

# The Challenge of the Irish Catholic Community in Nineteenth-Century Montreal

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*As a receiving point for the Irish diaspora, Montreal offered the exceptional context of a Catholic majority, a bilingual labour market, and, in the 1840s, a polity undergoing reconstruction. The high quality of records in Montreal allows us to trace the destinies of Irish Catholics who settled in the city in the 1840s and to weigh some of the factors that contributed to their upward mobility. One such factor was the existence of an Irish Catholic population that, from as early as the 1820s, constituted a third community, distinctive in its demographic behaviour and institutional allegiances, alongside French Canadians and Anglo-Protestants. An examination of sample families shows that the “famine immigrants” of the 1840s advanced into new economic niches, their infants thrived, they achieved in the second and third generations substantial improvement in housing and residential integration, and they exercised, in each generation, an active and articulate political voice. These findings contradict earlier assumptions of persistent poverty and powerlessness among Irish Catholics in North American cities and raise new questions about urban opportunities and social pathways.*

*Carrefour d'accueil de la diaspora irlandaise, Montréal offrait le contexte exceptionnel d'une majorité catholique, d'un marché du travail bilingue et, dans les années 1840, d'un régime en reconstruction. La grande qualité des archives à Montréal nous permet de retracer la destinée des catholiques irlandais qui s'y sont établis dans les années 1840 et de soupeser certains des facteurs qui ont favorisé leur mobilité ascendante. L'un de ces facteurs était l'existence d'une population catholique irlandaise qui, dès les années 1820, représentait une tierce communauté,*

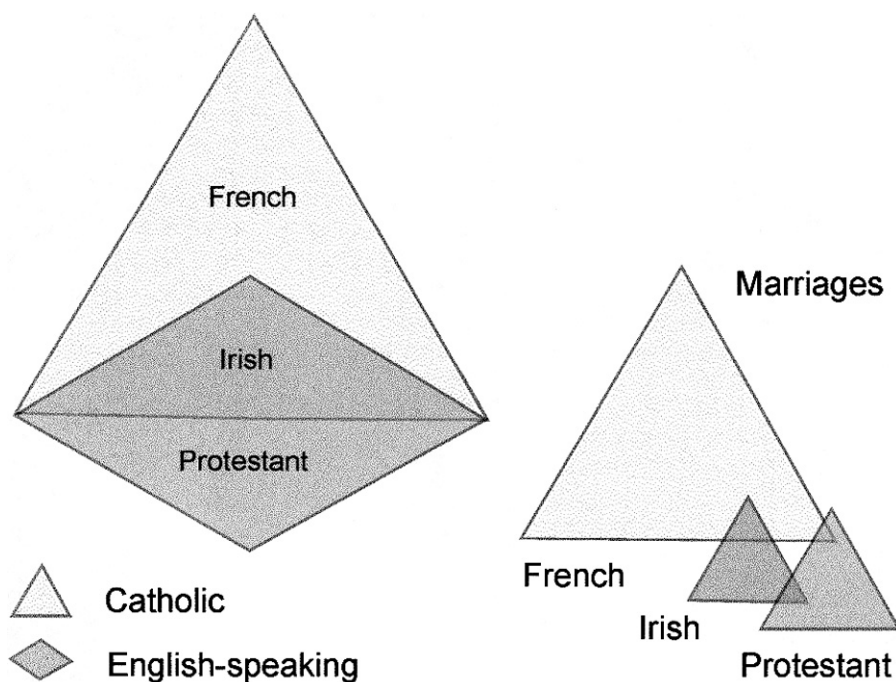
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*distincte par son comportement démographique et ses allégeances institutionnelles, aux côtés des Canadiens français et des anglo-protestants. On se rend compte à l'examen d'un échantillon de familles que les « immigrants de la famine » des années 1840 se sont taillés de nouveaux créneaux économiques, que leurs enfants ont prospéré, qu'elles ont nettement amélioré leur intégration en matière d'habitation et de logement à la deuxième et à la troisième génération et qu'elles ont exercé à chaque génération une influence politique active et articulée. Ces constats contredisent les hypothèses antérieures d'une pauvreté et d'une impuissance persistantes chez les catholiques irlandais des villes nord-américaines et soulèvent de nouvelles questions sur les débouchés en milieu urbain et les parcours sociaux.*

NINETEENTH-CENTURY Irish emigrants encountered very different conditions in different parts of the world, and recent research suggests that they integrated into their host communities, rural and urban, in different ways.<sup>1</sup> The high quality of records in Montreal allows us to trace the destinies of Irish Catholics who settled in the city in the 1840s and to weigh some of the factors that contributed to their upward mobility. We shall see from suites of sample families that they advanced into new economic niches, their infants thrived, they achieved in the second and third generations substantial improvement in housing and residential integration, and they exercised, in each generation, an active and articulate political voice. These findings contradict earlier assumptions of persistent poverty and powerlessness among Irish Catholics in North American cities and raise new questions about urban opportunities and social pathways. By using a wide array of “micro” sources that name individuals and describe their household situations, we shall argue the wholeness of culture.

