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Ethnicity in Lowell



Lowell National Historical Park

Ethnographic Overview and Assessment

Ethnicity in Lowell

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Lowell National Historical Park
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Cover Photo: The spire of St. Patrick's Church and the golden dome of the Holy Trinity Hellenic Orthodox Church in the Acre section of Lowell, Massachusetts.
(Richard Howe Jr., 2009)

Executive Summary

This Ethnography Project, sponsored by Lowell National Historical Park, examines the history of immigration and ethnicity in Lowell, the prototype factory town developed in the 1820s and one of the most diverse cities in the United States today. Utilizing archival sources, including numerous interviews, a corpus of new oral histories that we've collected, neighborhood and building histories, and ethno-historical and ethnographic methodologies, we examined the city's past and its contemporary cultural geography.

Our study begins with the early colonial contact between Native Americans and Europeans in the seventeenth century and traces the history to the present day. We examine how European colonial expansion influenced the Native peoples in the region from the sixteenth century onwards. Early European colonization brought trade and disease and eventually undermined the presence of sovereign Native villages in the region. By the seventeenth century, the expansion of the British colony of Massachusetts also led to the establishment and entrenchment of colonial British settlements like Chelmsford.

In the nineteenth century the global industrial revolution and immigration brought significant change to the region. The landscape where the Concord and Merrimack Rivers joined was slowly transformed by the emergence of manufactories, mills, and canals. Early industrial producers recruited Yankee women to work in their textile mills. But at the same time a growing presence of immigrant laborers from Ireland and other parts of Europe settled in the region. Male and female immigrant workers, who remained the major source of labor until the 1920s, soon replaced the daughters of Yankee yeomen farmers in the mills.

The federal Immigration Act of 1924 dramatically undermined the entry of new immigrants to the United States. The law's quota system made it particularly hard for immigrants from eastern and southern Europe and the non-western world to enter the country. Furthermore, the gradual decline of the textile industry and the corresponding loss of mill employment made Lowell a less attractive destination for those immigrants still able to enter the United States.

Following the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished the national origin quotas, a renewed stream of global migrants has entered the United States and many of these individuals and families have found their way to Lowell.

These newcomers are no longer largely of European origin. Instead, they mostly come from Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Since the 1970s, immigrants and refugees from these parts of the world have changed and enriched the cityscape with their places of worship, businesses, and cultural events.

While acknowledging that immigrants participate in a global movement, the research for this report was locally grounded. The LNHP requested that the study focus on two Lowell neighborhoods, the Lowell Highlands and the Back Central area. While we focus on these two sections of the city, we learned that the lives and movements of immigrants often went well beyond the two neighborhoods.

Like much of the academic literature in the social sciences and the humanities, we maintain that concepts such as *ethnicity* and *race* are socially constructed. These organizing principles change meaning through time, space, and throughout cultures. Immigrant identities are imagined and constructed by mainstream receiving societies, but also by immigrants themselves. This leads to complex and diverse processes that buck easy characterization and categorization. Thus, immigrant experiences and identities are as diverse and complex as the oral histories we collected and the hundreds of interviews and immigrant stories we studied in the process of writing this report. Such human experiences are at the center of our report. The immigrant/refugee/migrant experience continues to shape Lowell and the nation. Newcomers arrive weekly, adding to the community mosaic. We hope that the study provides a useful perspective on the complex history of the area and that we carefully considered the numerous ways that transnational influences dynamically shape Lowell's story and, by extension, the nation's history.

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Chapter One
Global Immigration in Lowell: Overview and Assessment

This study examines the history of immigration to the greater Lowell area, roughly from the seventeenth century to the 2000s. In it we discuss Lowell's pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial history. We argue that global developments shaped the lives of the peoples of the Merrimack Valley from at least the sixteenth century to the present.

We examine in Part I how European colonial expansion influenced the Native peoples in the region from the sixteenth century onwards. Early European colonization brought trade and disease and eventually undermined the presence of sovereign Native villages in the region. By the seventeenth century, the expansion of the British colony of Massachusetts also led to the establishment and entrenchment of colonial British settlements like Chelmsford.

In the nineteenth century, as we argue in Part II, the global industrial revolution and immigration left its mark on the region. The landscape where the Concord joined the Merrimack River was slowly transformed by the emergence of manufactories, mills, and canals. Early industrial producers recruited Yankee women to work in their textile mills. But at the same time there was also a growing presence of immigrant laborers from Ireland and other parts of Europe who made their home in the region. The daughters of Yankee yeomen farmers were relatively quickly replaced in the mills by immigrant workers – both male and female. Immigrants remained the major source of labor until the 1920s. In this decade, legislations by the federal government dramatically undermined the entry of new immigrants to the United States through the Immigration Act of 1924. The law imposed a quota system, which made it particularly hard for immigrants from eastern and southern Europe (as well as the non-western world) to enter the United States. Furthermore, the gradual decline of the textile industry throughout the twentieth century and the declining availability of mill work increasingly made Lowell a less attractive place for immigrants.[1]

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[1] On these issues see for example Frederick W. Coburn, *History of Lowell and Its People*, (New York City: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1920); Paul F. McGouldrick, *New England Textiles in the Nineteenth Century: Profits and Investment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Mary Blewett, *The Last Generation: Work and Life in the Textile Mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1910-1960* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990); Mary Blewett, *Constant Turmoil: The Politics of Industrial Life in Nineteenth Century New England* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).

As we examine in Part 3, since the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished the national origin quotas, the United States and the city of Lowell has seen a renewed stream of global migrants. Furthermore, the new immigrants who have set up and are setting up their homes in the all-America city are no longer largely of European origin, but they come from Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Since the 1970s immigrants from these parts of the world have changed and enriched the cityscape with their places of worship, businesses, and cultural events.[2]

Several scholars argue that American immigration history is part of global history. They maintain that this past is not one of "exceptionalism" as the "national myth" so often maintains, but rather, that the United States underwent similar trends and tendencies as other parts of the world. In fact, immigration trends in the United States have always been influenced by worldwide population movements.[3] The efforts by immigration scholars to "globalize" their research are in line, and were in many ways ahead, of the recent efforts by historians to place the history of the United States in a global context.[4] Thus, the United States has not only been part of, but in turn has also been influenced by the processes of global immigration. Similar arguments have been made by historians of immigration who pursue a global paradigm.[5]

Another recent scholarly concept that we have included in this study is that of transnationalism. This organizing principle has been popular among academics to describe the connections and links between immigrants and their sending societies. It has

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[2] For the standard work that examines the recent period of immigration on a national level see Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait*, third edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). See also Douglass Massey, ed. *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008).

[3] For an interdisciplinary approach on these issues see the essays in Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, ed., *Immigration Reconsidered: History Sociology, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). See also Reed Ueda, "Immigration in Global Historical Perspective," in *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration Since 1965*, eds., Mary Waters and Reed Ueda (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[4] See Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); Ian Tyrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789* (New York: Palgrave, 2007); Carl Guarneri, *America in the World: United States in Global Context* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007); Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of Califorina Press, 2002); Gary Reichard and Ted Dickson, eds., *America on the World Stage: A Global Approach to U.S. History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

[5] See Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact World Migrations in the Second Millenium* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Thomas Sowell, *Migrations and Cultures: A World View* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); W. M. Spellman, *The Global Community: Migration and the Making of the Modern World* (Stroud, Glouchestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2002).

been especially applied in the area of American immigration studies since 1965. Peggy Levitt argues that transnationalism creates "[d]ense networks across political borders created by immigrants in the quest for economic advancement and social recognition. Through these networks, an increasing number of people are able to live dual lives." Transnational immigrants "are often bilingual, move easily between cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both."[6] Levitt's scholarly observations certainly find reflection in the experiences of the new immigrants in Lowell who we have interviewed for our oral histories. But transnationalism is not only a phenomenon of recent years. In fact, as Nancy Foner demonstrates, comparisons between the major wave of immigrants at the turn of the late nineteenth and those at the end of the twentieth century can be readily drawn.[7] For example, Mark Wyman estimates that about four million immigrants to the United States chose to return to their sending societies between 1880 and 1930.[8] However, as our oral histories point out, some of the immigrants who returned to their sending societies eventually returned again to the United States.[9] In addition to these back and forth migrations, several of the religious or political conflicts and disputes that occurred in Lowell for example in the Greek or the Armenian community, just to mention two specific examples, in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, were influenced by international and transnational developments.[10]

Like much of the academic literature in the social sciences and the humanities we maintain that concepts such as "ethnicity" and "race" are socially constructed. These organizing principles change meaning through time, space, and throughout cultures. Immigrant identities are imagined and constructed by mainstream receiving societies, but

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[6] Peggy Levitt, *Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Peggy Levitt, *Good Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape* (New York: New Press, 2007); Peggy Levitt and Mary Waters, eds., *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

[7] Nancy Foner, *In a New Land: A Comparative View of Immigration* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

[8] See for example Mark Wyman, *Round-Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

[9] See for example Barbara and Albert Bernstein interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, March 28, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA. See also Ana Suarez interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, February 29, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[10] On the Greeks see Part 2. On the Armenians see Muriel Parseghian interviewed by Christoph Strobel, December 7, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.; Lisa Dagdigian interviewed by Christoph Strobel, March 28, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

also by immigrants themselves. This leads to complex and diverse processes that buck easy characterization and categorization.[11] Thus, immigrant experiences and identities are as diverse and complex as the oral histories we collected and the hundreds of interviews and immigrant stories we studied in the process of writing this report. These human experiences are at the center of our report.

While acknowledging that immigrants participate in a global movement, our study is locally grounded. The LNHP requested that the study should focus on two Lowell neighborhoods – the Lowell Highlands and the Back Central area. While our research focuses on these two sections of the city, we also quickly learned that the lives and movements of immigrants often went beyond the two neighborhoods. This is the case both in the nineteenth and early twenty century as well as in the post-1965 period.

Some historians maintain that "ethnic enclaves" in Lowell have always played a strong role in the neighborhoods. In her study of immigrant women in Lowell, Martha Norkunas determined, "The groups who settled in Lowell remained separate in a number of striking ways. Each lived in its own distinct ethnic enclave within the city, each established its own ethnic church and often its own school and ethnic club, each preserved its own language, each celebrated it own holidays and each tried to maintain its own traditions."[12] In 1983 Norkunas interviewed 22 Lowell women from seven different ethnic groups: Irish, Greeks, Poles, Lithuanians, English, French-Canadians, and Portuguese. "Each ethnic enclave came to regard the physical boundaries of its neighborhood as representing the cultural boundaries of their group." Norkunas argued that almost without exception all the women lived near or with a relative who had found them their first job and she noted that the "physical boundaries of the enclave represented the cultural boundaries of the group."

> The women I spoke with had traveled both physically and culturally from the Old World to the new World. Once they arrived in Lowell, they moved close to those with whom they felt more culturally comfortable—the people from their own ethnic group. Each of the groups, over time, came

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[11] Here we have been especially influenced by Hoerder, XXII; as well as the essays in Nancy Foner and George Fredrickson, eds., *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004); and Nancy Foner, Ruben Rumbaut, and Steven Gold, eds., *Immigration Research for a New Century: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000).

[12] Martha Norkunas, "The Ethnic Enclave as Cultural Space: Women's Oral Histories of Life and Work in Lowell," in Robert Weible, ed., *The Continuing Revolution: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts*, (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1991), 323-339, 324.

> to be associated with certain sections of the city. It was within a distinct geographical area of Lowell that members of a group were born, raised, learned their language and culture, went to school, married, and died.[13]

Norkunas concluded that there was some irony in her interviews. Though each woman described a sense of separateness from the larger Lowell once they arrived, she argues that "[m]ost came from situations that resembled each other, although from different countries; they took the same boat and felt the same sickness; and they came with the same sense of hope. . .. The ethnic enclaves were as separate satellites following the same trajectory."[14]

Our oral histories complicate and challenge Norkunas argument of the clear cut "ethnic enclaves" that existed in Lowell's neighborhoods. Several of the immigrants' recollections seem to reflect the idea of shared neighborhoods. Albert Bernstein told us that "there were kosher markets and small grocery stores" in the neighborhood and his wife Barbara noted that the neighborhood was "mixed." "Our neighbors were Polish and Syrian."[15] The Hale Howard area was also the home of a decent sized Armenian population.[16] The mother of another interviewee, Muriel Paradis, came to Lowell from Canada and grew up in the Highlands near Cupples Square. In the Highlands:

> there was a lot of Jewish people on the street I lived, and Irish. It was everything really; rich people moved up and up and poor people. . .and middle class. . .. There was a large Jewish community because they have a synagogue up there. There was a lot of Jewish people in the Highlands, mostly the upper Highlands. I lived in the lower Highlands.[17]

This testimonial indicates a shift in the Jewish community from the lower Highlands to the upper Highlands, but also provides a glimpse at the mixed nature of neighborhoods. Other interviewees who were members of more established immigrant

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[13] Norkunas, 326, 333, 335-336.

[14] Norkunas, 336.

[15] Barbara and Albert Bernstein interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, March 28, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[16] Muriel Parseghian interviewed by Christoph Strobel, December 7, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Lisa Dagdigian interviewed by Christoph Strobel, March 28, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[17] Muriel Paradis and Rolande Cloutier interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, Susan Thomson, and Yingchan Zhang, February 28, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

groups also suggest that immigrants from various groups interacted frequently with their neighbors on their streets – regardless of their immigrant backgrounds.[18] As our oral histories demonstrate, contemporary immigrants in Lowell tend to be even less rigid about moving to exclusive ethnic neighborhoods.[19]

Neighborhoods are often in the eyes of the beholder. They are complex and diverse places with fluid boundaries. Ward lines change, census data is incomplete for Lowell over the range of years under review and subject to the biases of the census takers and the individuals who fill out forms, streets get renamed, combined, and sometimes disappear. For example, neighborhoods like Lowell's 'Little Canada' and Lowell's Jewish neighborhood were largely destroyed during the so-called period of "urban renewal." The challenge comes in weighing the evidence to draw conclusions about neighborhood spaces and immigrant inter-group relations. The evidence suggests that there was always good deal of commercial interaction and that many parts of the city were simultaneously home to several immigrant groups.

The United States is a nation of great diversity. Its people come from all corners of the globe, carrying essential elements of their cultures with them. In deciding what they can and must bring, immigrants consciously choose to begin the complex process of preserving various aspects of their cultural identities as they adjust to a new place, new ways of making a living, a new culture, and a new civil society. These processes have occurred throughout the history of Lowell.

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[18] See for example Pauline Golec interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, April 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[19] See Part 3.

PART ONE
Before Lowell: A History of the Greater Lowell Area Prior to the Industrial Revolution

European colonization brought religion, trade, and disease to the indigenous Americans of greater Lowell. By the mid-seventeenth century, the expansion of the British colony of Massachusetts led to the establishment of white settlements in the area. The history of colonization led to accommodation but also to conflict between Native Americans and European newcomers.

Chapter Two
Pawtucket and Wamesit: The Challenges of [Reconstructing the History of] Two New England Native Communities

Ethnohistorians and anthropologists have long focused on examining scholarly organizing principles such as "tribes," "confederacies," "nations," or "extended family networks," to gain a better understanding of Native American history. In the last two decades, some academics have begun to emphasize the value of focusing their studies on specific indigenous communities, such as towns and villages.[1] This strategy provides a useful path to improve our understanding of the fluidity and complexity of the impact that European colonization had on the world of Native Americans.

In the 1600s, the two Native settlements that could be found within the limits of what is today the city of Lowell were called Pawtucket and Wamesit. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, the town of Pawtucket was a major New England Indian settlement. The community was situated close to the falls, which today are named after the town. Typical for New England Native settlements, where town or village sites were not infrequently moved, Pawtucket's location sometimes changed in the general area around the falls. In 1653, the Puritan missionary John Eliot lobbied for the establishment of a "praying town," a community for Native "Christian converts," called Wamesit. This community, located where the Merrimack and the Concord rivers meet, just a short distance down river from the settlement of Pawtucket, was in what is today downtown Lowell. Still, and while these two communities are widely mentioned in the historiography of Native New England, scholars have so far failed to explore their history in much detail.

This slight does not mean that the Native people of the Lowell area received no attention. Several local historians have studied their history. Much of this scholarship is in the tradition of "white settler historiography," which was widely produced in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth and in the early decades of the twentieth

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[1] See especially the path-breaking study by Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and the Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

centuries. These accounts generally embraced the ideals of white supremacy prominent at that time. Reflecting the racism of their days, many early local historians felt that their writings required "but a brief account of the Indian inhabitants." Wilson Waters, one of the greater Lowell area's early historians, for example, argued the racist notion that the Native people of the region "were polytheists and polygamists, untruthful and fond of gambling." Native Americans were denied "legal" ownership over the land, because they "can hardly be said to have had proprietary right to the land. They were nomadic, occupying certain territory as long as it afforded them a livelihood."[2]

Such misinterpretations became convenient narratives that justified the taking of Native American lands. Historians routinely overlooked that New England's original inhabitants cleared wide swaths of land for agriculture and village sites. Native Americans in the region also actively managed the forests, cutting wood for fuel and construction, and burning the forest's underbrush to make hunting more efficient. Early historians like Waters turned Native Americans into human caricatures, stressing that the natives of the Lowell area were "very hospitable and fond of extravagant dancing and reveling." Early local historians also saw what they would describe as some redeeming qualities among Native Americans. "Their government possessed of some noble traits," wrote Waters, and they "were grateful for kindness of all animals." To the early historians of the Lowell area, however, Native Americans were little more than a vanishing race, mostly "wild" with some "noble" attributes. They had to make room for, what these writers saw as, a more advanced English civilization, one more deserving of the land.[3] Thus historians like Waters, through the narratives they constructed, justified the ethnic cleansing of the area's Native population.

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[2] Early writings on Native Americans in the Lowell area depicted Indians through the prism of the "wild" or the "noble savage," both popular historiographical and cultural perspectives among European Americans of native peoples in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Wilson Waters, *History of Chelmsford, Massachusetts* (Lowell: Courier Citizen Company, 1917), chapter 1. Other writers emphasized the "vanishing" of "noble savages." This view, however, also did not question or historicize the ethnic cleansing of the first peoples of the region. See Charles Cowley, *Memories of the Indians and Pioneers of the Region of Lowell* (Lowell, 1862); Cowley, "The Last of the Sachem," in *Contributions of the Old Residents' Historical Association*, v. 6, no. 1 (1904).

[3] Waters, chapter 1. For a discussion and critique of settler historiography in comparative perspective, see Christoph Strobel, *The Testing Grounds of Modern Empire: The Making of Colonial Racial Order in the American Ohio Country and the South African Eastern Cape, 1770s-1850s* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 5. For studies on Native American land use see Gordon M. Day, "The Indian as an Ecological Factor in the Northeastern Forest" *Ecology* 34, 2 (1953), 329-46. See also William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

In the last 30 years or so, some scholars have again approached the native history of the greater Lowell area of the seventeenth century. In the 1970s, Frederic Burtt, a professor of mechanical engineering and an amateur archeologist, published a short essay on this topic. Though avoiding many of the racist assumptions and clichés of earlier works, Burtt's article does not move our general understandings far beyond what earlier settler histories provided in terms of information on daily life and the general outlines of the history.[4] The most comprehensive work on Native Americans in the Greater Lowell area is John Pendergast's *The Bend in the River*. Pendergast, an amateur archeologist who taught in the English department at Middlesex Community College and at the University of Lowell, provides a narrative summary of the region's early Native history geared toward the general reader. The study provides an introductory glimpse into the area's early history and archeology.[5]

Like many of the earlier attempts to tackle the Native history of the greater Lowell area, Burtt's and Pendergast's accounts do not discuss the local developments in the larger context of New England. Both authors focus excessively on the Indian leaders Passaconway and Wannalancet, as well as the Puritan missionary John Eliot and his backer, the Superintendent of Praying Indians Daniel Gookin. Their studies are celebratory in tone and emphasize the roles that the four men played. Burtt and Pendergast reveal little new detail about the social history and culture of the seventeenth-century Native Americans, and fail to develop a more nuanced discussion of the Native settlements – Pawtucket and Wamesit – that existed in the area. To summarize, these accounts revisited the historic records examined by the settler historians, but provide little in-depth analysis of the larger forces that shaped Native lives in the northeast.

Admittedly, there are significant gaps in the historic record about the Natives in the Greater Lowell area. Archeological evidence and seventeenth-century writings provide only a limited perspective. Thus, reconstructing the story of the two seventeenth-century Native communities remains a challenge. This fact is likely the reason why historians who study Native history in New England have looked at Pawtucket and Wamesit with only a passing glance or ignored them altogether. Scholars have largely failed to explore the history of the two communities in any detail.

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[4] J. Frederic Burtt, "Passaconway's Kingdom" in *Cotton Was King: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts*, ed. Arthur L. Eno, Jr. (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1976), 3-9.

[5] John Pendergast, *The Bend in the River* (Tyngsborough, MA: Merrimac River Press, 1991).

Pawtucket and Wamesit: Two Pennacook Communities

The Native Americans who lived in the Greater Lowell area were Pennacook. The Pennacook settled in villages in the area we today call New Hampshire, northeastern Massachusetts, and southern Maine – mostly settling in the Merrimack River Valley and along its tributaries. Before, during, and in the aftermath of King Philip's War from 1675-76, the Pennacook were ethnically cleansed out of the lower Merrimack River Valley by English colonists. Some Pennacook villages continued to exist along the upper Merrimack River until 1730. Yet, increasingly due to English pressures, most of the Pennacook moved north to join with the Abenaki in Maine or the Western Abenaki at St. Francois, also known as Odanak, in Quebec.

Pennacook is believed to be derived from the Abenaki word "penakuk" meaning "at the bottom of the hill." According to several scholars, the term Pawtucket was and is also commonly used to describe the Pennacook Indians who lived on the lower Merrimack River. This name might have been derived from the town of Pawtucket, which some seventeenth-century European observers described as the "capitol" of the Native confederacy. Other names for the Pennacook were likely also Nechegansett, Opanango, Owaragee, and after 1680, St. Francois Indians.[6]

The Pennacook were not politically and militarily unified and often acted independently from one another. Bert Salwen characterizes this relationship as "flexible multi-village alliances" of shifting and fluid coalitions. Different communities often pursued varying goals and interests, and could face internal divisions and strains. Thus, Native leaders needed to display flexible leadership, which allowed for disagreement on major concerns, and permitted people to pursue different choices and strategies within this system of fluid alliances – a crucial point in understanding the history of the settlements of Pawtucket and Wamesit.[7]

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[6] On the Pennacook/Pawtucket, see for example Gordon Day, "The Problem of the Openangos," *Studies in Linguistics* 23 (1973), 31-37; Bert Salwen, "Indians of Southern New England and Long Island: Early Period," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast*, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 169-170; Colin Calloway, *Western Abenakis of Vermont, 1600-1800: War, Migration, and the Survival of an Indian People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 14; Kathleen Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England, 1500-1650* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996),13; Daniel Mandell, *Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth Century Eastern Massachusetts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 16-17; Dennis Connole, *The Indians of the Nipmuck Country in Southern New England, 1630-1750* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2000).

[7] Salwen, 168; Bragdon, 23-25.

Linguistically, the Pennacook were Algonquian speakers. Their language was more closely related to their northern neighbors, the Abenaki, than to the Algonquian languages spoken by their neighbors in southern New England, such as the Massachusetts. For much of the seventeenth century, the Penacook acted politically independent from the Abenaki. Yet by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and as earlier mentioned, increasing English pressures on their homelands and the violence and wars with the English colonists from Massachusetts forced the Pennacook to seek refuge among the Abenaki and blend into this society.

The lifeways of the Indians at Pawtucket and Wamesit were similar to those of many of the Indian peoples in New England. Native life in the region followed the seasonal life cycles that influenced the procurement of food. Native Americans subsisted by farming, hunting, fishing, and gathering. Women and men both contributed to the survival of their community. Their tasks and contributions were often defined by gender – meaning that certain chores were done by women and others by men.

Among the Native peoples of southern New England, horticulture played a central role in a community's subsistence. Pawtucket and Wamesit were located in close proximity to farming fields situated along the Merrimack and the Concord rivers. Native women were the principal agricultural producers – though men aided in the creation of new fields. Women worked the fields planting corn, squash, pumpkins, and beans. The planting season for corn, the main food staple for the Pawtucket and Wamesit Indians, began in mid-April. Women weeded the corn in the spring using hoes made out of long sticks and a bone or freshwater shell at the end. By late June or early July, women horticulturalists also used these hoes to perform the task of hilling, which meant that they pushed a few inches of earth around the corn's stem. These little earth mounds aided the corn to grow tall and straight. Furthermore, it enabled women to plant beans in the little earth mounds. Women and also children kept on weeding corn throughout the growing season. They also planted pumpkins, gourds, herbs, and squash. Women supplemented their families' diets further by gathering roots, berries, and nuts, as well as medicinal herbs.

Fishing and hunting, performed by men, further sustained the diet of Pawtucket and Wamesit Indians. The Merrimack and Concord Rivers were abundant in fish. The falls were an especially popular fishing site during spawning season when many fish traveled upriver. Native peoples of various backgrounds, including the Pennacook

and Massachusetts, are believed to have converged on this site during the seventeenth century. They came to fish, but also to hold political and diplomatic council at Pawtucket. The Native inhabitants of Wamesit and Pawtucket also hunted for water fowl, turkeys, pigeons, and a variety of other birds, deer, and moose.[8]

Pawtucket, Wamesit, and European Colonization

European colonization had a significant impact on the Native peoples of New England. Foremost, it led to the spread of disease, which led to a demographic catastrophe among Native American communities like Pawtucket. Native towns and villages experienced a severe decline in their population. Scholarship on disease emphasizes the destructive impact that alien pathogens had on Native Americans who had little immunity to "Old World" epidemics. Disease led to a population decline among Native Americans, as most experts estimate today, of about 90 percent. The 1616-18 and 1633-34 small pox epidemics had particularly devastating impacts on the Pennacook Indians living in the lower Merrimack River Valley. Smallpox returned again in 1639. In 1647, it was followed by influenza. In 1649-50, another smallpox epidemic broke out in New England, trailed by diphtheria in 1659. In the long run, disease rendered the Penacook Indian lands vulnerable to English colonization.[9]

It is, of course, impossible to reconstruct and determine the exact mortality rates and population numbers among the Pennacook in general and the settlement of Pawtucket in particular. Thus, we are left with estimates and approximations that provide merely a glimpse at what the demographic situation was like in the seventeenth century. The observations of Daniel Gookin, the supervisor of Massachusetts' Native mission reservations in the mid-seventeenth century, about demographic developments among Native Americans in New England seem to confirm the general scholarship on aboriginal populations and disease. According to Gookin's informers, the population of what he

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[8] On subsistence, see Alice Nash and Christoph Strobel, *Daily Life of Native Americans from Post-Columbian through Nineteenth Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006), 6-10. Burtt, 4.

[9] See Salwen, 170. For more general introduction to this issue, see Dean Snow and Kim Lamphear, "European Contact and Indian Depopulation in the Northeast: The Timing of the First Epidemics," *Ethnohistory* 35 (1988), 15-33; Russel Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman University Press of Oklahoma, 1987).

called the "Pawktuckets," likely referring to all Pennacook living on the lower Merrimack, but equally possible counting all Penacook Indians living in the river valley, or maybe counting even many other groups, had been reduced from 3,000 fighting men "to not above 250 men."[10]

Looking at the records of Thomas Dudley for the "Pawtucket," Neal Salisbury writes that his "upper figure of 500 in 1631 represents only 17 percent of the 3,000 men reckoned by Gookin's informants."[11] Daniel Mandell, on the other hand, estimates that in the early 1630s "the natives in the region, known as the Massachusett and Pawtucket tribes, had been devastated by the recent epidemic, and only about 200 remained."[12] It is hard to verify or calculate the accuracy of any of these estimates and depopulation rates – they are mere approximations. Yet, the numbers clearly underscore the dramatic impact that epidemics and English colonization had on Native settlements like Pawtucket.

Pawtucket, due to its shrinking numbers, was especially vulnerable to attacks from its neighbors. There were repeated raids by and conflicts with the Micmac, the Narragansett, and in later years with members of the Iroquois Confederacy. In its early years, Plymouth Colony also attacked several Pawtucket-Pennacook settlements. These conflicts reinforced the vulnerabilities of the Native communities on the lower Merrimack River.[13] Weakened by disease and war, it is likely that Pawtucket desired to seek closer relations with the English as a potential powerful ally. Still the attacks continued. Throughout the 1650s, 1660s, and 1670s, as part of the warfare waged between Iroquois and New England Indians, war parties of the Mohawk nation, the eastern-most members of the Iroquois, harassed the Pennacook Indians in settlements like Pawtucket, as well as in New England praying towns like Wamesit. As the English did little to help to protect the settlements, the Natives of the greater Lowell area are likely to have built a fort as a defensive structure in the late 1660s or early 1670s on a hill overlooking the Concord River, in a part of Lowell that is now known as Fort Hill.[14]

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[10] Daniel Gookin, "Historical Collections of the Indians in New England," in Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections*, 1st Ser., I (Boston, 1792), 147-9.

[11] Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 104.

[12] Mandell, 12.

[13] Salisbury, 105, 109, 121, 144, 156, 180, 183, 204-5, 209.

Relations between Native peoples and the English colonies were generally initiated through the trade in fur. Passaconaway, the influential Pennacook leader who resided for much of the year at Pawtucket, and who in the early 1630s led a faction that was about 400 to 500 fighters strong, had been an active participant in the region's fur trade.[15] For the Pawtucket, as for many of New England's Native people, trade was at least as much a way to establish diplomatic ties and relations of reciprocity with neighbors, as it was an economic interaction. Pawtucket's involvement in the fur trade likely led the Native settlement to pursue closer contacts with the English. It is important to acknowledge that this relationship was not without tensions. In 1642, for example, colonial authorities had tried to disarm and arrest Passaconaway, sending 40 soldiers in his pursuit. They fired at the fleeing sachem and arrested his wife and child. Still in 1644, due to threats and fears from attacks by the Narragansetts as well as other neighboring groups, the Pawtucket decided to move under the authority of the General Court in Boston.[16] It appears likely that the Pawtucket saw rivalries with neighboring nations as a more dangerous threat to their survival and sovereignty than English expansion.

The Pawtucket's path of accommodation with the English was limited. For example, Passaconaway and the Pawtuckets do not appear to have converted to Christianity despite pressures to do so. While the local historians of Native-white relations have described the sachem as a "great friend of the whites," Passaconaway's actual motivations likely were not so simplistic. Like many Native American leaders before and after him, Passaconaway had to make difficult decisions about the survival of his people. He became a firm believer that militant resistance to English colonization would be a failed and costly strategy. In a speech in 1660, he told his people:

> I was as much an Enemy to the English at their first coming into these Parts, as any one whatsovever, and did try all Ways and Means possible to have destroyed them, at least to have prevented them sitting down here, but I could in no way effect it; . . . therefore I advise you never to contend with the English, nor make war with them.[17]

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[14] On continuing hostilities between the Pennacook and Iroquois, see Gordon M. Day, "The Ouragie War: A Case History in Iroquois-New England Indian Relations," in Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi and Marianne Mithun, eds. *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquois Study* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 35-50.

[15] Salisbury, 103-5, 199-202.

[16] For a general discussion of Passaconaway's stance toward the colony, see Richard Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 36-9.

[17] Passaconaway quoted in Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1998), 101.

Many of the Indians who lived in Pawtucket would embrace this strategy. Others, however, would abandon their leader and the area around the falls and move north, farther away from the reach of the colonists. There they would join communities and leaders who pursued a less reconciliatory stance toward the English. Passaconaway's son, Wanalancet, who became the leader of Pawtucket after his father, pursued a similar strategy, and faced similar opposition among the town's increasingly shrinking membership.[18]

When animal pelts became sparse due to Native American over hunting and the increased ecological pressures brought on by English settlement, Indian-white economic interactions in New England often shifted to the sale of land. This led to dramatic changes. Peter Leavenworth, who studied the history of Penacook-Pawtucket land sales, writes that "European trade goods, some of which replaced traditional native implements," became "part of the fabric of everyday native life. At first Indians considered non-essential land an acceptable variation on customary exchange." Over time, however, Penacook-Pawtucket leaders would eventually turn "to land sales to maintain their consumption levels . . . This consumer activity was largely supported by traders offering liberal credit, a practice common among the English." The increasing pressure on Native land certainly had an impact on the Native people of the Greater Lowell area. By the second half of the seventeenth century, due to the expansion of the white population in the region, agricultural land became increasingly scarce and demands on Native leaders to surrender their land intensified. As a consequence, both Passaconaway and Wannalancet sold land rights to the settlers.[19]

Elliot and Gookin

Much of the scholarship on the Native peoples of the greater Lowell area has underscored the roles played by John Eliot and Daniel Gookin. The two men indeed played central roles in New England's Native American mission history – and thus in the historiography of seventeenth-century New England. Historians of New England, however, disagree over Eliot's impact on Native Americans. Scholars like Francis Jennings

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[18] Colin Calloway, "Wanalancet and Kancagamus: Indian Strategy and Leadership on the New Hampshire Frontier," *Historical New Hampshire* 43 (Winter 1988), 264-90.

[19] Peter Leavenworth, "'The Best Title That Indians Can Claime': Native Agency and Consent in the Transferal of Penacook-Pawtucket Land in the Seventeenth Century," *The New England Quarterly* 72 (June 1999), 288-9, 293; Salisbury, 199-202.

view Eliot and his allies as agents of empire who aided in the political and economic subjugation of the Natives of New England.[20] Others, like Richard Cogley, argue that Eliot viewed the mission primarily as a program for instructing Indians in 'civility' and 'religion' so that some natives could experience 'conversion' and 'full' church membership … [O]nce he became better acquainted with the Indians and more sympathetic to their problems, he regarded the mission as a way of protecting Native Americans, whether Christian or not, from land grabbing settlers and from Indian marauders.[21]

The local historians make a similar argument. In Burtt's and Pendergast's narratives of the Native peoples of the greater Lowell area, Eliot and Gookin have a central and even a celebratory role. They are described as converting the Native peoples to Christianity and are portrayed as the central protectors of the Indian communities, a deed described as a great achievement.

In 1653, Eliot's work contributed indeed to the creation of the "praying town" of Wamesit. Still, there is a problem with this focus because the earlier scholarship on the Native people of the greater Lowell area broadly overstated the missionary influence. In fact, Eliot's impact was rather limited as he and even his Native helpers rarely visited Pawtucket and Wamesit. The distance from Roxbury, Eliot's place of residence, and from Natick, the major New England Indian praying town, to the confluence of the Merrimack and Concord rivers, proved to be too far to establish permanent and consistent connections. The issue of limited missionary influence was further reinforced by the linguistic barrier as the Penacook and Massachusetts Indians spoke a different language. Eliot did not know Pennacook. In fact, Wamesit and Pawtucket were two of only a very few settlements among the Pennacook Indians where Puritan missionaries made any inroads. Through its early days, Wamesit consisted of about 15 families, all in all maybe 70-80 "converts." It did not grow much further in later years. Thus, the overall missionary impact was quite limited. Eliot had to supervise a growing number of praying towns, which led him to even further neglect the missionary efforts among towns farther in the interior like Pawtucket and Wamesit. In addition, the missionary enterprise was under-funded since the Massachusetts Bay Colony would not fund the praying towns. In fact,

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[20] See Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), chapter 14.

[21] Cogley, 4.

only a few expenses were covered by the General Court, including the costs related to the surveying of the Native mission settlement of Wamesit in 1653. At 2,500 acres, it was the smallest of New England's praying towns.[22]

The creation of Wamesit aided in Native American dispossession. The establishment of the reservation coincided with the founding of Billerica in 1653 and of Chelmsford in 1656, the two towns that would become the neighboring white communities to Wamesit and Pawtucket. Judging from the historical record, neither the Pawtucket nor the Wamesit were reimbursed for the creation of these two settlements on their lands, suggesting that the General Court deemed the 2,500 acres granted to the Indians in the area as adequate compensation.

Missing Elements

Decisively missing from the earlier historical accounts of Pawtucket and Wamesit are Native American perspectives – a real challenge for anyone trying to reconstruct the history of the two communities. For example, it is difficult to find information that provides insights into the relations between the two settlements. It is likely that the Natives of Wamesit relocated for the most part from Pawtucket, but we do not know that for sure. What we do know is that the Wamesit, like the Pawtucket, spoke Pennacook. Eliot and Gookin generally attempted to visit Wamesit in the spring, a time when many Indians came to Pawtucket to hold council. These meetings motivated the two Englishmen to come to the greater Lowell area to recruit new followers for their missions – largely a fruitless effort. The two also complained about the corrupting and harmful impact that the visiting Indians at Pawtucket had on the Wamesit Indians. Gookin displayed a high level of frustration when he described many of the Native visitors as "divers vitious and wicked men and women."[23]

A further challenge is to figure out the Native American motivations to join the "praying town" at Wamesit. Was this a sign of polarization among the Pennacook? Did different groups among the Pennacook not get along and therefore decided to start a new community? Did they believe that the embrace of Christianity might provide them political advantages with the English and lead to a closer alliance? Or did the Christian

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[22] See Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England* (1853-1854; reprint ed. New York: AMS Press, 1968), 3:301, 4:136-7.

[23] Gookin, 186-188; John Eliot, *A Brief Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians of New England, in the Year of 1670* (London, 1671), 29-30.

faith have genuine appeal to the Natives? The historic record is quiet on these issues. Since both Eliot and Gookin rarely stayed or even visited Wamesit, what role did native community leaders play in the settlement? And how did the Wamesit understand their "conversion," and their position in regards to Pawtucket as well as the colony?

Additional questions emerge that further complicate the picture. How real was the division between the two communities? Was the split between "Christian" Wamesit and Pawtucket really as dramatic as the white missionary writings might suggest, or might this separation have been artificially emphasized by Eliot and Gookin, who wanted to give the impression that their missionary efforts were successful at separating the "Christian" Indians from others? Or might the Pawtucket Indians have seen the presence of the "praying town" strategically as an asset in their efforts to maintain friendly relations with the colony, without, however, having to be directly associated with Christianity themselves?

The Pawtucket Indian leaders had to play a cautious balancing game. They walked a tightrope needing to appease their followers at Pawtucket as well as the English. Eliot's and Gookin's efforts to convert Wannalancet exemplify these tensions. Gookin described the Pawtucket leader as "a sober and grave person" in his 50s or 60s.

> He hath been always loving and friendly to the English. Many endeavors have been used several years to gain this sachem to embrace the Christian religion; but he hath stood off from time to time, and to yielded up himself personally, though for four years past hath been willing to hear the word of God preached, and to keep the Sabbath. A great reason that hath kept him off, I conceive, hath been the indisposition and averseness of sundry of his chief men and relations to pray to God; which he foresaw would desert him, in case he turned Christian.

Thus, conversion to Christianity, despite some potential political advantages that it might have brought to a Native leader, also could mean the potential loss in standing among one's followers. This possibility was at least in part why Passaconaway and Wannalancet were reluctant to convert. As Gookin reminded us in the same document, another sachem in the region, after converting to Christianity, was abandoned by his people.[24]

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[24] Gookin, 186-8.

Wannalancet, according to Gookin, finally "converted" to Christianity in the early 1670s. Gookin wrote that Wannalancet spoke to the effect that

> I have, all my days, used to pass in an old canoe . . . and now you exhort me to change . . . and embark in a new canoe, to which I have hitherto been unwilling. But now I yield up myself to your advice and enter into a new canoe, and do engage to pray to God hereafter.

The "conversion" of an important Indian leader, while certainly a propaganda coup for Eliot and Gookin, also lost Wannalancet numerous followers and powerful allies at Pawtucket and beyond.[25]

Wannalancet's decision to embrace Christianity is again difficult to assess from the historic record and provides historians with what is likely to be an unsolvable puzzle. Was it a spiritual decision? A political calculation by Wannalancet, done out of hope that conversion to Christianity would improve Pawtucket's position in the region, provide protection, guarantees for land, or access to more trade goods? Or, was he simply placating the missionaries?

On the evidence, Christianity's impact on the Native people of Pawtucket and Wamesit is hard to assess. Certainly being a member of a praying town like Wamesit meant a more formalized alliance with the English. Praying towns at least provided a limited promise to preserve land and access to English goods to Native "converts." On the other hand, being a member of a mission town required Native Americans to change at least some of their behavior and to follow a new set of rules.[26] But it is extremely difficult to reconstruct how much of this was taking place at Wamesit from the limited sources we have available. Due to little missionary oversight, it seems that the Wamesit Indians had more of a leeway to pursue the lives they wanted. In fact, in 1670, John Eliot wrote that the Wamesits "have not much esteem for religion."[27] Gookin as well complained about the "converts" in this community who he considered indolent. He complained about their failure to raise livestock and to adopt European forms of agriculture.[28] As mentioned earlier, Wamesit is likely to have been run by the Natives. Thus, control stayed with Native

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[25] Gookin, 186-8.

[26] See for example Jean O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650-1790* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[27] John Eliot, "Account of Indian Churches in New England," (1673) in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 10 [1809], 126-7.

[28] Gookin, 184-9.

American leadership. The Indians there, as the missionary complaints suggest, seemed resilient about maintaining their cultural traditions and lifeways. Wamesit in many ways served as a place where Native Americans attempted to maintain their land basis, independence, sovereignty, and autonomy.

King Philips War and the Ethnic Cleansing of Wamesit and Pawtucket

Despite missionary rhetoric, conversion to Christianity did not mean English protection for the people of Wamesit, nor for Wannalancet and his followers at Pawtucket. Conflict and tensions emerged, for example, during King Philip's War in the 1670s. Wannalancet and many of his followers, including what must have been a good number of Wamesit Indians, fled north fearing attacks from the colonists. Some of the praying towns – though not Wamesit – sided with Metacomet, who the English called King Philip. Metacomet fought a war against colonial domination, and gained support among a number of New England Indians who felt oppressed by English colonization and subjugation. Still, many Indians, especially in the established praying towns, remained friendly with the English. This strategy, however, failed to benefit Native groups and could even lead to greater suffering.

King Philip's War left a bloody mark on New England. Numerous white settlements were attacked during the conflict, and several were totally destroyed by Native forces allied with Metacomet's cause. During the war, Indian hating in New England also reached a peak, and colonists often did not differentiate between friend and foe among the Natives.

While the war was a disaster for the English population, it was even more devastating for the Native Americans of New England. Many of the Christian Indian allies of the colony ended up on Deer Island where they were put into an internment camp despite their friendly stance toward the English. They suffered under extremely poor conditions and a high mortality rate. To make matters worse, at the end of the conflict, many of the survivors were sold into slavery alongside the colony's alleged and real Indian enemies. According to Gookin, numerous innocent Wamesit and Pawtucket people were among those sold into slavery in the Caribbean.

At Wamesit too, the conflict had a devastating impact. In the fall of 1675, Chelmsford settlers rounded up the 145 Native men, women, and children who at that time remained in Wamesit, probably some of them Indians from Pawtucket who had not

wanted to leave the area. They were forcefully marched to Boston. Although most Indians were eventually allowed to return to their homes, the situation remained tense. Only a short while after this incident, a group of Chelmsford settlers barged into the Native village and killed a boy and injured several women. Afraid of further attacks, the Wamesit Indians fled into the forests. Suffering from the cold temperatures and lack of food, they returned to their settlement in December and lobbied the Massachusetts government to provide protection. When the government refused, they fled north to meet up with Wannalancet, leaving several elderly and sick persons behind who were unable to travel. In an act of cruelty, settlers massacred about a half dozen people when they burned down the settlement. Colonists took over the Indians' fields by the spring.[29]

King Philip's War had a destructive impact and proved a decisive turning point for the Native peoples of this region. It was a major factor in undermining the continued existence of Native communities in the greater Lowell area. While Wamesit was set aside as only one of four Native reservations that were allowed to continue to exist in Massachusetts, the pressures of Chelmsford settlers on Native land continued. Despite the official recognition, the "praying town" pretty much vanished from the historic record. The few Native Americans who remained led a marginal existence, moving in and out of the area. Wannalancet and some of his followers, who had returned to the greater Lowell region after King Philip's War for frequent stays, eventually sold their lands to white settlers by the mid-1680s. Eventually most of the descendants of the survivors and evacuees of Pawtucket and Wamesit merged with their northern neighbors, the Abenaki, many of them settling on the St. Francis River in Quebec at the native settlement of Odanak.[30]

Native Americans in the Greater Lowell Area after King Philip's War

With King Philip's War, the Native settlements of Pawtucket and Wamesit had ceased to exist. Still, even a short examination of their history, can provide new perspectives on the life of Native Americans in New England. Certainly there remain many intriguing and unanswered questions about the history of the two communities. This is in large part due to the limited sources available to historians. Yet, by reassessing

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[29] For the Wamesit and Pawtuckets during King Philip's War, see Gookin, 471-92.

[30] Burtt, 8; Pendergast, 82-5.

and reexamining the literature and the historic record of these two settlements, we can get a glimpse at the confrontations and challenges that colonial expansion brought to the Native peoples of the greater Lowell area.