As a receiving point for the Irish diaspora, Montreal offered the exceptional context of a Catholic majority, a bilingual labour market, and, in the

1 The range of variation within Canada is indicated by Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants to the Canadas: A New Approach* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press); Mark McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto 1888–1922* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); William M. Jenkins, “Geographical and Social Mobility Among the Irish in Toronto, Ontario, and Buffalo, New York, 1880–1910” (Ph.D. dissertation, Geography, University of Toronto, 2001); Robert J. Grace, “The Irish in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada and the Case of Quebec: Immigration and Settlement in a Catholic City” (Ph.D. thesis, Université Laval, 1999); Donald Akenson, “Ontario: Whatever Happened to the Irish?”, in Gerald Tulchinsky, *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), pp. 86–134. For a fuller bibliography, see Robert J. Grace, *The Irish in Quebec: An Introduction to the Historiography* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1993); Amy Greenberg, “Irish in the City: Recent Developments in American Urban History”, *Cambridge Historical Journal*, vol. 42 (June 1999), pp. 571–581; Lynn Lees, *Exiles of Erin, Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979); Lynn Lees and John Modell, “The Irish Countryman Urbanized”, *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 3 (1977), pp. 391–408. For more distant migrations, hence a more severe selection, see Lyndon Fraser, *To Tara via Holyhead: Irish Catholic Immigrants in Nineteenth-century Christchurch* (Auckland, N.Z.: Auckland University Press, 1997); Donald Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Toronto: P. D. Meany, 1996).



**Figure 1** Relative sizes of three cultural communities, Montreal, 1860, and their rates of intermarriage. Source: Baptisms of 1859, parents matched to manuscript census (1861) and marriage registers of earlier dates.

1840s, a polity undergoing reconstruction. Figure 1 shows the relative numbers in 1860 — half French Canadian, one-quarter Irish Catholic, one-fifth Anglo-Protestant — and the degree to which they were, at that moment, intermarried. Maintaining intense and contradictory relationships with the two host communities, Irish Catholics constructed and maintained a distinct identity. From as early as the 1820s, they constituted a third community, distinctive in its demographic behaviour and institutional allegiances.

This study originated in a comparative analysis of infant survival, and our initial evaluation of parish registers (births of 1859) invited close attention to Irish Catholic couples whose records were often lumped with either the Catholic majority (three-quarters) or the English-speaking community, which shrank from about half in 1850 to one-third in 1900. Tests confirmed the distinctiveness of the community and suggested that what Marvin McNinn described as “two cultures of childbearing in nineteenth-century Canada”<sup>2</sup> might be better articulated as three cultures. The differences of demographic behaviour persisted in families of infants born in 1879 and 1899, and the surprising

<sup>2</sup> Marvin McNinn, “The Demographic Transition”, vol. 3, plate 29, *Historical Atlas of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

rates of survival of the infants and new occupational profiles of their fathers called for explanations and thus launched us on a search for information about housing, investment, and schooling, and ultimately a consideration of the process of cultural transmission and the nature of the relevant bundle of behaviours associated with a “cultural identity”.

In a city in which religious and linguistic cleavages were formidable, rooted in the British Conquest of a French colony (1765) and a sharp renewal of antagonisms in an unsuccessful Rebellion (1831–1839), Irish Catholics occupied a strategic position. They shared with “the French party” their faith, with “the English party” a common language as well as a certain complicity with a fraction of Protestants born in Ireland. In trade, in public demonstrations, and in their choices of partners, Irish men, and to an even greater extent Irish women, moved back and forth across the religious line of demarcation. Irish-born women were more concentrated in urban jobs (men in rural work), and their higher rate of out-marriage was therefore encouraged by the gender balance or “marriage market”<sup>3</sup>. Even while they kept up the rhetoric of a third party caught in the middle, Irish Catholics appropriated a certain freedom, playing both sides and taking advantage of the two sets of institutions already in place.<sup>4</sup>

Rather than adopt a purely chronological narrative, we first describe the situation in 1847 and review the nature of the receiving community. The leadership and strategic alliances of Irish Catholics are identified through the use of two under-utilized sources: a census of 1842 and an array of records associated with the “prehistory” of St. Patrick’s Church. Small samples and analytic methods familiar to historical demographers (record-matching, family reconstitution, and event history) provide evidence of upward mobility among descendants of the “famine immigrants”. After identifying some of the social costs involved, we return to the problem of interpreting social mobility in relation to the “cultural package”.

### The Precursors

Conditions of departure in the famine years were presumably much the same as for other emigrants from Tipperary, Limerick, Kilkenny, and Clare. The

3 Marriages between Catholics and Protestants were certainly somewhat more frequent than portrayed from marriage registers of 1859, if we consider the discretion that surrounded them and the number of abjurations kept secret in the 1840s. Expressions of concern by the clergy reflect the considerable intermarriage, as well as return of the Jesuits who were charged with handling adult converts. Where abjuration preceded a marriage, it erased the “mixed” aspect from the record. Confrontation of sources shows that the census is not entirely reliable with respect to religious affiliation, and our case-by-case examination of the St-Mary Street population in the 1842 census shows a higher level of intermarriage. Soldiers garrisoned at Montreal in the 1850s and 1860s were about two-thirds Protestant, about half born in Ireland, and many of them married Montreal women of Catholic faith and Irish birth. André Duchesne, “A Study of the Garrison Families in Montreal and Quebec City, 1855–1865”, *Shared Spaces*, no. 11 (1990).

4 An unwed mother, for example, as early as 1846, was likely to give birth in the Protestant Lying-In Hospital and, upon leaving it, to deliver the child to the Grey Nuns’ orphanage. The annual report of the hospital for 1849 identifies half of its patients of the previous three years as Irish Catholic.

crossings to Canada were among the most devastating since no control was exercised over freighting of the “ships of death”. Crowding and short rations during the two-month voyage contributed to mortality at sea and vulnerability to typhus and cholera, which then spread into the host populations. Five of the six curates of St. Patrick’s were among the dead, and the survivor, Father Connolly, recalled having “prepared for death and consigned to the silent grave for a period of six weeks or more 50 adult persons a day”. Toward the end of July 1847, he said to his congregation, “Here I am, here I stand, the bird alone.”<sup>5</sup>

Recent commemorations (1997) have evoked details that still have the power to shock. About 40,000 persons arrived in 1831 at Quebec City, 60,000 to 70,000 at the quarantine station on Grosse-Île in 1847, and a comparable number in 1849.<sup>6</sup> Most passed upstream through Montreal, and in each of those years of floodtide the arrivals amounted to more than the population of the city. Government negligence and the want of preparation were as shocking in Montreal as at Grosse-Île, the number of deaths as high,<sup>7</sup> the distress as painful, the reception as ambiguous, the epidemic as terrifying, and the acts of personal generosity as impressive in dealing with “ce peuple mourant jeté journellement sur nos quais”.<sup>8</sup> Tradition recalls the occasional miracle, like the reunion of little Rosie Brown with her mother. Sister Slocombe, a nurse in the makeshift hospital sheds, found the child clinging to her father’s corpse, and she was adopted in Montreal without any record. Her mother, who had been detained at Grosse-Île, recovered, found her two other children in Montreal, and was praying earnestly in the vast nave of the new St. Patrick’s Church when a marble rolled to her feet: Rosie’s marble.<sup>9</sup>

The flood receded rapidly, most of the survivors having continued their journey toward agricultural frontiers of the Ottawa valley, Upper Canada, or the United States. Others sought employment in the public works or private timber shanties and at the same time began clearing farms in the forest fringes of the Eastern Townships, leaving only a few thousand in Montreal.

5 Alan Hustak cites the daybook of Father Connolly for Sunday, July 25, 1847, in *Saint Patrick’s of Montreal: The Biography of a Basilica* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1998), p. 37.

6 For conditions of immigration at Quebec, as well as analysis of estimates, see Grace, “The Irish in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada”.

7 Alan Hustak estimates, on the basis of 75,000 arriving, 8,000 deaths at Grosse-Île, 6,000 at Quebec City, 6,000 at Montreal, and 6,000 at sea (*Saint Patrick’s of Montreal*). See also Marianna O’Gallagher, *Grosse Ile, Gateway to Canada 1832–1937* (Quebec: Carraig Books, 1984); Donald MacKay, *Flight from Famine: The Coming of the Irish to Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990); *Report of the Special Sanitary Committee Upon Cholera and Emigration for the Year 1834* (Montreal: Starke, 1835); Robert O’Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds, eds., *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada* (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988).

8 *La Minerve* protested that the steamboat *Queen* had disembarked “831 individus, pour ne pas dire âmes, quelques-unes déjà séparées de leurs corps” (July 5, 1847).

9 Rosie herself joined the Grey Nuns and died early of tuberculosis. Sr Estelle Mitchell, *Mère Jane Slocombe* (Montreal: Fides, 1964).

Beginning in 1850, tighter regulation due to modifications in the fare structure diverted the emigrant stream to American ports, so that subsequent reinforcements to the Irish community in Montreal were modest. The low rate of renewal makes it easier to interpret the evolution of the population from one generation to the next, but gives salience to the arrivals of 1847 as a demographic turning-point and a rupture in memory. It was, of course, the drama that Bishop Bourget had in mind 20 years later when he spoke of the “afflictions of an unhappy people”, an expression to which the prospering community took exception.<sup>10</sup>

On St. Patrick’s Day, March 17, 1847, when the port of Montreal was still fast in ice, local newspapers brought word from New York City of the aggravation of the famine in Ireland, the appearance of typhus among immigrants arriving in ice-free Boston and New York, and a worrying number of ships already at sea, scheduled from Cork and Dublin to Quebec City. Montrealers, despite a hard winter and 1,100 people living in indigence, had already raised £1,300 to succour the starving in Ireland, and out of sympathy the St. Patrick’s Society had cancelled its traditional dinner.<sup>11</sup> On that solemn day, however, was celebrated the first Mass in a commodious and handsome stone church, St. Patrick’s of Montreal. The event reveals several of the trump cards which made possible, in the course of the coming half-century, the upward mobility of the famine immigrants that we attempt to measure. First, however, we need to look at the small group of Irish who preceded them. In their church-building operation we discover evidence of a community of identity and mutual assistance that would broker the entry of the “boat people” into the life of the city, through abilities to mobilize resources, muster solidarity, and exercise political finesse.