The end of Pawtucket and Wamesit did, however, not mean the end of Native life in the greater Lowell area. As in other parts of New England, the end of conquest and subjugation did not mean that Native Americans just disappeared. Throughout the eighteenth, the nineteenth, and the twentieth centuries, Native Americans continued and continue to have a presence in the region. In the eighteenth century, various accounts were recorded of Native Americans who traveled the Merrimack River and at times visited white friends and relations. In the nineteenth century, Native American women were among the mill workers. Most noted among them was Betsey Chamberlain, who wrote for the *Lowell Offering* and the *New England Offering*.[31] Today, the Greater Lowell Indian Cultural Association is a Native American community group which remains active in the region. Pawtucket's and Wamesit's legacies of survival, adaptation, accommodation, resistance, and resilience thus continue to remain a part of Lowell's cultural mosaic today.

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[31] Judith Ranta, *The Life and Writings of Betsey Chamberlain: Native American Mill Worker* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003).

Chapter Three
East Chelmsford to Lowell: From Colonial Settlement to the Industrial Revolution

The tensions that existed in the greater Lowell area in the seventeenth century eased in the eighteenth century with the displacement of many of the region's Native peoples. White settlers took over Native American farmland and opened up new fields to agriculture and, in some cases, small-scale industry on the lands that once were the Native settlements of Pawtucket and Wamesit and later would become the city of Lowell. For much of the eighteenth century, however, East Chelmsford remained a small farming community.[1]

East Chelmsford was part of the town of Chelmsford founded in the 1650s. At the time, much of what would eventually become the city of Lowell remained "Indian Territory." Thus, and as we have seen, for several decades white colonists, an initially small, but steadily growing number, lived alongside Native Americans. Sometimes Indian-white interactions were ones of accommodation as, for example, reflected by trade. At other times, however, ethnic tensions could flare up as they did during King Philip's War in Wamesit. Chelmsford as well, due to it being one of the western-most settlements during King Philip's War, suffered from native attacks. For much of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Chelmsford remained a dangerous frontier post vulnerable to Native American and French attacks. There were a number of tensions between the Chelmsfordites and the Natives. By 1675, trading with Native Americans was done at shops and towns where goods were sold to the English. However, by 1676, as a result of King Philip's War, all trade with Native Americans was prohibited, which led to an increase in attacks from both sides. For example, in March of 1676, Native leader John Monoco, also known as one-eyed John, threatened to burn down Chelmsford among other towns. Because of his remarks and possible involvement with local fires, Monoco

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[1] Henry Adolphus Miles, *Lowell as it Was, and as it Is* (Boston, B.M. Dickinson, 1845), 10.

was hanged in Boston on September 22, 1676.[2] Furthermore, especially by the eighteenth century, white settler access to good agricultural and common land was an issue in Chelmsford forcing further encroachment on Native land.

The history of British settlers in colonial Chelmsford has been given some attention. There have been various narrative histories by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians of the area. Many of them are poorly researched, antiquarian, disorganized, and seem highly contextualized.[3] In the 1970s, historian Charles Carroll wrote three chapters on Chelmsford's early history. They were published in the compilation of essays *Cotton Was King: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts*. The essays are poorly sourced, but provide an overview of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century history of British settlement and of Native-European relations.

The chapters lay out some of the themes of the history of white settlement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the greater Lowell area in specific and in New England more generally. "Church and State in early Chelmsford" explores the history of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. "For Chelmsford," Carroll writes, "the decades following King Philip's War were a time of internal expansion, renewed warfare, migration, and sectional political and religious crises." Assaults were motivated by a variety of wars for empire fought between France, England, and various Indian nations. Furthermore, especially by the eighteenth century, white settler access to good agricultural and common land was an issue in Chelmsford. In the middle 1700s, the religious fervor connected to a movement described by historians as the Great Awakening led to a broad rejection of the established religious authorities and caused conflict in the community.[4] Tensions over religion remained a staple in the region for years to come. People in Chelmsford, however, also could display a level of unity. "Paradoxically" writes Carroll, "while Chelmsfordites quarreled over political, economic, and religious issues at home, they were taking major steps leading them toward the formation of the American union" achieved during the revolution against the colonial power Britain.[5] This spirit supportive of rebellion developed slowly. Carroll argues that the colonial settlers in the

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[2] Waters, 113, 432.

[3] See for example Wilkes Allen, *The History of Chelmsford* (Chelmsford, MA: Chelmsford Bicentennial Committee, 1974).

[4] Carroll, "Church and State in Early Chelmsford," in *When Cotton Was King*, 1976, 26-35.

[5] Carroll, "Church and State in Early Chelmsford," 38.

greater Lowell area, like most New England settlers, had "a strong conservative strain in their political ideas." Yet with the French and Indian War and the resulting Stamp Act, introduced by the British to generate income to pay for this expensive conflict, revolutionary fervor gradually grew in the region.[6]

Community, Religion, and Church

On May 18, 1653, the Massachusetts General Court granted a rectangular tract of land that encompassed not only today's Chelmsford but also the current towns of Groton, Westford, and large portions of Littleton and Carlisle. The area, later know as Lowell, was then Wamesit, also sometimes known as the Black Brook area. It was not officially added to Chelmsford until the Wamesit Purchase in 1685 by Jonathan Tyng and Thomas Hinchman. Still, and as we have seen, Chelmsford settlers already had encroached on this area before Wannalancet sold the land.

About fifteen families started the colonial settlement of Chelmsford. The town was placed in what is today the center of Chelmsford, an area which is now known as "Center Village." The area lacked thick forestation (potentially an indication that the land had been initially cleared by Native American farmers who had died of disease or moved away) making it more readily available for farming. Furthermore, there were several brooks, which provided a steady water supply.

During the period of early colonial settlement, Chelmsford lacked two of the central pillars of any Puritan community in New England. It had no formal church and no meeting house. Initially, meetings concerning civil or religious matters were held in the homes of leading men in the community. By 1663, the British colonists in Chelmsford completed the meeting house as the official seat and venue for town government. One of the major obstacles to creating an organized church in Chelmsford, however, was the absence of a man of the cloth. Efforts to rectify this issue began in 1654 when Reverend John Fisk of Wenham was invited to Chelmsford. Soon after visiting Chelmsford, Fisk was pleased with the proposals given to him and his people. However, early in the year 1655, questions on whether Fisk would remain in Wenham or move to Chelmsford brought another obstacle to the development of the church. On November 13, 1655, a decision was made and Chelmsford now had its man of the cloth.[7]

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[6] Carroll, "Chelmsford and Dracut in the Revolution," 41-2.

[7] Waters, 9-10.

The church played a central institutional role in Puritan towns like Chelmsford. For property-holding men, membership in the church was essential in terms of social and political standing in the community. Puritan religious standards in the seventeenth century were stringent. Puritan men had to demonstrate that they had experienced a true religious conversion before they were considered full members. They were essentially put on trial in front of community members to prove the authenticity of their conversion. Puritan settlers who could not prove their conversion also could not have their children baptized in the church. This position was an issue of some controversy. Some claimed that this policy aided in keeping the religious community of Puritans in New England spiritually pure, while others were concerned about the failure to baptize children and the social and spiritual implications it might have in the future. Thus, in 1662, the varying factions reached a not uncontested compromise called the "Half Way Covenant." It allowed for the children of those Puritans who had been unable to become church members to be baptized. They were allowed to attend religious services but were not to vote on church affairs.[8]

Given the Puritan belief in predestination, the most influential people in the community were the ones who seemed confident in their spiritual salvation. These individuals were also known as "saints." While Puritan cosmology strongly suggested that one could never be sure of one's salvation, and while certainly many Puritan saints struggled with this issue, others, at least outwardly, felt secure about their fate. These Puritan saints, writes Carroll, "were predisposed to direct the full force of their strength and authority against any individual group opposed to their ideals."[9]

Parishes, like Chelmsford, were governed by strict rules. The General Court of Massachusetts put in place laws that regulated the church and its members, which resulted in very formalized and rigid relations in communities. Puritan leaders believed that such an arrangement would reinforce a sense of conformity and religious peace. It did so for the early decades of the Puritan colony and through King Philip's War.[10]

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[8] Carroll, "The First White Settlement," 17-18; Carroll, "Church and State in Early Chelmsford," 32. Cedric Cowing, *The Saving Remnant: Religion and the Settling of New England* (Urbana Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 45-46.

[9] Carroll, "The First White Settlement," 17-18; Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards*, rev. ed. (New Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1995), 23.

[10] Carroll, "Church and State in Early Chelmsford," 31.

However, and especially by the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, the established system would be increasingly and successfully challenged. The formalized and rigid religious and social regulations led many followers to yearn for more emotional and spiritual outlets. One major critique by those in New England who questioned Puritan religious practices was that the long Sunday sermons were given without emotions, making it virtually impossible for the audience to spiritually connect with God. The wars and culture of raiding that existed among English settlers, Native Americans, and the French colony to the north, and the knowledge that death was a constant reality in daily life in colonial New England, spurred this search for new emotional outlets among many. Some British settlers in New England lived too far away from churches to attend religious services, further removing them from the influence of the church and Puritan society. Furthermore, the "Half Way Covenant," initially put in place as a compromise to at least partially include all British colonists in the fold of the Puritan church, was increasingly seen as an inadequate solution by many who felt that they were stuck in the status of second-class colonial subjects

In the early 1740s, these suppressed issues, combined with feelings of shame and guilt among many in New England who believed that society was abandoning the religious goals of its founders, aided in the emergence of a religious revitalization movement that took hold in several parts of the Atlantic World and among various Christian denominations. Today, historians call this social phenomenon the "Great Awakening." Some Puritan preachers, like Jonathan Edwards with his famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," stirred up emotions with fiery orations of eternal damnations that awaited the unconverted. The assumption among ministers like Edwards was that most current members of the church lacked a true knowledge of Christ, as they defined it, and were thus not truly converted.[11] These developments also had an impact in Chelmsford.

The Great Awakening had its first significant impact on the town of Chelmsford in 1743, when John Burge and Gershom Proctor, members of two well established families in town, invited Elisha Paine to come to preach in Chelmsford. Elisha Paine was a lawyer from Canterbury, Connecticut, who stopped practicing law because he

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[11] See for example Frank Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening"* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), chapter 2. Robert Brockway, *A Wonderful World of God: Puritanism and the Great Awakening* (Lehigh, P.A.: Lehigh University Press, 2003); Joseph Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

believed that he had been called by God to preach the gospel. Paine increasingly gained a strong reputation as a preacher and his fame spread throughout New England. His message that the followers of Great Awakening ministers, also known as "New Lights," needed to separate from the established communities, referred to by historians as "Old Lights," was especially controversial. Leaders like Paine, in fact, called for the breakup of the Puritan church – a pillar of white New England society. In Chelmsford, Paine spoke to some Chelmsfordites at the homes of Burge and Proctor, trying to gain New Light followers in the community. The local minister, the Reverend Ebenezer Bridge, and the Old Light faction saw this visit as a disturbance of the communal peace and an offense to the church. Burge and Proctor were called before the congregation, had to explain their actions, and had to ask for forgiveness. The two apologized, promised never to do anything of the sort again, and were reconciled with the community.

Despite the Chelmsford Old Light minister's efforts, the schism in the community continued to simmer. The wives of Burge and Proctor, as well as six other women, followed Paine to Westford and attended a New Light meeting there. The New Light women were marched before the congregation. But unlike John Burge and Gershom Proctor, they refused to back down and were excommunicated. A week later, the women repented in front of the congregation and were accepted back in the fold. Yet, despite this public act of asking for forgiveness to maintain an air of communal unity and peace, several of the women and their husbands continued to follow New Light preachers in other communities. While Reverend Bridge was able to keep a New Light church from opening in Chelmsford, his power and that of the Old Lights was too limited to stop members of the community from attending New Light meetings elsewhere, and eventually unofficial New Light meetings would once again be held in the town. Hence, there continued to be tensions between New and Old Lights. In 1747, for example, Mary Stedman openly expressed the need for the New Lights to separate from the church as the old factions looked down on them. In the 1750s, a fellow named Samuel Hyde emerged as the leader of the New Lights in Chelmsford. He also preached a separatist doctrine. Hyde left the town in 1759 for New Hampshire, and his followers reconciled with the church and returned to the fold, apparently believing that they could reform the institution from within. The strongest separatist challenge to the Old Lights came, however, from a Baptist faction, which splintered away from the church starting in the late 1750s, although their

church would not be officially formed until October 22, 1771. This schism led to severe tensions, as the Baptists refused to pay taxes for the upkeep of the Congregational church, a heretofore unimagined act.[12]

The Farming Economy

As we have seen earlier, the first economic activities of British colonists in the Merrimack Valley happened in the fur trade with Native Americans. Yet, with over-hunting and the rapid expansion of the British settler population, economic interest quickly switched from the fur trade to a desire for more farmland.

Chelmsford was among the first Puritan settlements in New England to use the "closed field system." It was a significant change from earlier white settlements. Older towns used a system called the "open field" system. Here, land grants were given in one large piece and they were expected to be worked by members of the community in common. Yet, this system increasingly fell out of favor in the first decades of Puritan colonization. In Chelmsford, land was granted to families separately based on need and social status. The men who were considered to have higher social status were given larger plots of farmland. All of Chelmsford's initial land grants ranged from two to twenty acres, which were to be split between a small house lot, a vegetable garden, and a lot for a meadow. Land for crop was situated farther away from the house. Land that was not initially distributed was used by the town in common. Early on in the town's history much of the land was not fenced in and cattle grazed over common land under certain limitations. Eventually large tracts of land were fenced in and used as a common area. Common land could be used for cattle grazing as well as for fire and construction wood. The use of this common land allowed the families of Chelmsford to work together and become a more united community, much like their goals in establishing a church. There initially were three large ranges in the town, two of which started from the center of Chelmsford and spanned outward across the rest of the town. With tempting livestock, such as cattle, pigs, and sheep, it should come as no surprise that predators such as wolves became a threat to the town and by the 1690s bounties were placed on the roaming wolves.[13]

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[12] Carroll, "Church and State in Early Chelmsford," 31-36.

[13] Waters, 54-57.

Much of the town of Chelmsford's land was not ideal for farming. The soil was sour, poor in nutrients, and rocky. Nevertheless, the early Puritan settlers made a living on it farming and raising their cattle.[14]

The poor agricultural conditions are likely the reason why several people, in what was then the eastern parts of Chelmsford close to the Merrimack River, today however, part of the city of Lowell, began to experiment with various manufacturing industries by the eighteenth century. They believed that manufacturing was a more fruitful way to eke out a living in this area. The early efforts of industry in "Middlesex Village" and at "Wamesit Neck" played a not insignificant role in influencing the early developments of the industrial revolution in the area.[15] In 1656, mills first appeared in the form of a corn mill and a saw mill, with a second saw mill erected three years later in 1659. The mills in East Chelmsford weren't just limited to saw and grist mills for on February 2, 1691 a fulling mill (used to dress homespun cotton) was created. The desire to dress fabric expanded further in 1737 when Nicholas Sprague Jr. erected a fulling mill on the east side of the Concord River. Also located near this tract of land were more saw and grist mills. Sprague sold off his land and mill to Timothy Brown in 1737. By 1790, Moses Hale had developed his own fulling mill in East Chelmsford and soon after, in 1801, he introduced a carding machine into his factory. Further into the nineteenth century, mills such as William Adams' grist mill in North Chelmsford were effectively using water to power their mills. Surprisingly even after the purchasing of these mills—which were by then flour mills—by the Merrimack Manufacturing Company in 1815, they ran until 1858, producing at the same time as the mills of Lowell.[16]

The mechanization of East Chelmsford is an important part of its history that some scholars seem to ignore or at the very least fail to acknowledge. In his book *Lowell, as It Was, and Is,* Henry Adolphus Miles describes East Chelmsford as a place that not only "lost its former consequence," but that it also contained "nothing but a few farm-houses, a tavern, and a store."[17] As we have seen from Wilson Waters' research, there were a number of mills, many using streams, brooks, and the powerful Merrimack River

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[14] Carroll, "The First White Settlement," 13-15.

[15] John Goodwin, "Villages at Wamesit Neck," in *Cotton Was King*, 57-65.

[16] Waters, 52-53.

[17] Miles, 12.

as a source of power. These statements seem quite contradictory; however, much like the biased and antiquated histories about the Native Americans, the same holds true for these two historical works. Miles, who was invested in the history of Lowell, has downplayed the role of the mills of Chelmsford, whereas Waters, who had invested his time in Chelmsford, may have over-played them. Whatever the case, it is important to keep in mind that even though Chelmsford was a farming community, it had fully functioning mills that were running parallel to those of the city of Lowell.

One of the last significant changes to the land of East Chelmsford came in 1792 when construction of the Pawtucket Canal began. Throughout its history, the Merrimack River has been used as a source of transportation. However, where the river bends near East Chelmsford, over a series of rapids the river drops 32 feet. Hoping to keep trade up and make the area more navigable, the Proprietors of Locks and Canals was created on June 27, 1792. Four years later and at a cost of $52,000, the Pawtucket Canal was completed, changing the landscape and the people of East Chelmsford forever.[18]

Conclusion: Toward Revolution

While, as Charles Carroll discusses, people from what would eventually become the greater Lowell area participated in the American Revolution, the political changes of the late eighteenth century had a relatively limited direct impact on the region – especially in regard to ethnicity and immigration, the main focus of this study.[19] It was really the economic transformations – now commonly called the Industrial Revolution – which transformed and changed the area forever. They are discussed in the following chapter. This period saw the emergence of Lowell as an industrial and an immigrant city.

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[18] Miles, 14-15.

[19] Carroll, "Chelmsford and Dracut in the Revolution," 41-55.

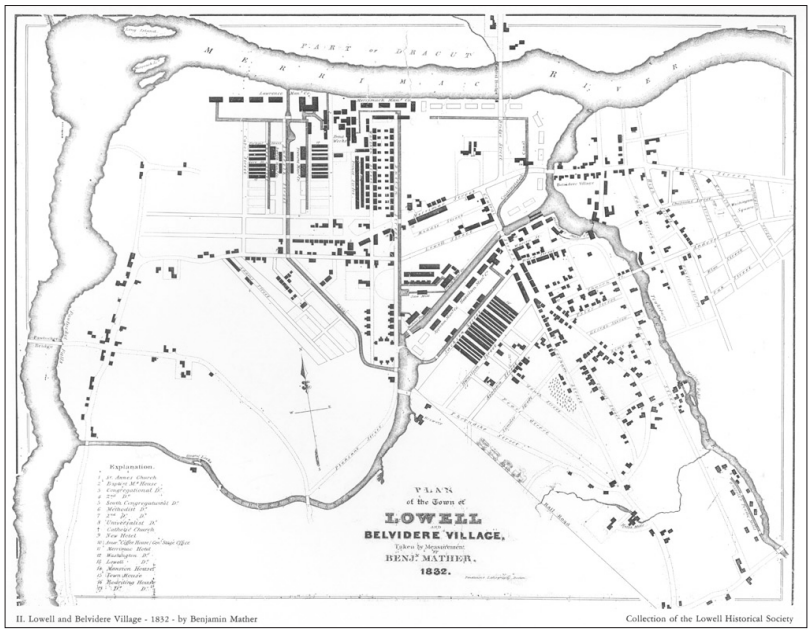
PART TWO
The Middle Period:
Immigration and Industrialization

In the nineteenth century, the landscape where the Concord and the Merrimack Rivers met was transformed by the emergence of manufactories, mills, and canals. Early industrial producers recruited Yankee women to work in their textile mills. Almost simultaneously, a trickle of immigrant laborers from Ireland and other parts of Europe arrived in the area and began building the canals and red brick factories along the two rivers. They soon made their homes in the region. By the 1840s, the numbers of Irish in the Commonwealth and in Lowell climbed dramatically with the onset of a devastating potato blight in Ireland. In the greater Lowell area, migration resulted in confrontation and accommodation as people adjusted to the new religions, languages, and cultures they came in contact with. These cultural encounters led people to imagine and construct identities as a way to differentiate between their group and others living in the area. This process led to the preservation, creation, and re-invention of traditions, ways of life, customs, and practices.

Chapter Four
From Farm to Factory:
The Red Brick Mills and the Irish

> Lowell is a unique historical resource in the country: it was the birthplace of the industrial revolution. The process of industrialization tells the story of the United States, and it's the basis for our economic, social and cultural development. And it began here, in Lowell, 150 years ago.[1]

Colonial New England was an important source of timber, with much of the wood used for shipbuilding and for the establishment of lucrative export revenue. The Merrimack River transported a great deal of wood from the interior to coastal ports. Along the journey, the Pawtucket falls and a series of rapids inhibited smooth transport to either Boston or Newburyport on the Atlantic Ocean. This problem led to the construction, starting in the 1790s, of a series of canals to bypass the falls. The completion of the Pawtucket Canal in 1797 and the Middlesex Canal in 1803 established a 27-mile long transportation network linking the region to Boston.[2]



Map of Lowell, 1832. (Lowell Historical Society)

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[1] Quote from an anonymous Lowell resident in Joseph H. Helfgot, et.al., *Lowell, Massachusetts: Living with Adversity, A Community Social Profile* (Boston: Boston University Department of Sociology, 1977), 35.

[2] Henry Adolphus Miles, *Lowell as it Was, and as it Is*, (Boston, B.M. Dickinson, 1845), 13-15.

Near the canal network in Middlesex Village—a part of East Chelmsford destined to become Lowell— were a glass manufactory, several sawmills, a gristmill, and Moses Hale's fulling mill, which had "expanded to include a sawmill and a gristmill in 1800, and in the following year, a picking and a carding machine."[3] In the 1820s, several wealthy Boston-area entrepreneurs financed East Chelmsford's rebirth as one of the world's preeminent textile centers.[4] The transformation commenced with an act of industrial espionage committed during an 1811 trip to the United Kingdom by Francis Cabot Lowell and Nathan Appleton. Lowell and Appleton toured several textile factories and in a letter Appleton recalled, "Mr. Lowell informed me that he had determined before his return to America, to visit Manchester, for the purpose of obtaining all possible information on the subject, with a view to the introduction of the improved manufacture in the United States." Complying with British rules, Lowell took no notes and made no sketches during the visits; instead, he memorized how the machines worked, allowing him to replicate and then improve upon them once back in Massachusetts.[5]

Lowell, Appleton, and Patrick Tracy Jackson hired Paul Moody, a gifted mechanic, to construct a water-powered textile mill in Waltham, Massachusetts. The 1790 spindle mill was the first one "not simply in the United States, but in the world, where the cotton was taken in at one end, and turned out finished cloth at the other."[6] With a joint stock company formed, investors bankrolled several mills but the effort exhausted Waltham's available water power and the group sought a new location for expansion. The land around the Pawtucket Falls in East Chelmsford was selected and the investor group surreptitiously purchased large tracts of land there from local farmers. In its 1900 history of the city, the Lowell Trades and Labor Council reported: "It is said that one of the early farmers who sold his farm for $2,500 (a good price for it as prices had been) lost his

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[3] Robert Weible, "'More of a place than represented to have been:' East Chelmsford, 1775-1821," in Robert Weible, ed., *The Continuing Revolution: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts* (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1991), 1-38, 14; Goodwin, "Villages at Wamesit Neck," in *Cotton Was King*, 57-65.

[4] See Robert Dalzell, Jr. *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associates and the World They Made* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993).

[5] Appleton letter cited in Kenngott, George. *The Record of a City: A Social Survey of Lowell Massachusetts* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 6.

[6] Quoted in Kenngott, 6.

reason upon learning that he might have obtained $10,000 for it, and never saw another happy day."[7] East Chelmsford was soon renamed in honor of Lowell, and the industrial city took shape.[8]

Lowell Takes Shape

Investors needed to persuade skeptical Yankees that the mills along the Merrimack River would not operate with what was perceived as England's degrading labor practices. In an unpublished paper, Daniel Ward notes:

> In England, industrial cities like Manchester and Birmingham had become massive slums whose workers lived in filthy streets lined with crowded hovels. The inhabitants of these cities were not transient workers or semi-dependant youths from surrounding communities, but full-time members of the working class. Francis Cabot Lowell specifically wanted to avoid such an environment in his new city. For a short time, social conditions in Lowell blossomed, while the mill girls were kept under tight control of a patriarchal system. But eventually, social, economic, and international developments would render this utopian version of Lowell impossible.[9]

At the outset, "On the whole of what is now comprised in the central portion of Lowell, there were scarcely 20 houses. Within the radius of practicable employment in connection with such mills, there was not at that time enough persons, counting everybody of working age, to furnish a small fraction of the help required." Rural New England seemingly wanted nothing to do with textiles,

> much less would New England parents permit their daughter to incur the risk of such contamination. Nothing would have been more preposterous to these people at this time, than a proposition to mobilize an industrial army within the sound of a mill bell at Pawtucket Falls.

Boarding houses were the solution to this dilemma.[10] The boarding houses drew large numbers of Yankee young women to Lowell where they could live in what was advertised as a clean, safe, and well-supervised environment and walk to and from work in one

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[7] See "Trades and Labor Council of Lowell, MA," in *Lowell a City of Spindles* (Lowell: Lawler & Company, Printers, 1900), 22.

[8] Dalzell, *Enterprising Elite*.

[9] Daniel Ward, "Lowell's Irish and Free Labor History," (Unpublished Paper, Center for Lowell History), 3.

[10] "Trades and Labor Council of Lowell, MA," 134-135.

of the city's fast-growing mills. "For more than a quarter of a century," according to one observer, "the relatively ideal social life of this community was its distinguishing characteristic. Lowell was better known abroad by the high character of its operative population than by its manufactured product."[11]

Population figures in George Kenngott's *The Record of a City: A Social Survey of Lowell Massachusetts* (1912) show the effectiveness of the boarding house strategy. The Merrimack, Hamilton, Appleton, and other mills added spindles and looms, and by1836 approximately 120,000 spindles and 4,700 looms were in use, the result of nearly $8 million worth of investments. The work force grew accordingly and by 1836, 11,000 female operatives worked in the city. In 1848, 8,635 women and 3,995 men worked in the city's ten incorporated mills and the Lowell Machine Shop, which designed and built the mill buildings and most of the machinery inside them.[12]

Lowell Population 1828 – 1844

	M	F	T
1828	1,342	2,190	3,532
1830	2,392	4,085	6,477
1832	4,291	5,963	10,254
1836	6,345	11,288	17,633
1840	7,341	13,640	20,981
1844	9,432	15,697	25,129

In 1825, on the eve of this construction explosion, the editor of the *Essex Gazette* offered his readers this picture of Lowell:

> As we ascended the high grounds, which lie on the side of the Merrimack, the beautiful valley, which had been chosen as the site of manufacturing establishments, opened upon our view. It is indeed a fairy scene. Here we behold an extensive city, busy, noisy, and thriving, with immense prospects of increasing extent and boundless wealth.

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[11] "Trades and Labor Council of Lowell, MA," 135, 136-137.

[12] Kenngott, 22-23.

Peoples' houses "are handsomely and uniformly painted, with flower gardens in front and separated by wide avenues."[13] For the *Gazette's* editor:

> The whole seems like enchantment . . . We stood gazing at this fairy vision at the distance of a mile. The roar of the waterfalls is intermingled with the hum and buzz of the machinery. There seemed to be a song of triumph and exultation at the successful union of nature with the art of man, in order to make her contribute to the wants and happiness of the human family.[14]

Novelist Charles Dickens and poet John Greenleaf Whittier offered their own impressions of Lowell. In *American Notes,* Dickens characterized female mill workers as "healthy in appearance, many of them remarkably so, and had the manners and deportment of young women; not of degraded brutes of burden . . ." Whittier, briefly a resident of Lowell, penned the 'Factory Girls of Lowell':

> Acres of girlhood, beauty reckoned by the square mile—or miles by long measure! The young, the graceful, the gay—flowers gathered from a thousand hillsides and green valleys of New England, fair unveiled Nuns of Industry, Sisters of Thrift, and are ye not also Sisters of Charity, dispensing comfort and hope and happiness around many a hearthstone of your native hills, making sad faces cheerful, and hallowing age and purity with the sunshine of your youth and love! Who shall sneer at your calling? Who shall count your vocation otherwise than noble and ennobling?[15]

Despite these and other glowing characterizations, historian Louis Merrill pointed out that agitation for reforms revealed the mills' dangerous health conditions. For example, an 1849 report by Dr. Josiah C. Curtis to the American Medical Association noted, "There is not a state's prison or house of correction in New England where the hours of labor are so long, the hours of meals so short, and the ventilation so much neglected as in the cotton mills with which I am acquainted." Factory ventilation was "about 85 percent below what it should have been for decent health conditions," and women slept in "dormitories scarcely better ventilated than the mills."[16]

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[13] Quoted in Kenngott, 11.

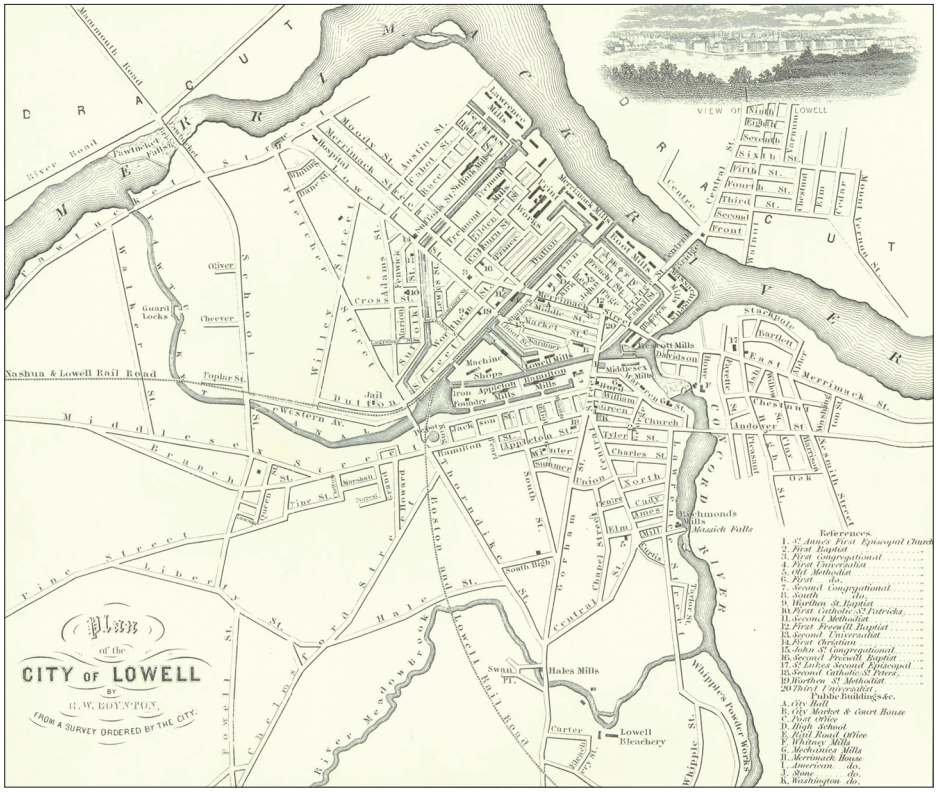
[14] Quoted in Kenngott, 12.

[15] Quoted in Kenngott, 13 and 17.

[16] Louis Taylor Merrill, "Mill Towns on the Merrimack," *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 1, March 1946, 19-31, 28.

The Early Irish

The first Irish in Lowell arrived after a stopover in greater Boston, attracted by the news that there was work digging canals and constructing mills. In April 1822, Irishman Hugh Cummiskey—a native of County Tyrone who had come to America in 1790—brought 30 laborers from Charlestown to Lowell to enlarge the Pawtucket Canal and to construct several textile mills, a machine shop, and worker housing. The laborers "formed a work gang who were personally loyal to Cummiskey, making him a dominant figure on local Irish affairs." Before arriving in Lowell, Cummiskey had worked as a supervisor on the Charlestown docks. By Brian Mitchell's account, Cummiskey "cultivated warm and lasting friendships with Lowell's Yankee leaders," becoming "actively involved in the early development of a Catholic church" in the city.[17] The 1845 map of the city shows the mills and the extensive canal network built to circumvent the river's falls and provide waterpower for the mills.



Map of Lowell, 1845. (Lowell Historical Society)

[17] Robert Dalzell, jr., "The Boston Associates and the Rise of the Waltham-Lowell System: A Study in Entrepreneurial Motivation," in *The Continuing Revolution*, 39-76, 43; Brian Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps: The Irish of Lowell, 1821-61* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 15.

The Irish population in Lowell reached 500 by 1830 and by then some Irish immigrants walked to the city through northern New England from Quebec or New Brunswick. "Passage on Canadian timber and flax seed ships was much less expensive than the cost of direct passage to a port in the United States . . ."[18] The 1850 census confirmed the importance of this northern route.

> By 1850, most of Lowell's Irish had been in North America for at least five years and many had been here for over ten years. Many families contained children who had been born in Canada. By recording the birthplaces of all individuals who lived in the heart of the Irish neighborhood in 1850, an area bounded by Dutton, Merrimack, Pawtucket, and Willie streets, the census documents the preeminence of Canada's Atlantic Provinces as a debarkation point. In the 650 Irish households examined, sixty-four births occurred outside Massachusetts or Great Britain, including Ireland. Of these sixty-four births, forty-seven (73 percent) were in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, with the Atlantic Provinces representing the largest percentage of births.[19]

What Irish laborers built, Yankee young women entered when they arrived in Lowell, as did successive waves of immigrants for the next hundred years. What they saw looked very much like the photograph below.



Historic Lowell mill buildings and canal looking from Central Street toward Lowell National al Park. (Dave Delay, posted on Flickr)

[18] Mitchell, 16.

[19] Mitchell, 18.

The Irish population growing, city fathers reluctantly allowed the construction of so-called 'paddy camps' on vacant corporation land. Initially the plan was to isolate them away from the city center. Living conditions in the camps were captured in an article in *Niles Register*:

> In the suburbs of Lowell, within a few rods of the canal, is a settlement, called by some, New Dublin, which occupies rather more than an acre of ground. It contains a population of not far from 500 Irish, who dwell in about 100 cabins, from 7 to 10 feet in height, built of slabs and rough boards; a fireplace made of stone, in one end, topped out with two or three flour barrels or lime casks. In a central situation, is the schoolhouse, built in the same style of the dwelling houses, surfed up to the eaves with a window in one end, and small holes in two sides for admission of air and light . . . In this room are collected together perhaps 150 children.[20]

Two camps, the largest one called the Acre, "developed around Cork and Dublin Streets in an area lying just west of the Western Canal and north of Broadway Street." Occupants were "migrants who came originally from the southwest sections of Ireland." A smaller one, the Half Acre, arose "in the general region of Lowell and Lewis Streets." Residents were the Connaught or "West County" Irish. The camps maintained distinct identities and competed for work.[21] Because Lowell officials interfered very little in the camps, residents established living arrangements that "reflected Irish cultural traditions, including clan associations" and resulted in an area of the city that "looked, smelled, and felt 'Irish'."[22] Narrow streets and alleyways boasted churches, schools, markets, and taverns.

Religion and Education

In October 1828, Merrimack Company agent Kirk Boott donated an 8,410-square-foot lot near the Western Canal to Boston-based Bishop Benedict Fenwick for the construction of Lowell's first Catholic church. Quite likely the site, equidistant between the two rival Irish camps, was selected to ease tensions between the two camps. Members of the camps helped with construction and the city's emerging Irish middle-

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[20] Quoted in George O'Dwyer, *The Irish Catholic Genesis of Lowell* (Lowell: Sullivan Brothers Printers, 1920), 8.

[21] Mitchell, 24.

[22] Mitchell, 22.

class contributed financially to the effort. Two- to three-thousand worshipers attended the church's dedication in July 1831. St. Patrick's attracted parishioners for mass and other religious activities from Nashua, New Hampshire, and Lawrence and Billerica, Massachusetts, during the 1830s and 1840s.[23]

Just as with more recent immigrants, the Irish shaped much of their cultural identity around the construction and maintenance of religious institutions.

> St. Patrick's defined the Irish presence in Lowell for the Irish themselves. The church was an impressive physical marker and the most visible 'Irish' institution in the paddy camps. More important, the church was located at the crossroads of Irish neighborhood life. Though it was originally situated between two major Irish camps, subsequent development in the neighborhood spread toward and then around St. Patrick's.[24]

The church was supported by and became an important gathering place for Irish shopkeepers, schoolteachers, and construction foremen, whom Bishop Fenwick counted on for financial support. Its leaders remained close to Lowell's Boston investors and Kirk Boott, enabling the mill hierarchy to maintain some economic and political influence over the Irish. In the mid-1830s this relationship helped the city to broker an important education compromise and in the late 1840s it helped facilitate the hiring of a large number of Irish mill workers.

The Hibernian Moralizing and Relief Society, organized in 1833 by "three or four energetic Irishmen from the Acre," counted more than 100 members.[25] Renamed the Lowell Benevolent Society in 1836, it helped families needing economic assistance. In 1837, shortly after arriving in Lowell, Father McDermott organized the St. Patrick's Charitable Society "from which aid to young and old was given indiscriminately, as far as the funds would admit." A women's society assisted in "clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and ornamenting our church [St. Patrick's]."[26] "A haven for the Irish middle class," the Benevolent Society served as " a social club in which the honored guests at St. Patrick's Day dinners were usually local Yankee officials, ranging from politicians to the editor of the *Lowell Courier,* William Schouler, who was regarded generally as a

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[23] Mitchell, 36, 39.

[24] O'Dwyer, 19-20; Mitchell, 40, 56, 57.

[25] O'Dwyer, 40.

[26] Quoted in O'Dwyer, 43.

spokesman for the corporations."[27] Belying tensions between Irish Catholic laborers and the city's Protestants, Society members described Lowell as the place "where the stranger finds a home, the mechanic employment, and the laborer a living."[28]

In 1830, the School Committee established a city-run school for Irish children, but not every parent sent their children to the school. Fearing Protestant proselytizing, laymen and priests instructed Irish children in grammar, writing, and arithmetic in the basement of St. Patrick's.[29] Five years later, with the parish school out of funds, Father Peter Connolly agreed to a School Committee plan for education that allowed Connolly and other Catholic priests in the city to examine and appoint all instructors and instructional materials for a new Irish public school.[30]

'Famine' Immigration and Nativist Hostilities

Irish immigration experienced a distinct historical shift in the 1840s. The Irish had been emigrating to the United States for decades, but an

> unprecedented wave of emigration occurred after the great famine of the 1840s. Caused by a fungus, which ruined the potato crop, the famine first struck late in 1845. For many in Ireland, particularly in the west and the south, the potato was the staple of the diet of subsistence farmers. When the crop first failed in 1845, followed by a terrible winter, tens of thousands of people died.[31]

Figures vary slightly depending on the source, but there is no dispute that the size, rapidity, desperation, and permanence of Irish immigration changed in the 1840s. The story of Irish immigration pivoted at the Famine years. In 1845, there were approximately 8,700 Irish in Lowell, out of about 30,000 people (29 percent); in 1850, the number jumped to approximately 11,000 out of a total Lowell population, according to the federal census, of 33,383 (33 percent). The numbers would have been higher if not for the fact that some Irish laborers left Lowell for work in other New England towns when mill and

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[27] Mitchell, 46, 47.

[28] "Celebrations of St. Patrick's Day," *U.S. Catholic Intelligencer,* March 3, 1832, 215.

[29] O'Dwyer, 27; Mitchell, 49-52.

[30] Mitchell, 52.

[31] Ward, 6.

canal building slowed. According to Mitchell, "For many Irish, work in Lowell grew scarce. From this perspective it is surprising that Lowell's Irish population did not decrease, especially since emigration from Ireland also slowed during these years."[32] Cathy Stanton in *The Lowell Experiment* pointed out that as Irish immigrants found jobs in the mills, they lived in "ethnic enclaves that often resembled the impoverished working-class districts in Britain's industrial cities that had so horrified the Boston Associates."[33]

From the start of the Great Famine in the 1840s through the mid-1850s there were more than 1.5 million deaths in Ireland. Large numbers of Irish arrived in Lowell starting in 1846 as evidenced by 353 Baptisms that year, a 54 percent increase over 1844, and the large-scale construction of cheap housing in the Acre. When unrest among the female work force escalated, mill owners even considered closing their boarding houses and hiring Irish laborers.[34] From1840 to 1880, mill owners dealt with an upsurge in ten-hour day organizing by Yankee mill hands and eventually with protests by Irish laborers as well. An initial period of Irish accommodation turned into unsettling labor strife as the nineteenth century wore on.[35]

"By the 1840s," according to ethnographer Cathy Stanton, "impoverished Irish immigrants were arriving in the northeastern United States in great numbers, providing a labor force willing to work for the lower wages being offered by mill owners."[36] After the first Irish women got jobs, more women obtained work in the mills through family and neighborhood networks. By and large, Irish laborers remained in the lowest-paid jobs with limited opportunity for advancement. For historian John Bodnar, the bunching of immigrant workers in a narrow range of jobs corresponded to the alteration of skill levels

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[32] Mitchell, 78.

[33] Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 50.

[34] Mitchell, 184. Mitchell states that the 1855 Massachusetts census recorded 10,369 native-born Irish out of a population of 37,553. When one estimates the numbers of non-native-born Irish in the city, it is likely the overall population jumps considerably along with the total number of Irish and Irish-Americans residing in Lowell. Mitchell suggests that the Irish were possibly half of the population by the Civil War.

[35] Mitchell, 89

[36] Stanton, 50.

among American workers. As early as the 1840s, Lowell's mill owners sought to improve their output in two ways: they switched to spinning mules, which could perform more than twice the work of older machines; and they assigned more machines to each worker at reduced piece rates. At one Lowell mill,

> the foreign-born proportion of the labor force rose from 3.7 percent in 1836 to 61.8 percent by 1860. Thousands of Irish immigrants entered the mills including many women and children who needed the wages and were willing to accept speed-up and stretch-out, in part because they were not familiar with an earlier, slower pace.[37]

With the number of Irish growing, Lowell's mayor established the Lowell Famine Committee. By all accounts, mill owners and overseers contributed nothing to the cause while in 1847 'everyday' Yankees donated nearly $2,000 to the effort. Lowell's Irish increased their remittances home and helped new arrivals find jobs and a place to live.[38] Boston Catholics sent $150,000 to their suffering countrymen between 1845 and 1846. At the insistence of sympathetic non-Catholic merchants in Boston, Congress authorized the war ship *Jamestown*, loaded by the all-Irish Boston Laborers' Aid Society, to deliver 800 tons of meat, potatoes, and grain to Ireland.[39]

In nearby Newburyport, residents were at first tolerant of the growing Irish population there. Concerned residents collected money and clothing for the Irish who settled there and in November 1849 Newburyport's *Daily Evening Union* referred to the Irish as "quiet, industrious, good citizens."[40] However, good feelings soured and soon a darker Nativist backlash surfaced in Newburyport, Lowell, and elsewhere in the run-up to the sweeping 1854 election victory of the anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic "Know-Nothing" party.

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[37] John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1985), 64.

[38] Mitchell, 75-76; Peter Blewett, "The New People: An Introduction to the Ethnic History of Lowell," in *Cotton was King*, 194.

[39] T. O'Connor, *The Boston Irish: A Political History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 60.

[40] Stephen Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 27.

Social Conditions

Poverty-stricken and lacking education and employment skills, the 'new Irish' were confined to the lowest rungs of the antebellum economy.[41] One Irish journalist summed up how many immigrants felt: "There are several sorts of power working at the fabrick [sic] of this Republic, water-power, steam-power, horse-power, and Irish-power. The last works hardest of all."[42] As desperate as the situation for the majority of Irish immigrants who settled in Lowell was, families tried hard to stay together. According to Charlotte Haller, "The strength of the family in the face of migration is evidenced by the fact that in 1850, almost 80 percent of Irish female factory workers were related to the head of the household" where they lived. Based on her analysis of 1850 census manuscripts, she summarized:

> While Irish women were free to migrate and seek employment far from their family in Ireland, many women still felt both economic and emotional family loyalties, and tried to regroup at least part of the family in Lowell.

By sending some of their wages to Ireland, they supported their extended family, a practice that did not sit well with non-Irish Lowellians. Haller quotes from the August 7, 1851 *Daily Morning News*, "Instead of keeping money paid to help in the country, if Irish are employed it will be sent out to Ireland to bring a father, a mother, a brother, a sister." But, the more Irish women worked in the mills, the more traditional family structures changed. According to Haller:

> Certain statistics point to a disintegration of the traditional patriarchal family for the Irish women who went to work in Lowell's textile mills. In 1850, the typical Irish factory woman was a daughter living at home with both parents present. In 1860, Irish factory women living with both parents were not as common, and many more women lived in homes where their mother was the head of the household.[43]

Well before famine immigration, the Irish helped to build industrial Lowell. Of Irish decent, Patrick Tracy Jackson worked with his brother-in-law Francis Cabot Lowell and Paul Moody to import cotton-processing machines to Lowell and to build the city's

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[41] Thernstrom, 27.

[42] Florence Gibson, *The Attitudes of the New York Irish Towards State and National Affairs, 1848-1892* (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 50; Thernstrom, 27.