Building the church demanded a major effort on the part of two elements: on one hand the Sulpician Order, the parish of Notre Dame (of which the Sulpicians were founders and pastors), and the Bishop, in other words the whole of the French Canadian community; and on the other the Irish Catholic community itself. Since 1815 English-speaking Catholics had gathered for special chapel services, and since the early 1830s they had pleaded for construction of a church, over objections of the French Canadian *fabrique* (churchwardens), responsible for the debt on the huge church of Notre Dame built by the Sulpician Order in the 1820s to serve the entire populace.<sup>12</sup> As *seigneurs* of the Island of Montreal, the Sulpicians were wary of any compet-

10 See letter of Thomas D’Arcy McGee, December 2, 1866; for the context, see Hustak, *Saint Patrick’s of Montreal*, pp. 50–54; Rosalyn Trigger, “The Geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic Parish in Nineteenth-Century Montreal”, *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 27, no. 4 (2001).

11 *La Minerve*, February 22, 1847; March 4 and 11, 1847.

12 The Irish community in Montreal was influenced by the successful manoeuvres of compatriots in Quebec City in building their church despite objections of the French Canadian *fabrique*. See Marianna O’Gallagher, *Saint Patrick’s, Quebec: The Building of a Church and of a Parish, 1827–1833* (Quebec: Carraig Books, 1981).

ing power such as their bishop and were ultra-loyal to their Protestant Queen and Governor.<sup>13</sup> To finance a church-annex for the “English-speaking Catholics”, they demanded that the community first raise £3,000, or about one-third of the required investment. An array of documents preserved at St. Patrick’s parish details the fund-raising and supervision of the project from 1841 to 1847.<sup>14</sup>

The Irish mobilized as effectively as the United Appeal (Centraide) or Catholic Charities does today to approach potential large donors with a firm idea about how much each should be pressed to give, to generate appropriate publicity, to minimize costs of collection, and to solicit universal participation. The building committee sought to “instill into the minds of their catholic brethren a religious feeling, that the poorest man may have the privilege to say hereafter that he had contributed his mite towards the building of St Patrick’s Church”. Thus they imprinted on the registers for Penny Subscriptions: “the New Church is now in progress, and they confidently hope that every Man, Woman and Child, will cheerfully contribute the small assistance now asked.”<sup>15</sup> The priest was specially “authorized to receive from Servants who want to contribute expressly through him”.<sup>16</sup> Surviving lists identify canvassers in every street, sergeants in the barracks which that year housed a strong Irish Catholic contingent in the 83rd Regiment, and major employers such as the merchant tailors, a road contractor, and foremen on the public works. The church itself was an imposing construction site, and the Irish building committee demanded employment for the Irish community; it seems no coincidence that the municipal election of April 1846 pitted John Kelly, a contractor on the Irish building committee, against Louis Comte, the French Canadian churchwarden of a family of contractors associated with the *fabrique*.

Of the 279 people who, at the first auction of pews in June 1847, committed themselves to an annual pew rent ranging from £1 to £5 (that is \$4 to \$20),<sup>17</sup> virtually all were identified by a trade, and we are able to match half of them to entries in the census of 1842 and the tax roll of 1848. Table 1 shows their élite character as compared with the overall set of heads of

13 Jean-Claude Robert, “Urbanisation et paroisse, le cas de Montréal au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in S. Courville and N. Séguin, eds., *La paroisse* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2001), pp. 82–97.

14 The documents include account books, registers of marriage banns, and announcements (*cahiers des prônes*) at services held in the Recollet and Bonsecours chapels. The new church was initially a *succursale*, not formally erected in canon law as a “national” parish until 1867, after considerable litigation. The politics are described by Rosalyn Trigger in “La vie des paroisses catholiques irlandaises : une fusion des identités nationale et religieuse”, in Courville and Séguin, eds., *La Paroisse*, pp. 229–231.

15 Cited from minutes of the Building Committee in the archives of St. Patrick’s, meeting of June 4, 1843; and the heading printed on a collector’s book, “Catholic Weekly Penny Subscription, in aid of the funds now raising for the building of St. Patrick’s Church...” in which receipts were recorded for June 1844–May 1847.

16 Archives of St. Patrick’s, Building Committee, January 1841, Rev. Phelan. Servants were normally treated as minors unable to make financial transactions.

17 Act of notary T. Doucet, June 13, 1847.

**Table 1 St. Patrick's Pewholders Compared with All Irish Catholic Householders**

| Status | Initial pewholders<br>St. Patrick's, 1847 |     |       | Irish Catholic householders |       |                  |       | Mean<br>house rent<br>\$/yr |
|--------|---|-----|-------|-----------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|-----------------------------|
|        | Mean<br>pew rent<br>\$/year               | n   | %     | Census of 1842              |       | Tax roll of 1848 |       |                             |
|        |   |     |       | n                           | %     | n                | %     |                             |
| A      | 15.21                                     | 19  | 7.0   | 48                          | 3.9   | 37               | 7.6   | 192                         |
| B      | 12.84                                     | 30  | 11.1  | 79                          | 6.4   | 59               | 12.0  | 117                         |
| C      | 12.09                                     | 85  | 31.4  | 129                         | 10.5  | 69               | 14.3  | 83                          |
| D      | 12.21                                     | 68  | 25.1  | 232                         | 18.8  | 103              | 21.4  | 87                          |
| E      | 12.83                                     | 42  | 15.5  | 158                         | 12.8  | 74               | 15.1  | 66                          |
| F      | 10.44                                     | 27  | 10.0  | 585                         | 47.5  | 143              | 29.6  | 54                          |
| Total  |   | 271 | 100.0 | 1,231                       | 100.0 | 485              | 100.0 |                             |

*Sources:* Pew rents recorded by notary N.-B. Doucet, July 1847 (ANQM); manuscript census of Lower Canada, 1842; Montreal rental tax roll, 1848 (Archives municipales). Pew rents are converted at 5 shillings to the dollar. Categories of occupational status are derived from the rental tax roll of 1861, since the roll of 1848 is skewed by the inclusion of some sublets. The authors identified Catholic households in the tax roll by matching records with the census.

households who can be identified as Irish Catholic.<sup>18</sup> One in ten pewholders turns up in the lowest tier (labourers), as compared with half of all Irish Catholic census heads of household (47 per cent). One-fifth owned the houses they lived in, as compared with 7 per cent in the larger set, and nine out of ten were able to sign, as compared with the evidence of a more comprehensive sample of marriage records (in which six men out of ten were able to sign).

Remembering the opportunity structure of a mercantile city, we see among the pewholders at least one-third in trade: nine butchers, 22 grocers, 10 merchants, and 24 traders, men who had advanced well beyond the rural peddler or one-room shop. Of particular interest are the five innkeepers and 13 tavernkeepers, as well as the merchants, grocers, and traders who were also involved in the liquor trade. Of the men who in 1843 were delivering at Recollet chapel the "penny-a-week" subscriptions for construction of St. Patrick's, many had been listed the previous year among the 200 tavernkeepers licensed by the Justices of the Peace.<sup>19</sup> It was likewise the image-con-

18 For the methods used to identify Irish Catholic families in the Census of Lower Canada, 1842, see Sherry Olson, "Ethnic Partition of Labour in 1840s Montreal", forthcoming in *Labour/ Le Travail*.

19 Archives nationales du Québec à Montréal [hereafter ANQM], Procès-verbaux, juges des sessions de la paix, Montréal, January 20, 1842. This source regularly reports licences for 1837–1842, especially contentious in 1840. A report of 1846 claims there were 600 taverns; in 1849 the number was 1,200. Archivists at Notre-Dame-de-Bonsecours, now the Centre Marguerite-Bourgeois of Congrégation Notre-Dame, located a book of receipts from weekly penny subscriptions in the east end for 1843–1845.



scious tavernkeepers who, as Father Chiniquy's temperance crusade waxed more vigorous,<sup>20</sup> made the largest bids for pews. If we draw from all of these sources, we find that one in five of the initial pewholders (22 per cent) made a living from the sale of liquor.<sup>21</sup>

In the census of 1842 it is possible to distinguish between Irish Protestants (9.5 per cent) and Irish Catholics (20.4 per cent), to show the social distances among the four cultural communities, to compare their relative social status, and to discern the distinctive niche that each group occupied in the urban economy. In the lowest 30 per cent — day labourers' households — two out of five were Irish Catholic (that is, twice the number one would anticipate), while in the top 10 per cent three out of four householders were Protestants, merchants in control of real wealth, visible in provincial politics, the courts, and the municipal corporation. The trades were also culturally segmented, and tailoring employed large numbers of Irish. The smaller mean size of Irish Catholic households (Table 2) and their smaller contingents of single men aged 14 to 21 and single women over 14 reflect the export of their young people as servants into Protestant households.<sup>22</sup>

The immigrants of the 1830s and 1840s — artisans, tailors, and merchants of butter, as well as caulkers and labourers — brought with them a certain "baggage" of schooling. While the rate of signatures on marriage registers is modest, as shown in Table 3, and much lower among women than men, the level of instruction exceeded the rate common in Lower Canada.<sup>23</sup> The penal

20 Jean-Patrice Ares and Louis Rousseau, "Les campagnes de Chiniquy, 1848–1851" and "Le sens d'un geste : faire profession de tempérance après 1840", in L. Rousseau and F. W. Remiggi, eds., *Atlas historique des pratiques religieuses, le Sud-Ouest du Québec au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1998), pp. 71–72 and 184–185. Chiniquy continued holding temperance revivals in the Irish chapels in June, October, and November 1848.