[43] Charlotte Haller, "Irish Factory Women: Identity and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1850 – 1860" (Honors thesis: Brown University, 1990), 14 – 17, 21.

mills.[44] For the original Irish who had marched from Charlestown with Hugh Cummiskey, the famine exodus became a business opportunity.[45] As the newcomers settled in, their forerunners mediated between them and the Yankee establishment. Similarly, Irish with work requiring cheap labor—such as Cummiskey's canal-digging operations—prospered from the flood of people. On the eve of the Civil War, Cummiskey possessed almost $6,000 in real estate.[46] He died in December 1871 in his home within the original 'paddy camps'.[47] But Cummiskey's success notwithstanding, immigrants confronted harsh conditions. In scenes to be repeated for other immigrant groups over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whenever Lowell's economy slowed, the 'famine immigrants' suffered.

In his 1848 annual report, the city's Minister at Large, Horatio Wood, noted, "While our native poor have received the principal share of my attention, the foreign poor have made large demands upon our humanity, the past year . . . Swarms of Irish poor come in upon us." According to Wood, individuals came to Lowell "because they have heard of the mills, and have thought they could get employment for themselves and *little ones*, as soon as they arrived . . ." Wood sought to "relieve severe distress, particularly at winter time when there was far less outdoor work available for people." He also endeavored to:

> scatter them [the Irish] away from Lowell, with advice, and even by compulsion, by withholding from them charity . . . When there are already some two or three hundred more Irish laborers in Lowell than can possibly be employed, what humanity can there be in extending aid to induce them to remain?[48]

In 1850, Wood commented on the city's deteriorating housing stock. "How many would sink into indifference, peevishness, sluttishness and looseness of morals," he asked:

> If obliged to live where many do, in a narrow lane, which the cupidity of landlords, robbed of any claim to humanity, has crowded in front and rear with houses, separated only by a narrow alley, in one only of a dozen or

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[44] O'Dwyer, 56.

[45] Mitchell, 102.

[46] Mitchell, 101.

[47] O'Dwyer, 55; Blewett, 190-191.

[48] Lowell Missionary Society, *The Fourth Annual Report of the Minister at Large in Lowell* (Lowell: Penhallow & Hart, Printers, 1848), 14-16.

> twenty small rooms, filled with six or eight each, no conveniences at all, repairs seldom or never made, obliged to fight for the rain water that comes off the roof or go without it, in a yard large enough for one, all to hang the clothes, compelled to take the wood into the room, and this the place to sleep, cook, wash, and be sick in, and the entry the resort of all sorts of children, some neighbors, too, making the house to resound with boisterous noise nearly all night. . ..

Economic difficulties in 1851 compelled the mills "to reduce wages materially, and even to dismiss half the operatives from many rooms . . ." Wood observed:

> There was less building of houses, and extension of established works, nearly all mechanical employments were abridged, the stores all did a greatly diminished business, boarding houses had fewer boarders and more bad debts, much help was dismissed, many felt obliged to hire as little as possible, to do their own work and little jobs, —and thus a long list of persons with small means were made poor, the poor were made poorer, and that numerous body, the washerwomen, who struggle the hardest for a living, complained that they had not half the usual employment, and their misfortune was aggravated by the introduction, at this time, of labor saving soaps, which brought their services into much less demand.[49]

The mills commenced a series of ups and downs into the first third of the 20th century when the permanent decline of the mills and mill employment prevailed. Amidst the 1850s downturn, Lowell's population decreased as mill girls returned home; when the mills reopened they did so with an expanded Irish work force.[50] In *Spindle City Blues*, historian Maura Doherty summarized changes in employment patterns:

> During the 1848 walkout of mill operatives, a group of Irish women first saw the inside of the mills as strikebreakers . . . According to Thomas Dublin's study of one Lowell mill, Irish immigrants were a majority of that mill by 1850. According to another source, "Of 7,000 women operatives in 1836, less than 4 percent were foreign-born." But the figure for 1860 climbed to an extraordinary 61.8 percent of the mill workforce.[51]

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[49] Lowell Missionary Society, *The Seventh Annual Report of the Minister at Large in Lowell* (Lowell: Penhallow & Hart, Printers, 1851), 4-5.

[50] Mitchell, 101-102; Brown, "Decline and Fall: The End of the Dream," in *Cotton Was King*, 145.

[51] Maura Doherty, "Spindle City Blues: The Impact of the Maturing Industrial Economy on the City of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1947 – 1978" (Ph.D. thesis: New York University, 1998), 66.

Low wages "reinforced the dominance of a family wage economy" of multiple wage earners in many Irish families.[52] Households depended on children's wages, something that was to mark French Canadian families in the 1870s and 1880s too.[53] Now, as Irish women provided a level of household stability and organized the family income, a segment of Irish men participated in the growing saloon culture that occupied the front rooms of several Acre tenements.[54] In the bars, people discussed religion and politics away from the scrutiny of the city's Yankee and Irish establishment. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Greek immigrants would establish coffee houses in the same neighborhood where they could mull over the events of the day and their struggles making a living.

Economic stress likely contributed to inter-Irish rivalries, which boiled over on September 6, 1849 in a three-day fight between two Acre Irish factions, the 'Corkonians' and the Lowell Street 'Connaught men', who each staked out territory on either side of the Western Canal. The mayor called out the constabulary to end the skirmishing, while several employers agreed to fire any of their workers involved in the fighting. In *The Paddy Camps*, Mitchell quotes from a column in the September 10, 1849 *Tri-City American* in which city officials blamed the three days of mayhem upon alcohol:

> There ought to be some way to stop these disgraceful riots. They almost universally commence over a glass of liquor. *Rum* is the prime mischief-maker, and under its influence the sectional differences of the old country are magnified into huge proportions. Is there no way to put down this reign of rum among the Irish population?[55]

The city had tried regulating the number of licensed alcohol sellers, something temperance leaders around the country were calling for.[56] This movement had its roots in the nation's industrial centers.[57] The medical community now addressed alcoholism as a treatable disease and the idea that alcohol represented a moral ill developed broad-based

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[52] Mitchell, 103-104.

[53] Mitchell, 102-103

[54] Quoted in Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps*, 103-104.

[55] Mitchell, 110.

[56] Mitchell, 110.

[57] J. Erickson, "Making King Alcohol Tremble: The Juvenile Work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1874-1900," *Journal of Drug Education*, 18, 4, 1986.

support in Yankee and immigrant communities. The Catholic Church vigorously spread the temperance message[58] and the Irish Catholic priest named Father Mathew traveled the country speaking out against the evils of drink. During an 1849 three-day visit to Lowell, Mathew administered the "temperance pledge" to 4,000 Irish, about 40 percent of the city's Irish population.[59] But the pledge did not change alcohol consumption in Lowell, nor did the Commonwealth's efforts to forbid the sale of alcohol succeed. Instead, Mathew's visit represented the peak of temperance efforts in Lowell.[60]

Nonetheless, leading Lowellians continued to connect increased crime to tenement alcohol sales to famine immigrants. Arrests for drunkenness increased 89 percent between 1847 and 1848 with a claim made that 92 percent of those arrested were Irish. Lowellians easily equated 'famine immigration' with drunkenness, public brawling, the city's deteriorating housing stock, and an increase in diseases like cholera and tuberculosis.[61] For many, Lowell's fast-growing Irish population was not assimilating quickly enough.

Popery, Know-Nothings, and Challenges to Social Harmony

In the 1840s and 1850s, many southern Protestants believed that there was a Catholic plot afoot to overrun the Mississippi Valley and calls were made for Protestants to move into the area to stem the popish onslaught. Anti-Catholic violence occurred in several cities across the country.[62] One of the most notorious incidents occurred in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in1833 with the burning of the Ursuline convent, spurred on by wild rumors that the nuns teaching the daughters of wealthy Protestant Bostonians kept their students locked in a convent dungeon.[63] It was in this context that Lowell's Irish struggled to preserve their identity and their Catholic traditions.

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[58] V. Stolberg, "A Review of Perspectives on Alcohol and Alcoholism in the History of American Health and Medicine," *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse,* 5, 4, 2006, 39.

[59] Mitchell, 72.

[60] O'Dwyer, 42; Mitchell, 72, 110, 111.

[61] Mitchell, 109-110.

[62] McCafferty, 85, 92-94.

[63] L. Whitney, *The Burning of the Convent: A Narrative of the Destruction, by a Mob, of the Ursuline School on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, As Remembered by One of Her Pupils, Fogelson and Rubenstein eds. (New York: Arno Press, 1969) [originally published in 1877], 18-19.*

By the late 1840s, Lowell's St. Patrick's and St. Peter's parishes competed for power among the city's Catholics. Father Tucker, who in 1847 relieved Father McDermott at St. Patrick's, reached across parish lines and engaged with St. Peter's to combine their strengths. Tucker found Gaelic-speaking priests to help minister to the newly arrived famine immigrants.[64] But despite these efforts, rifts remained in the Catholic community. When Father O'Brien arrived in 1848 to lead St. Patrick's congregation, he ended efforts to work with St. Peter's and St. Mary's parishes. O'Brien recruited across the city and soon doubled the church's membership. With that outcome, St. Patrick's dominated relations between the Yankee and Irish communities.[65]

The issue of public school attendance became important to St. Patrick's. From the mid-1830s, the public schools were an important conduit for Irish immigrants seeking mill employment. Hiring agents required that all Irish job applicants have a certificate of school attendance. Between 1838 and 1851 the Mann School—an Irish primary school in the Acre—awarded 669 such certificates for mill entry.[66] George O'Dwyer's *Irish Catholic Genesis of Lowell* contains a detailed account of the Irish schools and their function. The School Report for 1847 notes:

> [From Mann School, number 5 Grammar] a very large number of scholars enter the mills. More than one-seventh of the whole number of scholars [50] connected with the school, the past year, have received certificates for the mills . . . This has fallen heavily on the higher classes taking away, in many instances, the best and most advanced scholars.

"The quickness, intelligence, and spirit of the Celtic Race," the 1851 School Report gushed, "are easily excited by a teacher, of an earnest, commanding, and enlightened character!"[67]

But for many of the Irish, these public schools represented an only thinly veiled effort by the city to inculcate Protestant values and encourage cultural and religious assimilation.[68] Irish priests supported the public school system but their support

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[64] Quoted in Mitchell, *The Paddy Camps*, 131, 123.

[65] O'Dwyer, 25; Mitchell, 124 – 128, 130.

[66] 1851 Lowell School Report Appendix, in O'Dwyer, *Irish-Catholic Genesis*, 37.

[67] O'Dwyer, 38.

[68] Lawrence McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1976), 91.

weakened when the school department tightened their control over the Irish with a mandatory attendance policy. In 1851, in part responding to fears over an influx of unassimilated foreigners, Massachusetts authorities made school attendance a requirement for all children. The Irish supported education, but making it compulsory conflicted with their economic need for some children to work. In addition, some in the Irish community wanted to remain separate from some Yankee institutions.

As the education issue percolated, a new threat to the Irish emerged as young Irish women worked more and more outside the home. The seventh annual report of the Lowell Missionary Society's Minister at Large complained of a lowering of the city's "general moral tone," protesting that far too many young women were "found floating in the brilliant streets, seeking recreation, some other occupation, or amusement." This represented the "pernicious out-door influences of midnight dances, reveling rooms and houses of infamy."[69] An August 1851 editorial in the *Daily Morning News* warned of the negative influences that could sweep over impressionable Yankee mill girls should they be forced to rub elbows in the mills with their Irish counterparts.

> The fact that our Yankee girls will have to place themselves on a level with those who are unmistakably their inferiors in every sense, will cast a slur on the name of the Lowell factory girl, something which it has not yet obtained.[70]

Priests were troubled too over the harmful effects that might befall Catholic children forced to attend Yankee schools. They particularly encouraged young Irish girls to seek an education where they could receive a "cradle-to-grave" Catholic mentorship. In 1852, the St. Patrick's congregation had the financial resources to open a free girls school run by the Sisters of Notre Dame. By its third day, 300 students were enrolled in the school.[71] Demonstrating the Catholic school's popularity, the *Twenty-eighth Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Lowell* reported: "The female pupils of one section of our city were withdrawn, leaving several schools without a single female scholar."[72]

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[69] Lowell Missionary Society, *Seventh Annual Report* (Lowell: Penhallow & Hart, Printers), 1851.

[70] Haller, 34.

[71] Mitchell, 113, 116-117, 127-129; O'Dwyer, 39.

[72] Quoted in Haller, 71.

Mitchell suggests in *The Paddy Camps* that the arrival of the famine Irish disturbed a fragile détente between Yankees and the Acre Irish. The *Newburyport Herald* reported, "Were it not for our Irish population, we are inclined to believe that the wheels of justice would grow rusty." Lowell Nativists established a juvenile reform house to assuage fears of a growing crime rate.[73] Animosity and outright bigotry grew with every reported uptick in diseases like tuberculosis, dysentery (called the "Irish malady"), cholera and typhus, which could be linked to the new arrivals. One Nativist critic argued in the newspaper *Vox Populi*:

> When we see respectable and wealthy American families driven out from tenements that they had erected for their own use, and convenience, rather than endure the nuisances created by their Irish neighbors; when we see whole streets deserted by their former inhabitants and filled with a low class of foreigners before whose door are presented constant and disgusting exhibitions of their filthy habits, we wonder that by word or act they should countenance the policy [unrestricted immigration] of which our American citizens so justly complain.[74]

These tensions boiled over in the Merrimack Valley and across the state and the nation in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Newburyport published a City Directory for the first time in 1849, not in response to business requests for information, but as a way to document the "influx of strangers" to the seaport. The directory carried advertisements 'for Americans only' rooming houses.[75] When the Know-Nothings gained control of the Massachusetts legislature, they drafted a law forbidding relief funds for "alien paupers."[76] By this time, many famine Irish, in Massachusetts for five years, could vote, which they usually did for Democratic candidates. This set Lowell's and the Commonwealth's political system on a collision course because the majority Whig Party was anti-immigrant and pro-temperance.

With a strong faction of Whigs anti-slavery, the national party split in the mid-1850s over the issue of slavery's expansion. Now a "populist Nativist movement, dominated by Yankee working and middle classes in a coalition with a wide variety of

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[73] Thernstrom, 28, 112.

[74] Quoted in Mitchell, 97.

[75] Thernstrom, 15-16, 29.

[76] Quoted in Thernstrom, 29.

splinter groups, took over every major political office in Massachusetts." The American or 'Know-Nothing' party demanded decreased immigration and increased restrictions on immigrants in the country.[77] In 1854, the Massachusetts party won the governorship, 40 Senate seats, and 376 out of 379 House seats. Capitalizing on fears and concerns about the Irish in Lowell, the Know-Nothings elected Ambrose Lawrence mayor. The party ruled in Massachusetts without opposition from 1855 to 1858.[78]

The Lowell Know-Nothing's electoral ascension was preceded by a series of ugly Irish-Nativist clashes. On June 2, 1854, on South Common near St. Peter's Church, Nativist agitator John Orr, referred to around the city as the 'Angle Gabriel', delivered an inflammatory speech on the evils of Catholicism. Later in June, Orr made similar speeches in nearby Lawrence. Following his South Commons remarks, Orr's supporters demonstrated at the offices of several newspapers whose editors had opposed Orr's presence in Lowell. Alarmed by Orr's crowds, priests at St. Patrick's placed 60 guards around the church and the Notre Dame convent for girls. And at St. Mary's, parishioners stationed themselves in the bell tower, ready to ring the bells if a mob approached the building. Irish mill girls armed with paving stones stood guard near both churches when their factory shifts ended.[79] After several days, Know-Nothings paraded into the Acre neighborhood heading for St. Patrick's. According to a report in the *Annals of St. Patrick's Convent*:

> Yes, the Know-Nothings were approaching the church, but they had not counted sufficiently on Irish loyalty and vim. When just within sight of St. Patrick's, they were attacked by some strong-armed Irish men and women, —yes, women, for these led the attack. The march became a melee, and the street was completely filled with the motley crowd. They reached the bridge, which spans the canal just within sight of the convent. There was a halt, a splash, and a ringing cheer—A sinewy matron unable to restrain her indignation had seized upon one of the leaders of the gang and flung him over the railing floundering into the water below.[80]

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[77] McCaffrey, 94-95

[78] Richard D. Brown and Jack Tager, *Massachusetts: A Concise History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 180-81; McCaffrey, 95; Mitchell, 134.

[79] Mitchell, 134-139.

[80] Mitchell, 137-138.

The *Daily Journal and Courier* made light of the incident, suggesting:

> There are certain parties in the vicinity of Lowell Street, who seem to be very much, but very unnecessarily alarmed, lest their church might be pulled down, their houses demolished, and their heads broken, by the attacks of some anti-Catholic mob.

For the newspaper "the affair is fit only to be laughed at." The *American Citizen* mocked the church's defenders for using paving stones, shillelaghs, guns, pistols, and knives. Far from alarmist, the Acre Irish were well aware that Know-Nothing Mayor Lawrence had railed against the Notre Dame convent and was not himself above marching to it on occasion to demand that it be opened for public inspection.[81] Elsewhere in New England, priests weren't safe from public assault. Roger Daniels in *Coming to America* cites a Portland, Maine, priest's 1854 ordeal:

> Since the 4th of July I have not considered myself safe to walk the streets after sunset. Twice within the past month I have been stoned by young men. If I chance to be abroad when the public schools are dismissed, I am hissed and insulted with vile language; and those repeated from children have been encouraged by the smiles and silence of passers by. The windows of the church have frequently been broken—the panels of the church door stove in, and last week a large rock entered my chamber unceremoniously about 11 o'clock at night.[82]

Once in power, Know-Nothing politicians removed the Irish poor and mental patients from state institutions and deported many of them to Britain. Irish militia units were disbanded and the Legislature ordered that the Protestant Bible must be read in the Commonwealth's public schools. An unsuccessful attempt was made to deny Catholics the right to vote and naturalized citizens the right to hold office for 21 years. A legislative committee was given the authority to "inspect nunneries and convents, Catholic schools and the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester." But when committee members terrorized "some Catholic religious orders, public sentiment turned against Know-

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[81] Quoted in Mitchell, 138.

[82] Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 2nd edition (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 268.

Nothing extremes, and that practice ceased."[83] Historian Brian Mitchell suggests that these Nativist attacks ended Irish factional fighting in Lowell. Richard Brown and Jack Tager conclude, "The result was a stronger immigrant community better able to withstand Nativist hostilities."[84]

Economic Troubles and Patriotism Tested

By 1860, the Irish were a growing presence in the mills but not too many of them held better paying jobs in places like the Lowell Machine Shop where a 'workingman's aristocracy jealously guarded its rights," trained apprentices and controlled access to the metalworking trades.[85] When the Middlesex Company in Lowell and Lawrence's Bay State Mills closed in 1857, Irish mill workers likely suffered the effects of the closures more than their Yankee counterparts, many of whom received help from their families.[86] In 1861, several mills closed for the duration of the Civil War and hundreds of out-of-work female mill workers returned to their Vermont and New Hampshire family homes. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Irish Lowellians who chose not to enlist in the Union cause moved to Lawrence, Nashua, New Hampshire, and Lewiston, Maine, where mills operated at partial capacity and pay rates were higher than in Lowell.[87] Some Irish laborers made the far more arduous trip back to Ireland; according to Doug Preble more than 700 purchased tickets to Liverpool "attracted by the improved and improving state of agricultural interests in the Emerald Isle. Lowell's *Daily Journal and Courier* reported that numerous Irish were working to get back across the Atlantic. Some Irish Lowellians even headed west in search of better economic opportunities.[88]

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[83] Brown and Tager, 181. The Know Nothings also passed legislation beneficial to the Commonwealth's Yankee working class and a law making it illegal for any state officials to return fugitive slaves.

[84] Brown and Tager, 182.

[85] George S. Gibb, *The Saco-Lowell Shops: Textile Machinery Building in New England 1813-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 89. Irish workers in Holyoke, Massachusetts, a mill town started by many of the original investors in Lowell, dealt with a similar situation. See William Hartford, *Working People of Holyoke: Class and Ethnicity in a Massachusetts Mill Town, 1850-1960* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990). Mitchell, 144-145.

[86] Mitchell, 143-144; H. Vernon-Wortzel, *Lowell: The Corporations and the City* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 23.

[87] Vernon-Wortzel, 63-65, 113.

[88] Doug Preble, "Early Irish in Lowell" (Unpublished paper: Center for Lowell History, 1999), 3.

Before the Civil War, Irish and Irish-Americans' integration into the larger community was patchwork at best. The Know Nothings fueled religious tensions and heightened efforts to establish a Catholic school system. The outbreak of the Civil War offered a way for the Irish to demonstrate their '100 percent Americanism'. When the Commonwealth organized militias, the 9th and 28th were populated with Irish recruits. Even in serving the Union, the regiments' maintained a form of cultural identity through the use of Gaelic mottoes.[89] Benjamin Butler commanded Lowell's Irish division, which served in the Civil War as the "Hill Cadets."[90] The Irish used the wartime atmosphere to continue their demands for equality. In 1863, for example, they protested the draft system, which made it possible for the wealthy to purchase their own replacements and thus avoid military service.[91]

Irish and African-American tensions were manifested in several violent draft riots and even on the battlefield. Peter Welsh, in a remarkable collection of letters about his experience in the 28th Regiment, commented, "The feelings against the nigars is intensely strong in this army … they are looked upon as the principal cause of this war and this feeling is especially strong in the Irish regiments."[92] A June 14, 1862 editorial in the Catholic newspaper, *The Boston Pilot*, did not help: "The history of Negro slavery does absolutely prove that the Negro race is happier in slavery than in freedom … the Negro race is always best off both physically and mentally in the service of the white man."[93]

For the *Boston Pilot*, "one of the nation's most influential shapers of public opinion," to issue this pronouncement demonstrated the deep divisions between two populations that, based on their discrimination, suffering, and oppression, would have been better served in their long-term aspirations by joining together.[94] The *Lowell Daily Courier* precipitated a Nativist attack when it spread a rumor that the city's nascent Irish

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[89] Earl Mulderink, "'We want a country': African-American and Irish-American Community life in New Bedford, Massachusetts, During the Civil War Era." (Center for Lowell History: Manuscript Collection, 1995), 313.

[90] Mary Blewett, "The Mills and the Multitudes: A Political History," in *Cotton was King*, 170.

[91] McCaffrey, 68.

[92] Lawrence Kohl and Margaret Richard, eds. *Irish Green and Union Blue, The Civil War Letters of Peter Welsh, Color Sergeant, 28th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 62-63.

[93] Quoted in Mulderink, 317.

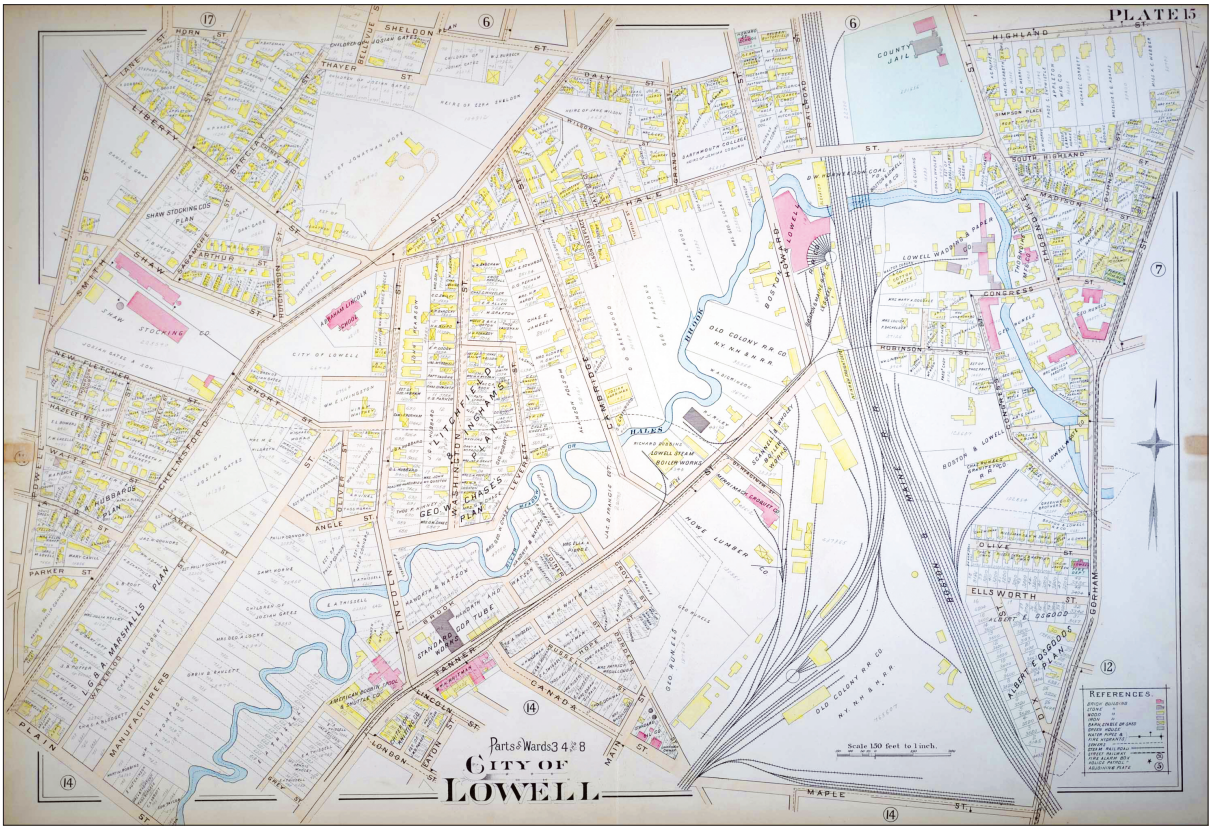
[94] William Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union's Ethnic Regiments* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 25.

militias were joining the Confederacy.[95] Irishman Matthew Donovan, who became a war hero and Lowell government official, responded for the entire Irish community, "We stand by the Union."[96]

To summarize, Irish immigration generated confrontation and accommodation. The cultural encounters that occurred in the various spaces where people came into contact with each other led them to imagine and establish their sense of group self, their 'ethnicity', as one way to differentiate themselves from the growing number of other groups they came into contact with on a regular basis. This led to the preservation, creation, and re-invention of traditions, ways of life, customs, and practices. There is indeed a fine line between a level of incorporation into the so-called 'majority' society and full assimilation. Lowell's Irish wanted prosperity for themselves and succeeding generations and sought to strike a balance in their new home that would produce an ability to practice their Catholic faith. Over time, the Irish dominated politics in several big cities, including Boston and Chicago. A quite similar story is replayed in Lowell as succeeding waves of immigration occurred between 1880 and 1940. We turn to these richly textured stories in succeeding chapters as well as discuss the continuing story of the Irish in Lowell.

[95] Vernon-Wortzel, 61.

[96] Quoted in Vernon-Wortzel, 61.



Chelmsford Street Neighborhood 1896. (Lowell Historical Society)

Chapter Five
Late Nineteenth Century Immigration Case Studies: French-Canadians and Greeks Into the Acre and Beyond

> America's ethnic neighborhoods are alternately romanticized or demolished by politicans, planners, and public policy-makers. It's nice to come into Little Italy and groove on the garlic, but there is a lot more about the German Towns or Little Italys of America that represents its unseen heart. The family structure, the ethnic organizations, political clubs, the relationships between school, church, and lending institutions form the community. It is not bricks, mortar, or European recipes but how people live with each other and the institutions they create that form the neighborhood.[1]

French Canadians in Lowell

Arrival

Approximately 600,000 French Canadians migrated to New England between 1860 and 1900 from the eastern provinces of Canada in what historian Roger Daniels determined was mostly a family migration, which "helped to change the face of New England."[2] Mostly farmers with large families, they could no longer survive on their tiny plots of exhausted land. While some of them took jobs in the Canadian lumber industry, job security was nonexistent. Even this seasonal employment slipped away whenever the lumber industry suffered a major downturn. The still booming textile mills of New Hampshire and Massachusetts offered some hope for a better way of life and by 1860 approximately 37,000 French-Canadians lived in New England lured by recruiting agents and family members already settled in places like Nashua, New Hampshire, and Lowell. The table below traces immigration into Lowell between 1870 and 1940 and puts French Canadian immigration in perspective.

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[1] Cited in Joseph H. Helfgot, et.al., *Lowell, Massachusetts: Living with Adversity, A Community Social Profile* (Boston: Boston University Department of Sociology, 1977).

[2] Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 2nd edition (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 261.

Largest Immigrant Groups in Lowell's Foreign-Born Population 1870-1940.

	Ireland (Free State)	Great Britain	Canada (Fr/Other)	Greece	Total Foreign-Born
1870	—	11,282	3,039	—	14,453
1880	—	13,879	8,768	—	23,054
1900	12,147	5,593	19,159	—	40,974
1910	9,983	5,751	16,342	—	43,494
1920	7,454	—	13,790	3,733	38,116
1930	4,231	4,213	10,169	—	26,175
1940	2,883	2,569	7,471	—	19,418

By some accounts, approximately 3 percent of Lowell's textile mill workers were French Canadian in 1850; by 1880 this figure had tripled. Lowell's total population climbed approximately 60 percent from 37,000 in 1850 to 60,000 in 1880, with the foreign-born portion of the total increasing from 10,000 (27 percent) in 1850 to 23,000 (38 percent) in 1880. In 1900, with a total population of 95,000, 41,000 (43 percent) of its residents were foreign born; 19,000 of these people were French Canadian.[3] According to historian Martha Mayo, these numbers should be considered with a healthy degree of skepticism. For example, the 1850 figure of 3 percent in the mills is for all Canadians, French and English, and is based on projections from the records of a single mill. Mayo contends that in 1855 of Lowell's total population of 37,554, immigrants comprised 33 percent of the total with Canadian immigrants—French and English—totaling 700. In 1880, by her count, Lowell's population was 59,475, with 40 percent immigrants. Of the total, Canadian immigrants—French and English—were about 9,300 or 16 percent. By century's end out of a total population of 94,969, all immigrants were now 43 percent with Canadian immigrants—French and English—at about 19,000 or 20 percent of the total. Whichever figures are more exact, no one denies that Canadian immigration, most of it French-speaking, dramatically impacted Lowell in the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

[3] Figures compiled from statistics collected by Martha Mayo, Center for Lowell History.

Fitting In?

Carroll Wright, Massachusetts's commissioner for labor statistics, offered a strongly worded critique of French Canadian immigration. "The Canadian French are the Chinese of the Eastern States," he claimed in 1881.

> They care nothing for our institutions, civil, political, or educational. They do not come to make a home among us, to dwell with us as citizens, and so become a part of us; but their purpose is merely to sojourn a few years as aliens, touching us only at a single point, that of work, and, when they have gathered out of us what will satisfy their ends, to get them from whence they came, and bestow it there. They are a horde of industrial invaders, not a stream of stable settlers.[4]

As the number of French Canadians in Lowell grew, word filtered home that jobs were available. According to Maura Doherty, citing figures from a Holy Cross College master's degree thesis by Andrew Boucher, "41 percent of the men and 81 percent of the women in the French Canadian labor force in Lowell were employed by the textile industry" in the late nineteenth century.[5] They crowded into Lowell's already over-crowded worker housing stock. In his 1920 *History of Lowell and Its People*, Coburn wrote:

> Many of the gravest problems of the twentieth century city first became acute in the last decades of the nineteenth century: deterioration of originally inadequate housing facilities for the working class; indifference to city planning for the future; neglect of the welfare of newly arrived immigrants; increasing tolerance of the evils of alcoholism and sex disease; a spread of coarsening influences in popular amusements and recreations; a new tendency toward vulgarity and ostentation among some of the well-to-do.

Coburn's so-called 'coarsening' was accompanied by what he described as the most striking development in Lowell after the Civil War, a "marked change in the racial complexion of the city, especially of the operative class."[6] 'Racial complexion' here is Coburn's term. What he was commenting on no doubt was the changing nature of

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[4] Carroll Wright quoted in Roger Daniels, 258.

[5] Maura Doherty, "Spindle City Blues: The Impact of the Maturing Industrial Economy on the City of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1947 – 1978" (Ph.D. thesis: New York University, 1998), 70.

[6] Frederick Coburn, *History of Lowell and Its People* (New York City: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1920), volI: 341.

Lowell's ethnic make-up. Even as their numbers climbed, according to Frances Early, "most French Canadians, at best a generation removed from a very different society and culture, faced the task of securing their livelihoods and shaping their lives under potentially alienating and disruptive conditions."[7] Louise Hemon recalled,

> When I was a girl [in the 1880s] pretty nearly everyone went off to the States. Farming did not pay as well as it does now, prices were low, we were always hearing of the big wages earned over there in the factories, and every year one family after another sold out for next to nothing and left Canada. Some made a lot of money, no doubt of that, especially those families with plenty of daughters.[8]

Del Chouinard noted his parents came to Lowell "because they were more or less having quite a time to make a living up there. Of course, my father had a farm and it wasn't paying off too much. So finally he had, finally, like a lot of others, he had to immigrate to this country."[9] What they found was nothing like the 'Currier and Ives-like' prints of pre-Civil War Lowell. Instead, "By the time of the Civil War, Lowell was a typical nineteenth-century industrial city, complete with slums and soot."[10]

Stay or Go?

Immigrants most often came to America in search of a better life, but it is noteworthy that significant numbers of French Canadians intended to stay for a few years before returning to Quebec. Valentine Chartrand, whose parents came from Canada, recalled:

> In those days they'd come to Lowell and Lawrence and you know these textile mills, they were in Manchester, those were all them mills they have down there. They'd come down this way, and they, some of them would settle here and others would go back, you know, after a while.[11]

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[7] Frances Early, "The French-Canadian Family Economy and Standard-Of-Living in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1870," *Journal of Family History*, Summer 1982, 180-99, 181, 182; Frances Early, *Immigrant Odyssey: A French-Canadian Habitant in New England* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1991).

[8] Quoted in Frances Early, "The French-Canadian Family Economy and Standard of Living: Lowell, Massachusetts, 1870," in Robert Weible, ed. *The Continuing Revolution: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts* (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1991), 236.

[9] Del Chouinard interview by Judith Dunning, July 30, 1981,Center For Lowell History, 80.18a,b.

[10] Peter Blewett, "The New People: An Introduction to the Ethnic History of Lowell," in *Cotton was King*, 208.

[11] Valentine Chartrand interview by Diane Novelli, October 8, 1984, Center For Lowell History, 84.1.

By some accounts, this proximity—the trip could be made in less than a day by train—led to a slower acculturation process than among other groups. According to Roger Daniels, "The French of New England's French-Canadian-American second and subsequent generations has persisted much more significantly, for example, than the Italian of New England's Italian Americans." Proximity makes it difficult for historians to determine conclusively how many French Canadians came to New England and to Lowell. An accurate count at the "land boundaries was at best erratic and the ebb and flow of individuals and families back and forth across the border only compounds the difficulty."[12]

Housing and Community Building

In Lowell in significant numbers French Canadians established 'les petits Canada' or Little Canada, an overwhelmingly French-speaking neighborhood on open land in what is now parts of Lowell's Pawtucketville and Centralville neighborhoods. In 2010, much of the University of Massachusetts Lowell's East Campus, its recreation center, LaLachuer Park, and the Tsongas Arena sit in what was once Little Canada. The area that French Canadians inhabited had been a dump owned by the Locks & Canals Company. Coburn noted the neighborhood was "convenient enough for a colony of mill operatives, to whom carfare would have been a prohibitive consideration."[13] On leased land, new, cheaply built wooden tenements sprang up to house the growing number of families crowding the city. Packed close together, the three-story buildings often contained 28 four-room apartments with a kitchen and bedrooms and a toilet, but no bath. Front and back rooms had windows, those in between did not; apartments on the top floor sometimes had skylights. "Little money was invested in the plumbing and heating systems. The twin threat of disease and fire dogged the French-Canadians of Little Canada, adding to the precarious nature of life."[14]

Yvonne Hoar recalled that when her family arrived in Lowell in the early 1900s they first lived in "dismal and dreary-looking" mill housing on Prince Street. "My mother was petrified; she wouldn't leave us out of the house. So we stayed there for about three days 'till they found a place on Salem Street." In dark, poorly heated apartments, tenants

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[12] Daniels, 261, 259.

[13] Coburn, vol. I: 343.

[14] Blewett, 190-217, 195, 205, 209, 211.

used kerosene lamps day and night for light in the interior rooms. "There were plenty of incidents, fires and all," Hoar noted.[15] Her family eventually purchased a home in Centralville, in a part of the city far different from Little Canada. "There was almost every nationality. There was Irish and French and Greek people. There were different nationalities in Centralville, it was a mixture."[16]

George Kenngott in *The Record of a City: A Social Survey of Lowell Massachusetts* (1912) described the largest wooden tenement block in Little Canada called 'The Harris'. It contained:

> two shops and 48 tenements of four rooms each, and often contains about 300 inhabitants. It has 30 rooms without windows . . . there are very few, if any, bathrooms. The washing is done in the kitchen, and the drying on outdoor lines controlled by pulleys.

Despite this description, Kenngott concluded, "The housing conditions for the French are generally good. While some of the property occupied by them is old, without modern conveniences, it is comfortable. The chief danger is the congestion of families in the large tenements in 'Little Canada.'"[17] Tenements often had just one common cooking area, something that likely put a strain on families; occupants marked their food. Kenngott describes how Polish immigrants handled this situation. One can imagine residents of Little Canada devising equally clever systems to protect precious food.

> Women who made bread cut initials in the uncooked dough to protect it from pilferage while it cooled on the windowsill after baking. An individual's or a family's meat in the common pot had a string with a ticket attached to it.[18]

In 1896, some 367 businesses owned and operated by French Canadians supplied food, drink, entertainment, clothing, and haircuts to Lowell's French-speaking residents. According to Maureen Doherty, "Economic patronage by ethnicity was characteristic of most ethnic enclaves in Lowell and often it continued after the population migrated

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[15] Yvonne Hoar "Mill Worker, Union Organizer, Shop Steward," Center for Lowell History, 127.

[16] Hoar, 127.

[17] Kenngott, 51, 52.

[18] Blewett, 190-217, 195, 205, 209, 211.

beyond the boundaries of the ethnic neighborhood" and created a "separate ethnic enclave in the city." French parochial schools and newspapers—*L'Echo du Canada* (1874-5*), La* Republique (1875-7), *L'Abeille* (1880-84), *Le Journal du Commerce* (1884-5), *L'Etoille* (1886-1957)—flourished.[19]

Many French Canadians sought to preserve their language and significant aspects of their culture and some individuals also sought citizenship. This pursuit required learning enough English to pass the citizenship test and to facilitate it community leaders established "the Naturalization Club in 1885, l'Union Franco-Americaine in 1895, the Pawtucketville Social Club in 1897, the Club de Citoyens Americains in 1898 . . ." to assist in learning the language. The quest for citizenship, historian Peter Blewett notes, became part of a larger effort by French Canadians to contest for political power, something "not so easily discerned among the early Poles, Portuguese, Jewish, or Greek immigrants who sought naturalization, and who attended language and citizenship classes at the International Institute."[20] It should be noted that across the U.S. French Canadians had one of the lowest naturalization rates of any ethnic group. Daniels, in *Coming to America*, determined that in 1910 "45 percent of all French Canadian males over 21 were naturalized and only 37 percent in the core area of New England, substantially lower than among other Canadians, Irish, English, and Scandinavian adult males."[21]

Employment and the Family Wage

Once in Lowell, French Canadians had to adjust to an urban industrial setting far different from the rural culture they'd left behind. But, according to Frances Early, the family retained its primary organizational role and this helped ease the transition into industrial society. Coming to the U.S. as "part of a two-parent nuclear family unit" in which the father had absolute authority while the mother stayed at home and kept the family intact was typical. Lowell's French Canadian families were influenced by "the family-farm economy" whereby "the family functioned as the primary productive unit" and "all members contributed their labor, and from an early age this included children."[22]

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[19] Doherty, 71, 72.

[20] Blewett, "The New People," 207.

[21] Roger Daniels, 263.

[22] Early, "The French-Canadian Family Economy," 182.

Because fathers were the 'breadwinners' and toiled long hours, their occupation greatly influenced the family's standard of living. A skilled worker's family might barely make it out of poverty in a generation while for the more numerous unskilled French Canadian males, their wages alone would not move the family too far ahead. In a 1975 interview, Lowell mill worker and union organizer Yvonne Hoar described how her family ended up in Lowell in the early 1900s.

> My father worked in the mills in North Adams [Massachusetts] and his boss moved to Lowell, so he asked him to come with him and that's why he came to Lowell then. My father was a machinist. He always worked at the Merrimack Mills for 40 years. He'd go to the early mass on Sunday and go right to work and come back home at six or seven o'clock. He worked every Sunday of his life.[23]

Papa Hoar's machinists' skills afforded the family a fairly decent living. More typically, economic success was contingent on one or more children taking a job at a very young age, while the first generation of mothers seldom worked for wages outside the home. Valentine Chartrand recalled, "My mother was always at home. She never had a chance to work outside. She had all she could do."[24] Del Chouinard noted, "So as far as her [his mother's] day's work [it] was just being a housewife. Taking care of the family, doing the cooking, taking care of the apartment. Doing the washing, doing the ironing. And that was her —she never worked, uh she very, very seldom worked, except maybe in the later years. She worked part time in a hospital … Outside of that, she never was in any factory."[25] For Arthur Morrissette, "My mother never worked … Naturally my mother used to hold the pocketbook with tight reins you know." [26] Desneiges Albert, wife of Felix Albert, was "busy in their small, poorly furnished flat caring for her young children … and performing arduous domestic chores – cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing, and sewing. Shopping had to be sandwiched in too, and attention paid to work schedules of

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[23] Hoar, 125-140.

[24] Valentine Chartrand interview by Diane Novelli, Center For Lowell History, 84.1.

[25] Del Chouinard interview by Judith Dunning, Center For Lowell History, 80.18a,b.

[26] Arthur Morrissette interview by Paul Page, June 17, 1985, Center For Lowell History, 85.7.

the several wage-earning members of the family."[27] Later, married women worked outside the home, though many stayed there until their children were out of the house. The first pregnancy was usually the occasion for leaving wage labor.[28]

It is reasonable to assume that a married woman's employment situation was somewhat contingent on the kind of job her husband had and whether older children in the household held paying jobs. In her research on French Canadian families in Massachusetts, Frances Early determined that seven in ten French Canadian children between the ages of 11 and 15 held jobs in 1870. In several instances, children's wages represented nearly 40 percent of household income.

We are fortunate to have a visual record of some of the work performed by children in the early 1900s, thanks to the work of noted photographer Lewis Hine who visited Lowell in 1911 and 1912. Children as young as ten or eleven worked as pinsetters in bowling alleys and large numbers of children under fifteen found their way into the city's mills.



(Lewis Hine, October 1911) Willie Payton, (boy in middle), 196 Fayette St., said to be 11 years old, made over $2 last week as pin boy in Les Miserables Alley, works there every night until about midnight. Joseph Philip (shortest boy on end). Frank Wojcick, (tallest boy), 7 Wall St., said to be 13 years, pin boy in Y.M.C.A. Alleys until 11 and 12 P.M. every week day: Location: Lowell, Massachusetts.

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[27] Early, *Immigrant Odyssey*, 13.

[28] Mary H. Blewett, *The Last Generation: Work and Life in the Textile Mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, 1910-1960*, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 99.

Early reviewed a survey of 397 Massachusetts families conducted in 1875 and found, "American and English fathers supported their families unassisted more often than French-Canadian and Irish fathers; one in four American and seven in ten English families relied on the secondary wages of their children, while nine in ten French-Canadian and Irish families did so." She concluded "that living standards for French-Canadian working-class families in Massachusetts were generally low when the father was an unskilled laborer. When such families eked out a bearable living, this was due primarily to the number of working children in the family… even those families fortunate enough to have two working children could save little over a year."[29]

To reiterate, children in Lowell worked at an early age. In 1870 seven in every ten children ages 11 to 15 worked outside the home. One cannot fail to take into account the social cost of children leaving school early; certainly their lack of education meant that their future was no more promising than an ordinary day laborer's. "The opportunity to achieve a middle-class occupational level in a working-class factory town such as Lowell," Early summarized, "was small in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Without a sound secondary education, French Canadian children were fated to follow in their parents' footsteps." Spindle City French Canadians:

> had to accept the socio-economic configuration of late nineteenth-century industrial capitalist New England society. In other words, they had to begin their new lives as members of a large, alienated, and often suffering industrial proletariat whose ability to direct and shape their present as well as their future was indeed, regrettably limited.[30]

An 1875 Massachusetts Bureau of the Statistics of Labor report found the wage system:

> fails to pay the father so much for his labor that he can in all cases support his family on his own earnings, educate all his children up to the proper age, buy a suitable home from his savings, or lay by enough for his decent support when his laboring powers have failed … It uses men and women when they are strong, and leaves them to shift for themselves when they are sick, infirm or without employment. This it does by paying no more for labor than the bare cost of existence of the body. It usurps to its benefit the future productive power of the state, by employing children who should be in school or at play.[31]

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[29] Early, "The French-Canadian Family Economy," 184, 185.

[30] Early, "The French-Canadian Family Economy," 192.



(Lewis Hine, October 1911) Joseph Boucher, 472 Moody, smallest boy in picture, appears 12 years old. Works in the mill-room at Massachusetts Mills. His father is boss of another room. Frank Matley, next in right end of picture, lives at 25 Rod St., been in mill-room No. 12 for 1 1/2 years.

Based on the 1875 Massachusetts Bureau of the Statistics of Labor Report, even with the help of children's wages, four in ten of the Commonwealth's French Canadian working-class families lived below the poverty line; one in ten broke even; while five in ten achieved a living standard somewhere above the poverty line. Those who did the best income-wise had large families and several children working. The price families paid to achieve a better standard of living was high.

> Living and working conditions in working-class Lowell were wretched, and mortality rates, especially among children under the age of five, were extremely high. French Canadians, particularly the unmarried women and children who worked in the unhealthy textile mills, fell victim to respiratory disease, and often died prematurely.[32]

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[31] Quoted in Early, "The French-Canadian Family Economy," 191.

[32] Early, "The French-Canadian Family Economy," 192.

Hine's photograph below of young girls going to work in Lawrence is evocative of scenes in Lowell as youngsters trudged to work each day.



(Lewis Hine, November 1910) Mill girls, Pacific Mills.
Location: Lawrence, Massachusetts.

Young women often delayed marriage for family responsibilities. Lucie Cordeau cared for her family after her mother and elder sisters died:

> And I took charge of the family. I was the only girl left. At that time, when the mother died, the older girls used to take over . . . As I said, the older girl takes over. She's the second mother. She has to supervise. She has all to make the decisions in anything . . . And if you had a boyfriend. Let's say you have to go back home and cook supper for your father or cook meals for my brothers, the boys never stay long. The friendship never lasts very long.[33]

The work environment was hazardous and the pace physically demanding. Recalled spinner Valentine Chartrand, "Because in the winter the windows are all closed, you know? And all you get is that lint flying around. And you breathe a lot of that . . . There was no coffee breaks in those days . . . We had our lunch at noontime. We had to close, ya, shut the, stop your machine and sit and have lunch altogether. Then at about quarter to one, not one hour, quarter to one, they had to start up again . . . It was mostly all women then."[34] Del Chouinard recalled: "As far as the heat is concerned, well, just

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[33] Lucie Cordeau interview by Judith Dunning, June 18, 1980, Center For Lowell History, 80.8a, b.

[34] Valentine Chartrand interview by Diane Novelli, October 8, 1984, Center For Lowell History, 84.1.

imagine, you have two other machines running at 275 F. of heat. You have nine cylinders in that machine which produce 240 F of heat per. So during the summer, it really, really gets hot."[35]

Some families achieved relative economic success by establishing businesses that catered to the French Canadian population. Grocery and variety stores, bakeries, and clothing stores appeared throughout Little Canada. A map in Kenngott's *The Record of a City* identifies many apartment blocks containing street-level stores on Merrimack, Tremont, Cabot, Race, and Aiken Streets, all within a few blocks of the hulking mills.[36]

Yet, even as French Canadian numbers grew and immigrants from other countries arrived, a main reason for coming to Lowell, the mills, were in the early stages of vacating the Merrimack Valley. "By 1890, the aging Northern textile industry faced competition from a nascent textile industry in the South," historian Maura Doherty found. "The 'downsizing' of the textile labor force and the mobility of capital investment in the Northern textile firms to the South was swift."[37] By the early 1920s, Lowell's mills could no longer compete with Southern textile mills with their new machines, new technology, new production methods, a cheap source of non-union labor, and a newly built infrastructure catering to the Southern mill owners' every need. In just twenty years, from 1919 to 1939, Massachusetts lost 45 percent of its textile jobs. French Canadian textile workers grappled with the loss of their livelihood. Doherty summarizes the crisis thusly: "Indeed 1890 marked the peak of textile mill employment in Lowell with 17,148 workers. While the number of spindles would continue to increase until 1923, the number of employees began to gradually decrease."[38] The Great Depression came early to most of Lowell's working class neighborhoods.

Religious and Social Life

When French Canadians arrived in Lowell, religious and social institutions including French language schools to maintain connection with their culture and language were established. "All over New England, but particularly in the mill towns where 'les petits Canadas' were established, French-speaking priests were to be found,

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[35] Del Chouinard interview by Judith Dunning, Center For Lowell History, 80.18a,b.

[36] Blewett, 214; Kenngott, map insert, 52.

[37] Doherty.

[38] Doherty, 13, 88.

almost all of them missionary priests from Quebec who treated New England as other religious groups treated Africa or China."[39] While St. Patrick's Church served them, there was a strong desire for their own parish and to attend Mass in French. In 1868, Father Andre-Marie Garin purchased a Protestant church, which became St. Joseph's Church for the exclusive use of French-Canadian Catholics. The parish grew but it was inadequate to serve the needs of the fast-growing population and four years later in 1872 the Immaculate Conception Church opened for worship. It was called "one of the most beautiful works of religious art in Massachusetts."[40]

Immaculate Conception opened a school in 1880 attended by nearly 1,000 students and staffed by nuns from the Ottawa-based Grey Nuns Order. In 1883, a second French-language school opened on Moody Street, also staffed by the Gray Nuns Order. It had 1,300 students enrolled in 1887. In 1896, a third church, St. Jean-Baptiste, located on Merrimack Street, opened to accommodate the residents of Little Canada. Eight years later, a fourth parish, St. Louis de France, formed in Centralville. Social clubs connected to each parish were set up for married men and women and young, single women.[41]

The Greeks in Lowell

The Greeks Arrive

By George Kenngott's count in *The Record of a City* (1912), in the early 1900s there were 20,000 native-born residents of native-born parents in Lowell. In addition there were 20,000 French-Canadians, 8,000 Greeks, 25,00 Portuguese, 2,500 Jews, 2,000 Poles, 2,000 Swedes, 500 Germans, 300 Norwegians, 200 Armenians, 200 Belgians, 200 Syrians, and a 'great mixture' of Russians, Lithuanians, and Chinese. A "large, foreign, non-English-speaking population has come to Lowell during the last 25 years; those from southern Europe and Asia have come almost entirely during the last fifteen years." Newcomers from Greece were part of this stream of people into the Spindle City.[42]

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[39] Daniels, 261.

[40] Gaston Carriere, OMI, *The Man Lowell Remembered: Andre-Marie Garin, OMI 1822-1895* (Lowell: Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate 1998), 57.

[41] Carriere.

[42] Kenngott, 28.

Greeks coming through Ellis Island were "very heavily male and were the only fairly large European group of which more than half returned." Males comprised nearly 90 percent of arrivals at Ellis Island, with just over 50 percent eventually returning to Greece. They came, according to Roger Daniels, with "a fierce sense of their own Greekness." Once here, "Elements of Greek culture continued in their newly adopted home—such as churches, coffeehouses, and language. Thus, life in Lowell and America aided in the creation of a unique Greek American identity—that was partially 'Greek' but also became increasingly 'Americanized'."[43] In 1973, Lowell resident Costas Liacopolous recalled his introduction to the U.S. "… I come to Staten Island. When I come out, I found a dime on the street. Jesus, I said, Christ's sake, I just come here, I begin to get rich now!"[44]

An agrarian country but with little arable land and poor soil, economic opportunities in Greece were limited.[45] In 1890, when the prices for several agricultural export crops collapsed, many people ventured to the United States. By 1897, about ten percent (20,000) of the Greek population lived abroad.[46] Earlier immigrants sent word home that "America is the land of wealth and opportunity. In America, the streets are lined with dollar bills and money is so easily made that anyone can become immediately rich."[47] While it is true that mill jobs were available in the 1890s—130 Greeks worked at the Lawrence Mills in 1895 and a smaller number worked in the Tremont Mills and the Suffolk Mills—jobs were becoming harder to come by as the city's mills faced growing competition from other parts of the country.[48] John Spanos recalls "[he] arrived in Lowell (1906) on a Saturday, and on the following Wednesday [he] was working in the Merrimack Mills." According to Pierson, "The quick process of hiring immigrants

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[43] Daniels, 201, 202; Andrew Pierson, "Rebirth: A Story of the Greek Americans and Lowell, Massachusetts," (Unpublished paper, 2008), 1.

[44] Lewis Karabatsos and Dale Nyder, "Greek Workers in the Mills of Lowell," in Mary Blewett, ed., Surviving Hard Times: The Working People of Lowell (Lowell: Lowell Textile Museum, 1982), 64.

[45] A Greek Census in 1899 indicated that 62 percent of the population was in agriculture. See Nicholas V. Karas Greek Immigrants At Work: A Lowell Odyssey (Lowell: Meteora Press, 1986), 19.

[46] Pierson, 2.

[47] In Dale Nyder, Assimilation of the Greek Community in Lowell, Mass. 1891-1920: Case Studies, Center for Lowell History.

[48] Karabatsos and Nyder, 63-77.

showed that once they had arrived, the mill owners were not only quick to scoop them up, but also that the immigrants quickly tried to establish themselves into their new society through work."[49]

Sending money to their families in Greece so that they might be reunited in America became an important task. Nicholas Psoinos recalled:

> My father came to America because our family was poor. He left to come here and work so he could earn money to send back to Greece and support his family. In those days, the people lived in a natural life where I came from. Mani didn't have much. We farmed; we had sheep. Mani is a very rocky place and poor, and so there weren't many different kinds of work. A person didn't have too much of a choice. You worked at what was there, if you could get work, or you left. A great many people left.[50]

Apostolos Eleftheriou tells a similar story:

> In Greece we heard about America, that there was work and you could earn a lot of money. That's what we heard – money, money, money. Many returned from America and brought back liras (gold currency). What was it then? About 100 liras were equal to 500 American dollars. Do you know what it was like in the village to have 500 American dollars? You could almost buy the village. How much could you earn working as a shepherd or in the fields? One, two liras in a year? How could you support a family? In Greece, I had never seen a factory; I didn't know what it was like inside or what kind of jobs people did.[51]

Remittances to the 'old country' were not peculiar to Greeks, and the activity by immigrants generated consternation throughout 'old Lowell'. In the early1900s, with mill jobs now at risk, some Lowellians argued that the corporations weren't investing enough in the city. Mill interests responded that the dividends paid out to non-resident stockholders in 1907 amounted to $848,508. "This amount is almost identical with that which went out of the city last year in foreign remittances, as the result of savings from wages." Lowell's dilemma, Kenngott argued, was the following:

> If dividends are paid out at the expense of the mills themselves, as sometimes seems to have happened by the exhausting of the mills, so that a long period of no dividends follows, and assessments for new machinery

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[49] John Spanos quoted in Nicholas V. Karas, *Greek Immigrants at Work*, 5; Pierson, 3.

[50] Karas, *Greek Immigrants at Work*, 22.

[51] Karas, *Greek Immigrants at Work*, 25, 26.

> and replacement accounts have been necessary; and if, on the other hand, the foreign remittances, the result of savings in wages, are due to such a lowering of the standard of living among the savers that their labor becomes inefficient and their health impaired, then the dividends and remittances to non-residents work a serious damage to the city.[52]

Economy and Employment

Kenngott complained that he saw too many "able-bodied men, loafing" yet he pointed out, "There are more Greeks at work in the factories of Lowell than in any other city in the country. They are mainly employed in unskilled labor, as in picker and carding rooms, and in performing certain labor, which is usually reserved for women, such as tending ring-spinning frames." Greeks entered the mills because "several Greek agents who act as interpreters find places in the mills for the new arrivals, and receive a generous fee therefore . . . These agents are in league with second-hands and others in some of the mills, and they occasionally exploit the ignorant immigrants."[53] John Spanos recalled that Greeks took unskilled jobs in the textile mills and nearby shoe factories. "But the noise in the weaving room! Everything shook and vibrated. There was so much noise that when I walked outside after first day, I couldn't hear myself talk; like I was deaf."[54] Apostolos Eleftheriou recalled:

> On very hot days the temperature went over 100 degree inside [and] our clothes got soaked through from our sweat, and the cotton bits and dust stuck to our hair, our faces, our arms, and got in our mouths. How much of that stuff we breathed into our lungs, who know.[55]

After 1900, Greek textile workers got caught up in the strike wave that swept through the mills. In March 1903, delegates from the Greek community participated in a strike discussion initiated by the Lowell Textile Council. Four years later in April 1907, 225 Greeks at the Bigelow Carpet Company on Dutton Street struck for a wage increase and were fired. Involved in numerous labor disputes prior to the start of the World War I, Greeks were sometimes used as strikebreakers. During a strike by dyers at the Hamilton

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[52] Kenngott, 163.

[53] Kenngott, 32.

[54] Karas, 7.

[55] Karas, *Greek Immigrants At Work*, 15.

Manufacturing Company, at the very last minute 100 Greek replacement workers were persuaded not to enter the mill. Kenngott provides an account of a September 1900 strike of 400 Merrimack Manufacturing Company print workers over the issue of overtime pay.

> Their places were filled, so far as possible, by Greeks . . . On the 19th, 200 employees of the packing department, mostly women, went out in sympathy with the print workers. A guard of mounted police was detailed to escort Greeks to and from the mill during the day, to protect them from the attack of the strikers.

The print workers gave in but only "115 of the strikers who applied for work were taken back, the Greeks who had filled the places of the striking employees being retained."[56]



1912 Strike parade on Merrimack Street in downtown Lowell led by the Industrial Workers of the World's 'Big' Bill Haywood, first full row with the cool hat.

In the 1920s, mills relocated to the South causing many second-generation Greeks to lose their jobs. Difficult economic circumstances dogged them through the Great Depression and led to an inter-community struggle in the 1930s as union and non-union Greek workers fought over jobs at the Chris Laganas Shoe Company.

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[56] Kenngott, 152.

Social and Religious Life

Roughly 20,000 Greeks lived in Lowell in 1910 and the population grew slowly until the 1924 Immigration Act severely limited the number of people allowed to enter the U.S. from particular countries. Albert Johnson, Republican congressman from Washington State, and a leading proponent of immigration restrictions, justified the legislation thusly:

> Today, instead of a well-knit homogenous citizenry, we have a body politic made up of all and every diverse element. Today, instead of a nation descended from generations of freemen bred to a knowledge of the principles and practices of self-government, of liberty under law, we have a heterogeneous population no small proportion of which is sprung from races that, throughout the centuries has known no liberty at all . . . In other words, our capacity to maintain our cherished institutions stands diluted by a stream of alien blood, with all its inherited misconceptions respecting the relationship of governing power to the governed . . . It is no wonder, therefore, that the myth of the melting pot has been discredited . . . The United States is our land . . . We intend to maintain it so. The day of unalloyed welcome to all peoples, the day of indiscriminate acceptance of all races, has definitely ended.[57]

Many Greeks first settled in the Acre, a neighborhood Karas describes as "a diamond-shaped island with sides of approximately one mile. Its northerly sides are formed by the Merrimack River; its southerly sides are formed by the Pawtucket Canal." This is essentially the same neighborhood the first waves of Irish immigrants lived in. Inside the Acre are Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Dummer, and Dutton Sts., the North Common, and "the Triangle" formed by six streets: Adams, Broadway, Fletcher, Lagrange, Marion and Suffolk.[58] Even in 2010, there is an iconic and striking spot in the Acre neighborhood, which allows one to stand on the road between St. Patrick's Church and the Holy Trinity Hellenic Orthodox Church, with a canal running parallel with the street. Lowell-born in 1917 and raised in the Acre, Nicholas Georgoulis recalled in a 1980 interview:

> Community was community. There wasn't a soul in the entire Acre that a child growing up didn't get to know. If you lived in the Acre they knew them, by name. If not by name, by sight and they could almost tell you

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[57] Albert Johnson quoted in Daniels, 283-284.

[58] Nicholas V. Karas, *The Greek Triangle of the Acre: Then and Now* (Lowell: Meteora Press, 1984), 2.

> exactly the house they lived in. But the people would walk down the street and everyone was saying hello, and speaking nicely . . . That was a very nice neighborhood.[59]

Greek immigrants adjusted to industrial Lowell and at the same time preserved important cultural traditions and their Greek Orthodox religion. In 1895, the Washington-Acropolis Society formed and in 1900 the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity opened its doors, joining the nearly 60 churches already in the city. In February 1901, the Society purchased an apartment building on the corner of Lewis and Jefferson Streets for $6,500 for a new church. "Of that amount, $1,050 was raised by the community, and the balance was borrowed from the Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank. An adjacent building was purchased for $2,800 in 1903 and financed by the same bank."[60] In March 1906, the Holy Trinity Church Council authorized construction of a church and a parochial school, with the church's cornerstone laid on October 29, 1906. The *Lowell Sun* reported on the event:

> with ceremonies imposing and impressive, the corner stone of the new Greek Church at the corner of Jefferson and Lewis Streets was laid . . . About 1,000 Greeks marched from Matthew's Hall on Dutton Street through Market Street to the site of the new Church headed by St. Patrick's Cadet Band.[61]

The Holy Trinity Church, featuring a Byzantine style with "its rounded arches, two towers in front with a central dome over the intersection of the nave and transepts," was dedicated on March 15, 1908.[62] The Hellenic-American school—the first Greek parochial day school in America where pupils studied the Greek language—opened in the church basement. Greek workers also used the basement to discuss strikes and other labor actions. In 1924, the community split over a political disagreement in Greece between the Royalists and Venizelists and the Transfiguration Church formed. Four years later, a

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[59] Nicholas Georgoulis interview by Judith Dunning, July 30, 1980, Center for Lowell History, 80.15.

[60] Karabatsos and Nyder, 65-66.

[61] Karabatsos and Nyder, 76.

[62] *Lowell Courier Citizen*, March 14, 1908.

second split occurred over religious differences between the old Julian calendar and the new Gregorian calendar. This dispute resulted in the formation of St. George's Church on Worthen Street. Financial problems threatened the existence of the church, yet donations kept its doors open. Nicholas Georgoulis recalled the numerous church splits:

> But I knew it was Greek politics, and that's how the church started to split. One group, factions started a church. The other faction started a church. Because they had different . . . the religion was the same but because this man belongs to the Royalists, this one to the Venezelois party, and this one here some other independent party . . . they went along their way, and split up that way.
> That was another break. That was another one with the royalists and the Venazelists. And my group was the old guard who believed in the old calendar, stayed with the old calendar. That's what they were fighting for. Ah, well, we all started with the Holy Trinity and cause during the regime of ah royalists in Greece, and [unclear] regime. The two factions split. So of course the Greek people split into two different groups then. And they left the Holy Trinity and formed several other churches. And finally they merged as Saint George.[63]

Housing and Neighborhood

Initially, the Greeks sent a substantial portion of their wages home. According to Kenngott, "The Greek immigrant comes by ship from far across the sea, and is largely of unmarried, able-bodied, unskilled young men, eighteen to 25 years of age; the French immigration comes by express train from the north and is of families."[64] Young men "crowded together in small apartments" and were thus able to send money home and at times "those with jobs supported others who were unemployed." Wages were low, so "renting anything other than the dilapidated buildings in the once-Irish neighborhood, the Acre, was out of the question."[65]

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[63] Nicholas Georgoulis interview by Judith Dunning, July 30, 1980, Center For Lowell History, 80.15.

[64] Kenngott, 124.

[65] Karabatsos and Nyder, 65.

Reflecting the early twentieth century's growing anti-immigrant feelings, Kenngott noted in 1912 that while the Greeks were generally law-abiding:

> They are addicted to gambling with cards, and much of this is carried on in hidden ways, in the numerous coffee houses and the police make occasional arrests. The absence of home restraints and family ties leads to sexual vice. Loyalty to their own native towns and districts leads to feuds and rivalries, and cases of assault and battery are not infrequent. Drunkenness is not yet common among them, though tendencies in that direction begin to appear.[66]

During the period when southern Europeans settled in Lowell, the corporations finally severed all of their ties to the boarding houses they once maintained, many of which were scattered in the Acre and other neighborhoods near the mills. With land values rising in downtown Lowell, many of the remaining boarding houses were broken up into small apartments. As the buildings were sold, rents rose rapidly and several families ended up "crowded into houses or apartments occupied a few years ago by only one family." In his social survey, Kenngott concluded that this development resulted in the city's segregation: "The English-speaking people, who once occupied these corporation houses and tenements, have moved in large numbers into outlying districts of the city and suburban towns, which have become more accessible by the development of the electric car system." Greeks ended up in the city's "worst housing conditions." [67]

In 1905, approximately 2,000 Greeks mainly lived on Market and Suffolk streets and walked to work in the Tremont, Suffolk, Massachusetts, Middlesex, and Boott mills The houses formerly occupied by a single native-born family were now inhabited by "great numbers of foreigners who sleep on mattresses on the floor, three and four in a room." Kenngott found, "the poorer and more ignorant the people are, the more they crowd together in the center of the city . . . Those who speak the same language naturally choose to congregate, and have a great tendency to over-crowd, both for companionship and economy." Overcrowding carried health consequences. Over the nineteenth century,

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[66] Kenngott, 32, 54.

[67] Kenngott, 28.

there had been a decline in the death-rate from tuberculosis among the Irish and other nationalities in the city; now, due in part to the bad housing, there were "many cases of pulmonary tuberculosis" and glandular and bone tuberculosis" among the Greeks.[68]

Kenngott found "In the section about Market Street, practically every store is operated by a Greek and every dwelling is inhabited by Greeks." He identified seven restaurants, twenty coffee houses, twelve barber shops, two drug stores, six fruit stores, eight shoe-shine parlors, four ticket agencies, seven bakeries, four candy stores, 22 grocery stores, five coal and wood dealers, eight truckmen, one pool room, one flavoring extract factory, a meat dealer, four doctors, one orthodox priest, two ministers, five farms and 200 farm laborers, two bankers, and three teachers in the neighborhood. However, the scene he describes also consisted of "a crowd of big, lazy, able-bodied men, loafing, smoking, and playing cards, while some poor child toils eight or ten hours a day to support them."[69]

To and from work, laborers made purchases in the Greek-owned coffee shops and stores that dotted their neighborhood. Coffee shops along Dutton and Market Streets served as meeting places to hear about events in Greece, discuss conditions in the mill and city politics, play cards, and brag about their children. Georgoulis recalled, "Market Street used to have probably twelve coffee houses. And they would all be full."

> All men! Never saw a female in there. They would play cards. And they . . . actually it was just a place for the guys to hang out. It was a clubhouse for them. A very inexpensive clubhouse . . . All I would hear him [his father] speaking about [Greek politics] in the coffee houses. Ya they [his father's generation] loved it, and they used to have ah . . . shows.[70]

Demosthenes Samaras noted that his father "went to the coffee house seven days a week. You could set your clock by him. When he passed by Coravos Market, the clock in the store might be wrong, not my father's time passing by."[71] Zoe Liakos described how

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[68] Kenngott, 48-49, 50-51.

[69] Kenngott, 31, 93.

[70] Nicholas Georgoulis interview by Dunning, July 30, 1980.

[71] Karas, *The Greek Triangle of the Acre*, 10.

her husband "went to the coffee house every day, like his friends. After supper, he put on his hat, and to the coffee house. That's the way the men were, my husband, the other husbands."[72]



Greek Cultural Influences Alive and Well: Olympia Restaurant on Market Street. (Richard Howe Jr., photographer, 2009)

To summarize, according to historian Peter Blewett, "Despite the cushion against cultural shock provided by the ethnic community, during the first year many people thought about going home. Few could afford the return fare." Newcomer populations relied on religion to preserve ethnic traditions and to keep alive their 'home country traditions' in the generation born in the U.S. Foreign language newspapers flourished in French Canadian and other immigrant neighborhoods across the city. Blewett found "Sentimental attachment to the old languages remains among all ethnic groups. Even in the third generation, children still learn French, or Polish, or Greek, or Lebanese, often in order to talk to their grandparents." In chapter seven, we discuss what happened to both Little Canada and the Triangle Greek neighborhood after 1930, but first we consider a third wave of immigrants, most of whom arrived just as work disappeared from the city.

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[72] Karas, *The Greek Triangle of the Acre*, 11.

Chapter Six
The Gates Are Open for a Time: Jewish, Polish, Lithuanian, and Armenian Immigration

> While no person can control completely his or her destiny, and since poor people—and most immigrants were poor—generally have fewer options than do better-off individuals, immigrants were often buffeted by forces beyond their control. But immigrants, and more properly the decision makers in immigrant families, all made at least one crucial decision: They chose to come to America. They were thus, in this sense, movers rather than the moved.[1]

Twenty-three million Europeans entered the United States between 1880 and 1930; people from southern and Eastern Europe swelled this number. In fewer than 20 years, nearly 2 million Poles came to the U.S. and "nearly 13.5 million Italians headed to North and South America from 1880 until the outbreak of World War I." Economic factors pushed mainly young males from their homes. In *Round Trip to America*, Mark Wyman summarized the causes of this mass movement: "over-crowding, land pauperization, and other worsening home conditions; it turned on wars and threats of wars, political upheaval, ethnic persecution, and natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions and the vineyards' phylloxera." Wyman added:

> In the decade ending in 1910, in fact, almost 70 percent of all immigrants into the United States were males, mainly young males. Women continued to arrive, but many found work not in factories but as servants, or they remained within family groups. And for both men and women it was a migration of youth. [2]

Ever-faster steamships cut travel time from weeks to days, and after brief stops in New York City or Boston, significant numbers of immigrants from Russia, Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, and Asia Minor reached Lowell. Many new arrivals likely had their ticket paid for in advance by a family member in the United States—perhaps living

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[1] Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 2nd edition (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 214.

[2] Mark Wyman, *Round-Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 16, 40.



Ansherford Synagogue. (University of Massachusetts, Lowell)

on Market Street, or Howard Street, or Lakeview Avenue in Lowell—for the use of pre-paid tickets came into vogue at the time. Lowell as a destination city is confirmed by the fact that many immigrants who arrived at Ellis Island had Lowell as their final destination. A federal commission studying immigration in 1906 heard testimony from a railway agent that "90 percent of the immigrants he checked at Ellis Island had arrived with a fixed destination, and 'no amount of persuasion could influence these people to be diverted. They all claimed that letters from friends and relatives guided them'."[3]

According to Roger Daniels, "In the early 1890s, perhaps one immigrant ticket in three was prepaid; just after the turn of the century, two in three were."[4] We explicate the Lowell stories of Jewish, Polish, Lithuanian, and Armenian immigration in what follows.

Jewish Stories

In 1880, roughly 250,000 Jews lived in the United States; fewer than 50,000 of them were from Eastern Europe. By 1924, when Congress "cut immigration from Eastern Europe down to almost nothing, there were perhaps four million Jews in the United States, more than three million of them Eastern Europeans and their children and grandchildren."[5] Some of the Jewish immigrants who had fled Russia and Russian-controlled Poland and Lithuania in the 1870s arrived in Lowell in the 1870s and 1880s, well ahead of other Eastern European groups, including the Poles, whose first major influx came in the 1890s. Their community remained small when compared to Irish and late-nineteenth century French-Canadian immigration.[6] The Jewish population never exceeded 6,000 and stabilized at about 2,000 after 1920.[7] But, despite their small numbers, Lowell historian Shirley Kolack concludes that Jewish immigrants played an important role in the city's development.[8]

In his essay "*The New People*," Peter Blewett suggests that most immigrant groups nurtured a "sentimental attachment" to their old language. "Even in the third generation,"

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[3] Wyman, 35.

[4] Daniels, 186.

[5] Daniels, 223.

[6] Shirley Kolack, *A New Beginning: The Jews of Lowell, Massachusetts* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 2-3.

[7] Kolack, 63.

[8] Kolack, 3.

Blewett notes, "children still learn French, or Polish, or Greek, or Lebanese, often in order to talk to their grandparents." The Jews, Blewett offers, were an exception to "this pattern of jealous maintenance of the old language."

> The Jews, who unlike most ethnic groups were anxious to assimilate, quickly picked up English. After 1900 the community even encouraged women to put aside housework to take night classes in English at the Lincoln School. They sent their children to public school and had them learn Hebrew at the synagogue in the afternoons. The children, especially the eldest child, became the invaluable authority on American ways for the parents.[9]

Why Do They Come?

In his *History of Lowell and its People*, Frederick Coburn notes, "A few families of German Hebrews had settled in the city before 1880 and become an integral part of its commercial life." After 1890, many Russian and Polish Jews passed through Ellis Island and New York City and eventually took the train to Lowell. One important factor pushing Jews from Russia and its territories was conscription. Similar to stories within the Polish and Lithuanian community, 18-year-old males were compelled to join the military often for up to 25 years of service far from home.[10] Conscription assimilated Jews into Russian society and out of their Jewish ghettoes. Whatever its exact aims, conscription was a central 'push' factor for exit from Russia.[11] Religious persecution and the sheer brutality of their living conditions also helped tip the scales toward leaving.[12] Lowellian Nathan Cohen recalled:

> When I was [in Russia], the boys between ten and twelve acted as a lookout for the self-defense that every [Jewish] community had. Defending themselves from the Russians who, whenever they felt like it, made a little pot-run or a larger pot-run, which means just attacking Jews. And first it started breaking their windows, then breaking their skulls and this is what they did.[13]

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[9] Peter Blewett, "The New People: An Introduction to the Ethnic History of Lowell," in Cotton was King, 205.

[10] Frederick Coburn, *History of Lowell and Its People* (New York City: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1920), vol. I, 344; Kolack, 2.

[11] Nathan Cohen interview by Paul Page, *The Mill Workers of Lowell*, The Lowell National Historical Park and the University of Lowell, July 10, 1985, 1; Kolack, 2; Stella Mazur, *Roots and Heritage of Polish People in Lowell* (Lowell, MA: Sullivan Brothers, 1976), 49.

[12] Kolack, 2.

[13] Nathan Cohen interview by Paul Page, 2.

It was no accident that Lowell's Jewish population grew in the 1890s. Coburn describes how textile mill agents received letters from New York City's United Hebrew Charities asking them if there was work in Lowell for Russian Jews. "There are many skilled mechanics among their number as well as families who have some experience and are well fitted to become operatives in mills and factories," read one correspondence. However, antagonisms existed between textile workers suffering through work downturns in the 1880s and 1890s toward Jewish immigrants and anyone else who might take what they claimed as their work. Yet mill agents welcomed these new workers to the Spindle City because, as Coburn pointed out, immigration

> hindered the growth of economic class consciousness … Solidarity of the workers was held back in Lowell by the fact that native Americans and Irish often hesitated to fraternize with French-Canadians, Greeks and Hebrews. This lack of cohesion might conventionally be interpreted as advantageous to Lowell manufacturers.[14]

The Neighborhood

A significant portion of Lowell's Jewish community settled in the Highlands around the intersection of Hale and Howard Streets. Isadore I. Wolf, the rabbi of the Congregation Sons of Montefiore Synagogue, and his wife Ester lived on the second floor of 7 Gates Street between 1944 and 1959. In 1959, they moved to 56 Bellevue Avenue, still in the neighborhood.[15] The Synagogue was located at 132 Howard Street. Howard Street and Hale Street formed the boundaries of the so-called Hale-Howard neighborhood, a first place of residency for many immigrants, especially Eastern European Jews who arrived in large numbers in the 1880s and 1890s. The Jewish community maintained a Yiddish-speaking assistant at the station—someone like a social worker—who greeted immigrants and helped them to secure housing. By 1900, the vibrant Hale-Howard neighborhood boasted kosher markets, Hebrew schools, four synagogues, and two newspapers, the *Star of Bethlehem* and *Zion's Banner*.[16] Montefiore Synagogue became one of the neighborhood's important anchors, just as St. Patrick's Church had for Irish immigrants. Its leadership included Chairman David Ziskind; Secretary and Teacher

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[14] Coburn, 344-345.

[15] Lowell City Directory, 1949, 1950, 1952, 1953, 1959, 1960, 1963.

[16] Shirley Kolack, 7-9.

Harry Perlman; and Treasurer Israel Steinberg. Perlman and Steinberg lived with their wives in the Hale-Howard neighborhood, as did Ziskind and his wife Rose and son Jacob. Jacob Ziskind worked as superintendent of one of his father's businesses at 137 Cambridge Street.[17]

A later wave of Jewish arrivals had fled the gruesome violence of the Holocaust. Szifra Burke described her parents' horrific situation and decision to flee to the U.S. In 1939, her parents traveled to Russia to retrieve her brother, sent there to avoid a "work situation" in Poland. While abroad, the borders closed and the World War II began. After nearly six years in exile, they returned to their hometown in Poland. As Burke described it:

> what ended up happening was that they went back to [her mother's hometown] and everyone had been killed, which was not at all what they thought. They thought it was sort of like, they would end up encountering sort of more stereotypic [war-type] casualties. So maybe one brother, one sister, one somebody. And I mean it's an amazing thing to think they were the only two people they knew alive.[18]

Burke's parents refused to stay in the village even for one night and fled to the U.S. on a journey that passed through Germany, France, Canada, and eventually into Buffalo, New York.[19]

Where's the Work?

When Jews arrived in Lowell from Eastern Europe and Russia, they mostly entered the work force on its lowest rungs. Predominantly peddlers in late nineteenth-century Lowell, they sold whatever they could, traveling the city streets with push carts loaded down with goods.[20] One man, a boat-builder by trade, bought grain from Lowell-area farmers and resold it at a market in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Other families went door-to-door selling pots and pans. Slowly, they made their way into employment in the city's sprawling textile mills.[21] Mill work, questionably an upgrade from the freelance

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[17] *Lowell City Directory*, 1919.

[18] Szifra Burke interview by Martha Norkunas, *Women, Work and Ethnicity in Lowell, MA*, (Lowell Historical Museum and the Center for Lowell History, 1983), 12.

[19] Szifra Burke interview by Martha Norkunas, 7-15.

[20] Norman Zawicheck, *Lowell Sunday Sun*, "A Native Recalls Old City," June 13, 1971, B6.

[21] Ester Cohen, interview by Mark Levine, Willow Manor Nursing and Retirement Center, 1987, in Kolack, *A New Beginning*, 10; Nathan Cohen interview by Paul Page, 3.

peddling, presented Jewish immigrants with the same harsh working conditions faced by other immigrant groups. However, mill work created special problems for, and discrimination against, Jewish workers. They entered the mills with a stern warning from their managers that they abandon their religion, saying they were told, "If you don't come in on Saturday [the Sabbath], don't come in on Monday."[22]

In the first decade of the twentieth century—around the time Lowell's Jewish population entered the mills—wages were about $3.00 a week.[23] Though their numbers increased, Jews never took a large number of mill jobs. For example, in 1910, the seven largest mills listed eight Hebrews, one Russian-Jewish, and 13 Jewish workers.[24] Despite the small numbers, their experiences in the mills echoed those of other immigrants. Sidney Muskovitz remembered his mother working in the Swisher Mill in North Chelmsford at the age of 14. He also started working there at a young age.[25] Another boy worked as a floor sweeper in the Boott Mills at age 15. Although both men moved on to other work, their lives remained linked to the mills. The work was physically demanding and accidents were common. The typical work week in the early twentieth century was 54 hours with no sick time or paid vacations to speak of. In certain areas of the wool mills, temperatures reached 110 degrees. Carding rooms contained hulking machines, which whirled through cotton at high speeds. A former worker concluded, "I wouldn't have a dog work in the mill."[26]

Lowell's small Jewish neighborhood centered on Chelmsford, Grand, Middlesex, and Howard Streets near South Commons and one of the city's train stations. The area contained single-family homes, apartment blocks, religious institutions, and a small commercial district at the intersection of Grand and Chelmsford Streets. A Polish-Jewish neighborhood on the other side of the Merrimack River in Centralville consisted of several single-family homes in the Crescent Street area and a number of tenements along

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[22] Jewish old-timers, group interview by Mark Levine and Shirley Kolack, Willow Manor Nursing and Retirement Center, June 2, 1988, in Shirley Kolack, *A New Beginning*, 10.

[23] Zawicheck, *Lowell Sunday Sun*, "A Native Recalls Old City," June 13, 1971, B6.

[24] Kenngott, *Record of a City*, 34.

[25] Sidney Muskovitz interview by Pauline Steinhorn, *Working for Victory: Textiles*, Center for Lowell History, March 16, 1995, 1.

[26] Muskovitz interview by Pauline Steinhorn, 2-5; Nathan Cohen, interview by Paul Page, 11-12.

Front Street, Lakeview Avenue, and West Third Street. In *The Record of a City*, Kenngott noted in a condescending tone that "[m]any Jews occupy modern houses, but often they do not seem to appreciate the conveniences." HE added that "[t]he Hebrews can hardly be placed in the 'working class' of Lowell, and they seldom have more than one family in a tenement, but their surroundings are kept none too clean."[27] According to Mary Podgorski, [i]t was just Polish Jews [in Centralville], there were Polish stores, grocery stores, there were Polish bakers, and we mingled with the Polish people. So [not knowing English in America] wasn't a hardship (uh) at all."[28] Leni Joyce remembered:

> It was interesting—which it had to change in our social structure today—it was not uncommon for families to have as many as fifteen to seventeen children. They all lived together, they managed. If you compare with today's housing situation where it's unusual for even two families to live together. They all managed to pile in together and have as many as fifteen children. Lowell had one of the highest birth rates in the country. I don't know if that's true today, but it was at that time. Now. Also what was very interesting is because the mill was really the center of commercial employment. We had many people from a single-family work at the mill.[29]

Sidney Muskovitz recalled: "There used to be a mix, but [there] usually was a Jewish section. Howard Street was the synagogues, and Dealy Street, that's where I was born. My mother was born on Howard Street, that's right where the synagogues are. My father came from Russia. My mother came from Russia, but she was only seven years old."[30]

Not surprisingly, the earliest neighborhood organizations were religious ones, which became sanctuaries from the swirling new environment and noticeable anti-Semitism. Jewish immigrants established orthodox synagogues soon after their arrival. Organized in 1897, the McIntyre Synagogue brought the first rabbi to Lowell, Rabbi Elias

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[27] Kenngott, 53, 54.

[28] Mary Podgorski interview by Olga Spandagos, *The Working People of Lowell*, Lowell National Historical Park and the Center for Lowell History. November 14, 1985, 2.

[29] Leni Joyce interview by Mehmed Ali and Gray Fitzsimons, *After the Last Generation: Lowell's Textile Workers, 1958-1998, Part II*. The Lowell National Historical Park and the Center for Lowell History. April 5, 2001.

[30] Muskovitz interview by Pauline Steinhorn, 1995,

Wolfson.[31] When he passed away in 1928, the *Lowell Evening Ledger's* obituary reported that Wolfson had been a leader "among the Jews of Lowell" for nearly 40 years and that he was "an expert on Rabbinical Law."[32]

Barbara Bernstein noted that while Jewish identity remained important, the Yiddish language became less important over time.

> There's a lady I still keep in touch with, she lives in Florida, and she had a Yiddish group going, not so much teaching it, but people who could barely speak it got together so they could keep speaking it. I think when Albert [her husband] was growing up and I was growing up too, that was the language our parents or grandparents used so we wouldn't understand what they were talking about. We can understand a little bit of it, but they never encouraged us to speak it, which is a shame because it is a very interesting language.[33]

For Barbara Bernstein, belonging to a temple mattered as an expression of her Jewish identity.

> They all have education programs and study groups and things. Culturally and religiously they have everything. In temple, a lot of it is in Hebrew, whereas Yiddish is the language people spoke, not the Bible language. They definitely do keep their identity, but Yiddish is one of the parts of identity that is let go.[34]

In 1927 Temple Beth El, the "first conservative synagogue and combined community center," opened in the former Highland Club on Princeton Boulevard in Lowell's Highlands neighborhood. For Shirley Kolack, it quickly became the most important Jewish institution in the city. The Jewish community also established burial societies to carry out the faith's traditions at death, even before schools were set up; every Jew in Lowell was listed with a burial organization.[35] As the population got smaller in the post-World War II period, Temple Beth El was sold to the Community Christian Fellowship and the congregation merged with a nearby temple in Andover.[36]

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[31] Kolack, 17.

[32] "Rabbi Wolfson Dies Here Today," *Lowell Evening Ledger*, November 5, 1928, 5.

[33] Barbara and Albert Bernstein interview by Christoph Strobel, March 18, 2008.

[34] Barbara and Albert Bernstein interview, 4.

[35] Kolack, 17-20.

[36] Barbara and Albert Bernstein interview, 2.

Polish Stories

Polish immigrants arrived in Lowell in significant numbers near the end of the nineteenth century, a part of a much larger eastern European influx into the U.S. By 1910, the Polish represented about 2,000 of Lowell's 80,000 immigrants. The International Institute estimated that 5,000 Poles lived in Lowell in 1918, while in the U.S., their population swelled to almost one million by 1915. According to 1910 census data analyzed by Roger Daniels, of the approximately 950,000 foreign-born Poles in the U.S., "almost 45 percent of the Polish immigrants came from Russia, 35 percent from Austria-Hungary, and 20 percent from Germany." Poles brought their strong Catholic faith to Lowell, which mixed with two extant Catholic populations already well embedded in the city, the Irish and the French-Canadians.[37]

Problems in Poland, including religious persecution, conscription, and a lack of employment, pushed many Poles toward the U.S. Poles also came to escape persecution in Russia, where, for example, they weren't allowed to learn to read or write. Passing through Ellis Island, Poles headed to Boston and then to Lowell for its widely advertised work opportunities.[38] Daniels suggests that most Poles settling in industrial cities "were largely impelled by economic motives, *za chlebem* (for bread)."[39] Polish families also moved to Lowell from southern New Hampshire and nearby Chicopee and Holyoke, Massachusetts. The Belvidere, Centralville, and South Common areas of the city became home.[40]

Where They Worked

The priest for Lowell's Holy Trinity [Polish] Roman Catholic Church recalled that in 1931 Poles who had been silk mill workers in Clinton, Massachusetts, and Newmarket, New Hampshire, traveled to Lowell for work in its silk mills, a more skill-

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[37] Daniels, 215; Lowell Polish Cultural Committee, *Polonia: The Greater Polish American Community, Past & Present*, Lowell, MA, 1991; St. Casimir's Polish National Catholic Church, *75th Anniversary: 1898 to 1973*, Lowell, MA, St. Casimir's Polish National Church, 1973; John Abucewicz, interview by Paul Page, *The Working People of Lowell*, Lowell National Historical Park and the Center for Lowell History, February 26, 1986.

[38] Joseph Golas interview by Suzette Jefferson, *The Working People of Lowell*, Lowell National Historical Park, University of Massachusetts Lowell, and the Center for Lowell History, November 11, 1985, 1-4.

[39] Daniels, 219.

[40] Mazur, 9; Kenngott, 52.

intensive production process than woolen mill work. John Abucewicz described how he and his father and sister followed the silk mills from New Hampshire to Lowell.[41] Silk mills tended to be smaller than textile mills and usually paid higher wages. Newmarket's silk mills originated as cotton mills in 1823; in 1924, owners established a subsidiary silk mill in Lowell. In 1931, when the Newmarket, New Hampshire, operations shifted to Lowell due to "persistent labor trouble" in New Hampshire, Polish families made the short trip for the jobs.[42] Poles earned $4 a week as basic laborers, $6 as spinners, and $12 as weavers.[43] Polish immigrant Joseph Golas lived in Newmarket before coming to Lowell with his parents in the 1930s. He recalled Jewish and Polish bosses and felt that his Polish boss was much worse to Polish workers. Golas bounced from the Pacific Mills to a Lawrence-based woolen mill, the Boott Mills, and finally the Wannalancit mills. Slack periods drove his job changes.[44] Mary Podgorski's mother learned weaving in Lowell and earned $3.60 a week. The Holy Trinity pastor's mother arrived in the U.S. in 1911 or 1912 and initially lived in Chelsea. Finding no work there, she moved in with her cousins in Lowell and took a mill job. As compared to the Newmarket Poles who followed semi-skilled production jobs whenever possible, these women took whatever work they could find.[45]

The mills' pull is mentioned frequently in oral histories.[46] However, Polish immigrants pulled to Lowell by the promise of work confronted harsh working conditions as employment decline had begun. Mary Podgorski recalled the work thusly:

> My mother worked in the Boott Mill. Sometimes, if there was vacation time, I would go in with her running noon time, and fill up. She was a weaver. They used this big round object where the filling was put in. . .. The filling has to go into the shuttle and the shuttle goes back and forth and weaves the

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[41] John Abucewicz interview by Paul Page, 1; Joseph Golas, interview by Suzette Jefferson, 22-23.

[42] Mary Blewett, *The Last Generation: Work and Life in the Textile Mills of Lowell, Massachusetts 1910-1960*, (Amherst, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 25-26.

[43] Mazur, *Roots and Heritage*, 10.

[44] Interview with Joseph Golas by Suzette Jefferson, November 21, 1985, Center for Lowell History, #83.31, 33, 2-3.

[45] John Abucewicz interview by Paul Page; Mary Podgorski interview by Olga Spandagos, *The Working People of Lowell*, Lowell National Historical Park and the Center for Lowell History, November 14, 1985, 10.

[46] John Abucewicz, interview by Paul Page, 2.