21 Median £3/4/6 for the liquor dealers, £2/18/6 for the entire set of pewholders.

22 For further tables and discussion, see Olson, "Ethnic Partition". The 1842 manuscript census has been little used because no tabulations were published, and the manuscript provides information only on the household and household head without the detail for individuals that is found in later censuses. Canadian censuses prior to 1871 are subject to some double-counting as a result of a "jurisdictional" conception, as explained by Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population, State Formation, Statistics and the Census of Canada, 1840–1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). This does not interfere with use of manuscript data for highly controlled exercises such as these, where we occasionally discover, for example, that the same person has been recorded as a servant in two different households, or the same family interrogated by two census-takers. The census was better organized in Montreal than elsewhere; manuscripts for both 1842 and 1861 are remarkably complete, and the microfilms for 1861 contain unusual detail, with addresses in some wards of the city, as observed also for Quebec City by Grace, "The Irish in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada". See also Kris Inwood and Richard Reid, "Introduction: The Use of Census Manuscript Data for Historical Research", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 28, no. 56 (November 1995), pp. 301–312.

23 Ordinarily the priest invited the couple and their witnesses to sign the marriage register; the father, godfather, and godmother signed the register of baptisms. The notary requested the *testataire* and two witnesses to sign a will, both spouses to sign in acknowledgment of a sale or mortgage (*hypothèque*) of real estate. Additional signatures were observed from a widow's ratification of the inventory after her husband's death or an act of apprenticeship of her son or daughter. In Montreal, we find few contradictions in the documents.

**Table 2 Structure of Urban Households in Three Communities, 1842, 1861, and 1901**

|   | 1842 (c)        |                | 1861 (b)         |                  | 1901   |            |
|---|-----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|--------|------------|
|   | French Canadian | Irish Catholic | Irish Protestant | Other Protestant | French | Irish      |
| Households                                | 2,552           | 1,247          | 580              | 1,722            |        |            |
| Persons                                   | 16,712          | 7,452          | 3,729            | 11,238           |        |            |
| Married couples per household             | 1.26            | 1.52           | 1.17             | 0.77             |        |            |
| Servants per household                    | 0.32            | 0.25           | 0.54             | 0.77             |        |            |
| Persons per household                     | 6.55            | 5.98           | 6.43             | 6.53             |        |            |
| Married men                               | 1.15            | 1.11           | 1.01             | 0.99             |        |            |
| Married women                             | 1.29            | 1.22           | 1.08             | 1.07             |        |            |
| Children 5-14                             | 1.35            | 1.14           | 1.29             | 1.22             |        |            |
| Children under 15                         | 0.96            | 1.08           | 0.93             | 0.90             |        |            |
| Single men over 14 (including servants)   | 0.79            | 0.73           | 1.11             | 1.17             |        |            |
| Single women over 14 (including servants) | 1.09            | 0.68           | 1.11             | 1.17             |        |            |
|   | Urban           |                | Rural            |                  |        |            |
|   | French          | Irish          | Protestant       | French           | Irish  | Protestant |
| Households                                | 52              | 57             | 48               | 158              | 26     | 36         |
| Persons                                   | 318             | 310            | 284              | 1,151            | 174    | 225        |
| Persons per household                     | 6.12            | 5.44           | 5.92             | 7.25             | 6.69   | 6.25       |
| Children under 15 per married woman       | 0.84            | 1.18           | 0.87             | 1.23             | 1.26   | 1.57       |
| Youth 15-29 as % of all                   | 35.5            | 32.6           | 31.0             | 26.4             | 27.0   | 23.6       |
| Females as % of all                       | 55.3            | 51.3           | 51.4             | 47.6             | 44.8   | 53.3       |
| Females as % of ages 15-29                | 59.5            | 52.5           | 59.0             | 43.9             | 46.8   | 47.2       |

**Table 2 (Concluded)**

|  | Source | French Canadian | Irish Catholic | Protestant |
|--|--------|-----------------|----------------|------------|
| 1901   |        |                 |                |            |
| Median rent (\$ per year)                          | a      | 70              | 84             | 100        |
| Mean number rooms in dwelling                      | a      | 5.0             | 5.4            | 6.1        |
| % of earnings contributed by members 15-29         | b      | 30.0            | 38.0           | 29.0       |
| Crowding: % households with over 1 person per room | b      | 26.0            | 23.0           | 39.0       |
| Rent burden (rent / income)                        | b      | 12              | 14             | 17         |

Sources: a) Birth cohort of 1899 (n = 1,477 households)

b) Surname samples, matched from census and tax roll

c) Manuscript census of 1842 (n = 6,105)