> loom. I would do that for her. . . as one would empty out, the other the other one would drop in automatically and I was always so afraid of it because there were times when the shuttle would go out of the kilter and just go flying. . .. If you were in the way you would get hit. I always feared that job.[47]

Fearful of the weave room, Podgorski still began work in one at age fifteen to help her mother pay the bills. Other Poles recounted the sadness they felt standing for days on end in mill doorways, hoping to "take work."[48] The work's extreme conditions were ameliorated somewhat with the introduction of unions in the 1920s and 1930s, but by then many mills in and around Lowell were closing.[49]

When "slack time" arose in the mills, many immigrants scrambled for ways to keep their families afloat, even moving in search of an elusive paycheck. Podgorski described her brief periods in Hillsboro, New Hampshire, and Cranston, Rhode Island. For example, she left Lowell when the mill she worked in went on strike, following other Polish workers into a Rhode Island silk mill until the Lowell strike concluded. John Abucewicz, at one time a pastor at the Holy Trinity (Polish) Roman Catholic Church, described how his father took a job in a foundry in Cambridge in the 1920s when Lowell's mills began closing.[50]

According to Joseph Golas, the Roosevelt administration's National Recovery Act pushed wages up. "When [it] came into effect, that was a godsend, because they had to give you thirty cents an hour." But, despite small improvements in wages, Golas remembered that tough times persisted in Lowell. At the Wannalancit Mills, he operated the straight loom. When he started there, he ran eight to ten looms, but ended up tending 24 machines at a time. By the time the mill closed, he heard that each weaver ran 60 or 70 looms.[51]

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[47] Mary Podgorski interview by Olga Spandagos, 10.

[48] Mary Podgorski interview by Olga Spandagos, 10; Joseph Golas interview by Suzette Jefferson, 24.

[49] John Abucewicz interview by Paul Page, 10.

[50] Mary Podgorski interview by Olga Spandagos, 12; John Abucewicz interview by Paul Page, 3.

[51] Interview with Joseph Golas by Suzette Jefferson, 11/21/1985, Center for Lowell History, #83.31, 23, 28-29.

Where They Lived

Polish immigrants lived within an ethnic enclave, a "safe" area where everyone spoke Polish.[52] The self-contained community helped smooth the way for new arrivals, who often moved in with family members already in the city or rented rooms from other Polish families. It was not unusual for a Polish household to allocate several rooms for boarders; this was an important source of income for large families. Poles living in parts of Centralville could take a short walk over the Aiken Street Bridge and the Bridge Street Bridge to the mills and downtown to shop. In Centralville, small grocery stores and bakeries catered to the needs of the Polish community. Young, single Poles often lived together in group rooms, overseen by a house mother. They ate communal meals, marked their baking bread in the communal oven with their initials, and somehow labeled their meat stewing in communal cook pots.

Mary Podgorski's parents never ordered her to stay in her neighborhood, one she characterized as a "Polish colony."[53] Families never locked their doors because neighbors in the large tenement blocks always dropped by "like open house." In the evening, men played cards and women sat and talked on the front steps of their homes.[54] Though the community's internal strength provided a measure of security, many newcomers lived in substandard housing. Podgorski's experience highlights the hardscrabble lives that awaited people:

> Later on my mother was able to take a tenement and at that time tenements were three dollars a week, and we had gas lights which I thought was great because when we were boarding I lived up in the attic with my mother. We had one room and the only thing we had that was of any heat was a lamp . . . after that my mother was able to take a tenement. It was three dollars a week and had gas and I thought that was so great because the gas light was so much brighter than the lamp light, and we also had a small gas stove beside the old black stove you burn wood and coal in. To me it was a luxury, just a luxury, to have three rooms instead of just one room.[55]

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[52] Mazur,11; John Abucewicz interview by Paul Page, 2.

[53] John Abucewicz interview by Paul Page, 2; Mary Podgorski interview by Olga Spandagos, 3-4.

[54] Interview with Joseph Golas by Suzette Jefferson, November 21, 1985, Center for Lowell History, 83.31, 14, 16.

[55] Mary Podgorski interview by Olga Spandagos, 4-5.

Maintaining Their Culture

The Roman Catholic Church's comfortable routines of religion provided Poles with important homeland links. In Poland, the church was the center of village social and cultural life, and in Lowell Poles established churches. Until 1899, priests from the Boston-based Our Lady of Czestochowa Church conducted services for the city's Polish community. For important religious events—baptisms and marriages—people traveled to the South Boston church. After saving money, Lowell residents petitioned the Boston church for permission to establish a Polish parish in Lowell.[56] The Boston bishop failed to respond, and in an act of defiance Poles tried withdrawing their money from the Boston church to build one of their own; the archdiocese refused to return the money. Faced with this predicament, the Polish community split. One group stayed with the Boston church and eventually started the Holy Trinity (Polish) parish on High Street. The breakaway group, disillusioned with Boston and the Vatican, in 1901 joined the upstart Polish National Catholic Church, a U.S.-based splinter church.[57]

In 1900, even though nearly 200 Polish Catholic parishes existed across the U.S., there were no Polish bishops and the church hierarchy ordered priests not to teach Polish in their parish schools. Resentment over the language ban stirred 'revolts' in Chicago, Buffalo, and Cleveland. In 1897, dissatisfied Scranton, Pennsylvania, coal miners asked the Polish-born priest Father Francis Hodur to found a new church.[58] The Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC) translated the Latin liturgy into Polish, celebrated Mass in Polish, and taught the language and culture in parish schools. Lowell's disaffected Poles sought ought the PNCC and on March 23, 1901, Father W. Szumowski celebrated the first Catholic Mass in Polish in their church on Rogers Street.[59] Going forward, the two Lowell parishes only communicated with each other when grave threats to the U.S. or Poland sprang up such as during World War II.[60]

For a while, Poles kept up many of their old-country wedding and food traditions. In Poland, the community celebrated weddings with a calf slaughter, while village women

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[56] Mazur, 51.

[57] Lowell Polish Cultural Committee, *Polonia: The Greater Polish American Community*; St. Casimir's Polish National Church, *75th Anniversary,* 1.

[58] St. Casimir's Polish National Church, *75th Anniversary*, 1-2.

[59] St. Casimir's Polish National Church, *75th Anniversary*, 15.

[60] Mazur, 52.

baked for a week. Weddings started in the church, after which a celebration several days long moved to the home. But over time, the Americanization process modified weddings to a one-day affair. This probably occurred in part because a week-long wedding got too expensive.[61] Joseph Golas remarked on the centrality of food in the Polish community when he described the making of sauerkraut. When farmers brought cabbage into town, Polish families bought five or six bushels. Then "they used to take turns going from one house to the other, and shred it." They combined the shredded cabbage in barrels with salt, vinegar, and full heads of cabbage. The communal nature of the activity maintained traditions, social cohesion, and social networks.[62] John Abucewicz noted that Polish burial traditions changed over time. At first home-based wakes preceded a trip to the cemetery. As late as 1945, his mother's funeral commenced at home. He believed that the transition to funeral home wakes began around that time.[63]

Lithuanian Stories

Lithuanians arrived in Lowell as part of the eastern European immigration wave at the start of the twentieth century, leaving difficult circumstances to find a new life in the industrial U.S. Lowell continued to draw immigrants to its surviving textile mills. Upon arrival, Lithuanians established religious institutions and found work in the mills.

Why They Came

Two factors pushed Lithuanians to Lowell: the difficulty of farm life and conscription into the Russian army. Rather than fight for Russia, young men fled their homes. Distinct from military service, men and women experienced the hardships of rural farm life. Edna Balkus remarked:

> But over [in Lithuania] on the farm [when] I work, I don't get nothing. If I work for 50 cents I work 12 hours; almost 50 cents I get pay over there. It's very hard. That's why people from Europe, all nice boys, when he's 19 years old, 20, he runs to America, because at 21 he got to go in the Russian Army. Everybody run away from [that].[64]

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[61] Mary Podgorski interview by Olga Spandagos, 14; John Abucewicz interview by Paul Page, 9.

[62] Joseph Golas interview by Suzette Jefferson, November 21, 1985, Center for Lowell History, 83.31, 15.

[63] John Abucewicz interview by Paul Page, 9.

[64] Edna Balkus interview by Martha Norkunas, *Women, Work and Ethnicity Study*, Center for Lowell History, July, 1983, 11.

Their Work

As we have demonstrated, while newcomers often lived in fairly well defined ethnic neighborhoods, they almost all shared the common experience of mill work. Despite harsh conditions, low pay, periods of unemployment, and eventually mill closures, many Lithuanians worked in the city's largest mills and slowly improved their quality of life.[65] This placed them well within Lowell's broader immigrant story.[66] Edna Balkus hopscotched to several different mills in and around Lowell during the 1920s and 1930s because of lay-offs.[67] Between 1900 and 1930 as the mills closed their doors, the nascent Lithuanian community barely coalesced before many of its members moved away from Lowell looking for work. Based on figures in Margaret Parker's *Lowell: A Study of Industrial Development* (1940), cotton mill employment reached its peak in the city in 1890 (15,074 jobs) and thereafter fell to 6,758 jobs in 1927, on the eve of the Great Depression.

A 1928 *Lowell Sun* article about St. Joseph's Lithuanian parish noted, "Within the past few weeks, [the pastor] says, a dozen or more of his parishioners have moved with their families to Lynn, New Bedford, Detroit, Michigan, and other places where they have been able to find work."[68] In the early twentieth century, at the Lithuanian community's height, approximately 2,300 parishioners attended the church.[69] However, they began leaving the city soon after their arrival, and according to one long-time Lowell Lithuanian, no 'little Lithuania' ever took shape. By one estimate, roughly 350 Lithuanian families remained in 1935.[70]

Before the population decline, Lithuanian immigrants encountered an evolving built environment. Two things were happening in Lowell as the Lithuanians were arriving. First, "the English-speaking people, who once occupied [those] corporation houses and tenements" moved in large numbers "to outlaying districts of the city." Yankees and Irish

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[65] Kenngott, 28-34.

[66] Anne Ohlsen interview by Pat Coble, *The Working People of Lowell*, Lowell National Historical Park, University of Massachusetts Lowell and the Center for Lowell History, May 19, 1986, 23-5.

[67] Edna Balkus interview by Martha Norkunas.

[68] "Unified Effort of Parishioners and Pastor of St. Joseph's Lithuanian Church Have Brought about Transformation in a Year," *Lowell Sun*, September 1, 1928.

[69] Anne Ohlsen interview by Pat Coble, 18.

[70] Edna Balkus interview by Martha Norkunas.

alike moved from the Acre and other 'downtown' neighborhoods as the great influx of eastern and southern European immigrants arrived. The electric car hastened outward migration as middle-level workers moved to the Highlands, Pawtucketville, and Belvidere neighborhoods. Such moves often reflected a higher family income than that of families who remained living in the shadow of the city's slowly closing mills.[71]

Local historians disagree on where the Lithuanian community's geographic center was. For some, Lithuanians mainly concentrated around the Lithuanian Catholic Church on Rogers Street. One oral history identified Centralville as a key area of such settlement. And according to Anne Ohlsen, Lithuanian and Polish immigrants settled near the Lowell Textile Institute, now the University of Massachusetts Lowell in the city's Pawtucketville neighborhood. Ohlsen's family, on the other hand, were the only Lithuanians living on Christian Hill.[72]

Maintaining Their Culture

As we have observed, immigrant groups brought pieces of their homelands with them to Lowell. Some customs continued, but many disappeared over the generations. In 1902, Lithuanians began establishing their church when two members of Lowell's Lithuanian Algirda fraternal society met with a priest in the South Boston Lithuanian parish and the Archbishop of Boston. The archdiocese approved construction of a church and Father Joseph Jusaitis, from Lawrence's Lithuanian parish, helped the fraternal society's undertaking. Efforts culminated with the 1908 purchase of a former Polish church on Rogers Street.[73] In 1911, Lithuanian musical groups traveled from Boston, Cambridge, Nashua, Manchester, Haverhill, and Lawrence for the dedication of the city's first Lithuanian church.[74] It served as an important center of Lithuanian identity and culture, just as St. Patrick's Church had from the middle of the nineteenth century forward for the Irish. Ten years later, a parish hall opened. The pastor "organized the

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[71] Kenngott, 28.

[72] Anne Ohlsen interview by Pat Coble, 23.

[73] "St. Joseph's Church: History," Lithuanian exhibit, Center for Lowell History.

[74] "Church Dedicated: Rt. Rec. Bishop Anderson Blessed the Lithuanian Church," *Lowell Sun*, May 31, 1911, 10.

children of the parish for the purpose of studying their native tongue and the history of the Lithuanian people … [to] instruct them in the traditions of their people."[75] When asked whether parish children learned Lithuanian, Edna Balkus recalled:

> Yeah, oh yeah, they learn Lithuanian. They go to Sunday school, they go in the church, they learn Lithuanian. All Lithuanian. But no one talks, it's kind of like a broken language, because not many talk in Lithuanian now … destroying languages. Like now, I'm Lithuanian and my kids don't talk in Lithuanian, we talk just in English. My cousin lives on Concord Street. They both Lithuanian, both good talking Lithuanian, good talking. They have three kids, kids don't understand Lithuanian.[76]

Despite her bleak outlook, some families spoke the language through several generations; but it would be fair to say that the cultural transmission largely failed for the third generation.[77] Lithuanians remained connected to Lithuania and celebrated its achievements, including the independence of their homeland after World War I. A rally on Lowell's South Common commemorating the event prominently featured the Lithuanian and American flags and included a marching band and men, women, and children dressed in traditional clothing.[78]

Armenians in Lowell

According to the Armenian Historical Society, there were 69 Armenians in the United States in 1870. It was not until the late 1880s that significant migration began. In 1880, about 40 Armenians lived in Massachusetts, half of them in the Greater Boston area and the rest in Worcester and Millbury. Most Armenian immigrants came through Ellis Island, settled in Eastern cities, and worked in factories. "Probably around 100,000 came to the United States between the late 1880s and the virtual closing of immigration for them in 1924." According to Daniels, they were mostly male (71.3 percent) and had a moderate return migration rate (18.1 percent).[79] Pushed by the political persecution

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[75] "Unified Effort of Parishioners and Pastor," *Lowell Sun*, September 1, 1928, 9.

[76] Edna Balkus interview by Martha Norkunas, 17.

[77] Hazel Greska interview by Martha Norkunas, *Women, Work and Ethnicity in Lowell, MA*, Lowell Historical Museum and the Center for Lowell History, July 25, 1983, 10.

[78] "Lithuanians in Celebration," *Lowell Sun*, August 21, 1922, 1.

[79] Daniels, 209, 210.

and massacres of Armenians by Turkey in 1894 and 1896, and pulled by the employment opportunities that Lowell provided, Armenians settled in Lowell. Most of them were unskilled male laborers who intended to rejoin their families back home after making some money. In 1905, 142 Armenians lived in Lowell, less than one percent of the city's total population of 94,889. Even this small figure made Lowell one of the ten most populous Armenian communities in Massachusetts in 1905.

Where They Worked

Mirak contends, "Armenians found work through hearsay, because of the arrival of earlier immigrants, by chance, or through the work of various immigrant groups functioning as employment agencies."[80] Soon after arrival, they found mill employment and, similar to other immigrants, they worked long hours for low wages under exacting working conditions. The lack of English-speaking skills made it difficult to advance up the pay scale. Mirak described what mill work was like for Armenians in nearby Lawrence and it is easy to visualize Lowell's mills in the story.

> In the mills, the air is, as a rule, very bad, and there is often no provision at all for proper ventilation. In many mills I have seen the condensed moisture streaming down the windows, and clouds of water vapor, almost scalding hot, rising amongst the looms from open grids on the floor.[81]

The Armenian Historical Society indicates that there were two additional small inflows of Armenians to Massachusetts from 1908 to 1913 and from 1920 to 1924. Many of these newer immigrants were skilled and literate; the proportion of professional and skilled people was actually one of the highest among European immigrants during this period. This enabled many Armenians to start businesses and pursue professional careers.

Social and Religious Life

Sporadic records about the Armenians indicate that they lived in congested and fully occupied tenements with other non-English-speaking immigrants as the Yankees and the Irish moved to the newly developed edges of the city. A huge block located at

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[80] Robert Mirak, *Torn Between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 80.

[81] Cited in Mirak, 82; see Young, 5

the corner of Elm and Linden Streets contained thirty-two tenements in 1912. Fourteen different nationalities lived in the block known as 'Joe Flynn's Wonderland' and the 'Hotel Philadelphia' because there were "two large buildings with one front entrance in a retreating nook, after the manner of Philadelphia apartment houses." Among the fourteen ethnicities in the building were Armenians, Turks, Greeks, Italians, Poles, and French-Canadians.[82]

Though a small population, Armenians built a community in Lowell and also maintained connections with Armenians in Watertown, Worcester, and Boston. The Armenian Apostolic Church was the most important organization in preserving the community's identity, culture, and values. In 1910, the first Ladies' Aid Society formed, with the primary goal to build a church and in 1916 Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church opened on Lawrence Street. It was "a small brick building with an Armenian architectural bell tower."[83] As one of the first edifices of the Armenian Apostolic Church in America, it played an important role in the Massachusetts Armenian community while it provided essential religious, social, and cultural services to Lowell's Armenian community. Armenian language and culture classes were offered to children. In the early years of the church, Marcus Der Manuelian became "a dominant force in religious affairs."[84]

Iterations and Interactions in Defined Spaces

The intersection of people and immigration patterns is demonstrated by what happened to the mixed-use building at 311-317 Westford Street in Cupples Square. In 1926, Abbott Bros. grocery store opened at 313 Westford Street. The proprietor, Goodwin Abbott, Russian-born and Yiddish-speaking, lived at 315 Westford Street with his parents Samuel and Ethel Abbott.[85] The store was owned in 1930 by Charles W. Hamm; perhaps the presence of A & P and First National grocery stores in the neighborhood put the Abbot Bros. out of business. In 1940, Jacob Gardner operated Terminal Fruit Shop at 313 Westford Street, which endured as a neighborhood fixture through several ownership

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[82] Kenngott, 52.

[83] http://www.stsvartanantz.com/historyofourchurch1.htm. (Accessed October 24, 2008).

[84] The Armenian Historical Society, *The Armenians in Massachusetts* (Boston: the Armenian Historical Society, 1937), 65.

[85] The Lowell Directory, 1926; US Census, 1930.

changes. Gardner lived at 238 Wilder Street with David Gardner, a clerk, and Irving Gardner, a lawyer.[86] George Malapanis, a Greek, living in nearby Dracut, succeeded Gardner as the owner of Terminal Fruit during the 1960s and the 1970s.[87] In 1970, Dino Borras, who lived in Lowell's Acre neighborhood operated Terminal Fruit.[88]

Daniel Brown and his wife Ninaetta, born in Maine of Canadian-English parents, lived at 315 Westford Street in 1930. Brown worked as a watchman at a local shoe factory.[89] Henry Reslow operated a shoe repair business at 311 Westford Street and lived at 83 Corbett Street. His son Carl worked in the shoe repair shop. Reslow's parents were born in Sweden and he was born in Michigan. His wife, Ellen, was born in Sweden and spoke Swedish. Their four children—Carl, Edith, Albert, and Gertrude— were born in Michigan. Swedish-born Edwin Peters lived next door to the Reslows. Neighbors were born in Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, England, Lithuania, and Portugal or had parents born in one of these countries.[90]

By the early 1990s, Cupples Square and the 311-17 Westford Street block had gone through a major demographic transition. Resident surnames living in the area bounded by Coral, Loring, and Leroy Streets in the Square reflect the changes. In 1975, the streets held a mix of peoples and backgrounds, with the block dominated by Irish (Gallagher, Lannan, MacKinnon, McGadden, McMeniman, Lambert, Connelly, McWilliams) and French-Canadian (Jacques, Cote, Legere, Lafontaine, Cornier, Lafleur, Ducharme) families.[91] While few families moved out of the neighborhood between 1975 and 1985, Boeuf and Ann Le moved into 48 Coral Street. Their move marked one of the first appearances of Southeast Asians in the Westford-Coral-Loring-Leroy Street grid. In 1990, while several families (Legere, Lannan, McWilliams, McGadden, Jacques) remained, the neighborhood contained Southeast Asian families (Pham, Pin, Vu, Ngyuen) as homeowners and

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[86] *Lowell City Directory*, 1940.

[87] *Lowell City Directory*, 1940, 1950; U.S. Census 1930.

[88] *Lowell City Directory*, 1970.

[89] *Lowell City Directory*, 1926, 1930; U.S. Census, 1930.

[90] U.S. Census, 1930.

[91] *Lowell City Directory*, 1975.

tenants.[92] The 1990 occupants of 311-17 Westford Street mirrored these changes. Sanara Chea and Phurin Am operated Arun's Fashions at 311 Westford Street. The relationship between Chea and Phurin is unknown, although both families lived at 363 Walker Street within walking distance of Arun's Fashions. Sanara Chea also operated equipment at a high-tech facility in Wilmington, Massachusetts. Newcomers filled similar roles/ occupations as their predecessors, opening convenience shops, food stores, bakeries, and other service-oriented businesses catering to the needs of the neighborhood. In 2000, 311 Westford Street housed Monroe Videos & Services. In 2007 Bayon Jewelry store operated there. Also in Cupples Square were Cambodian video stores and hair and nail salons.[93]

Neighborhood demographics on Central Street also demonstrate how a complex urban ethnic landscape evolves. In 1920, the all-Irish Fire Department Hose Company No. 7 was located at 490 Central Street. Several Armenian, Italian, Yankee, Scottish, French-Canadian, and Greek families lived in the area. Businesses reflected this ethnic diversity and indicate how neighborhoods often contained their own commercial district. Businesses included a confectioner, two grocery stores, a variety store, a billiard hall, and a real estate office.[94] Pietro Millinarzio operated a furniture store at 394 Central Street. Vincente Silva operated a fish and oyster business at 452 Central Street and Portugal-born Manuel Ferreira operated a shoe repair shop at the same address. Armenian-born Antoine Antebelian owned a tailor shop at 512 Central Street. Firefighters might have had their uniforms tailored at his shop. In a sign that the neighborhood was rich in diversity, an Armenian social club and a Portuguese social club were located at 404 and 448 Central Street respectively.

According to Margaret Terrell Parker in *Lowell: A Study of Industrial Development*, in 1930 "of the 100,234 people that then constituted the population of Lowell, 73 percent were foreign-born or of foreign parentage. Of the larger cities of the United States—those having a population of more than 100,000—only four exceed Lowell in the percentage of population foreign born or of foreign parentage." Two of those were Fall River and New Bedford, at 78 and 77 percent respectively . . ." Miles of city streets were lined with "drab

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[92] *Lowell City Directory*, 1985,1990.

[93] *Lowell City Directory*, 1990, 2000.

[94] *Lowell City Directory*, 1920; US Census, 1920.

and cheerless tenements;" poor crowded cottages and once-good houses now "decaying and shabby." In general, Parker wrote, "the poorer residence districts are massed near the mills, and the good residence districts are those far removed from the industrial areas …[95] In the next chapter, we describe what happened to some of what Parker referred to as "the poorer residence districts" and frame the story of these neighborhoods within a brief account of job loss in Lowell and the larger region.



Portuguese musicians in Lowell. (University of Massachusetts, Lowell)

[95] Margaret Terrell Parker, *Lowell: A Study of Industrial Development* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1940), 18, 20, 24, 27, 28.



Merrimack Mills being torn down. (Lowell Historical Society)

Chapter Seven
An Interlude:
Work and Neighborhoods Disappear

Immigration reform in the 1920s coupled with sustained job loss in the Merrimack Valley produced a far less welcoming environment for newcomers and the second generation of families who arrived in Lowell in the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. The 1930s global economic depression added immensely to the city's troubles. Reflecting the tough times and slowing immigration, Lowell's population dropped 11 percent from 1920 to 1930, from 113,000 to 100,000.

In 1931, Louis Adamic received an assignment from *Harper's Monthly Magazine* to examine the impact of the nation's economic calamity on working people in New England mill towns. Walking Lowell, he noted that a decade earlier it was still one of the nation's most important cotton-textile centers. Riding on the train from Boston's North Station to Lowell, Adamic sat beside a traveling salesman who offered this assessment of the city: "Things are pretty low in Lowell. That's a gag among us salesmen who cover this territory, but 'low in Lowell' is putting it mildly."

Adamic interviewed Charles M. Runels, executive secretary of the Lowell Chamber of Commerce, who candidly admitted, "he was spending sleepless nights trying to think of something—anything—that would put the city back on its feet industrially, but, in common with other leading Lowellites, was deeply perplexed." Charity, one Lowellian informed Adamic, was "the biggest industry in Lowell." Adamic observed:

> I had a creepy feeling as I walked through some of the streets. There were rows of old wooden houses, unoccupied, uncared-for, their windowpanes broken. Many of the tenanted houses in the working people's districts evidently, have not been painted for years. I saw broken windowpanes pasted over with paper, the residents, apparently, being too poor to replace them.[1]

In this chapter, we discuss the city's deindustrialization from the 1920s through the 1940s and several mainly post-Second World War efforts at urban renewal. Decisions were made to, in effect, literally take apart three of Lowell's most prominent 'immigrant-

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[1] Louis Adamic, "Tragic Towns of New England," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, vol. 162, May, 1931, 748-760, 749, 750, 751.

ethnic' neighborhoods in hopes of re-energizing the city and stimulating economic growth. These efforts displaced hundreds of families, resulting in the third generation of many of the immigrants discussed in the previous chapters leaving Lowell. It was to a 'remade' Lowell that future waves of immigrants came at an accelerated pace after 1970.

The Mills—Promises Expired

In the 1840s, New England women began rejecting mill work. Simultaneously, Irish immigrants arrived in Lowell and provided the mills with thousands of new cloth-making hands. Over the next 60 years, successive waves of immigrants replenished the labor supply until strikes before World War I, rapid rates of unionization among New England's textile workers, and vigorous competition from the lower wage, non-union South led to the absolute decline of mill employment. For historian Shirley Zebroski:

> By 1900 Yankees and Irish workers occupied most of the skilled positions, while the late-arriving immigrants entered the unskilled and lowest-paid mill jobs. The New England mills depended on these new immigrants because the native-born labor force had left many of the unskilled positions to seek better paying jobs.[2]

Later arrivals and their sons and daughters who came between 1880 and 1920 confronted a changed Lowell, one losing its fairly easy access to employment opportunities.[3] In basic economic terms, Lowell had lost its nineteenth-century competitive advantage. William H. Wallace calculated that between 1909 and 1919 Merrimack Valley factories employed 150,000 people, "a labor force not equaled before or since." For after World War I:

> The relatively highly paid, militant labor forces of the Merrimack Valley, combined with the greater age and generally less efficient nature of the plants, placed this area at a disadvantage relative to newer competitors in other parts of the country. Throughout this period a continuous exodus of older industrial centers to new locations with untapped labor pools took place.[4]

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[2] Shirley Zebroski, "The 1903 Strike in the Lowell Cotton Mills," in Mary Blewett, ed., *Surviving Hard Times: The Working People of Lowell* (Lowell: Lowell Textile Museum, 1982), 43 – 62, 43.

[3] Sallie Marston and Andrew Kirby, "Urbanization, Industrialization, and the Social Creation of a Space Economy: A Reconstruction of the Historical Development of Lowell and Lawrence, Massachusetts," *Urban Geography*, 9 (4), 1988, 358-375.

[4] William H. Wallace, "Merrimack Valley Manufacturing: Past and Present," *Economic Geography*, 37, October 1961, 283-308, 287, 288, 289.

Just before and during World War I, several mills permanently closed, including the Bigelow Carpet Company and the Middlesex Mills. In 1926, in rapid succession, the Hamilton, Suffolk, Tremont, and Massachusetts Mills suspended their operations followed by the Bay State Woolen Mills in 1927 and the Belvidere Woolen Company in 1929. In 1918, there were approximately 40,000 manufacturing jobs in Lowell; during the next 20 years, this number dropped to about 15,500 jobs and "the manufacture of cotton textiles ceased to be the city's leading industry."[5] The table below reveals the extent of job losses in manufacturing after 1900, with the bulk of the lost work in textiles coming between 1910 and 1930.

Percentage of Lowell's Labor Force in Manufacturing 1840 –1980.

Year	Labor force total	Manufacturing	% of labor force
1840	17,115(est)	8,936	52.2
1870	20,793	15,396	70.0
1900	47,748	31,582	66.1
1940	33,546	15,437	46.0
1960	35,907	15,691	43.7
1970	38,645	15,080	39.0
1980	41,621	17,321	41.6

Prior to World War I, "nearly one-half of its [Lowell's] $14.5M payroll was distributed by cotton mills; in 1926, only about one-third of its $21M payroll went to cotton operatives."[6] For a few years—despite the closure of the Saco-Lowell Shops and layoffs at several mills—diversification of local industry gave pause for optimism. Aggregate industrial payroll in 1928 was $1.5M larger than in 1927 and in May 1929, six months before the stock market crashed and banks failed, "local industrial payrolls reached $3,197,476 . . . and 23 new industries located in the city in 1927 and 1928—shoes, art gum, carpets, paper tubes, lunch carts, sweaters, bathing suits, wood heels, mops, golf and sport hose, women's shoes, wire, ignition switches, upholstered furniture." In

[5] Parker, 4-5.

[6] George Sweet Gibb, *The Saco-Lowell Shops: Textile Machinery Building in New England, 1813 – 1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); Orra Stone, *History of Massachusetts Industries: Their Inception, Growth and Success* (Boston: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1930), 767, 768, 772.

1928, the Moth Aircraft Corporation opened a factory adjacent to the Lowell Airport and produced one airplane a day under contract to de Haviland Aircraft Company, Ltd., of England. Close to 400 workers built these rather odd airplanes with folding wings and weighing just 895 pounds.[7]

Less Need for Hands Changes the Equation

The global economic meltdown at the end of the 1920s and for most of the 1930s stifled any hopes for Lowell's industrial rebirth. The Great Depression accelerated shutdowns throughout the Merrimack Valley; mills closed in Lowell and Lawrence, and in Nashua, New Hampshire. As the twentieth century wore on, the loss of traditional industries was accompanied by the arrival of peripheral or secondary market jobs, with low pay, little job security, few prospects for advancement, and high turnover rates. Even the eventual growth of the high-tech sector and of the non-manufacturing sector did not offset the losses caused by the deindustrialization of Lowell's traditional industries.[8]

The closing of the massive Amoskeag mills in Manchester, New Hampshire, in December 1935, which at its peak employed 17,500 people and at closure still employed 11,000 people, dramatized the loss of jobs and opportunity throughout the region. In 1940, Margaret Parker in her *Lowell: A Study of Industrial Decline* offered a sanguine assessment of its future:

> Thus, the city which, a century ago, as a model manufacturing community and a daring experiment in industrial management, attracted the interest of students of social and economic questions throughout the United States and Europe begins the second century of its life faced with grave problems; their solution may require even more foresight, initiative, and energy than contributed to make Lowell America's first industrial city and for many years its leading center of cotton manufacture.[9]

To summarize, employment prospects did not improve appreciably for nearly 30 years until the first stirrings of an electronics and high-tech boom and the city's working class neighborhoods felt the full weight of the economic depression for a generation. The

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[7] Stone, 767,768, 772.

[8] Doherty, 93, 120-121.

[9] Parker, 6.

loss of hundreds of entry-level jobs made it difficult for the small numbers of immigrants who came to Lowell in the 1950s and 1960s to enter the job market successfully. By the 1970s as the computer manufacturing boom in Massachusetts caught fire, entry-level positions in several greater Lowell firms became a draw for Southeast Asian refugees living in border camps in Thailand. This history is discussed in Part Three of this report.[10]

The Greek Triangle's Makeover

As if the loss of jobs was not bad enough, during and immediately after World War II, the city's economic development officials considered whether many of Lowell's older neighborhoods ought to be torn down to be replaced by new housing and new industries to take the place of lost mill employment. One of the first neighborhoods to witness the wrecking ball was the Greek Triangle in the Acre neighborhood.[11] Passage in 1937 of the federal Housing Act had provided the impetus for the Lowell Housing Authority (LHA) to consider redeveloping certain sections of the city and the area known as the Greek Triangle came under scrutiny. According to a report prepared by the Lowell Hellenic Heritage Association, the goal became "the demolition of almost 150 structures and the eviction of more than 2,000 residents from the heart of the Greek community." According to Andrew Pierson's research, when the North Common Village project was completed in the 1940s, for many it seemed that the very heart of the Greek community had been excised from the city. In fact "[w]hile the housing project provided benefits to the city as a whole, the North Common Village project is remembered for its impact in displacing a cohesive ethnic community."[12]

The LHA used the broadest terms from its 1937 legislative mandate to determine areas of the city appropriate for demolition. Housing which exhibited the following characteristics could be razed: in need of structural repairs; lack of private bathrooms, hot water, or sufficient heat; insufficient space, ventilation, or lighting; or too many people per unit. Such broad definitions of 'blighted areas' would later prove an important element in

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[10] Wallace, 283-308, 287, 288, 289.

[11] Andrew Pearson, "Rebirth: A Story of the Greek Americans and Lowell, Massachusetts," (University of Massachusetts Lowell: Unpublished paper, 2009).

[12] Cited in Pearson. "Housing Project", The Lowell Hellenic Heritage Association. http://ecommunity.uml.edu/hellenicheritage/Acropolis1/housing.htm, (accessed December 17th 2007).

other federal urban renewal programs. In the end, LHA settled on a 13-acre site around Market, Common, Cross, and Suffolk Streets in the Acre and Lowell's Mayor Dewey Archambault sold the program locally and to federal funders.[13]

Archambault referred to the neighborhood as "a SLUM spelled with capital letters." He believed that construction work for Lowell's unemployed was an unmistakable side benefit.[14] Opposed by the business community because it represented federal interference in the private housing market, the plan polarized the city. Not surprising, local construction unions embraced the project for the jobs it would create. The chairman of Lowell's Board of Health called the area slated for demolition a health menace and endorsed the plan, as did a former chief of police who thought the area was a dangerous fire hazard.[15]

The Greek community split over the plan. The president and officers of the Holy Trinity Church—located in the designated area—supported the plan and didn't share the worry some residents had that the religious training of Lowell's Greek youth would suffer as a result of the upheaval. The opposition's chief concerns were that Greek merchants would lose their customers; some might be forced to abandon their businesses entirely; the Greek community centers and organizations would wither and die. Residents feared that they would not be able to move into the new development. The average wage in the "Greek colony" was $12.50 per week and the expected rents were $25 per month.[16]

Several community leaders formed an opposition coalition. In January 1939, Acre resident Constantine Dukakis demanded that the LHA hold a public hearing on its plan. The *Lowell Evening Ledger* initially labeled house painter Dukakis "one opponent, representing a committee of five."[17] However, four days after this characterization, the newspaper reported that there were objections to the project from 70 merchants, 150 tenants, and several local property owners.[18] Along with Dukakis, outspoken critics of

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[13] Cited in Leney, 38-9.

[14] Cited in Leney, 43, 47.

[15] Craig Thomas, "The Julian D. Steele Housing Complex In Lowell, Massachusetts: Tenant Outcomes from 1995-2009," (M.A. Thesis: University of Massachusetts Lowell, 2009), 21-22.

[16] Leney, 6-7.

[17] "70 Merchants Oppose the Housing Plans: Announce They are Against Choice of Site," *The Lowell Evening Ledger*, January 28, 1939, 1.

[18] "Housing Project Hearing Thursday: Objection to Site Chosen to be Heard," *The Lowell Evening Ledger*, January 24, 1939, 9.

the project included Nicholas Kyriazos, Theodore Katramados, Spiros Vulgaropoulos, Theodore Kominis, and Dan Apostolopoulos. Kyriazos operated Parkway Cash Market, a grocery store and meat market at 404 Market Street in the heart of the site. Katramados operated the Minerva Café at 59 Jefferson Street, a street to be eliminated entirely. Kominis owned a grocery on Market Street. The group called themselves the Greek-American Anti-Housing Committee.[19] Working-class and small business owners' opposition reflected the neighborhood's history and sense of self-identity. For example, 95 Dummer Street, on the edge of the area slated for demolition, was a central commercial establishment in the neighborhood. In 1927, John Turkogeorge ran a grocery store there. In the early 1930s, the grocery/variety store's ownership went from Arthur Koufogazos to George Metropoulos. The building's last owner was Nicholas Theodorou, who ran a wood and coal business at the location.[20]

While the eventual loss of the architecture around the North Common was not emphasized at the time, one Lowell historian placed a particular emphasis on the physical presence that was lost. Greek-American Nicholas Karas stated, "Social planners failed to understand the interdependence and the interrelation between the spirit and the physical make-up of a community, like a human being."[21] He described how the neighborhood changed:

> The public housing buildings resembled military barracks, rectangular, orderly, spaced. The physical architecture of the previous buildings disappeared: front and back porches which Greek mothers used as surveillance platforms, front steps which invited friends and neighbors to sit and chat, alleyways used by young people as short-cuts and to explore their neighborhood and know it intimately . . . Many of the buildings, especially some of the tenements, were old and dilapidated and deserved to be torn down; however, many could have been rehabilitated. A significant number were sturdy and serviceable. None survived.[22]

In other words, far more was going on in the Greek Acre than simply 'blight and decay'.

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[19] "70 Merchants Oppose the Housing Plans;" *City Directory*.

[20] Nicholas Karas, *The Greek Triangle of the Acre: Then and Now* (Lowell, MA: Meteora Press, 1984,) 23.

[21] Karas, *The Greek Triangle of the Acre*, 41.

[22] Karas, *The Greek Triangle of the Acre*, 27.

On March 1, 1939, Senator Walsh officially notified Archambault that President Franklin Roosevelt had approved the federal loan of $2.6M to undertake new construction and the project got closer to fruition. The last step was for the Housing Authority to secure $300,000 for its share of the project's costs. Archambault now touted the welfare reductions the demolition and construction jobs would bring. He believed the city could employ 600 to 700 Works Progress Administration laborers located at nearby Fort Devens, whose contracts there were to expire June 1.[23]

On March 18, 1939, the *Lowell Evening Ledger* reported that construction would start August 1. The newspaper also reported on renewed efforts by city leaders to gain support for the project from the Greek community. Archbishop Athenagoras, head of the Greek Orthodox archdiocese of North and South America, and Bishop Athenagoras of the Boston diocese, which oversaw the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, now publicly endorsed the plan. To secure their support, Bourgeois and Archambault met the bishop and archbishop in New York City. Walter Trivets, from the Federal Housing Authority, traveled from Washington to meet the group in New York City. The paper reported that the church's support was "nullifying the local opposition which has developed among certain residents of the so-called Greek-American district."[24]

Despite the increasing odds against their success, on July 26, 1939 the Anti-Housing Committee held a meeting in City Hall for residents to discuss the demolition of their neighborhood.[25] The committee drafted a petition to go to Lowell city officials, municipal and state housing authorities, the state legislature, and President Roosevelt. More than 200 residents attended the meeting.[26] Nonetheless, the project proceeded, with the 400 displaced families promised first priority in the new development. However, while the development was under construction and the former residents scattered, families faced an unexpected problem. The Lowell School Department, arguing that most schools

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[23] "Sees Housing Project Reducing Relief Costs for Months," *The Lowell Evening Ledger*, March 2, 1939, 17.

[24] "Lowell Housing Project Will be Started Aug. 1: Chairman Bourgeois Says Greek Prelates Approve FHA Project," *The Lowell Evening Ledger*, March 18, 1939, 1.

[25] "$2,619,000 Has Been Approved for Lowell Housing Project," *The Lowell Evening Ledger,* March 1, 1939, 1; Leney, 5-6.

[26] Leney, 6.

in the city were at or near capacity, refused to let the children of the uprooted attend any school in their new neighborhood. Instead, regardless of the distance, they had to walk back into their old neighborhood to attend school.[27]

After the demolition and new construction, the Greek Triangle was reconstituted as a Greek neighborhood, even though other groups moved into the area. Greeks re-settling there included James Karelas, who had previously owned a dry goods store on the corner of Market and Jefferson Streets. With Jefferson Street eliminated in the upheaval, he reopened on the corner of Broadway and Marion Streets and remained there until he retired in 1963.[28] In 2010, much of the area under discussion still contains the public housing constructed in the late 1940s and 1950s. There were few new, permanent jobs created other than a handful of restaurants and convenience stores catering to the neighborhood.

The Central Plaza Project

The 1950s Church Street Project—later called Central Plaza—was Lowell's first urban renewal project to demolish properties on private land and sell the land for private business development. Coordinating the federally funded effort, the LHA evaluated 165 structures on the ten-acre site, determining that 123 were sub-standard and needed to be removed.[29] Former Lowell city planner Bob Malavich remembered that the small section of the city under review housed Polish, Lithuanian, Greek, Canadian, Italian, Armenian, Serbian, and Portuguese families.[30]

On June 21, 1957, the LHA held a public hearing about the project where soon-to-be-displaced tenants spoke against it. The First United Baptist Church originally opposed the project but changed its position once it was excluded from the demolition plans. Many local unions and Lowell officials supported the plan. Several downtown merchants opposed the redevelopment, fearing that it would create a rival retail district. They argued that municipal officials' primary concern should be support for the existing Merrimack

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[27] Leney, 8.

[28] Karas, *The Greek Triangle of the Acre*, 27-30.

[29] Leney, 29-30.

[30] Robert Malavich interview by Mehmed Ali, March 27 and April 10, 2000, Center for Lowell History, 00.14, 27-8.

Street business district.[31] Despite opposition, the plan was approved in Washington, D.C. in August 1957 and the LHA started taking properties in the parcel about a year later. The federal government provided $1.2M in grants and loans for the project, a sum the *Lowell Sun* supported:

> The cost of this project may seem like a staggering sum to be allocated to such a run-down location, but that's one of the prime purposes behind urban renewal—to replace slums with modern buildings and to keep neighborhoods from deteriorating into slums.[32]

Two parcels in the ten-acre site were not put up for sale: the rear lot of the First United Baptist Church, on which the church planned to build a new religious education building; and a second site set aside for the Union National Bank. LHA gave priority to bidders dispossessed by earlier eminent domain projects, and the bank had lost a branch on Middlesex Street for a state public works project called the "Middlesex Street grade crossing elimination project."[33] In January 1959, with demolition complete, the *Lowell Sun* suggested that urban renewal projects were too much work for LHA, an agency with a mandate to manage the city's public housing units. A discussion followed, which led to the formation, in 1960, of the Lowell Redevelopment Authority.[34]

In early 1960, the construction of the Union National Bank branch and the education building behind the First United Church moved forward. In March 1960, the LHA sold the cleared ten-acre site to grocery chain Stop & Shop's real estate arm.[35] On April 4, 1962, Central Plaza's grand opening brought public figures, including the federal commissioner of the Urban Renewal Program to witness the nation's first commercial redevelopment by a non-real estate company. While LHA technically controlled the project, Stop & Shop played a crucial role in the project's final outcome.[36]

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[31] Leney, 29-30.

[32] Fred Day, "Survey Shows Bay State Lagging," *Lowell Sun,* July 10, 1958, 7.

[33] "Boston Developer High Bidder for Church Street Urban Project," *Lowell Sun*, March 17, 1960, 20; Leney, 31.

[34] Fred Day, "Urban Renewal Agency?" *Lowell Sun,* January 15, 1959, 7; Fred Day, "Recommends Urban Authority," *Lowell Sun,* February 24, 1960; "Making Way for Improvements: Two Major Urban Renewal Projects to Improve City," *Lowell Sunday Sun*, September 27, 1959, A42.

[35] Day, "Recommends Urban Authority;" "Boston Developer High Bidder for Church Street Urban Project," *Lowell Sun*, March 17, 1960, 20.

[36] Fred Day, "LHA Approves Urban Renewal," *Lowell Sun,* December 7, 1960, 1; "A Great Day," *Lowell Sun*, April 6, 1962, 6.

Good-Bye, 'Little Canada'

The demolition of the Northern Canal area, commonly referred to as Little Canada, was a major expansion in scale of the city's redevelopment efforts. City officials had gained valuable experience working with federal officials during the Central Plaza project and this knowledge helped them to jumpstart the Northern Canal project. The Lowell Redevelopment Authority, Lowell's new urban renewal organization—modeled on the Boston Redevelopment Authority—had jurisdiction over the Northern Canal project.[37]

The area was one of mixed use with mills, tenements, factory row housing, and housing on the edge of the downtown in a section of the city that served as home to French-Canadian immigrants for nearly 80 years.[38] In the tightly knit section of the city, "residents were actively involved in events, activities and institutions centering on neighborhood life, which itself helped to cement the close-knit structure with increased ethnic awareness and neighborhood identity."[39] Irene Germaine, a resident of Little Canada, vividly recalled what the neighborhood was like before the wrecking ball struck.

> I'll tell you the biggest landmark was Gordon's Market . . . This man was so good to the French people it was incredible! ... I mean you went to that market and he was, I mean he'd have given the shirt off his back. And then there was a little variety store, I'll never forget it, Racette's Market, a little variety, Racette's Variety. And then next to that was a Gauthier and Tessier . . . they had a big barn full of horses.[40]

But, the city decided to demolish the neighborhood. Recalled Richard Howe Sr., a four-term Lowell mayor:

> The theory behind the Urban Renewal Program was to demolish dilapidated substandard buildings, and replace them with new, more efficient buildings . . . That's what happened to Little Canada. It was an area

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[37] Fred Day, "Eye Northern Canal Approval," *Lowell Sun*, March 28, 1962; Thomas, 24; *Lowell Sunday Sun,* "Making Way for Improvements."

[38] Day, "Eye Northern Canal Approval;" Craig Thomas, "Julian Steele," 24; "Making Way for Improvements."

[39] Joseph H. Helfgot, et.al., *Lowell, Massachusetts: Living with Adversity, A Community Social Profile* (Boston: Boston University Department of Sociology, 1977), 99.

[40] Irene Germaine interview by Mehmed Ali, November 15, 2001, Center for Lowell History, 01.23; Henrietta Blanchette interview by Jim Beauchesne, October 6, 1997, Center for Lowell History, 97.04.

> that had become dilapidated. It was sub-standard. So consequently it was demolished, and replaced with what we had once called the cement huts.

Howe noted, "… I think everybody saw things as rejuvenation of a neighborhood, and of a decayed, dilapidated area, without seeing beyond it as to what it would do to the community as a whole, you know. So there's no 'Little Canada today'."[41]

The LRA did not recognize the strong community institutions described by Irene Germaine. Instead, the organization's reports noted the large variety of businesses serving the people of the neighborhood. It described the work of urban renewal thusly: Along with bars, lounges, barber shops, small luncheonettes, variety stores and diners

> came the usual problems associated with mixed uses. Lack of adequate parking facilities, overly congested streets and a lack of open space were the most significant. However, the renewal treatment eliminated nearly all of the many instances of mixed use.[42]

LRA's reports touted their efforts at creating more viable industrial space. However, as Howe noted, the LRA did not understand or did not want to admit to themselves that the project would have a profoundly negative impact on the existing community. Irene Germaine and other residents believed:

> There must have been some arrangement with somebody in order to demolish that, because I mean it really, so many families, so many families, and that's what spread out the French … I have heard rumors that there was an arrangement with a priest, or church, but I have no idea, with the promise that they were going to build better, or do something for them [the residents], but it was never done, you know. But I mean it's sad too, because I mean there were so many memories there.[43]

Armand Mercier noted, "A lot of people in Little Canada, as all people in urban renewal areas, did not approve of what was going on because they were going to lose their homes." Arthur Eno viewed the urban renewal resistance as rooted in the strong sense of community and the solidarity of the ethnic enclave. He said, "… there was also among the older people, I think there was a very strong community feeling about Little Canada. That

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[41] Richard Howe Sr. interview by Jim Beauchesne, September 18, 1997, Center for Lowell History, 97.01.

[42] The City Development Authority, 1972, "Lowell Community Renewal Program: Action Program," (Lowell, MA: Offset Printing, 40), 60-1, from the Lowell Historical Society's John Mullen Collection, #2003.045.

[43] Irene Germaine interview by Mehmed Ali, November 15, 2001, Center for Lowell History, 01.23.

these people had been there as an embattled minority in a ghetto for generations. And you uprooted them and that was quite a, uh, quite a traumatic thing."[44] For Mercier, while the demolition "may have been the right thing to do, it was done wrong." Rather than doing a 1960s-style project:

> They could have done what we do today, rehabilitation. But back then it was the first federal program that was going to renovate and rejuvenate a whole neighborhood, and Northern Canal, which was one of the oldest neighborhoods, had more people living there, had more old buildings, you know, than any other part of the city.

During the debate over demolition, historical preservation did not come up. Long-time Lowellian Arthur Eno lamented the loss of several Dutton Street row houses to make way for the Lowell High School expansion. A local historian, he said, "I thought that the row houses were much more spectacular [than] the mill buildings." Eno blamed the deterioration of the buildings on the LRA. He noted that they remained in decent condition until the LRA obtained them, at which point they deteriorated dramatically. Eno led attempts to save an old mill agent's house and wooden buildings next to the Masonic Temple on Dutton Street.[45] Brendan Fleming, a former LRA official and Lowell city councilor, supported Eno's ideas regarding the importance of the row houses and their tremendous historical value and worked hard to save the buildings. However, they were torn down between his tenure on the LRA and his time on the council.

During discussions on the fate of the neighborhood, the LRA hired Reggie Oullette, a French-Canadian consultant, to help them sell the plan to Little Canada's residents. He convinced many of them to sell their property, making them believe that they would be the first ones to move back into the new development. However, many long-time residents didn't want to move into the 'cement blocks' once they were put up on Moody Street. Oullette also convinced Donat Morrissette, pastor of Little Canada's St. Jean Baptiste Church, that the redevelopment was a good thing. But the project actually led to the dissolution of St. Jean's parish. According to Armand Mercier, it was the worst thing that ever happened to the neighborhood.

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[44] Armand Mercier interview by Mehmed Ali, February 27, 2002, Center for Lowell History, 02.6, 25-6; Arthur Eno interview by Jim Beauchesne, September 24, 1997, Center for Lowell History, 97.02.

[45] Arthur Eno interview by Jim Beauchesne, September 24, 1997, Center for Lowell History, 97.02.

> As it turned out it destroyed the parish, and it destroyed the Franco-American community as a community. And I remember the night of the debate when the action had to be taken, everybody in the audience were not talking to Father Morrissette, who had gone on record that he was supporting this.[46]

Mercier believes that Father Morrissette and Ray Lord, a Franco-American LRA board member, never fully grasped the project's full implications. He said:

> As I look back, I think that Father Morrissette was taken in by the value of rejuvenating a whole neighborhood, as opposed to seeing that it was going to wipe it all out. And I think that Ray Lord also, for what reasons that only he can answer, decided to 'abandon' as they said, Franco-Americans on behalf of a city, on behalf of an urban renewal project that was doomed to fail as far as a community was concerned. And then they destroyed it. I mean, wiped out Little Canada. It could have been a community had there been the mentality of restoration . . . that could have saved the community.[47]

With the demolition, the French-Canadian population dispersed across the city and to neighboring communities. For former resident Germaine, "Well I tell you, the day that they tore down Little Canada, they tore down the French language and St. Jean Baptist Church."[48] Robert Malavich offered a different perspective, one infused with the benefit of time. "I think if you met a lot of the folks who lived in Little Canada . . . in the six- and twelve-unit tenements that were rat-infested and just tired buildings that had seen three or four generations of immigrants. If you met them today, they'd say, 'Thank God I moved,' because in hindsight they were better off . . ."[49] The demolition reduced Lowell's apartment stock and increased demand hit renters in the city. Rents for the displaced residents rose from $8-$12 per week to $30-$35. With the housing market tight, many former neighborhood members relocated to New Hampshire. An enduring legacy of the redevelopment was the homes built to replace the demolished ones. LRA stated

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[46] Craig Thomas, "Julian Steele," 26; Armand Mercier interview by Mehmed Ali, February 27, 2002, Center for Lowell History, 02.6, 25-6.

[47] Armand Mercier interview by Mehmed Ali, February 27, 2002, Center for Lowell History, 02.6.

[48] Irene Germaine interview by Mehmed Ali, November 15, 2001, Center for Lowell History.

[49] Robert Malavich interview by Mehmed Ali, March 27 and April 10, 2000, Center for Lowell History.

that they were going to construct low- and middle-income housing. But, the result was aesthetically flawed housing constructed out of cement slabs painted different colors, which community members dubbed 'Flintstone Village,' or 'Cement Village,' among many derogatory terms.[50]

Hale-Howard's Demise

Hale-Howard, occupying an area of the city near the current Lowell Regional Transit Authority hub, suffered the same fate as Little Canada and the Triangle Acre. A Jewish neighborhood for nearly seventy years, its name was derived from two perpendicular streets—Hale and Howard—running through the area. The streets contained numerous institutions and stores that defined the neighborhood, including two Synagogues, several bakeries, and delicatessens. Personal descriptions provide a wealth of understanding and insight into the area. Robert Malavich, long-time Lowell city planner, recalled Hale-Howard:

> There were a lot of Jewish people in that neighborhood . . . And we'd drive by these tenements and I had friends who lived in some of those and knew that—you know, in hindsight I knew that they were bad, but while I was there and visiting, it was just like anybody else's house.[51]

For Malavich, the essential element was that the people living in what became the demolished area had their lives changed forever.

In the 1970s, Lowell's City Development Authority (CDA) controlled renewal projects. It cleared designated parts of the city, turning them into industrial parks and commercial centers. To some extent, the CDA acted as a "relief valve" for the mayor, the city council, and the city manager because appointed members, not elected officials, ran it, making the process less politically risky. Indeed, former councilor and CDA appointee Robert Kennedy contended that the Hale-Howard and Northern Canal (Little Canada) demolitions would not have happened absent such a political buffer.[52]

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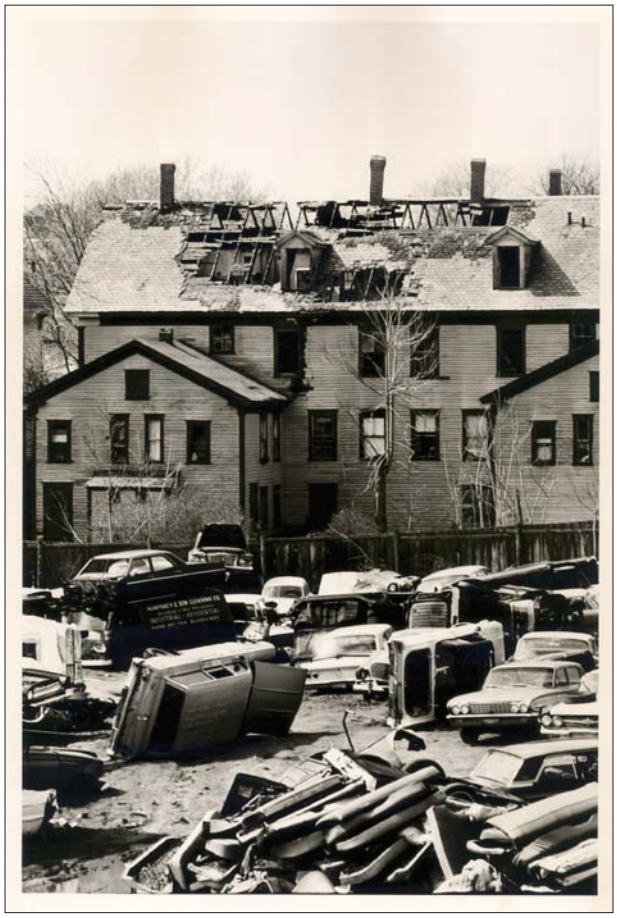
[50] Thomas, 27.

[51] Robert Malavich interview by Mehmed Ali, March 27 and April 10, 2000, Center for Lowell History, 00.14, 14.

[52] Robert Kennedy interview by Mehmed Ali, February 1, 2000, Center for Lowell History, 00.28, 4-5.

A 1972 CDA publication focused on citizen participation in renewal projects. Prior to Hale-Howard:

> The experience of the past is that very little citizen participation occurred in the renewal projects of the city, and, in fact, very few community organizations were in operation in Lowell at that time. The outcome was that project area residents were not formally involved in the decision-making process, and development plans may or may not have reflected the values and goals of area residents.[53]



Hale–Howard demolition.
(University of Massachusetts, Lowell)

In 1968, because of the outcries across the country from citizens dislocated by renewal activities, HUD had mandated the creation of Project Area Committees

[53] City Development Authority, "Special Studies, Lowell Community Renewal Program: Social Resources," (Lowell, MA: City Development Authority, 1972), 116.

composed of neighborhood residents for all new renewal projects.[54] In December 1968, the CDA held an election in the neighborhood and formed the Hale-Howard Advisory Committee (HHAC). Of the 390 eligible voters in the neighborhood, 68 cast ballots and thirteen members were elected. According to the CDA, the group "served as an information dispensing organization regarding administrative progress on the project and as an occasional forum for citizen discussions." More than anything else, the group sought community buy-in to the project. However, Community Teamwork, Inc. organized a rival organization called the Lower Highlands Neighborhood Council (LHNC) among residents in and adjacent to Hale-Howard.[55]

Neighborhood relocation started on March 12, 1971 when the CDA received authorization to dispense benefits to 158 families living in the target area. They also had to find housing for low-income families being displaced in a city already pressed to find housing for its residents.[56] CDA Executive Administrator James F. Silk reported that in June 1972, fewer than a dozen large families lived in the targeted sections of Hale-Howard. Smaller families found apartments themselves or with minimal CDA help. However, these large families encountered considerable trouble finding adequate housing.[57] A June 1972 *Lowell Sun* article highlighted the problems experienced by families with seven or more children. The CDA offered public housing to the families, mainly in the Bishop Markham development, the only public housing that could accommodate large families. But even Bishop Markham couldn't house all of the families being forced from their neighborhood. According to the CDA Relocation director, "I would describe the shortage as not being acute but rather typical of the average city that is struggling to rebuild and revitalize itself."[58]

With the demolition date approaching, pressure mounted to relocate the families. Using federal payments, the CDA moved 104 of 158 families from the neighborhood. Forty families moved to apartments across Lowell, ten families moved into public

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[54] The City Development Authority, "Lowell Community Renewal Program: Action Program," (Lowell, MA: Offset Printing, 1972), 41, from the Lowell Historical Society's John Mullen Collection, #2003.045.

[55] City Development Authority, "Special Studies," 117-8.

[56] "Relocating Hale-Howard families mostly a success, reports CDA," *Lowell Sunday Sun*, June 18, 1972, B3.

[57] Elissa Papirno, "From Hale-Howard: Large families finding apartment hunting hard," *Lowell Sunday Sun*, June 18, 1972, B3.

[58] Papirno, "From Hale-Howard: Large families finding apartment hunting hard."

housing, and 31 homeowners found new homes.[59] Relocation assistance included help with leased housing and rent supplements. Payments averaged $10,600 per family, $4,400 below the $15,000 maximum allowed. The CDA paid that sum in addition to fair market value to all homeowners forced from the neighborhood.[60]

Going forward with the demolition, city officials argued that the Hale-Howard neighborhood had experienced too much neglect to be turned around. To be sure, the working class neighborhood was not in good shape, yet the demolition planning created a self-fulfilling prophecy. As the *Lowell Sun* documented, conditions deteriorated rapidly from the time the neighborhood's fate was first discussed in the early 1960s through the first demolitions eleven years later in 1971. Over the years, "People moved out, tenement houses became abandoned, and the once old proud neighborhood became a slum area, almost a ghost city by the turn of the decade."[61] While the city and the CDA discussed Hale-Howard's future, residents fled, the infrastructure decayed, and landlords stopped investing in their properties.

In a final twist, as the relocation efforts wound down, the CDA and the Council altered the original plan. At first, the LHA had agreed to build 100 new housing units on 3.5 acres of the neighborhood set aside for the purpose. Now, the housing component was eliminated. In early June 1972, the *Lowell Sun* reported that the CDA had declared the 3.5-acre site "inappropriate for residential use" and, in a move that alienated many early supporters, the cleared site was to be 'all-industrial'. The city council, City Manager Jim Sullivan, and "nearly all city officials" supported the change, but Councilor Armand Mercier recalled that during the controversy Brendan Fleming and Richard Howe, Sr. won seats on the council by campaigning against the Hale-Howard demolition.[62]

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development opposed the change to an all-industrial site. In 1971, it had approved a plan to convert four parcels in the neighborhood, three of them city-owned, into housing. The CDA decided to turn the

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[59] Papirno, "From Hale-Howard: Large families finding apartment hunting hard."

[60] "Relocating Hale-Howard families mostly a success."

[61] Frank Phillips, "Absentee property owners did well in Hale-Howard $$$," *Lowell Sunday Sun*, July 30, 1972, B1.

[62] Armand Mercier interview by Mehmed Ali, February 27, 2002, Center for Lowell History, 02.6, 25-6.

neighborhood into an all-industrial site.[63] According to city planners from that era, the decision was an easy one because their priority had shifted from housing creation to job creation, likely on the advice of a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who worked as a city consultant on the project.[64] The assumption was "there seemed to be enough housing in the community." Instead of rebuilding the neighborhood, plans shifted to the construction of an industrial park, some demolition, and some rehabilitation of existing properties.[65]

Other factors influenced the decision to move to an all-industrial zone, including that the public from outside the neighborhood supported the job creation mission. Armand Mercier suggested another reason for support—racism. According to him, visions of low-income housing had Lowellians, "visualizing people coming in from Roxbury," nearby Boston's large African-American neighborhood.[66] HUD withheld final approval for the project until the CDA and LHA provided a tenant-by-tenant account of relocation plans and completed the proper relocation of the families living in the neighborhood as of July 1972. At the time, CDA needed to relocate 41 families and half of the neighborhood's businesses.[67] When HUD's conditions were met, the project turned into an all-industrial development.[68]

The Great Connector Extension Mash-Up

As the Hale-Howard project drew to a close, the CDA started a far more complex project to extend the Lowell Connector off Interstate 495 and Route 3 through Lowell's South End neighborhood. The *Lowell Sun* and the Greater Lowell Chamber

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[63] "HUD delays decision on Hale-Howard because city failed to act on housing," *Lowell Sun*, June 13, 1972, 9.

[64] Armand Mercier interview by Mehmed Ali, February 27, 2002, 02.6, 26.

[65] Robert Malavich interview by Mehmed Ali, 15.

[66] Armand Mercier interview by Mehmed Ali, 27.

[67] "Housing sites left out of revamped Hale-Howard," *Lowell Sun*, June 5, 1972, 9; "Howe schedules meeting to advance all-industrial Hale-Howard plan," *Lowell Sun*, June 6, 1972, 13; "Relocation plan said key to Hale-Howard change," *Lowell Sun,* June 21, 1972, 9; "CDA owns nearly all Hale-Howard property," *Lowell Sun*, June 25, 1972, 13.

[68] "CDA to be asked to OK bidding for Hale-Howard work," *Lowell Sun*, March 26, 1973, 9.

of Commerce favored the proposal, contending that with it cars could more quickly get closer to the city's downtown. Robert Kennedy suggested that the project's timing was important:

> Once the mills left during the '50s and during the '60s you had . . . more and more decline. More and more storefronts were being boarded up. It looked terrible. It looked terrible. And so if you follow this, when we were in that state of mind, the projects like this looked good to us, some of us, and especially to those property owners downtown who were, any port in the storm, they were looking for help.[69]

As proposed, the extension would uproot a close-knit Portuguese neighborhood. Moreover, the South End in the 1970s was one of the few places with significant African-American and Latino populations. By the CDA's estimates, 73 African-American families and 52 Latino families lived in the area slated to become a roadway.[70] The proposed relocation ignited a debate that eventually brought to a close the city's era of urban renewal.

To win extension approval, politicians, city planners, and downtown merchants began publicly discussing the need for increased traffic volume and improved traffic flow in the downtown. The downtown's commercial decline had been dramatic. When Interstate 495 was laid out, Lowell city planner Charles Zetteck crafted what the *Lowell Sun* called, "The only definitive Lowell Connector plan."[71] In May 1964, the state Senate authorized the Commonwealth's Department of Public Works (DPW) to study three highway construction and improvement projects, including the Lowell Connector extension. The argument was that the Connector would give speedy access to the highway system for Northern Canal tenants, new business owners, and especially for shoppers outside metro Lowell. Federal funds became available for it in 1966.[72]

The state DPW scheduled a public hearing on the project for April 22, 1968, preceded by a showing of the draft plan at City Hall. The plan called for the demolition

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[69] Cited in Thomas, 33-4, Robert Kennedy interview by Mehmed Ali, 7.

[70] City Development Authority, "Special Studies," 94-95.

[71] "Let's Make it Clear to All—There's but One Lowell Connector Route," *Lowell Sun* , January 30, 1966, 40.ß

[72] Franz Scholz, "Strange History of Connector," *Lowell Sun*, May 15, 1968, 15; "Let's Make it Clear to All—There's but One Lowell Connector Route," *Lowell Sun*, January 30, 1966.

of three historic schools and the displacement of 340 families and twenty businesses. Hundreds of South End residents viewed the $4.5M plan prior to the April hearing.[73]

Four hundred people attended the public hearing and, according to the *Lowell Sun*, the majority in the room opposed the Connector extension. The plan's only strong proponent was the Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce. State Representative Ray Rourke opposed the plan, saying that "many people will be spared broken lives, broken homes, and broken hearts" if the proposal fails. He added, "I may be depicted as an obstructionist and against progress, but I ask, is it progress to displace over 400 families?" [74] Those in the opposition advocated for the extension of Route 3 and a new Merrimack River bridge to improve Lowell's traffic problems.

The opposition forces were a diverse coalition, including State Representatives Paul Sheehy and Cornelius Kiernan and State Senator John Harrington; powerful city councilor and downtown businessman Sam Pollard, who opposed the extension because it would demolish his childhood home; several other city councilors; and Father Kalfayan of St. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church.[75] Unlike earlier renewal projects in which families were displaced without very much official opposition, this time most councilors objected to the displacement of about 400 families, despite the state DPW's assurances that capable relocation facilities would be set up and staffed by Lowellians. In early May 1968, just one city councilor, John Cox, supported the plan. This marked a dramatic turn from a May 1967 council vote of 7 - 1 to build the extension.[76]

On May 2, DPW Commissioner Ribbs announced that no decision had been made on the proposal and that the project was being relegated to a low priority.[77] Shortly thereafter, the city council met with the Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce and the state DPW. DPW administrators wondered why the Lowell legislative delegation was not involved in the discussions and warned that the project would receive a low federal

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[73] Kendall Wallace, "Prepare for Hearing: Many View Connector Map," *Lowell Sunday Sun*, April 14, 1968.

[74] Robert McKeon, "Hundreds Oppose Connector: Chamber Only Proponent at Hearing on Extension," *Lowell Sun,* April 23, 1968.

[75] McKeon, "Hundreds Oppose Connector."

[76] Scholz, "Strange History of Connector."

[77] Scholz, "Strange History of Connector."

priority if no one at the local level supported the state's efforts.[78] However, when the federal government improved its relocation assistance benefits—displaced residents could get up to $2,000 to find a new place to live and businesses could receive up to $3,000 to relocate[79]—the *Lowell Sun* supported the extension in an August 11, 1968 editorial:

> The state department is being besieged by cities and towns throughout the state for highway projects—including some other Connectors to throughways—and it is doubtful if it would hesitate for a moment to take advantage of any further disagreement among Lowell officials on the Connector Route. This would mean the money set aside for the local project would go to some other community's project. If this should happen, it would be a foregone conclusion that the Connector extension would be a "dead issue" for many years to come—if not forever . . . that a tie-in between the present terminal of the Connector on Gorham Street to the down-town [sic] area is a must cannot be seriously questioned.[80]

The matter returned to the city council in September 1968 and, with hundreds of South End residents in the council chambers loudly denouncing the project, the council voted 8-1 against the extension.[81]

A second attempt was made to demolish a substantial portion of the city's South End neighborhood to build the Connector extension. This time, proponents of the project formed a Blue Ribbon Task Force to study ways to improve access to downtown Lowell. In February 1972, the CDA voted once again to support the Connector extension plan and the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Task Force and the Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce voiced their support as well.[82] For the opposition, this appeared to be a second attempt to improve the city's downtown at the expense of a neighborhood. A broad coalition of residents, religious organizations, and South End business owners coalesced once more against the extension. Religious organizations established the Connector

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[78] Scholz, "Strange History of Connector;" Loring Swaim, Jr., "Connector Door Still Open," *Lowell Sun*, May 24, 1968.

[79] Charles Harrington, "$25M Area Highway Plan Aired: Links Chelmsford, Lowell, Dracut," *Lowell Sunday Sun,* January 12, 1969, 1; Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Works, "Proposed Lowell Connector Extension in Lowell," Publication number 858, April 22, 1968, Center for Lowell History #Lf.F8264.

[80] "Connector Decision Rests with Lowell City Council," *Lowell Sun*, August 11, 1968, 36.

[81] Frank Phillips, "Tumultuous Connector Hearing," *Lowell Sun,* June 7, 1972; Thomas, 34.

[82] Carol Giacomo, "CDA Chairman Scores Rep. Rourke," *Lowell Sun,* June 30, 1972.

Objectors and the Catholic archdiocese helped to fund the opposition campaign. The Connector Objectors' built a broad-based coalition, produced leaflets in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and organized a petition campaign across Lowell.[83] Local resident Ruth Kosiavelon told a *Lowell Sun* reporter that the South End community had never been so organized. According to Kosiavelon, the Objectors had convinced the community that they could permanently defeat the Connector extension. The *Lowell Sun* reported, "Residents contend theirs is not the deteriorating neighborhood some think it is. They argue against being forced from their homes either because they have put much time and effort into improving it or they fear not finding somewhere else to live."[84]

Another vote on the Connector extension was scheduled for June 27, 1972. The arguments for and against it had not changed since 1968: the road must be approved to keep the downtown alive and increase the city's tax base. At a public hearing on June 6, 1972, the Objectors spoke out. Residents packed the Rogers School cafeteria and the *Lowell Sun* credited the group with dooming the project:

> The optimism many had been feeling about the probability of the Connector extension being approved has been severely damaged by the intense and emotional neighborhood opposition to the highway voiced at a public hearing Tuesday night. "Whatever else you may hear, the Connector is dead," one councilor predicted yesterday.[85]

Despite the June 6 meeting, the outcome of the June 27 vote remained uncertain. Councilors Charles Gallagher, Robert Kennedy, Paul Tsongas, and Philip Shea supported the plan while Richard Howe and M. Brendan Fleming and Mayor Ellen Sampson opposed it. Councilors Leo Farley and Gail Dunfey were undecided. Twenty-one-year-old Councilwoman Dunfey, a University of Lowell student at the time, struck the final blow against the renewed push for the Connector.[86] She offered a compromise plan that called for taking far fewer homes, arguing, "The city is not meeting its housing needs, particularly those for large, low-income families." She added, "[the South End] clearly

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[83] Carol Giacomo, "Connector Objectors Organized," *Lowell Sun,* June 11, 1972; Thomas, 34.

[84] Giacomo, "Connector Objectors Organized."

[85] Carol Giacomo, "Damaged Optimism," *Lowell Sun,* June 8, 1972.

[86] Carol Giacomo, "Connector Doomed as Dunfey Opposes Route," *Lowell Sun,* June 8, 1972.

demonstrated its viability at the public hearing. It should not be destroyed."[87] Noticing the change in public sentiment, Paul Tsongas supported Dunfey's plan.[88] The *Lowell Sun*, however, launched a vigorous campaign to get the road built:

> Although we think it unfortunate that more residents of the city from sections other than the South End saw unfit to attend and express their views, we can understand their temerity in view of what happened. As a matter of fact, it might have been a darned good thing they didn't attend or the evening might have wound up in a battle royal worthy of calling out the National Guard! ... Changing the route now is neither necessary nor practical—by the time any changeover in route could become effective, we'll all be dead and gone! The city now has before it one route for consideration. It's either this or nothing at all.[89]

In partnership with the city's election commission, the *Lowell Sun* conducted a newspaper-run referendum on the Connector extension, with the results to be reported at a scheduled June 27 city council meeting. On June 20, several letters in opposition to the extension appeared in the newspaper. James Bailey cast the battle as the working-class South End versus the affluent downtown establishment. Others attacked the Connector's proponents as the wealthier interests. Three letters criticized the downtown as unfriendly to shoppers, full of expensive stores, and lacking in entertainment venues.[90] Complicating things, the state DPW unveiled a series of alternative Connector proposals on June 23. At the same time, DPW Commissioner Bruce Campbell hinted that the state wouldn't fund the extension.[91]

On June 26, 1972, the *Lowell Sun* offered a blistering pro-extension editorial.

> The process [of starting a Connector project over from scratch] will be time consuming—and so much time has already been lost—but it is the only course now left open to the people who want to see Lowell grow and prosper in the future rather than wither away and die on the vine. The decay of downtown Lowell is a process that has been underway for quite a few

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[87] Giacomo, "Connector Doomed as Dunfey Opposes Route."

[88] Carol Giacomo, "Mixed Reaction to Dunfey Plan," *Lowell Sun*, June 9, 1972.

[89] *Lowell Sun,* "The Connector Ballot," June 11, 1972.

[90] *Lowell Sun,* "Connector Options," June 20, 1972.

[91] Carol Giacomo, "Connector Alternatives Detailed," *Lowell Sun,* June 23, 1972; Carol Giacomo, "Connector Options Get new Study," *Lowell Sun,* June 25, 1972.

> years now, it is a process that must be stopped and reversed if Lowell is to remain a viable and important center in Northern Middlesex county . . . Construction of a suitable Connector must not be abandoned as something that we in Lowell are simply too weak to accomplish.[92]

Before the council voted, the results of the *Sun's* poll were announced: 1,655 residents voted against the plan with 606 residents in favor.[93] The city council defeated the extension plan six to three, with Philip Shea, Mayor Ellen Sampson, M. Brendan Fleming, Leo Farley, and Gail Dunfey opposed and Paul Tsongas, Robert Kennedy, and Charles Gallagher still supporting its construction. *Lowell Sun* reporter Frank Phillips summed up the result. "For the second time in four years, the neighborhood defeated the same proposal that had strong backing from some of the most powerful forces in the city, armed with sound arguments."[94]

Conclusion

Into this cauldron came Lowell's next waves of immigration. Significant housing stock had disappeared, old historic buildings had been demolished, and several once well-defined immigrant neighborhoods no longer existed. At the same time, an historic district in the city's long-time retail corridor along Merrimack Street and for several blocks on either side of it was constructed with the powerful assistance of the Lowell National Historical Park. Initial experiments converting mill buildings into rental housing were launched. Amidst these mostly publicly funded efforts, the economy perked up for a time and the so-called 'Massachusetts Miracle'—the rapid expansion of the state's computer and high-tech sectors—generated thousands of relatively low-skill computer assembly jobs in and around Lowell. Just as the textile mills once absorbed immigrants eager for work, home-grown Wang Computer and firms along Routes 495 and 3 provided employment for many newcomers. How the new wave of immigrants made their way in Lowell is the subject of the last section of this report.

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[92] "So What Happens Next?" *Lowell Sun*, June 26, 1972.

[93] Carol Giacomo, "Connector Defeated, 6-3," *Lowell Sun,* June 28, 1972.

[94] Frank Phillips, "Hearing Anticlimax, but the Problems of the City Remain," *Lowell Sun,* June 28, 1972.

PART THREE
The New Lowellians: Overview and Assessment of Immigrants in a Post-Industrial City

Since the 1970s, Lowell has again attracted its fair share of newcomers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 22.1 percent of Lowell's population in the year 2000 was foreign-born.[1] Just as the presence of immigrants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries altered and influenced the city, the latest wave of arrivals is changing the face of Lowell.[2] Like earlier generations, these New Lowellians are once again shaping and enriching the city's ethnoscape with their unique and diverse presence. The immigrants have turned the city into their new home.[3] They have built and joined religious institutions, started businesses, are part of the regional labor force, and contributors to the regional economy. They are participants in and creators of cultural, social, and community organizations and institutions.

With the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the United States has received the most diverse group of immigrants in its history. This act eliminated the national origin quotas established by the Immigration Act of 1924, which had based quotas on the 1890 census. This measure discriminated against migrants from eastern and southern Europe, as well as those from the non-western world. It pretty much ended Asian immigration to the United States. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 eliminated quotas based on national origin and opened America to immigrants from Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa.[4]

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[1] See graph in Mitra Das, *Between Two Cultures: The Case of Cambodian Women in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 56.

[2] For a national examination of these trends see Douglas Massey, ed. *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008).

[3] Our interpretation of "home" here is influenced by Linda Silka, "Transforming Experiences: When Host Communities Become Home Communities," in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City: Changing Families, Communities, Institutions – Thirty Years Afterward*, eds., Tuyet-Lan Pho, Jeffrey N. Gerson, and Sylvia Cowan (Burlington, Vt.: University of Vermont Press, 2007), 192-204.

[4] On immigration policy, see for example Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004); Aristide Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Hence, and unlike in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the majority of migrants came from Europe, the latest wave of immigrants comes from the non-western world.[5] There is a tremendous diversity among the new immigrants – in terms of identity, race, culture, language, religion, economics, connection to the homeland, and politics.[6] These complex developments are part of the broader process of global migration, which is not only occurring in the United States, but in fact is taking place the world over.[7]

This section of the report provides an ethnographic and ethnohistorical discussion of the New Lowellians. The chapters focus on the newest groups that have arrived in the city in the last few decades. Their story is told through an assessment of the scholarly literature, but also through oral histories collected among the new immigrants.[8] It examines how the newcomers are preserving, creating, and re-inventing their traditions, ways of life, customs, and practices. It explores how the new immigrants are accommodating, but also how they retain and re-imagine their ethnic identities as the New Lowellians.[9]

The new immigrants have had a significant economic and social impact in Lowell and in Massachusetts. Both the city and the state have faced some population losses – a process counterbalanced by global migration. After decades of gradual decline in the mid-twentieth century, Lowell's population rose from 92,418 in 1980 to about 103,000 in 2004,

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[5] For a comparative perspective that examines immigration trends today with those in the past, see Nancy Foner, *In a New Land: A Comparative View of Immigration* (New York: New York University Press, 2005). See also Nancy Foner and George Fredrickson, editors, *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004).

[6] For the standard work on the new immigrants, see Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. Third Edition (Berkeley: University of California, 2006). See also Reed Ueda, *Postwar Immigrant America: A Social History* (Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1994); and Mary Waters and Reed Ueda, eds. *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration since 1965* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 2007); Nancy Foner, Ruben Rumbaut, and Steven Gold, editors, *Immigration Research for a New Century: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000).

[7] On global immigration, see for example Stephen Castles and Mark Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. Third Edition. (New York: Guilford Press, 2003); Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). For two excellent world historical perspectives and introductions on global migration see Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2005); and Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).

[8] For insightful uses of immigrant stories, see for example Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, *Crossing the Boulevard: Strangers, Neighbors, Aliens in a New America* (New York: Norton, 2003).

[9] For a national study of these developments see Christoph Strobel, *Daily Life of the New Americans: Immigration since 1965* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010).

according to official data. It was a population increase of 11 percent – and a development that moves counter to the state's overall population losses. The demographic decline in the Commonwealth has been impacted by a net loss of jobs and by increasing house and condominium prices, which have soared until the real estate market crisis of the mid-2000s. Between 2000 and the mid-2000s, Massachusetts had a net loss of 230,000 inhabitants. This demographic deficit has been somewhat offset by an inflow of 160,000 immigrants from around the world. Many of the new immigrants took on low-wage jobs in the service, health care, and the ever-shrinking manufacturing sector.[10] However, it would be naïve to see immigrants only at the lower end of the economic spectrum. In fact, many of the high-paying jobs in the high-tech and biomedical sectors in the state, which require highly skilled and educated labor, are also being filled by immigrants.

Southeast Asians – Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Lao – today make up a significant part of the city's population. Among them, especially the Cambodians, have been given scholarly attention.[11] However, there are groups that are much less examined. While the city has a large number of Hispanics, with the exception of the Colombians and the Puerto Ricans, few studies concern this population.[12] While the Portuguese community in Lowell, discussed in the previous section, has been given some attention,[13] scholars have so far largely failed to study the other sizeable Portuguese-speaking group in the city – the Brazilians. Furthermore, the various Indian and African communities in Lowell have not been researched to any significant degree.

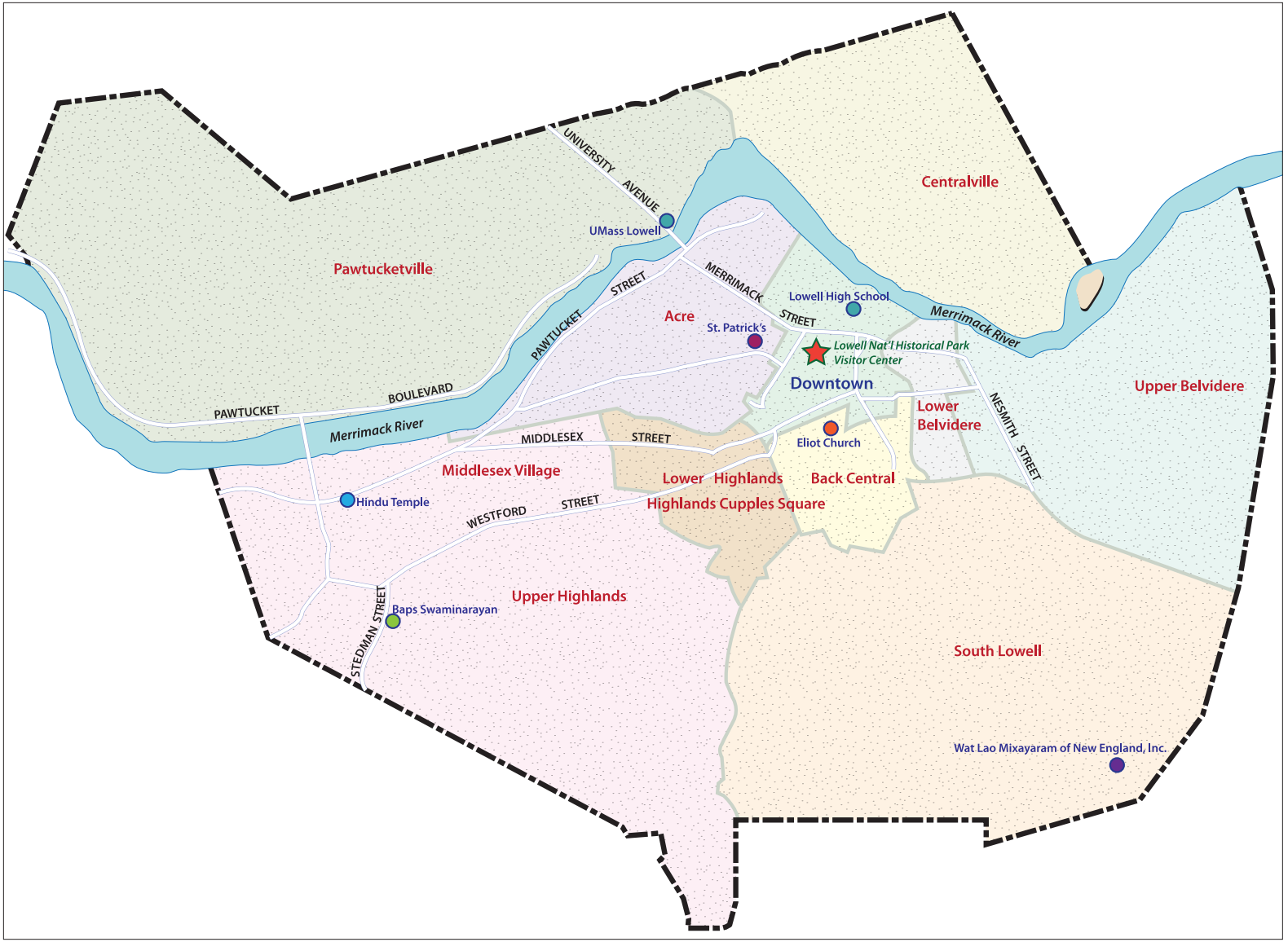
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[10] Hai Pho, "Lowell, Politics, and the Resettlement of Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants, 1975-2000," in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City*, 15-16.

[11] See for example *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City*; Das. There are also a growing number of theses written on the Southeast Asian communities in Lowell. See for example Amy Stitley "Beyond Celebration: The Cambodian Struggle for Representation in Lowell Massachusetts," (Masters Thesis: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2008).

[12] Eleanor E. Glaessel-Brown, "A Time of Transition: Colombian Textile Workers in Lowell in the 1970s," in *The Continuing Revolution: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts*, ed. Robert Weible (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1991), 343-369; Jeffrey Gerson, "Latino Migration, the Catholic Church, and Political Division in Lowell," in *Latino Politics in Massachusetts* eds. Carol Hardy-Fanta and Jeffrey Gerson (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[13] For Portuguese in Lowell, see Karen Borges, "*The Portuguese Community of Lowell,"* Research Paper at the Center for Lowell History, (University of Massachusetts Lowell.)



Lowell Neighborhoods Map. (Original map research by Safi Shams. Map design by Michael Ruocco)

Chapter Eight
The Southeast Asians: Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Lao

Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Lao constitute a significant portion of the population in Lowell. According to estimates by the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (MORI), in 2000 approximately 20,000 (the official number given is 17,371) Southeast Asians lived in Lowell. Thus, Southeast Asians make up about a fifth of the city's overall population. About 90 percent of Southeast Asians in Lowell are believed to be Cambodian, five percent Vietnamese, and another five percent Laotian. Lowell, in fact, is home to the second largest population of Cambodians in the United States after Long Beach, California. Due to its size, this chapter focuses predominantly on the Cambodian population, but it also incorporates analysis on the Vietnamese and Laotians.[1]

The arrival of Southeast Asians in the United States is in large part due to America's involvement in the wars in Southeast Asia. As spelled out below, many of the Laotians and Vietnamese in the United States and in Lowell left their respective countries in reaction to the take-over by communist regimes in the two countries in the 1970s. A significant number of the refugees and immigrants who came to America supported the United States' effort to contain the expansion of communism in the region, and now make the United States their new home. Given the additional complexities in Cambodia in the 1970s, resulting from the genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge regime, as well as the large number of Cambodians in the city of Lowell, it is worthwhile to spell out the developments in Cambodian history that spurred their coming to the United States in a little more detail.[2]

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[1] Hai Pho, "Lowell, Politics, and the Resettlement of Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants," 12.

[2] See Carl Bankston III and Danielle Antoinette Hidalgo, "Southeast Asia," in *The New Americans*, 624-640; Ruben Rumbaut, "Vietnam," in *ibid*., 652-673, David Haines, ed., *Refugees as Immigrants: Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese in America* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman Littlefield, 1989); Jeremy Hein, *From Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: A Refugee Experience in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Paul Rutledge, *The Vietnamese Experience in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Paul Strand and Woodrow Jones, *Indochinese Refugees in America: Problems of Adaptation and Assimilation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1985); James Freeman, *Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese American Lives* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991). On Cambodians in the United Statesee Sucheng Chan, *Survivors: Cambodian Refugees in the United States* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Sucheng Chan, ed., *Not Just Victims: Conversations with Cambodian Community Leaders in the United States* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Julie Canniff, *Cambodian Refugees' Pathways to Success: Developing A Bi-Cultural Identity* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2001); Usha Welaratna, *Beyond the Killing Fields: Voices of Nine Cambodian Survivors in America* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1994).



Nineteenth and twentieth century juxtapositions. (Photographer, Richard Howe, Jr.)

The Cambodian Migration Story

Cambodia gained its independence from France in 1953, but national economic development remained stagnant. After independence the country was led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who did little to industrialize the country. Instead, he spent most of the nation's resources on building roads, railways, and a seaport, which had, however, little impact on improving Cambodia's economic fortunes. Thus, by the 1960s, three-fourths of the country's population still lived in villages."[3]

Sihanouk pursued a variety of diplomatic strategies throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The war in neighboring Vietnam at that time, a struggle fought for national liberation and complicated by Cold War dynamics, increasingly spilled over that country's borders into neighboring Laos and Cambodia. In response to such developments, the Cambodian head of state pursued a complicated balancing act between the conflict's different power players. Sihanouk claimed that he attempted to pursue a policy of neutrality. In part, he did. Yet, at the same time, he tried to accommodate the Americans, while also collaborating with the Vietnamese communists. In 1970, Sihanouk was ousted by a military leader named Lol Nol in a coup supported by the United States. Lol Nol established the Khmer Republic. Shortly after the overthrow of the Sihanouk government, Cambodia slid into a civil war. During the conflict between a Marxist guerilla group called the Khmer Rouge and the Lol Nol regime, which received military support from the United States in the form of military hardware, training, and aerial bombardments of communist held areas, approximately half a million people died. After several years of struggle, the Khmer Rouge overthrew the Lol Nol government in April of 1975, when they took over the Cambodian capitol Phnom Penh. Following the civil war, the Khmer Rouge unleashed a genocidal terror in Cambodia of the worst proportions.

Immediately after gaining control of the capital, the Khmer Rouge ordered an evacuation of the city, forcing people, including the sick and elderly, into the countryside with virtually no opportunity to prepare. "In addition to evacuating cities," the Asian American historian Sucheng Chan writes, "the regime abolished markets, money, banks, and private property in order to erase all traces of capitalism. Khmer Rouge leaders also closed schools," persecuted Buddhist nuns and monks, "and used Buddhist temples for non-religious purposes."[4] In its efforts to create a "classless" society, the Khmer Rouge

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[3] Canniff, *Cambodian Refugees*, 53.