**Table 3 Literacy of Catholics of Irish and French Origins, Estimated from Signatures on Parish Registers**

|       | French Canadian |    |       |    | Irish Catholic |     |       |    |
|-------|-----------------|----|-------|----|----------------|-----|-------|----|
|       | Men             |    | Women |    | Men            |     | Women |    |
|       | n               | %  | n     | %  | n              | %   | n     | %  |
| 1820s | 19              | 16 | 18    | 0  | 11             | 73  | 8     | 38 |
| 1830s | 8               | 13 | 8     | 50 | 16             | 56  | 17    | 29 |
| 1840s | 37              | 27 | 37    | 16 | 45             | 71  | 46    | 20 |
| 1850s | 39              | 54 | 42    | 33 | 45             | 51  | 54    | 20 |
| 1860s | 52              | 73 | 55    | 51 | 44             | 68  | 60    | 53 |
| 1870s | 103             | 62 | 102   | 44 | 38             | 89  | 40    | 68 |
| 1880s | 102             | 57 | 103   | 54 | 59             | 92  | 61    | 87 |
| 1890s | 75              | 68 | 83    | 64 | 71             | 89  | 73    | 89 |
| 1900s | 133             | 90 | 153   | 88 | 72             | 100 | 75    | 97 |
| 1910s | 170             | 98 | 183   | 96 | 80             | 99  | 72    | 97 |

*Note:* Couples married in Montreal, schooled a decade earlier, including persons born in rural habitats.

laws which braked literacy in Ireland and pushed Catholic schoolteachers “underground” had by those means provoked Irish Catholics to place a high value on schooling and writing, a value-system which, as we shall see, favoured the destinies of their children.

Also preserved is a set of documents which provides evidence for recirculation of resources within the Irish Catholic network. These are the papers of Bartholomew O’Brien, a broker of silver who left a legacy of £1,000 to be managed by the pastor of St. Patrick’s as “trustee for the Irish poor”. A box of correspondence and unpaid notes unravels the story of access to credit, essential to entrepreneurial ventures. In the precursor generation were building contractor John Kelly (whom we have already met) and his brother Michael, butchers James and Patrick McShane, tavernkeeper John Reily, shoemaker Patrick Murray, carriage-maker Joseph O’Kane, and grocer James Megorian, who in 1847 was building a soap and candle factory and was occasionally fined for blocking the street with candle moulds.<sup>24</sup> By selling off three speculative properties to fellow “English-speaking Catholics”, John Donegani, of Italian origin, created Irish neighbourhoods which lasted a century.<sup>25</sup> The Kelly brothers put up houses in these little subdivisions for O’Kane, Pat McAuley, and William Brock, among others, and subcontracted the plastering to Martin Fardy.<sup>26</sup> All of the entrepreneurs named here rented pews at St.

24 ANQM, Montréal, Sessions de la Paix, April 9, 1839.

25 These sites were in west-end Fief Nazareth, east-end St-Mary Street, and at the centre Près-de-Ville adjacent to the site of St. Patrick’s.

26 ANQM, acts of Lamothe January 25, February 8, and April 4, 1843; April 2, 1846. Kelly had failed by May 8, 1847.

Patrick's, and all had depended at critical moments on a line of credit from Barthley O'Brien. Born in 1795, O'Brien had immigrated from Clonmel, County Kilkenny, in about 1815, and by 1847 he was among the directors of the new savings bank. At the time of his death in 1849, O'Brien's estate was probably reduced by half due to losses associated with the failures of the McShanes, the Kelly brothers, and mason-architect Maurice Ryan. The legacy he intended for creation of a servants' refuge explains the conservation of threads of information about his more important role as financial pledge for his compatriots on contracts and loans over 20 years.<sup>27</sup>

The evidence extends also to practice of sociability within the Irish community. O'Brien, with his wife Eliza McDugald, whom he had married in the Presbyterian Church, kept an inn near the corner of Hospital and St. John Streets, two blocks from the waterfront, and they received each year a great number of Irish immigrants heading upstream and Irish raftsmen bringing down timber from the shanties of the Nation River to markets at Montreal and Quebec City. Generous in small emergencies (5 shillings here, 5 shillings there), the O'Briens were not the only ones, and the dining rooms and bar rooms, often managed by women or as family enterprises, were vital spaces in the exchange of ideas and maintenance of solidarities — Irish Catholic, all-Catholic, and all-Irish.<sup>28</sup> The self-awareness is apparent in an editorial in *The Emerald*, commenting on the city taxation bill in 1841: "But when we see tavern-keepers taxed to an enormous amount, the soap and tallow chandlers taxed to an enormous amount, and the wholesale merchants not taxed at all, then we look at our pettiness. Oh! Ireland, what kind of children did you rise and send to Montreal, we are sorry to say sleepy fellows...."<sup>29</sup>

Political awareness was of course fostered by the continued pressures of politics in Ireland. As early as 1828 Irish Montrealers had organized effectively to send relief to Ireland and contribute to Daniel O'Connell's appeal for a "Catholic rent".<sup>30</sup> Just prior to the Rebellions, *rapprochements* between several Irish and *Patriote* leaders, notably the editors of the *Vindicator* and *La Minerve*,<sup>31</sup> were a source of pressures from the Sulpician pastors to split

27 The documents conserved at St. Patrick's were transferred in 1995 to the McCord Museum of Canadian History.

28 One might compare the Irish Protestant tavernkeeper McKiernan, known as "Joe Beef"; see Peter DeLottinville, "Working-Class Culture and the Tavern, 1869–1889", *Labour/ Le Travailleur*, no. 819 (Autumn/Spring 1981–1982), pp. 9–40.