[4] For quote, see Chan, *Survivors*, 19.

pursued a brutal agenda. The campaign targeted intellectuals, political and religious leaders, artists, those who resisted the regime, and even many former supporters of the regime who were suspected or alleged to be traitors. The Khmer Rouge also targeted families – another major pillar of Cambodian society. Forced into horrendous labor conditions often without adequate food supplies, people died from starvation, sheer exhaustion, not to mention the brutal torture and targeted murder that occurred in the country. The Khmer Rouge period brought a reign of terror and horror to Cambodia. An estimated 1.5 to 2 million people (out of a population of less than 8 million) died because of the abuses of the regime. The 1978 invasion by Vietnamese forces of Cambodia, and the installment of a new government in the country by the Vietnamese, forced the Khmer Rouge into retreat. Vietnam's military interference also led approximately 600,000 Cambodians to flee to Thailand, where they were assigned to refugee settlements.[5]

Our oral histories give insights into the refugee experience of Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Laotians. They provide a human face to the trauma of escape, life in refugee camps, and the adjustment to life in the United States that many Southeast Asian refugees had to undergo. The legacy of the Khmer Rouge terror and the pain and stress it caused in the Cambodian community is very apparent in the testimonies. This holds true even in cases were the witnesses were not directly impacted by the regime, or experienced this regime at too young an age. The trauma of the parents is passed on to the children. One informant tells us:

> My mom when she talks about the killing fields, I think she ... I . . . think that she does have post traumatic stress syndrome, because when I listen to her, her story . . . [it is] choppy, but all of them can be pretty violent . . . She actually got tortured. What she told me . . . they used to . . . put a bag around her neck, and then would suffocate her, and then pour water on her and wake her up again, and then do it to her again. So she went through the camps, and then I think she grabbed her sister, and they, they ran. They left the camp.

The mother's sister was killed days after the flight, not too far from the Thai border. "[H] er sister died in her arms . . . she had to grab the sarong her parents gave her. That's what she used to wrap her sister up and bury her."[6]

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[5] For a concise summary of events in Cambodia see Chan, *Survivors*, 2004, chapter 1. For a magisterial biography of Pol Pot and the history of Cambodia around the period of the genocide, see Philip Short, *Pol Pot: Anatomy of Nightmare* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005); see also Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996).

[6] Sambath Bo interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

Vietnamese and Laotian Refugees and Immigrants

The coming of Vietnamese refugees to Lowell is tied to the history of the Vietnam War. In 1975, the United States pulled out of Vietnam, which caused a flood of refugees to flee that country. Many of those who attempted to escape had supported the United States' occupation and anti-communist struggle in their country. The harrowing experience undergone by the Vietnamese boat people, as this group of refugees is often called, comes to life in the interviews. "It was a very dangerous journey," told Tony Mai. We were in "a little wooden boat about 30 feet long and it carried about 70 . . . 73 people exactly." The boat people feared that bad weather might sink their small vessels. They dreaded potential pirate attacks, which could mean theft, rape, murder, among other dangers. Yet despite these challenges, many Vietnamese refugees felt that they had no option but to leave.[7]

Sylvia Cowan in her essay on Lao refugees in Lowell argues that between 1975 and 1992, roughly some 220,000 people from Laos came to the United States as refugees. The Laotians were of a variety of different ethnic backgrounds belonging to the Hmong and various groups of the lowland Lao. As with the Vietnamese, many in the first wave of Laotian refugees who came to America in the early1980s had been allies, collaborators, active fighters, and their family members, who had participated in the so-called "secret war" fought by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the United States against the communist Pathet Lao. Cowan writes "while many of the first wave of refugees left from fear of political violence and warfare, later migrants left because of hardships experienced under the new regime, wanting to reunite with their families, seeking more freedom or economic and educational opportunities."[8]

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[7] Tony Mai interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 25, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Thong Phamduy interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 30, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[8] Sylvia Cowan, "Lao Refugees in Lowell: Reinterpreting the Past, Finding Meaning in the Present," in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immingrants in the Mill City*, 135-137. See also Blong Xiong interviewed by Christoph Strobel, March 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

How Lowell Became a Cambodian Stronghold

Prior to the mid-1970s, there was only a limited presence of Southeast Asians in Lowell – a reality reflected on the national stage as well. Sucheng Chan, in her book on Cambodians in the United States, estimated that fewer than one thousand Cambodians lived in the United States at that time. Many had arrived here for short-term stays, often related to professional development and in most cases education. This quickly changed, and by the mid-1970s there was a significant increase in the Southeast Asian population.[9]

Sucheng Chan argues that there were two major Cambodian migration movements. The first wave of immigrants came to America from 1975-1977, and included those immediately able to flee the Khmer Rouge. Generally well educated and of upper- and upper middle-class background this group often spoke French or English, and avoided the horrors of the genocidal killings that occurred in Cambodia. The second wave of Cambodian refugees to the United States occurred after the ouster of the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s. This much larger group of refugees was generally, though not exclusively, from rural backgrounds, less educated, and had experienced the horrors of the genocide. Between 1980 and 1985 the United States took in an average of about 20,000 Cambodian refugees per year. This group in particular was least familiar with Western culture, and faced a variety of challenges as the people settled into American life.[10]

Initially, the major factor dictating refugee settlement patterns in the United States was the government's policy of dispersing refugees throughout the country. This approach was taken, in part, so as not to financially overburden specific communities, and to encourage the "assimilation" of refugees into American culture.

Overall, however, the need for community support and the desire to preserve culture and traditions led to what sociologists and historians describe as a secondary, internal migration among many of the refugee populations. Many Cambodians, for example, decided to move to areas where they knew that friends and relatives had been sent, areas with a climate more similar to their homeland, and or locations with the possibility of more jobs and places for worship. The largest population of Cambodians exists in Long Beach, California, with an estimated peak of 35,000 to 50,000 – though this population is now believed to be significantly lower.

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[9] Chan, *Survivors*, chapter 3.

[10] Chan, *Survivors*, chapter 3.

Sucheng Chan examines the "pull" factors that encouraged the migration of Cambodians to places like Long Beach and Lowell. She argues that the community in Long Beach formed because California State University Long Beach sponsored about 100 college students from Cambodia in 1958. These students returned home, but many came back to the Long Beach area once trouble began in Cambodia. These Cambodians and some of their allies in mainstream American society made efforts to sponsor and to provide support to some of the later refugees, thereby creating a place that felt comfortable to many Cambodians. This development, over time, drew a secondary wave of migrants to the city.[11]

According to Chan, the Lowell area possessed three important "pull factors" for Cambodians: a Theravada Buddhist temple, the availability of jobs, and "refugee-friendly" government policies. Chan argues that then Massachusetts Governor Dukakis' wife, Kitty Dukakis, had a commitment to providing assistance to the victims of the Cambodian genocide. Involved in local initiatives, she traveled to Thailand and lobbied on behalf of Cambodian refugee issues. The state government organized support agencies and provided public assistance programs. During part of the 1980s, the greater Lowell area also experienced the creation of many low-skill manufacturing jobs in the computer business – a period since then referred to as the "Wang boom." This boom eventually went bust, yet during the times of plenty, many assembly plants readily hired Cambodians looking for work. The third pull factor to Lowell was the presence of a Buddhist temple in North Chelmsford, which was led by an experienced monk from Cambodia.[12]

While some scholars might take issues with Chan's emphasis here, favoring certain factors over others, from the oral histories it also seems clear that family and community were additional major reasons that attracted Cambodians to Lowell. Cambodian immigrants feel a certain degree of comfort in Lowell because of community and family support networks, as well as the availability of ethnic stores and businesses.[13] Thus, since their arrival in the 1980s, the Cambodians have created a community for themselves in the city of Lowell as well as in the surrounding suburbs.

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[11] Chan, *Survivors*, 85-97.

[12] Chan, *Survivors*, 102-106.

[13] See for example Phala Chea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Sidney Liang interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 17, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

Southeast Asian Immigrant Lives in Lowell

There is a wealth of Cambodian businesses and restaurants in the city of Lowell, centering especially around Pailin and Cupples Square, but they can be found all over the Highlands, as well as in many other parts of the city. Samkhann Khoeun, a leader in the Cambodian community, describes the entrepreneurial activities.

> I think there is one furniture business owned by Cambodian-Americans and there are a few liquor stores . . . Then of course restaurants, insurance agencies, things of that nature. Then I think there's one or two driving schools, but again it's small scale as well. Hmm, you know, laundromats. There's one on Westford and Chelmsford, and then motor shops and mechanics, you know. Again, it's still in Lowell in general, and cars, you know, when it comes to a new, or a new hybrid car, they don't have a high capacity to sell it. Businesses tend to sort of grow in the area where there is a need in the community. They really tailor to the non-English-speaking clientele. So a lot of folks just take their car to have a new engine put in at a Cambodian-American body shop. And jewelry, there's many jewelry shops too.[14]

There are also some larger markets like the Battambang Market on Merrimack Street. Generally, however, the businesses are of a much smaller scale.

There are economic and cultural factors that explain why Cambodian businesses tend to be smaller. Statistically speaking, the Cambodian community ranks among the poorest immigrant groups in the United States. In many instances, Cambodian immigrants and Cambodian Americans lack familiarity with the American system. Samkhann Khouen explains:

> [I]t's a cross-cultural component and the way businesses run and operate, all that kind of stuff is somewhat different. You know, the Cambodian community lends each other free food and money to start out. We do a lot of things on a personal basis. And we do not like to really sign contracts. So there is still that element happening in the Cambodian community here. In their mind they know what to do, you know. So there are still elements of cultural difference and to some extent, I don't think, the Cambodian-American community, the business community, really puts into good use the existing infrastructures in Lowell.[15]

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[14] Samkhann Khoeun interviewed by Susan Thomson and Christoph Strobel, January 8, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[15] Samkhann Khoeun interviewed by Susan Thomson and Christoph Strobel, January 8, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

Furthermore, immigrant businesses in general have a high failure rate. Their survival often depends on the hard work and long days that an owner puts into his or her business, and also on family members who pitch in as free or underpaid laborers.[16]

The Southeast Asian population has established various associations that have become major stakeholders in the city. The Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA) of Greater Lowell is arguably the largest among them. Founded in 1984 to serve the needs of the growing Cambodian refugee population in Lowell and its surrounding area, the CMAA is governed by a fifteen-member board of directors who are directly elected by the Cambodian community. While the majority of people served by the CMAA are Cambodian, the association also serves Laotian, Vietnamese, Hispanic, and American-born Lowell residents. The CMAA runs and has run a day care, youth programs, programs for elderly and children with developmental disabilities, civic education, a program for families undergoing intergenerational conflict, and a program for young parents. Other programs the association has sponsored feature reintroducing refugees to agricultural farming through use of local farmlands and a pilot project in fish farming. Phala Chea who was the president of the CMAA during the time of her interview, explained hers and the CMAA's role and challenges.

> Networking is a big task for me . . . and making connections with members of the community. As a president, I want CMAA to be recognized by the mainstream community and I want to find ways to get more funding for the organization. These are my goals as well as my challenges. Each year, I feel that we have to scramble for city, state, and federal funding to keep our programs running. We try to do what we can yearly to make our organization known to the public . . . I think we are getting more involvement from the city. I think they are starting to be more supportive of us, more so than in the past. The city manager met us several times to listen to our concerns and our issues. We are beginning to work closely with the Police Department as well . . . The CMAA and other Southeast Asian organizations do not want to work in isolation – we want to work with the city to help improve our community.[17]

Phala Chea points to obstacles faced and strategies pursued by several of Lowell's non-governmental organizations that represent, work for, and advocate for the interests of immigrants.

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[16] See for example Portes and Rumbaut, *Immigrant America*, chapter 4; and Leakhena Nou, "Exploring the Psychosocial Adjustment of Khmer Refugees in Massachusetts from an Insider's Perspective,"in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City*, 173-174.

[17] Phala Chea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

The Lao Family Mutual Association (LFMA) was founded in 1998 to support the Lao community and to encourage links and interaction with other communities in Lowell. The organization is severely under-funded and constantly struggling to find monetary sources to provide English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and other programs that would benefit the Lao community. The LFMA offers community and emotional support to the Laotian community, and is involved with the production of the Southeast Asian Water Festival.[18]

The water festival in Lowell serves to celebrate, preserve, and share Southeast Asian identity and culture. The celebration attracts about 60,000 people every year. Attendees are certainly from the area, but many Cambodians, Lao, and Vietnamese come to Lowell from across the country. The festival is based on Buddhist scripture and tradition and "is held," according to the festival's website, "to thank the spirit of the water, to pray for evil spirits to go away, and to honor the Dragon King who dwells in the water. The water festival is a time to be thankful for the rivers, lakes, and ponds that villagers depend upon for their livelihood and economic development." In Lowell the water festival centers around the Merrimack River. A festival highlight are the boat races that occur throughout the day, and in which teams with crews of about eighteen to 24 rowers compete in traditional Southeast Asian boats over a stretch of 1,000 meters. There is also a wealth of traditional Southeast Asian dance performances as well as traditional musical performances. But the dancers at times also mix in American cultural elements such as hip hop and break dancing to lighten up the mood, and teenagers and young adults perform rap music, often in Southeast Asian languages, such as Khmer. Beauty pageants also play a popular role during the water festival. Furthermore, there are many booths, where vendors sell a rich variety of Southeast Asian foods and crafts, such as wooden statues, which in many Southeast countries would be aimed at the tourist trade. Several stalls also sell traditional clothing.[19]

Buddhism is the major religion among the Cambodians in Lowell. They, however, refer to it by a different name, calling it "sasana boran" or the "original teaching of Buddha." Scholars of world religion classify the particular school of Buddhism practiced

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[18] Samkhann Khoeun interviewed by Susan Thomson and Christoph Strobel, January 8, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Blong Xiong interviewed by Christoph Strobel, March 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[19] See http://www.lowellwaterfestival.org/. Accessed February, 19, 2009.

by the Cambodiasn as Theravada ("the teachings of the elders"). This religious branch is older and historically distinct from the other major school of Buddhism called Mahayana (often translated as the "Great Vehicle"). This branch is today practiced by believers in China, Japan, and Korea. Both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists adhere to the basic tenets of Buddhism. Yet, Theravada Buddhists emphasize the release or escape of an individual person from the cycle of life to reach the state of nirvana (a Sanskrit word for "blown out"). Mahayana Buddhism, on the other hand, maybe influenced by Hindu practices, writes Peter Occhiogrosso, "developed the ideal of everyone becoming a bhodisattva ["enlightened one"] and then a buddha endowed with omniscience and compassion and the ability to help limitless beings through rebirth in samsara [Sanskrit for "journeying" in the wheel of existence]."[20]

Various Buddhist temples in the greater Lowell area are used by Southeast Asians from the region. A Lao Buddhist temple, named Watlao Mixayaram, can be found in a quiet residential neighborhood in South Lowell just off Interstate 495. Some members of the community were kind enough to invite members of the research team during the Lao New Year celebration in April 2007. In this particular small temple, the monks reside in a building to the left from the main entrance gate. On the right is the main temple hall, which was built just a few years ago. The temple is painted in yellow with red and green designs decorating the eaves. As you enter the temple, you remove your shoes. The main temple has a kitchen area in which women prepare food for the monks and at times also for the community visiting the temple for festivals and holy days. As you enter the main hall of the temple, you can see the statue of a golden Buddha sitting on an altar. The hall is encircled with paintings depicting aspects of the life story of the Buddha.[21]

Religion can, however, not only play a role in cultural preservation and community building, but it can reinforce differences, tensions, and division among believers and communities. We have already seen this trend with the wave of late nineteenth- and early twentieth century immigrants. The Trairatanaram Temple and Parsonage in North Chelmsford, the longest established temple in the area, has been the staging ground for a recent episode that underscores this observation. The conflict

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[20] Peter Occhiogrosso, *The Joy of Sects* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 93-102; Susan Thomson, "Along the Path to Nibbana: Civic Engagement, Community Partnerships, and Lowell's Southeast Asian Buddhist Temples," in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City*, 2007, 114-120.

[21] The members of the research team were Christoph Strobel and Susan Thomson.

between monks there, the actual causes of which we were not able to untangle, has had a spill-over effect into the Cambodian population of the greater Lowell area. Many have chosen sides in this dispute. After threats of violence in the temple community, a court ordered the two factions of monks to separate into the upstairs and the downstairs portion of the temple. This division caused some Cambodians to call the institution the "Upstairs Downstairs" temple. Jeffrey Gerson, who has extensively studied the division and the roots of "the battle for control" of the temple, observes:

> One significant factor is Cambodia homeland politics. Another is differing notions of how power should be structured; that is, centralized versus decentralized . . . [A] third is differing religious visions, with one group expressly advocating "Engaged Buddhism." The issues in the North Chelmsford temple are similar to those found at Cambodian temples around the United States: charges of misappropriation of funds and improper recordkeeping, deep personality conflicts, rivalries among the monk leadership, and legal attempts to evict monks and their supporters from the temple.

The dispute has antagonized some members of the Cambodian community who are not happy about the in-fighting among monks and believe that the situation needs to be sorted out.[22]

For many Cambodians, Buddhism is a day-to-day practice, very much ingrained in every-day life. Many Cambodians in greater Lowell do not limit themselves to attending only one temple. They go to the "one in Lowell" as well as to the "Upstairs Downstairs [temples]; "we attend all three" says Phala Chea. "We find that we get along with all three." Her views are not unusual. "A lot of our friends go to all three, so we go there with them. So it doesn't really matter. I think for some people maybe they like one better than the other, but for me, I have no preference."[23]

Christian churches play an important role in the lives of some Southeast Asians. The congregation of the Presbyterian Elliot Church, for instance, is divided into about one-third Cambodian, many of whom were exposed to Christianity while living in

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[22] Jeffrey Gerson, "The Battle for Control of the Trairatanaram Cambodian Temple," in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City*, 153-172. See also Sidney Liang interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 17, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell; Sambath Bo interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[23] Phala Chea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

refugee camps, one-third African, and one-third white membership.[24] Furthermore, a significant part of the Vietnamese population in Lowell is Catholic.[25] In addition, the Church of Latter Day Saints is a chosen place of worship among a number of Southeast Asians.[26]

St. Patrick's church has become a popular place for the Vietnamese of the greater Lowell area to meet and socialize. Saturday is their usual meeting day, which is also when mass is given in Vietnamese. The Saturday get-togethers in the basement of the church are a time to socialize, visit, and network. These meeting times also are used to prepare for holidays like the Vietnamese New Year, or to prepare for the ping pong tournament that the group organizes. Membership in the church or being a Christian is not a prerequisite to attend the socials as they are open to everybody no matter what their religious affiliation. Moreover, the Vietnamese community at the church also has a youth group, and working with the young is emphasized by community leaders.

St. Patrick's is a lead participant in the Vietnamese New Year's celebration. It collaborates with the University of Massachusetts Lowell's Vietnamese Student Association to stage that event. In fact, one of the community's leaders, Thong Phamduy, was a lead organizer and co-initiator of the celebration at the university's Cumnock Hall when he was a student there in the 1980s.[27] An interviewee describes the Vietnamese New Year's celebration at St. Patrick's:

> Traditionally we have three days to celebrate, but over here, we don't have that much time . . . we only celebrate one day every year. Here at the church, we have a big feast. Everybody just brings their food and we all share. Hundreds show up for that night at church. Usually we have a pretty

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[24] Debbie Hovanasian, "A pilgrimage to ministry" originally in the *Lowell Sun*. See http://www.eliotlowell.org/ThysanLowellSun.html (accessed July 3, 2010).

[25] Thong Phamduy interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 30, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Bryan Bryan Tran interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, May 8, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[26] Blong Xiong interviewed by Christoph Strobel, March 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[27] Thong Phamduy interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 30, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Tony Mai interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 25, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Bryan Tran interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, May 8, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

> big mass. I'm in the church choir and we prepare to sing special songs and we practice for that. And then we also do a talent show . . . I did a Judo presentation with my sister once . . . we did a traditional opera . . . a lot of food . . . fashion show.[28]

The mixing of culture and processes of synchronicity are apparent in this quote.

As with earlier immigrant groups, language preservation is a central issue for many Southeast Asian immigrants in the "All America" city. The Vietnamese community runs a language program at Saint Patrick's church. Thong Phamduy explained that he had the "drive to create" this program, "because in my own [extended] family we have twenty some kids." For the father of five kids, the desire for his children to learn Vietnamese in a formal and structured way became a priority.

> I started a Vietnamese Language Program eleven years ago. Now that program seems to meet the need of lots of Vietnamese people. We have about 100 students in the program and ten teachers. We run 30 weeks per year starting in September. Like the school year . . . The goal of the Vietnamese Family Program is for the youth to become instructors for the next generation, so that we are able to carry on that mission. So as soon as they finish the program after eight years . . . they're invited to become a teaching assistant for two years or three years. Then they become instructors. Usually they instruct the lower classes. The elder like myself, we cover the upper classes, including the culture, poetry, and everything else . . . Since I'm a teacher, I know how to create curriculum. I am able to work with the group and create our own curriculum. We are revising it every year. It is a working model.[29]

As we learn from Tony Mai, the Cambodian community also runs a similar language program. For him, it is important that his children learn his native Vietnamese and his wife's native Cambodian. He explains:

> I think the reason I'm active in the community is because I want them to know where I came from . . . We say [America is] a melting pot, but I don't believe in the pot [theory]. I think we are a salad bowl. Each of us has a

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[28] Bryan Tran interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, May 8, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[29] Thong Phamduy interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 30, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

> different flavor . . . If they understand the language a little more . . . they understand where we came from. And the generational gap is lower and we communicate a little more.[30]

Other cultural organizations, institutions, and stakeholders are active in the area of cultural preservation. The Angkor Dance Troupe of Lowell, for example, is a nationally recognized dance ensemble. It plays a crucial role in "keeping Khmer traditions alive for future generations" by practicing, performing, and preserving both Cambodian classical and folk dance. A central part of the Angkor Dance Troupe's mission is to teach dance to a younger generation. The group's brochure states:

> As a non-profit cultural organization, Angkor's mission is to:
>
> - preserve, develop and teach the traditions of Cambodian performing arts;
> - promote an increased understanding and appreciation for Cambodian culture through educational programs and professional public performances;
> - support the work of Cambodian dancers in the U.S. and Cambodia; and
> - provide in-depth, high quality arts training and leadership development opportunities for inner-city youth.

The performances are rooted in temple and palace, as well as in rural dances.[31] Nevertheless, and while the Angkor Dance Troupe aims to maintain Cambodian culture, the dancers also actively participate in processes of cultural creation. By fusing Cambodian dance with American musical elements such as rap and hip hop – blending the "traditional" with the "modern" – for some of their performances, the dancers are reinventing and creating a strong Cambodian American culture.[32]

The issues of cultural preservation and adaptation to mainstream society are, however, not uncontested issues in Lowell's Southeast Asian community. Asian American scholars like Sucheng Chan have pointed to the existence of some intergenerational tensions among Southeast Asians in the United States. She argues in the context of the

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[30] Tony Mai interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 25, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[31] *The Angkor Dance Troupe* (Lowell, MA: Official Pamphlet of the Angkor Dance Troupe, 2003), 3-8.

[32] See for example the documentary *Monkey Dance*, by Julie Mallozzi (ITVS, NAATA, WGBH, 2005).

Cambodian Americans that the faster "assimilation" and "acculturation" of youth can lead to clashes in the family.[33] The existence of these conflicts also becomes apparent in the oral histories we collected.

Complaints among some members of the older generation are based on, what is often a perceived "lack of respect" and "unruliness" in the younger generation. Some of the elderly Southeast Asians feel that the youth is being changed by mainstream society in a way that has disrupted a more traditional order. One older man, who came to the United States as a refugee from Laos, explained:

> I think the school system here, from kindergarten to twelve, if they taught what they teach in our country, how to be men, how to respect, not to do bad thing . . . we would call them family values, right? Teach religion in school . . . There is too much freedom . . . students talk back at teachers . . . not in our country . . . Their life here is different. Right now, I can't even talk to my grandchildren. Whatever your parent and grandparents say to you are supposed to say 'Yes grandmother, yes grandfather.' Here they say, 'I can't do it, I don't want to do it, I hate you.' Now this is totally wrong. And it shocked me. I cannot depend on them. In our country when you get old, you can depend on your children to take care of you. Here, forget it![34]

Many younger Southeast Asians have a different view of the situation, which supports Chan's argument, and indicates a sense among them that they have a higher degree of "acculturation" or "assimilation" and that they do not want to pursue the road of their parents and grandparents. A young Vietnamese American man in his mid-20s explains:

> I've been Americanized a lot. I'm the first one in the family that would break out. The traditional Vietnamese way, I don't really like it that much. I like to try new things. I look at the old way, but I also want to see what is out there. So a lot of traditional rules I do not follow, or refuse to follow . . . There are tensions, but there's nothing my parents can do, because I'm a grown- up.[35]

It is important to emphasize that this does not lead to a total rejection of Southeast Asian roots, customs, and traditions. A good number of the younger Southeast Asians in Lowell attempt to maintain their culture. The same Vietnamese American points out:

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[33] Chan, *Survivors*, 193, 210.

[34] Blong Xiong interviewed by Christoph Strobel, March 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[35] Bryan Tran interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, May 8, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

"How do I maintain my cultural identity? Usually what I do is celebrate the [Vietnamese] New Year. I promote my culture by doing a traditional performance, like an opera, and musical performances . . . I also bought a Vietnamese zither. I learned how to play the zither on my own."[36] A young Cambodian American states "our culture and our traditions . . . it is so intertwined . . . Even though I'm really Americanized, and a modern-day . . . young adult, but I do follow the tradition and culture . . . it's important."[37]

Traditional gender dynamics also are being challenged in many Southeast Asian households. Today in the United States, Southeast Asian women do not only fulfill their "traditional" domestic roles as housewives, but they also are increasingly moving into the work force. Increasingly, two incomes are a necessity for families to survive. As Sucheng Chan underscores, increased responsibilities and travails can lead women to become more assertive in their relationships. This often challenges the sending society's gender norms and assumptions, and it can lead to problems at home between couples.[38]

Transnationalism is a powerful organizing principle embraced by many scholars of immigration. The term refers to the fact that in today's world many immigrants not only live in their country of residence, but they also retain strong ties and remain involved with their country of origin. This fact not only helps us to understand the connections of many Southeast Asians with their sending societies, but these connections indeed apply to many of Lowell's newer immigrant communities. The transnational involvements of newcomer populations shape the lives of many immigrants in significant ways, but they also influence developments in the United States. The sociologist Peggy Levitt, observes that the "proliferation" of the "long-term transnational ties challenges conventional notions about assimilation of immigrants into host countries and migration's impact on sending-country life."[39] Yet, it is important to emphasize that the transnational connections become less important and apparent with later generations of immigrants.

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[36] Bryan Tran interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, May 8, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[37] Sambath Bo interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[38] Leakhena Nou, "Exploring the Psychosocial Adjustment of Khmer Refugees in Massachusetts from an Insider's Perspective," in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City*, 181; Das; Chan, *Survivors*, chapter 6.

[39] Levitt, *Transnational Villagers*, 3-5. On transnationalism and Southeast Asians in Lowell, see several of the essays in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City*.

Lowell's Southeast Asian population also participates in transnational politics. While certainly only a minority among Cambodians in the city is involved in their sending society's political affairs, it is enough of an engagement that Cambodian political parties have active party apparatuses in the city. Thus, all major parties, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), the Royal Party, and the Sam Rainsy Party, seek active support among Lowell's Cambodians. David Turcotte and Linda Silka write that "these party loyalties continue to loom large and infrequently have led to conflict that has negatively impacted community development within Lowell." Furthermore, "party activists hold influence within the community and their distrust of each other often prevents collaboration on important community initiatives." Among the Lao as well, homeland politics can impact debate and tensions. Members of the community here argue over the right flag that should be used to represent the Lao, some supporting the use of the official flag, while a minority advocates for use of the royal flag that was flown in the country before the Pathet Lao communists took over in the late 1970s. "As a result," write Turcotte and Silka, "divisions have emerged within the Lao refugee community that are now preventing collaborating to address local needs and issues within Lowell."[40]

There is also transnational economic support that several Southeast Asians contribute in monetary form, such as remittances to close and extended family members, or in the form of targeted support to development projects, such as supporting educational programs and other missions that improve the life quality in their countries of origin. Phala Chea describes her parents' involvement in Cambodia. "My parents actually are in Cambodia right now … They are basically there to unite with their family members and also to help some of the villagers to dig wells. Before they went, they were able to fund-raise some money for their well-digging project." Moreover, she and her family also support family members financially in Cambodia.[41]

Political representation in the city is an important issue for the New Lowellians in general, and for the Southeast Asians, given their large numbers, specifically. While several Cambodians have run for the city council only one candidate so far has been able to get elected to office.[42] Phala Chea observes the political situation:

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[40] David Turcotte and Linda Silka, "Reflections on the Concept of Social Capital" in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City*, 57-59.

[41] Phala Chea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[42] See for example Jason Lefferts, "Despite Uong's strides, Cambodians taking slow steps to voting power" *Lowell Sun*, October, 29, 2001, and Michael Lafleur, "Three Cambodian-Americans on ballot," *Lowell Sun*, October 17, 2005.

> It is very frustrating because we do want someone in office to reflect the population, but we just can't get a candidate from the Asian community elected since former city councilor Rithy Uong. We just don't have enough registered voters. We definitely need to promote voter registration more within our community. We also need to encourage potential candidates to put their name on the ballot.[43]

A challenge is that many Cambodians are not naturalized U.S. citizens. Rithy Uong, the first Cambodian American in the U.S. to win public office, who got elected to the city council in 1999, 2001, and 2003, "emerged victorious" according to Sucheng Chan "because he managed to gain support from mainstream voters."[44]

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[43] Phala Chea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 15, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[44] Chan, *Survivors*, 105-106.

Chapter Nine
Spanish and Portuguese Speakers

This chapter focuses on the Spanish and Portuguese speakers in Lowell. The Spanish- speaking immigrants in Lowell are almost exclusively Latino, which we define as immigrants who come from South of the border of the United States, and, of course, speak Spanish as their first language. The Portuguese speakers in the city are immigrants from Portugal and from Brazil, although this chapter focuses mostly on the latter of the two groups. From 2001 to 2005, Massachusetts received four percent of the total number of Latinos immigrating to the United States, making the state the seventh largest recipient behind such states as California, Texas, New York, and Florida. The 2000 U.S. Census suggests that nearly 15,000 Latinos live in Lowell, though informal estimates come closer to 19,000 to 20,000. Census numbers suggest that nearly 8,000 Portuguese and Brazilians live in the city. Though again unofficial estimates, as our oral histories seem to suggest, nearly double this number to closer to 15,000 to 16,000.[1] Despite the size of the population, as well as a vast literature produced on a national level, surprisingly little work has been done on the Latinos and Brazilians in Lowell.[2]

Since the1960s, Massachusetts and Lowell experienced an influx of Latino and Brazilian immigrants. Sociological research suggests that, initially, many among these newcomers saw their stay in the United States as temporary, working two to three jobs and sending money to their families back home. However, in the 1990s, America

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[1] http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFFacts?_event=≥o_id=16000US2537000&_geoContext=01000US|04000US25|16000US2537000&_street=&_county=lowell,+ma&_cityTown=lowell,+ma&_state=&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=&_useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=160&_submenuId=factsheet_1&ds_name=ACS_2007_3YR_SAFF&_ci_nbr=null&qr_name=null®=null:null&_keyword=&_industry=. For the unofficial estimates, see for example Francisco Carvalho interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 23, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[2] The literature on Latinos is too vast to be cited here. For a useful introduction, see Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Edna Acosta-Belen and Carlos Santiago, *Puerto Ricans in the United States: A Contemporary Portrait* (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 2006); Victor Zuniga and Ruben Hernandez-Leon, eds. *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006); Norma Stoltz Chinchilla and Nora Hamilton, "Central America," in *The New Americans*, 328-339; Luis Eduardo Guarniza and Marilyn Esitia, "Colombia," in *ibid*., 371-385; Cecilia Menjivar, "El Salvador," in *ibid*., 412-420; Albert Camarillo, "Mexico," in *ibid*., 504-517; Helen Marrow, "South America," in *ibid*., 593-611. On Brazilian immigration, see Bernadete Beserra, *Brazilian Immigrants in the United States: Cultural Imperialism and Social Class* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2003); Maxine Margolis, *Little Brazil: An Ethnography of Brazilian Immigrants in New York City* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

experienced a toughening of border security, which made it harder for undocumented immigrants to enter the United States. The sociologist and demographer Douglass Massey argues that the increasing security led to a rise in smuggling fees because crossing the border became more involved and risky. Thus, many undocumented immigrants began not only to stay longer in the United States, but also began to send for spouses and children as repeat trips became too costly and dangerous. Once here, issues with immigration papers, such as green cards and others, continued, often preventing even legal immigrants from traveling back home. Said one Brazilian worker, "I have been waiting for six years [for my green card] … One day I go there [immigration] and they give you one piece of information and then two days later you get a totally different answer. It is misleading." While the policies in the 1990s and 2000s pursued the target to cut the number of immigrants, ironically, they had the opposite impact. They increased the number of those without documentation who settled permanently in the United States.[3]

As a result of strict border controls, many immigrants come to visit family members on tourist visas, but remain in America after the visa expires. In 1979, for example, immigration authority ordered a Lowell mill owner to appear in immigration court in Boston. They found that "most of the workers had overstayed tourist visas and some had entered without inspection. One individual had entered the country on a 30-day visa in 1972."[4]

Due to the issue of undocumented immigration, it is virtually impossible to get an accurate count of Latino and Brazilians in Lowell. The official census in 2000 reported nearly 10,000 Puerto Ricans in Lowell, and nearly all of them had arrived in the last 30 years. Ana Suarez, who moved to Lowell in 1962, remembered about the Puerto Rican community: "When I came to Lowell, there were probably no more than ten families here."[5] Puerto Ricans constitute the biggest Latin American minority in Lowell. Since Puerto Ricans are American citizens, these numbers are likely to be accurate. Among the Latinos, the Puerto Ricans are followed by the Colombians and then the Dominicans at

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[3] William Ferreira Fahlberg interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 23, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Douglas Massey and Chiara Capoferro,"The Geographic Diversification of American Immigration," in *New Places New Faces*, 32.

[4] Eleanor E. Glaessel-Brown, "A Time of Transition: Colombian Textile Workers in Lowell in the 1970s," in *The Continuing Revolution,* ed. Robert Weible (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, 1991), 366.

[5] Ana Suarez, interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, February 29, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

close to 1,100 each. The Brazilian community numbers around 1,800. However, due to the significant presence of undocumented immigrants, the number of newcomers in many Latino communities and among the Brazilians is likely to be significantly higher.[6]

While one ought to be careful not to over-generalize the complex and diverse experiences and motivations of Latino immigrants, many were lured to the Lowell area by a desire to find jobs and to improve their opportunities. It is hard to find a distinct pattern in the migration stories of Latinos though. One exception may be the Colombians.

As research by Eleanor Glaessel Brown demonstrates, it was the textile industry that brought this group to Lowell in the 1960s and 1970s. The Colombians were thus only another group of textile laborers, preceded by the Irish, Greek, French Canadians, and many others. While Lowell saw a significant decline in the textile industry from 1900-1930, and then again after World War II, with many companies leaving the Merrimack River Valley, a few companies remained. Wannalancit Mills, Ames Textile Corporation, and Joan Fabrics Corporation, among others, continued to stay in business for some time into the second half of the twentieth century.

It is worth noting the transnational historic developments that drove the Colombians to work in Lowell. Much of Colombia's textile industry centered in one area: 89 percent of its production came from Medellin. The textile industry began to flourish in Medellin in the 1870s. There were more than 800 businesses associated with the textile industry in the city. The majority of the workers were highly skilled due to the presence of vocational schools and a strong emphasis on the industry. Colombian labor laws were worker friendly as layoffs were illegal, contracts were generally honored, and a competitive wage scale offered to the workers created an expert work force. Despite such benefits and job security, the textile industry in Lowell offered wages four times higher than the Colombian companies as well as the opportunity for overnight shifts which paid time and a half. Furthermore, Lowell's mills were in need of workers, because by American standards, work conditions were undesirable, wages low, benefits scarce, and there was little job stability. Still the conditions were attractive enough to Colombian laborers.

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[6] http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFFacts?_event=≥o_id=16000US2537000&_geoContext=01000US|04000US25|16000US2537000&_street=&_county=lowell,+ma&_cityTown=lowell,+ma&_state=&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=&_useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=160&_submenuId=factsheet_1&ds_name=ACS_2007_3YR_SAFF&_ci_nbr=null&qr_name=null®=null:null&_keyword=&_industry=.

Glaessel Brown shows that many Colombians found the organization and management of the mills to be considerably less effective than what they experienced in Medellin. They resided in crowded quarters, worked long hours, and faced tensions with native and other immigrant workers. Yet, they stayed in Lowell because, according to one worker, "we earned more because we worked so many extra hours, generally twelve, but there were people who worked fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen. Since it was in the same mill, you only had to change clothes. We suffered, but one was stuck on dollars." For some, money was not their motivation. Rather, many "were people who worked long hours with pride and dignity in jobs shunned by local labor so that their children would know a different future." Even after companies in New England stopped recruiting in Colombia, the flow of immigrants to the mills did not stop. Social ties through families and friends provided the information needed for Colombian workers and led them to Lowell and other manufacturing cities. They proved to be incredibly important to the textile industry. Said one company manager, "we would be very hard-pressed if we lost our Colombian work force. We could not operate without them . . . They filled positions where we had very high turnover, and they stayed." The prospect of a higher wage and a sense of duty to their family was attractive to these workers even if the jobs came with fewer benefits compared to Colombian mills.[7]

Over the decades, however, the pattern of Colombian immigration has changed. According to one interviewee, the recent influx of immigrants consists of "engineers" and "all kinds of educated people . . . Most of them speak English, and they want to do an MA, they want to study, they want to do many things, but it's not like before. There are still people who come to work. But not like before."[8]

Social science researchers and social workers frequently point out that many of the newcomer populations have unique needs, especially compared with mainstream Americans. Immigrants come to the United States with little to no fluency in English and they experience culture shock. Many are also unfamiliar with some American customs, the political system, and public services. Various organizations aim to assist immigrants with these issues.

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[7] Glaessel Brown, 343-369.

[8] Anonymous 5 interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 5, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

One organization that aims to aid immigrants is the Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS), which was founded in 1970. The clientèle of this group originates mostly from the Portuguese mainland, Brazil, but also the islands – Cape Verde and the Azores. With agencies in Cambridge, Somerville, and Boston, the group expanded out of the greater Boston area into Lowell in 1998 to reach the approximately 16,000 to 18,000 Portuguese and Brazilians in Lowell, along with others in surrounding communities. Located in Back Central, the neighborhood where many Portuguese speakers live, MAPS offers both health and social services. However, the recent budget crisis has resulted in staff cuts and fewer programs. The director of the Lowell office summed up their goals: "to create access and break barriers to education, social, and health services." Services can range from domestic abuse assistance to menial yet important tasks such as reading or translating correspondence or calling a doctor for a prescription or appointment. Funding on the state and federal levels has always been an issue – even before the recent economic recession.

Growing concerns about women's issues led MAPS to establish a domestic violence program in 2006.

> We provide services to the victims or develop safety plans for them. Connect them to housing, to legal services, might they need a divorce … We do a lot of education and awareness, because in our community, we still often think of domestic violence as just physical abuse. They do not see it as emotional or controlling or financial abuse. [With] a lot of education … the women began to realize that they are being controlled and are being victimized.

MAPS plays a key role in the Portuguese-speaking community, which is believed to be nearly evenly split between Portuguese and Brazilians. The program brings together the two groups to promote the community. While MAPS did meet some resistance by those who wanted assistance from someone from their own country, either Portuguese or Brazilian, the success of the program and the workers' responsiveness have helped overcome such biases.[9]

Similar programs exist in Lowell for Latinos. The Casey Family Services, a program with sixteen offices all over New England, for example, has several employees

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[9] Osvalda Rodrigues interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 5, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

specifically for Latinos. Established in 1991, Casey serves low-income and working families. Ivette Nieves, a parent aide at Casey Family Services, deals with struggling students in school, whether the problems are academic or behavioral.[10]

Like so many other immigrants, the Latinos, Portuguese, and Brazilians believe that continuing their children's cultural identity is important. Various programs by MAPS educate the next generation. Elderly women, for instance, volunteer at the center to teach young girls how to sew, crochet, and embroider – a skill the Portuguese take much pride in. Young girls are kept off the streets, elderly women are involved in the community, and the culture is passed down from one generation to the next. This commitment encourages and enables the younger generation to retain their native tongue, which many consider to be vital to their identity.[11]

For Puerto Ricans, one way of celebrating their identity is through the Lowell Puerto Rican Festival. For nearly 30 years, this festival celebrates Puerto Rico's culture and heritage, attracting Puerto Ricans from all over New England. Activities have included the dance troupe Estrellas Tropicales (Tropical Stars), orchestras, food, parades, and beauty pageants.[12] The celebration of the Lowell Latin American Festival and the Colombian Independence Day also aids Latinos in the process of cultural preservation. Various Latino and Latin American groups perform in a variety of music and dance styles. It is through teaching children their country's dance that a sense of identity is passed on. One interviewer explained that "the groups here, they don't dance that well, but if we want to be able to transmit our roots to our kids, good for us. If they dance the cumbia, they will know it's from the north of Colombia."[13] Festivals as well as music and dance groups play an important role in the community by strengthening Latino identities and pride through displays of dance, music, and food.[14]

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[10] Ivette Nieves interviewed by Christoph Strobel and Yingchan Zhang, April 24, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[11] Osvalda Rodrigues interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 5, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[12] Wilson Wanene, "Puerto Rican pride rules in Lowell's Movable Feast," *Lowell Sun*, July 8, 2002.

[13] Anonymous 5 interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 1, 20008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[14] On this issue see Olivia Cadaval, *Creating a Latino Identity in the Nation's Capital: The Latino Festival* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998).

There are tensions that can emerge and that exist within and among the Latino, Brazilians, and Portuguese, which can sometimes come to the forefront. An immigrant from Mexico explains: "I have never been invited to be a part of the Puerto Rican festival. I try to participate … but me and others, Colombians, Dominicans, as far as I know, are not welcome to be a part of the committee."[15] Francisco Carvalho found that during some Latino events and celebrations that he attended, "Puerto Ricans would be upset because they would play cumbia all night, which is Colombian music and not Puerto Rican salsa, or merengue and Colombians would be upset the next dance because there was merengue and no cumbia. They would leave and not go to the next party." Furthermore, as a Brazilian who married a Portuguese, he initially faced an uphill battle to get accepted by the Portuguese community.[16]

Some Spanish and Portuguese speakers who live in Lowell are undocumented immigrants. Immigrants without paperwork live in a constant state of fear. They worry about getting caught and about deportation. In an interview done with one such family, the husband of the family commented, "When I was in Brazil, I had no money, but I had peace. Here I have money to buy food or whatever I need, but I'm always afraid."[17]

Despite the size of the Latino, the Portuguese, and the Brazilian-speaking population, their political representation in Lowell is limited. Many hurdles stand in the way of voting. One of them is a general disinterest concerning politics among some. Furthermore, limited knowledge of English, laws, and procedures, combined with the intimidation of the process, prevent many of those who are able to vote to do so. Furthermore, the ward system in Lowell also undermines minority representation. Some immigrants are unable or unwilling to give up their native citizenship. For others, experiences with political repression in their sending societies, has made them resistant to voting. Osvalda Rodrigues, a social worker at MAPS, found this out when talking to older Portuguese, who had grown up in fascist Portugal, and who now could vote in America. "When these people came here 40 or 50 years ago, you didn't vote. We were oppressed politically. You wouldn't dare to speak up because it could be very dangerous if you did."[18]

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[15] Margarita Zapata Turcotte interviewed by Christoph Strobel, April 7, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[16] Francisco Carvalho interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 23, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[17] Evan Lehmann, "Hard-Working, Taxpaying, Law-Breaking" *Lowell Sun,* December 5, 2005.

The large Latino, Brazilian, and to a lesser extent the Portuguese population are also restricted due to their lack of citizenship and due to the low rate of voter registration among foreign-born citizens. Naturalization is a difficult, long-winded, and intimidating process. Various organizations in Lowell offer assistance with citizenship classes and voter registration drives. MAPS, for example, helps fill out citizenship applications and readies applicants for the process through various classes. CASEY runs voter registration drives and runs voter education programs which create "awareness about the importance of voting."[19]

Lowell has had one Latino councilor, George Ramirez, elected in 2005 after an unsuccessful bid in 2003. There were mixed feelings among the politically active Latinos. They were concerned that he had married into one of Lowell's prominent families and about his residency in the predominantly white, and upscale, Belvidere neighborhood. One Latina observed: "I'm proud, obviously. Better one than none and better him than somebody who wouldn't represent us well. The only thing I don't know . . . does he understand all the issues?"[20]

Immigrants can experience intolerance from outsiders. Being Latino or Brazilian can lead to discrimination, especially given the focus in mainstream American society that pushes for "English only" due to the general impatience and uneasiness about foreign-language speakers. This attitude has forced some immigrants to not pass down their native tongue to their children. "Because of the difficult time I had when I was a child, as a student," one Latina informer explains, "I didn't want [my children] to go through that." This made her reluctant to teach her children Spanish. "My two older ones . . . They could understand it . . . but they cannot read it, and they can't talk back to you." In addition, a member of her family was ethnically profiled when he tried to open up a bank account. Her son was asked to produce a green card, despite the fact that he is Puerto Rican and hence an American citizen. Nevertheless, due to the fact that he is Latino, our informer explained, this type of questioning by bank employees seemed acceptable.[21]

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[18] Osvalda Rodrigues, interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 5, 2008, Lowell Ethnographic Project, MA; Portes and Rumbaut, 139.

[19] Ivette Nieves interviewed by Christoph Strobel and Yingchan Zhang, April 24, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowel, MA.

[20] Michael Lafleur, "A Sign of Growing Power?" *Lowell Sun,* November 13, 2005.

[21] Ana Suarez interviewed by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, February 29, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

Some observers accuse immigrants of competing with mainstream Americans for jobs, to burden taxpayers, and to live off welfare. But these opinions are not necessarily reflected in the available economic data. In fact, various studies show that immigrants contribute more in taxes than they cost in terms of benefits. Immigrants also contribute to the community through their spending. Furthermore, undocumented immigrants cannot take advantage of various social programs such as Social Security, even though they help fund these programs by paying taxes. Many also work unappealing jobs, which mainstream Americans would not want – at least not at the wages that employers offer. At the "Day without an Immigrant" protest in Lowell on May 2, 2006, one observer commented that immigrants "have been contributing to the economy, to our community, and to society in general."[22]

Religion plays a central role in the life of many Latinos, Brazilians, and Portuguese. Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, two experts in recent immigration to the United States, argue that

> religion accompanies the process of migration, seeking to ameliorate the traumas of departure and early settlement, to protect immigrants against external attacks and discrimination, and to smooth their acculturation to the new environment . . . So important is this mediating role that when a church . . . is not there to receive the newcomers, immigrants have commonly organized in order to build it.[23]

In 1966, for example, when the Latino community was slowly growing in Lowell, the now demolished Spanish American Center was established by the Catholic Archdiocese. It rented the second floor for religious services. The Spanish American Center served both social and religious functions, writes Jeffrey Gerson. It aided "to lessen alienation and to replace town and kinship structures of Puerto Rico." It also eased "the psychological isolation of being newcomers in a hostile, predominantly white ethnic, declining industrial city."[24]

Despite the large size of the Brazilian community in Lowell, the population seems to be transient, and recently also stagnant, and some suggest, even in decline. A

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[22] See Neeraj Kaushal, Cordelia Reimers, and David Reimers, "Immigrants and the Economy," in *The New Americans*, 175-188. Quote from Tom Spoth, "Rallying Cry: 'We Come to Work'," *Lowell Sun*, May 2nd, 2006, 8.

[23] Portes and Rumbaut, 301.

[24] Gerson, "Latinos in Lowell," 128.

study done by Carlos Eduardo Siqueira found that 90 percent of Brazilians identified themselves as "just passing through." Because of this attitude, many work multiple jobs. Many live in crowded conditions. For instance, in one extreme case, investigators found eighteen people living together in a six- by eight-foot space, a room which also included a boiler. Because of the risk of deportation, the weakening dollar, and because they have enough money saved up, many Brazilians are believed to have started to return home. Maristela Tosato, a caseworker with MAPS, has noticed many "people are going and many more are making plans not to stay longer."[25]

Numerous Latino, Portuguese, and Brazilian businesses exist throughout Lowell. Many of the Portuguese and Brazilian businesses are in the Back Central neighborhood. Latino businesses can be found around several neighborhoods: the Acre, Back Central, Lower Belvidere, the Highlands, Centreville, and South Lowell. There hasn't always been such a strong presence of Latino businesses. One interviewee explained,

> There was only one guy who used to go to New York and bring stuff from there to sell to the people here. But, for example, if something is $20, he would sell it for $50 or $60 and we'd pay whatever he'd say ... Now, everywhere we go, we can get what we need.[26]

A variety of new immigrant businesses cater to ethnic consumers' needs and desires. However, they do not only satisfy a commercial niche within the community, but they also provide employment. Ivan Light has proposed the "disadvantage theory" to explain the prominence and high volume of immigrant businesses. Due to discrimination in the labor market and opportunities only in the least attractive jobs, self-employment is an attractive, and often the only alternative for economic mobility for many immigrants.[27]

Back Central still has some of the elements of a Portuguese ethnic neighborhood with a strong recent Brazilian influx, although our oral histories seem to indicate that the character of the area is gradually changing. Still, the neighborhood remains a Portuguese-speaking stronghold with many businesses and social institutions. Osvalda Rodrigues

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[25] Maristela Tosato interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 26, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Jeff Skruck, "Brazilian Natives Charged in Document Forgery Scheme," *Lowell Sun*, May 3, 2002. See also Francisco Carvalho, interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 23, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[26] Anonymous 5 interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 5, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[27] Ivan Light, "Disadvantaged Minorities in Self Employment," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 20 (March-June 1979), 31-45.

observes: "If you want to go to a Portuguese store, you come here. The church is here. We are here [MAPS]. The clubs are here. We have two clubs, the restaurants. They are all here." Mariestela Tosato, a Brazilian, adds, "When I came here . . . Wow, there are a lot of stores! I can speak Portuguese all the time! Portuguese from Portugal, from Brazil, everywhere." Some mainstream businesses have also recognized the commercial opportunities that can be reaped from catering to the Portuguese-speaking community. Supermarkets in Lowell have a variety of Portuguese and Brazilian foods. "I don't need to go to the Brazilian store to buy . . . the cream we use," says Tosato. "They have it at Market Basket. We use some special cookies to do some desserts, they have that. They have all kinds of the regular foods that we use. So it's easier now." Other businesses, such as banks, in Back Central also offer services in Portuguese.[28]

Education can provide a unique set of challenges to newcomers. One issue that has been debated in Lowell, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and across the United States, is bilingual education. Question 2 passed in 2002, reversed Massachusetts's policy on students whose first language was not English. The new law stated that all instruction, with very few exceptions had to be taught in English. Replacing the bilingual classrooms were now English immersion classes, in which students were normally placed for one year, and from then on they were expected to do their schoolwork in English. One concerned parent questioned the change. "If [students] don't know what they are hearing, they aren't going to be able to ask and understand what's going on. I know there are a lot of smart children that could just get frustrated."[29]

Another frequently cited challenge in the area of education is parent-teacher-student relations. Ivette Nieves, a parent aide, found that "the parents don't know how to speak English. The kids are born and raised here, they know the language, and they often don't know how to communicate with their parents." In disciplinary situations, children also at times mistranslate messages from the school system, which can lead to further trouble down the line. As several social scientists point out, parents and immigrant students can face discrimination from school officials and teachers. Our interviewee points to the dangers that can emerge from this situation. If children's "parents are trying

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[28] Maristela Tosato interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 26, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA. See also Francisco Carvalho, interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 23, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Osvalda Rodrigues, interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 5, 2008, Lowell Ethnographic Project, MA.

[29] Rebecca Piro, "Many Tongues, One Language," *Lowell Sun,* September 14, 2003.

to find support and can't find it . . . the kid won't find it either. So they're lost. [They] end up in gangs, do crime, do whatever." Many immigrant parents are also forced to work more than one job. With challenges that parents and students face, and the absence of a clear support system, the children of immigrants face severe challenges in the American educational system.[30]

In summation, Latinos and Brazilians face many unique challenges. As we have seen, due to the high level of undocumented immigrants among these groups, they face unique trials, which complicate their lives in the city and the United States. In the area of education, politics, cultural preservation, and enterprise, Latinos and Brazilians face similar dynamics as other groups of newcomers.



Sowy's Spanish-American Bakery

[30] Ivette Nieves, interviewed by Christoph Strobel and Yingchan Zhang, April 24, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Ana Suarez interviewed by Christoph Strobel, February 29, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, Carola Szuarez Orozco, and Irina Todorava, *Learning in a New Land: Immigrant Sudents in American Society* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 2008); Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Carola Szuarez Orozco, *Children of Immigration* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

Chapter Ten
The Indians

While there is a growing literature on Indian immigrants in the United States, scholars have so far paid little attention to this group in Lowell.[1] There is a significant Indian population in the city. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Indian population in Lowell is about 14 percent of the overall Asian population. Thus, after the Cambodians, it is the second largest Asian sub-group in the city. There are about 3,000-4,000 Indians in Lowell.[2] They come largely from Gujarat as well as from southern India. Many South Indians as well as some Gujarati live in Middlesex Village. However, many Indians also live across the Merrimack River in the Pawtucket Boulevard area, as well as in the Highlands. There exists sort of an ethnic neighborhood in Middlesex Village, with many of the flats in apartment buildings occupied by Indians. As well, two Indian stores, two restaurants, and two Swaminarayan temples serve the needs of the Indian community. Because of their cultural uniqueness due to the size of the population and because of the impact that Indian religious institutions, restaurants, and businesses have, especially in Middlesex Village, we thought it necessary to dedicate a chapter to the Indians. Thus, and much like Framingham and Andover, Lowell plays a focal point for the Indian community in eastern Massachusetts.

Judging from informal conversations during visits to the temples in Lowell, the membership and visitors to the temple as well as the Indian customers who go to the stores in Middlesex Village, they tend to live not only in the city, but also in various locations outside of Lowell, such as the area suburbs, and in places like Waltham, southern New Hampshire, and even towns and cities as far away as Beverly and Worcester. At times, the Indian immigrants are former residents of Lowell, but often they just belong to a particular Swaminarayan temple or they like a certain store, and they are willing to travel for a long distance to worship and to meet with members of their community.

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[1] On Indian immigrants in the United States, see for example Karen Isaksen Leonard "India," in *The New Americans*, 458-468; Madhulika Khandelwal, *Becoming American, Being Indian: An Immigrant Community in New York City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); Padma Rangaswamy, *Namaste America: Indian Immigrants in an American Metropolis* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000)

[2] See graph in Das, 49.

Peggy Levitt, in her book, *The Transnational Villagers*, provides a limited one-paragraph discussion of the Gujarati community of the greater Lowell area. She describes the Gujarati as "transnational" because of the community's strong international ties. The Gujarati have a history of migration, ranging back to Gujarat's long involvement in the Indian Ocean trade, which peaked from the 800s to 1750 C.E. Gujarat produced much of the cloth that dressed the Middle East and the Indian Ocean world, reaching from eastern Africa all the way to China. Gujarati also were participants in the Indian Ocean world's trade diaspora, which stretched to many corners of the Afro-Eurasian world.[3] In the early 1900s, the Gujarati began to have a strong presence in eastern Africa as traders, especially in Tanzania and Uganda. There they maintained frequent contacts with India and preserved a distinct Gujarati culture and identity, and prospered economically (often to the envy of the local African populations). Links with the homeland remained strong. Gujarati, for example, frequently send their children to Gujarat, while in turn, receiving family members and close kin from India. During the national liberation struggles of the 1960s in Africa, the Gujarati were openly associated with the former European colonial masters by anti-colonial activists, and faced discrimination and sometimes violence. Many Gujarati left the region. They departed for India, the United Kingdom, and some went to the United States. At a social event at the temple, we talked to an elderly gentleman who had lived in East Africa and had been part of the exodus and now lives in Worcester, MA. He sometimes comes to the *Swaminarayan* temple on Stedman Street and provides financial support to the community. Furthermore, it becomes clear from our oral histories that the Gujarati in Lowell have frequent contacts with relatives in India via phone, e-mail, and through visits. They also interact with relatives in European countries, especially the United Kingdom, and with members of the Gujarati communities that are spread all over the United States in states like New Jersey, California, and Texas.[4]

There is a tremendous diversity among the immigrants in the United States who identify as Hindu. There are wide regional and sectarian variations in Hinduism. Peter Occhiogrosso, a scholar of world religions, describes Hinduism as "an endlessly complex

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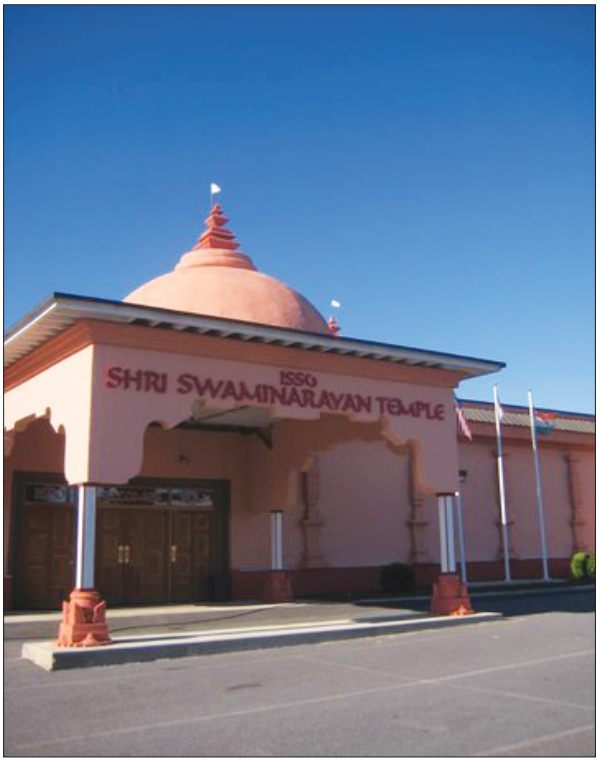
[3] See for example K.N. Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 307-308.

[4] See for example Raymond Brady Williams, *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 209.

and varied collection of beliefs and belief systems, but they are all based on ideas and principles that can be traced back to an extensive collection of scriptures called the Veda."[5]

Religious life among many in the Indian community centers on the temples. Hindu temples have sacred images and statues of Hindu deities and services such as *pujas* and the "feeding" of deities takes place several times a day. The temples are often open during the day for attendees, who come in to perform their religious prayers and practices.

The two temples in Lowell can be found on Stedman and Middlesex streets where they have been put into industrial parks. The two temples in Lowell are largely attended by Gujaratis, but also attract Indians who came from different regions of India. Furthermore, many of Lowell's South Indian residents attend the Chinmaya Mission temple in Andover or the Ashland Sri Lakshmi temple.



Shri Swaminarayan Temple. (Photo: Christoph Strobel)

Both temples in Lowell are Swaminarayan institutions, named after the founder of this sect of Hinduism, but each temple is led by a different line of gurus. As mentioned above, they are especially frequented by the Gujarati populations of the greater Lowell

[5] Peter Occhiogrosso, *The Joy of Sects: A Spirited Guide to the World's Religious Traditions* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 8.

area. Both places of worship have gender segregation during worship, which is not common to all Hindu temples. Seating arrangements in the Stedman facilities is that men sit up front and women in the back. In the Swaminarayan temple on Middlesex, as one enters the hall of worship in the back, men sit on the left side, while women sit on the right. The temples draw especially large crowds during divali (the Hindu festival of lights). During a researcher's visit, hundreds of people were seen streaming in and out of the temple. Food was served to temple visitors and a gorgeous display of food was built up as an offering to the Hindu deities. Furthermore, Indian foods, especially Indian candy, calendars, and religious items, were being sold.[6]

The Indian temples also are active in fundraising for charitable work in areas such as disaster assistance. These efforts can be nationally as well as internationally focused. For example, BAPS Care International, which is affiliated with the temple on Stedman Street, has a yearly Walk-a-thon in Lowell through which the community raises money for various causes. In the past, for example, this event has been used to raise funds for Hurricane Katrina relief. The temple and BAPS Care International also were actively involved with disaster assistance and fundraising during the earthquakes in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and during the tsunami catastrophe. BAPS Care International runs literacy, health care, and housing programs, which the temple membership supports through donations and volunteering.[7]

The aforementioned transnational links between and networks among Gujarati are an interesting phenomenon. Peggy Levitt writes that the

> Indian government and Indian political groups have played a minimal role in reinforcing these ties. But geographic dispersion and limited transnational institutional development are counteracted by the multiple overlapping identities, such as being from Gujarat or belonging to the same caste, are reinforced by membership in smaller endogamous marriage groups of residents from particular towns or religious organizations. The requirements of membership in many of these groups, the values that guide them, and the substantive content of their activities, isolate members from the host society and constantly remind them of their attachments

[6] Christoph Strobel attended the Stedman temple for the divali celebrations in late October 2008. He has also been to both temples on several other occasions.

[7] Robert Mills, "Local Indians look to native country amid news of horror," October 9, 2005, *Lowell Sun*; Robert Mills, "BAPS walk-a-thon raises funds for Hurricane Katrina survivors," October 10, 2005, *Lowell Sun*; Anonymous 1 (Indian) and Anonymous 2 (Indian) interviewed by Christoph Strobel, December 14, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

> to their home state. In the case of Gujaratis, then, the nature of their transnational normative community may mean strong, continuous ties to Gujarat combined with abbreviated participation in U.S. political and civic institutions.[8]

Thus, the Gujarati of Lowell are part of a transnational community. This characterization is represented in other aspects of their life. For instance, when the industrial park property on Stedman was purchased for the temple in 2002, it was the 345th temple worldwide that was opened up by this particular Hindu sect.

Transnational factors influence the life of Indians in Lowell. Family visits play a major role here. They lead people in the Gujarati community, however, not only to travel to India, but also to visit family members in the United Kingdom and other places where there is a Gujarati diaspora. Furthermore, family members from India, the United Kingdom, and other countries can also, on occasion, visit their relatives in the United States. Furthermore, travel can happen for spiritual and religious reasons. Two of the Indian women interviewed spent significant time traveling throughout the United States and Canada during the summer of 2008, in order to follow their guru from India who was visiting North America. The two women, and other members from the Stedman temple, also were looking forward to visit a newly constructed major temple complex in India, which recently has been completed by their religious organization.[9]

Weddings, too, can be transnational affairs. A community resident who wished to remain anonymous tells that her "cousin's wedding . . . even though they're in the U.S." was celebrated in India. "It just feels better if you have an Indian wedding in India because you have all the traditional stuff and everything. So that's why I've been back, once for my cousin's wedding and once for my sister's wedding even though they were both here." The interviewee is interested in celebrating her own wedding in India in the future. She also buys her saris and many other items when visiting her country of birth.[10]

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[8] Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers*, 215.

[9] Anonymous 1 (Indian) and Anonymous 2 (Indian) interviewed by Christoph Strobel, December 14, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[10] Anonymous 1 (Indian) and Anonymous 2 (Indian) interviewed by Christoph Strobel, December 14, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

Levitt writes that many of the Gujarati who lived in the greater Lowell area in the early 1990s, were

> Patidars or Patels, who belong to a subcaste from the Baroda and Anand Districts. Like Indians throughout the United States, they are likely to be college educated (49 percent), well represented in professional (49 percent) and technical (47 percent) occupations, and home owners (63 percent) (U.S. Census 1992). But there is also a growing number, originally from rural towns and villages, who find blue-collar jobs when they arrive in the States.[11]

The latter group seems to become a growing presence in the expanding Indian immigrant community. In fact, the growth of the influx of less affluent and educated Indian immigrants who take entry-level jobs, as scholars like Madhulika Khandelwal point out, seem to be a growing trend in the Indian communities throughout the United States. This development runs counter to mainstream American society's perception of Indians as the "model minority" of doctors, engineers, or scientists.[12] It certainly seems to be reflected in the city of Lowell, if not so much in the wealthier suburbs. All three interviewees came from working-class backgrounds. Their family members were sometimes under- or unemployed, or worked in low-skill, entry-level positions, many in the service industry.

Participatory observation also suggests that there are a lot of young Indian couples, often with young children, living in the Middlesex neighborhood. They often seem of professional backgrounds, and one wonders if these couples, when more established, will leave the city for some of the more affluent surrounding communities. Many, here on H1-B visas, which are temporary employer-sponsored work visas for specialty occupations, will return to India after spending a few years working in the United States. Moreover, it is also likely that these young professionals boost the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau per capita median income of the Indian community in Lowell up to $20,327, compared to the $13,983 that the Vietnamese or the $9,727 that the Cambodians are making.[13]

The expectation for educational achievement is high among many Indians in Lowell. Several of our interviewees pointed out that educational and economic

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[11] Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers*, 215.

[12] Khandelwal, *Becoming American Being Indian*.

[13] Das, 110.

"opportunities" were factors that led to their family's immigration to the United States. In one case, Lowell was specifically picked as a location to move to, because one was able to get a relatively affordable engineering degree at a state university. All interviewees spoke of their families' expectations that they would go to college. Yet, the interviewees also pointed out that "we push ourselves hard." On the one hand, they do not want to disappoint their parents, but they also want to stay competitive with their peers such as siblings, cousins, and other children and young adults in their community. As research by Philip Kasinitz, Mary Walters, and John Mollenkopf demonstrates, these social expectations, pressures, and trends are common among several immigrant groups.[14]

Language and cultural preservation are very important to Lowell's Indian population. For instance, the temples run language and other cultural programs. They are seen as ways to help to educate and maintain certain aspects of India's cultures for the membership, especially the younger generation in the area. The three Gujarati women we interviewed underscored how much their families communicated in their native language and how important it was for American-born family members to learn the language. Language, culture, and going to temple are seen as important parts of one's personal and cultural identity. They are to be passed down to the next generation. One of the women explained that she and her friends would want their children "to know the language . . . we want to pass down traditions, basic Indian traditions."[15]

However, this does not mean that Indian immigrants are not changed by their encounter with the United States. The sociological changes brought about by culture contact are not lost on them. This holds especially true for the younger generation who came to America during their school years. One interviewee told us that she often talks to her parents about this issue. "In India, it's more like you're just dependent on your parents. Everybody here is like, 'I need to get a job,' or 'I get to have a job'. . . but in India you solely focus on school and then after school you go on to work . . . but until then you're basically dependent on your parents."[16]

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[14] Anonymous 1 (Indian) and Anonymous 2 (Indian) interviewed by Christoph Strobel, December 14, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA; Anonymous 4 (Indian) interviewed by Christoph Strobel, March 12, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA. On this issue see also Philip Kasinitz, John Mollenkopf, Mary Waters, and Jennifer Holdaway, *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[15] Anonymous 1 (Indian) and Anonymous 2 (Indian) interviewed by Christoph Strobel, December 14, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

[16] Anonymous 1 (Indian) and Anonymous 2 (Indian) interviewed by Christoph Strobel, December 14, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

Chapter Eleven
The Africans

There is also a growing number of Africans in the city. In various articles, *The Lowell Sun* estimates the city's African community at about 6,000 – a population which is extremely diverse. The Africans in Lowell come from places ranging from Cameroon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, to Togo.[1]

Sociologists, historians, political scientists, and anthropologists have only in recent years begun to pay attention to the current wave of African immigration to the United States. A growing number of academic papers and monographs have been published on issues related to this topic in the last decade or so.[2] Yet, and much like the Indians, Latinos, and Brazilians in the city, the African population has been given scant scholarly attention to this point.

The migration stories and backgrounds of the Africans in Lowell are as diverse and varied as the continent from which they come. As our oral histories and stories in the local media show, there are similarities in the migration stories of Africans, when we compare them with other immigrants, but there also are differences. Like so many immigrants, numerous Africans came to Lowell in a search for better economic opportunities. However, a good number were able to win a "green card" in the immigration lottery, which grants them a permanent home in the United States. African immigrants to the United States tend to be better educated. Undocumented and less well educated migrants from the continent tend to head for Europe, which is easier for them to access. In other instances, some African immigrants came here to connect or re-connect with family members. Others fled political crisis in their homes, such as repressive regimes or civil wars. In many instances, and as our oral histories underscore, it is a combination of economic and political factors which has spurred Africans to immigrate to the United States.

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[1] See for example Wilson Wanene, "Lowell's Africans throw a Party," *Lowell Sun*, June 6, 2002.

[2] On Africans in the United States, see for example John Arthur, *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States* (Wesport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000); Marilyn Halter, "Africa: West," in *The New Americans*, 283-294; and Abdi Kusow, "Africa: East," in *The New Americans*, 295-305.

Africans live all over the city of Lowell. There is certainly a center of African immigrant activity in Centerville where several African shops and an African church are located. Many Africans live in this neighborhood to the north of the Merrimack River as well as in adjacent Pawtucketville. Nevertheless, there are also several African churches and businesses south of the river. Furthermore, many African immigrants are renting and owning apartments and houses south of the river.

The African stores and businesses in Lowell largely aim to satisfy African customers. The stores sell special African grains, fish, hair products, cooking implements, fabrics, and clothing. They also sell western products and brands, often of the former imperial power Britain, which today many Africans have included in their consumption patterns. Some of these businesses also sell or rent African-made films and music. The old colonial and Indian Ocean connections can be seen in the Indian stores. In those businesses, on occasion, one can see Kenyan customers shopping for the same type of grains, teas, and British products which both African and Indian customers like to purchase, and which have been part of the Indian and east African consumption patterns as a result of trade exchanges pre-dating modern times, and tastes that have been influenced as a result of British imperialism. Furthermore, there are also African hair salons in the city.[3]

The African Assistance Center (AAC) is an organization that attempts to serve the needs of African immigrants and refugees in the city. It was founded in 2000. The AAC is pursuing outreach to the community by working with educational and religious issues. It runs assistance programs to the community in regard to economic and immigration issues. Furthermore, the AAC works to provide opportunities for socializing and networking to African immigrants in the city.[4]

Other cultural organizations cater to the needs of specific African groups in the city. CAMOLA (Cameroonians of Lowell Association) is arguably the most active among these groups. CAMOLA lobbies politically for the interests of the Cameroonian community in Lowell. The association does not only try to preserve Cameroonian culture, but also attempts to showcase it to mainstream society. The organization celebrated its tenth anniversary in the summer of 2002. At an event at St. Anne's Church,

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[3] See for example Hillary Chabot, "'We Have to Sacrifice:' Immigrants struggling to develop small Businesses in Greater Lowell," *Lowell Sun*, March 12, 2006.

[4] Gordon Halm interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell, MA.

600 people attended, including several city officials and a Cameroonian notable and traditional ruler, King Agwafo III. The event featured Cameroonian food, music, crafts, and dance.[5]

Not all African national communities are as highly organized, but several groups like the Liberians and people from the Ivory Coast have informal networks that try to assist the needs of their communities, as well as to engage with the needs of their sending societies. On May 2, 2009, for example, the Liberian community of the greater Lowell area was instrumental in hosting an inaugural ball of the Massachusetts Alliance for the Restoration of the University of Liberia. This event raised funds to support higher education in Liberia, a much needed cause since a civil war devastated the country in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

There also has been a proliferation of African churches in the Greater Lowell area. The story of the International Christian Fellowship Ministries provides a glimpse at the story of many of Lowell's African churches. A congregation of fewer than twenty members in the late 1990s, it had grown to more than 100 members in 2003, and bought its first church at 1426 Gorham Street in the location of an old restaurant. By 2007, the church had outgrown its location again. About an average of 200 members showed up for each service. Church leaders were looking again for a new location. There are several African churches in Lowell. There is a Liberian church in the Highlands, a Ghanaian church that meets downtown, an African church in Centerville, and the Kenyan Ushindi Church on Chelmsford Street in the Highlands, just to mention a few places of worship used by African immigrants. Other Africans go to mainstream churches, such as the Elliot Church, or worship at both mainstream American and African churches.[6]

As with other immigrants, transnational family ties play an important role in the lives of many African newcomers. Many travel to visit family members in their countries of origin or relatives who have moved to European nations – generally the former colonial powers France and Great Britain – where some of their relatives have found a new home. They also receive visits and many frequently communicate with family members abroad.

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[5] Gloria Negri, "Cameroonian group praised for advancing race relations," *Boston Sunday Globe*, June 2, 2002.

[6] Michael Lafleur, "'The Bigger your Fishing Net': Growing Lowell Church looking for New Home," *Lowell Sun*, January 23, 2007. See also Rita Ofori-Frimpong interviewed by Susan Thomson and Christoph Strobel, November 8, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell; Gordon Halm interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell; Emile Tabea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell.

Childrearing and meeting a future partner can have transnational dimensions as well. An immigrant from Ghana explained, for example, that her children are currently raised by her parents in her hometown in Ghana. This is not an unusual occurrence in immigrant communities. It is not uncommon for children to move back and forth between the United States and their parents' place of birth. "By distributing the task of production and reproduction transnationally," writes Peggy Levitt, immigrants in many cases "create and strengthen their transnational community. Migrant family members earn most of the household income, while non-migrants remain behind to care for children. Transnational ties grow stronger as household members become more and more dependent on one another."[7] Marriage partners as well can be found in the country of origin, or in a diaspora community in a different country. One of the interviewees who originally came from the Ivory Coast explained that he met his current wife, who is also from the Ivory Coast, in France. They were introduced while he was visiting his Ivorian cousin, who is a French citizen.[8]

The issue of arranged marriage, which occasionally happens among some immigrants from Asian, Middle Eastern, and African societies, was also elucidated by our oral histories. A man who immigrated to the United States from Sierra Leone explained his reasons to agree to an arranged marriage, suggested to him by his parents and close relatives. "It was an arranged marriage … She was home and I was here and we corresponded. We initially saw each other in New York, but it wasn't a situation where we dated each other. Some people think that's weird." He explained the rationale behind his decision and the tensions surrounding arranged marriages in mainstream American society as well as with second-generation immigrants.

> I think people consider the family and the impact it will have on the family if things don't work out, so people try to make it work…. I think the younger folks have moved away from that. The folks who are educated tend to want to go through this romantic thing first…. I am not a traditional person. I think part of it was that I didn't want to disappoint my parents.[9]

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[7] Rita Ofori-Frimpong interviewed by Susan Thomson with Christoph Strobel, November 8, 2008, 2007, Ethnographic Study of Lowell; Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers*, 75.

[8] Emile Tabea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell.

[9] Bowa Tucker (formerly Anonymous 3) interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 10, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell.

There is often an expectation in the country of origin that immigrants will provide support to the relatives who stayed behind, which is especially strong among Africans. An immigrant from the Ivory Coast explains:

> Almost every other month someone would call to ask for help. And we do it because we believe that we have a little more than they do. So we don't hesitate to go half way to help out. Sometimes we go all the way but most of the time we go half way. We have needs also; we cannot go all the way all the time.

Immigrants note that relatives in their sending society often have a false sense of reality about their life in the United States. They feel obligated to support their relatives. At the same time, many also struggle to make ends meet here in Lowell. Still, for many African newcomers, the social pressures and their personal values push them toward attempting to accommodate their relatives abroad. The same African gentleman explained: "Your contribution defines you; your contribution to the community, to your family, and to your extended family. What you do defines you as a person. If someone is in need and you don't participate, then you are a nobody. That is how we define a person. As Africans, we have to live to that level, live to that expectation."[10]

Since 2001, African immigrants have been celebrating the Greater Lowell African Festival. The event is a celebration of African culture, music, food, dance, and traditional dress. At the festival, bands perform African music and African food is served. "The festival is an opportunity for me to showcase my culture, and to get my neighbors and my American friends to sample our food and music, and to create an awareness of the pressures and triumph of the Africans in our community," observed one of the co-organizers of the festival to the *Lowell Sun*.[11]

Issues of race and racism can flare up at times. One interviewee told us that his family's property had been targeted and destroyed due to the fact that he is African. The perpetrators threw eggs against his house, sprayed the property with racially charged graffiti, and broke into the family's minivan several times. Eventually the vehicle was

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[10] Emile Tabea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell.

[11] Dennis Shaughnessey, "Standing Tall," *Lowell Sun*, June 16, 2002.

stolen and later found by the police in a completely burned-out state. Hate crimes, such as this or the killing of a Cambodian boy in the 1980s, are rare, but they leave a strong impact on its victims and the immigrant communities.[12]

Not all immigrants have experienced discrimination and point out that the situation in their country of birth was far worse. One interviewee explains,

> Back in my own country, I did. Probably more than here. Here never! But in the Ivory Coast two times . . . In most African countries, there are different ethnic groups. The ethnic group in power controls everything. Those not in power are controlled and are told what to do and you can't get anything that they don't want you to get. That is the reason why I didn't hesitate to leave the country.[13]

Thus, the contours of race and ethnic relations for African immigrants in the United States are complex and diverse.

Like other immigrants, many of the African interviewees seemed keen to pass on their culture to their kids. One informer reported that his kids "don't eat any kind of food besides African food." He saw this as a strategy to maintain an African identity. Other immigrants continue the practice of libation when a loved one passes, as well as other ceremonials of a similar kind. Visits back to the African continent are other strategies that families pursue to maintain a connection for their children with their country of origin. Furthermore, cultural festivals, immigrant support networks of specific African groups, and church are supposed to aid in this process of cultural retention.[14]

Many African immigrants in the greater Lowell area also emphasize education – not only for their children but also for themselves. Several people we interviewed have pursued doctorates and graduate education, and mentioned high educational achievements as a major goal. John Arthur, an expert on African immigration in the United States, argues that Africans see "education as a pathway to social mobility and

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[12] Gordon Halm interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell.

[13] Emile Tabea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell.

[14] Emile Tabea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell. See also Bowa Tucker interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 10, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell; Gordon Halm interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell.

economic advancement." In fact, for many, the desire to obtain more post-secondary education, spurred them to migrate to the United States in the first place. African immigrants, Arthur points out, rank among the most highly educated immigrant groups.[15]

The issue of education can cause intergenerational tensions. One interviewee observed that "I really put a lot [of] emphasis on education. I would like to see them [his children] to be college educated, and to see them become responsible persons." It is "hard," he continues, "when you raise kids who don't necessarily have the same vision that the parent might have. That can be very frustrating." [16]

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[15] Arthur, 2, 100-104; Emile Tabea interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell; Bowa Tucker interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 10, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell.

[16] Bowa Tucker interviewed by Christoph Strobel, January 10, 2008, Ethnographic Study of Lowell.



Invitation to Celebrate the 54th Anniversary of Ghana's Independence Day.

Chapter Twelve
Conclusions and Recommendations

While the history of the New Lowellians will continue to be written, newer immigrants, just like earlier generations, have undoubtedly left their influence on the "all-America" city. Immigrants always have and are currently still reshaping the cityscape with their businesses, places of worship, and their presence. This report merely scratches the surface of a complex, diverse, and unfolding story that will reshape the city's destiny for years to come.

As we have seen, immigrants throughout the generations have shared similar experiences. They have corresponding reasons why they migrated, many looking for economic opportunities, while others migrated for safety, political, or religious reasons. They share experiences in terms of the lives they live in their new home. How, to what degree, and at what speed do they "acculturate" into mainstream society? It is important to remember that historically it generally took immigrant populations two to three generations to become more fully integrated into society, as the newcomers faced cultural, language, and social barriers. This is likely a pattern that immigrants today will undergo again. Throughout the history of the city, immigrants have faced significant challenges in their daily life and pursued various goals. As we have seen, issues such as starting a business, becoming economically established, gaining political representation, caring for the welfare of their communities, and retaining their cultures and language are some of the main concerns.

Religious institutions play and have played an integral part in the lives of immigrants in the city. Some of them, like for example, St. Patrick's Church, have been places of worship for immigrant populations for much of their history. Small and large places of worship have emerged all over the city to serve the particular needs of specific immigrant groups. Some survive. Others, like, for example, the Lithuanian Church on Rogers Street, which have served an important purpose in the past, have now been turned into spaces filled with condos, while others have been torn down.

Throughout the last 150 years, immigrants in Lowell have lived transnational lives. Immigrants in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, communicated with families via letters, sometimes went back to visit or worked as seasonal laborers, or, after several years of working in the United States, decided to return to their countries of

birth. Furthermore, as our oral histories make clear, transnational family connections are maintained today by many immigrants in Lowell by communicating with, and by traveling to visit, their relatives abroad. Several of our interviewees point out that they talk to relatives on the phone, often using international phone cards to keep costs low. Among the younger generation especially, they also maintain contacts through other means of communication such as e-mail or instant messaging. Many New Lowellians travel to visit relatives abroad. These trips keep them connected to their families and their sending societies. Furthermore, many immigrants also receive visitors from their sending societies – though in recent years, as several interviewees point out, it has been harder for their relatives to obtain visas. This change is likely due to increased security concerns since September 11, but is likely also connected to the debate over "illegal immigration," which has led federal authorities to be more stringent about granting visas, especially from developing nations, for fear that visitors might stay over their time.

Despite many similarities, there also are differences in the experiences of immigrants. A noticeable one is their perception of neighborhoods. While historically neighborhoods and ethnic enclaves played a more important role in the lives of immigrants, many immigrants today de-emphasize their importance. There are certain ethnic enclaves such as Cupples or Pailin Square for the Cambodians in the Highlands neighborhood, Hosford Square in Back Central for the Portuguese speakers, or concentrations of African businesses in parts of Centerville. Nevertheless, immigrant businesses are spread out all over the city and it becomes clear from the sampling of interviews that we conducted, that the immigrants we interviewed pursue a variety of economic interests and consumer concerns such as choice, prize, and quality, and that these issues often outrank ethnic loyalties. This was the case with the great majority of people that we talked to. At times, the interviewees are also only vaguely aware of the names of the neighborhoods that they live in, which, alongside the statements made in interviews, seems to reinforce the notion that neighborhoods do not play much of a role.

Like earlier generations, many of today's immigrants, if they can afford to, leave the city for wealthier communities in the greater Lowell and Boston area. In informal conversations, as well as in some of the interviews, it becomes clear that some of the New Lowellians made a conscious choice to stay in Lowell even though they might have been able to move somewhere else. These interviewees often know people who left for more affluent communities, and that such an occurrence can lead to discussions among

families about their future in the city. We also talked to immigrants who after some time living in Lowell made the conscious choice to leave the city. Concerns such as being more comfortable with a suburban or rural lifestyle, apprehension about the quality of public education in the city, as well as other quality-of-life issues motivated some foreign-born Americans to leave the city.

The New Lowellians and the LNHP

The main purpose of the LNHP to contract the overview and assessment of the history of immigration in Lowell was to come up with strategies that will help the park to engage with the newer immigrant communities. Thus, we conclude this study with recommendations. Rather than impose our views on the Park, we are merely providing an overview of what the New Lowellians are saying.

This section provides a summary analysis of strategies that our interviewees suggested to help the LNHP to better engage with the New Lowellians. Furthermore, several interviewees have positively acknowledged the LNHP's efforts at outreach. However, they also have suggestions for improvements.

- Many of our interviewers pointed out that they think that many immigrants do not think of the LNHP or are unaware of its presence. Many have not visited local museums, cultural events, or they know that many people in their communities do not attend such events. The consensus among several interviewees is that if the LNHP wants to attract more visitors from the new immigrant communities it needs to advertise differently. Useful strategies for outreach that the Park might want to pursue: targeted advertising and outreach to immigrant businesses, community organizations, places of worship, and neighborhoods, as well as getting in touch with leaders in the community.
- Youth outreach at Lowell High School. Members of the 1.5 and second generation who underwent public education in Lowell favorably mention their visits to the Park during school trips. Similar and more programs that would target younger newcomers will have a trickle-down effect and will be a long-term investment in bringing the New Lowellians to the Park. Social networking sites like Facebook might be an especially effective means to communicate with this age group.

- More collaborative efforts with newcomers in regard to festivals and celebrations. The LNHP is already collaborating with several festivals and celebrations, but might be able to do more.
- Creating special exhibits that focus on newcomer communities might be not only appealing to Park visitors and Lowell's mainstream community – but if advertised in immigrant communities could also draw from specific newcomer communities and could acquaint New Lowellians more with the LNHP. If they see their own history reflected, many interviewees seem to indicate, they would be more likely to come to visit.
- Special exhibits that would connect Lowell's industrial period immigration history with that of the New Lowellians who have arrived in the post-industrial periods. Exhibits of this kind would help both mainstream society and newcomers to connect with each other's experiences then and now.
- More community outreach and a larger Park presence at meetings of new immigrant communities if there is an interest.
- Make new immigrant communities aware of Park spaces. Invite new immigrant groups to use spaces – and advertise the presence of these spaces more effectively.
- Information brochures and tours offered in the languages of the new immigrant communities would likely attract more new immigrants to the LNHP.

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Appendix One: Oral Histories Collected Between 1980 and 2001, Located at the Center for Lowell History

John Abucewicz, interview by Paul Page, Working People of Lowell Collection, Lowell National Historical Park and the Center for Lowell History, February 26, 1986.

Edna Balkus interview by Martha Norkunas, *Women, Work and Ethnicity Study*, Center for Lowell History, July,1983.

Henrietta Blanchette interview by Jim Beauchesne, Center for Lowell History, October 6, 1997, 97.04.

Valentine Chartrand interview by Diane Novelli, Center For Lowell History, October 8, 1984, 84.1.

Del Chouinard interview by Judith Dunning, ,Center For Lowell History, July 30, 1981, 80.18a,b.

Nathan Cohen interview by Paul Page, *The Mill Workers of* Lowell, The Lowell National Historical Park and the University of Lowell, July 10, 1985.

Lucie Cordeau interview by Judith Dunning, Center For Lowell History, June 18, 1980, 80.8a, b.

Arthur Eno interview by Jim Beauchesne, September 24, 1997, Center for Lowell History, 97.02.

Nicholas Georgoulis interview by Judith Dunning, July 30, 1980, Center For Lowell History, 80.15.

Irene Germaine interview by Mehmed Ali, Center for Lowell History, November 15, 2001, 01.23.

Joseph Golas interview by Suzette Jefferson, Center for Lowell History, November 21, 1985, 83.31.

Hazel Greska interview by Martha Norkunas, *Women, Work and Ethnicity in Lowell, MA*, Lowell Historical Museum and the Center for Lowell History, July 25, 1983.

Richard Howe Sr. interview by Jim Beauchesne, Center for Lowell History, September 18, 1997, 97.01.

Leni Joyce interview by Mehmed Ali and Gray Fitzsimons, *After the Last Generation: Lowell's Textile Workers, 1958-1998, Part II*. The Lowell National Historical Park and the Center for Lowell History. April 5, 2001.

Robert Kennedy interview by Mehmed Ali, Center for Lowell History, February 1, 2000, 00.28.

Robert Malavich interview by Mehmed Ali, Center for Lowell History, March 27 and April 10, 2000.

Armand Mercier interview by Mehmed Ali, Center for Lowell History, February 27, 2002, 02.6.

Arthur Morrissette interview by Paul Page, Center For Lowell History, June 17, 1985, 85.7.

Sidney Muskovitz interview by Pauline Steinhorn, Center for Lowell History, March 16, 1995.

Anne Ohlsen interview by Pat Coble, *The Working People of Lowell*, Lowell National Historical Park, University of Massachusetts Lowell and the Center for Lowell History, May 19, 1986, 23-5.

Mary Podgorski interview by Olga Spandagos, *The Working People of Lowell*, Lowell National Historical Park and the Center for Lowell History, November 14, 1985.

Appendix Two: Oral Histories Collected for This Ethnography Project in 2007 and 2008

Rita Ofori-Frimpong interview by Christoph Strobel and Susan Thomson, November 8, 2007.

Muriel Parseghian interview by Christoph Strobel, December 7, 2007.

Tooch Van interview by Christoph Strobel and Susan Thomson, December 11, 2007.

Anonymous 1 and Anonymous 2 interview by Christoph Strobel, December 14, 2007.

Samkhann Khoeun interview by Christoph Strobel and Susan Thomson, January 8, 2008.

Bowa Tucker interview by Christoph Strobel, January 10, 2008.

Phala Chea interview by Christoph Strobel, January 15, 2008.

Gordon Halm interview by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008.

Emile Tabea interview by Christoph Strobel, January 16, 2008.

Sidney Liang interview by Christoph Strobel, January 17, 2008.

Francisco Carvalho interview January 23, 2008 by Christoph Strobel.

Osvalda Rodrigues interview by Christoph Strobel, February 5, 2008.

Willian Ferreira Fahlberg interview by Christoph Strobel, February 13, 2008.

Maristela Tosato interview by Christoph Strobel, February 26, 2008.

Muriel Paradis and Rolande Cloutier interview by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, February 28, 2008.

Ana Suarez interview by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, Yingchan Zhang, February 29, 2008.

Anonymous 4 interview by Christoph Strobel, March 12, 2008.

Halleh Mahini interview by Christoph Strobel, March 14, 2008.

Blong Xiong interview by Christoph Strobel, March 15, 2008.

Janina Kouropoulos interview by Robert Forrant and Craig Thomas, March 15, 2008.

Nyola Vaillancourt (nee Romanauskas) interview by Robert Forrant and Craig Thomas, March 15, 2008

Lisa Dagdigian interview by Christoph Strobel, March 28, 2008.

Barbara and Albert Bernstein interview by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, Yingchan Zhang, March 28, 2008.

Anonymous 5 interview by Christoph Strobel, April 1, 2008.

Margarita Turcotte Zapata interview by Christoph Strobel, April 7, 2008.

Sambath Bo interview by Christoph Strobel, April 15, 2008.

Pauline Golec interview by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, Yingchan Zhang, April 16, 2008.

Mariah Cunha interview by Christoph Strobel, April 23, 2008.

Iviette Nieves interview by Christoph Strobel and Yingchan Zhang, April 24, 2008.

Tony May interview by Christoph Strobel, April 25, 2008.

Thong Phamduy interview by Christoph Strobel, April 30, 2008.

Anonymous 6 interview by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas, and Yingchan Zhang, May 2, 2008.

Bryan Tran interview by Christoph Strobel, Craig Thomas and Yingchan Zhang and Christoph Strobel, May 8, 2008.

National Park Service
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