29 *The Emerald*, vol. 1, no. 42 (April 9, 1841).

30 Reports of the fund-raising Society of Friends of Ireland in Canada (centred in Montreal) appear in *The Vindicator*, December 12 and 19, 1828; February 17 and March 20, 1829. The appeal was successfully made to the wealthier wholesalers (Presbyterians) since the hunger extended into Scotland.

31 Maurice Lemire, "Les Irlandais et la Rébellion de 1837–8", *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1995), pp. 1–9. Political figures such as Jocelyn Waller, Daniel Tracey, Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, later Thomas D'Arcy McGee and Bernard Devlin (members of parliament), Thomas Ryan (senator), and William Hales Hingston and James McShane (mayors) are virtually the only Irish Catholic Montrealers acknowledged in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, volumes 1–12, although a number of English-speaking Catholics can be identified in mixed marriages.

the “national” St. Patrick’s Society into separate confessional societies, Protestant and Catholic. Thanks to Donegani’s real estate and numerous small partnerships among Irish Catholics in the purchase of building lots, Irish resident owners and small entrepreneurs were seeded into several neighbourhoods of Montreal. Thus the Irish in Montreal were by no means confined to some “Little Dublin” like those notorious in London, Boston, New York, Buffalo, or Toronto.<sup>32</sup> Despite a considerable degree of residential segregation between Catholic and Protestant in the city in 1842, none of the four groups firmly dominated a particular district, and the presence of subdominant groups contributed to the volatility of electoral politics, to perennial efforts of both “the French party” and “the English party” to reach out to Irish Catholic voters, and to a continuing dispersal of Irish families throughout the city.<sup>33</sup>

Although the Irish counties of origin varied a good deal from one season of navigation to another, we can find no evidence that suggests major differences between those who settled between 1825 and 1846 and those who arrived at the worst of the famine, in 1847 and 1849, except for the head start enjoyed by the former and the traumatizing grief prevalent among the latter.<sup>34</sup> Those who were already established were angry, appalled at what was asked of them, but their preparedness for leadership was a critical factor in the advances of the next decade. In other words, the newcomers were sustained by a well-organized and politically astute community of Irish Catholics who preceded them, as well as by French Catholic leaders who likewise were well organized, politically savvy, and prepared to negotiate alliances as a Catholic majority.

### **A measure of success**

The decade 1847 to 1856, strenuous for the entire population of Montreal, was punctuated by epidemics of typhus (1847) and cholera (1849 and 1854), a severe business recession (pressing in 1843), a crisis in municipal finance (1849), a political riot in 1849 provoked by the conservative English party over the Rebellion Losses Bill, and fires which destroyed at least one-fifth of the housing stock (1850 and 1852). In the mid-fifties, as steam power and

32 Lees, *Exiles of Erin*; Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, eds., *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999); Jenkins, “Geographical and Social Mobility”.

33 See France Galarneau, “L’élection partielle du quartier-ouest de Montréal en 1832 : analyse politico-sociale”, *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, vol. 32, no. 4 (March 1979), pp. 565–584; Sessions de la Paix, election riot, October 31, 1834; *Journal of United Canada/ Canada Sessional Papers*, 1843 Appendices JJ (“Election outrages...”) and TTT; 1846 Appendix EEE.

34 An indication of the ruptures in families is the scarcity of grandmothers in the generation of the 1840s. For two-thirds of couples married in Notre Dame parish, Montreal, and reporting parents or birthplace in Ireland, only one or two of four parents were still living. The bride was more often an orphan. In the next generation, born in Montreal, the most common case was that three parents were present, four in a third of instances, and for three-quarters the bride’s mother was present. Less is known of the Irish Protestant stream of immigrants or of the factors that influenced their chances of staying in the city or continuing upstream.

railway construction transformed the economy, the Irish Catholic survivors began improving their situation, as shown by three indicators of community well-being: the rents they paid, shifts in the occupational profile of household heads, and survival rates of their children. This is where our patronymic samples come into play.

After examining three birth cohorts for the city and its suburbs,<sup>35</sup> we selected a small subset for family reconstitution and designed our sample as an ongoing “miniature Montreal” to permit cross-cultural comparison, to reproduce the urban occupational profile, and to verify family relations to several degrees of kinship. Here we matched records from a wider array of comprehensive sources: nominal censuses, municipal tax rolls, parish registers, and repertories of notaries.<sup>36</sup> We extracted panels for an event history analysis of two generations: one panel consisted of families who lived in Montreal in the 1860s, the other in the 1890s.<sup>37</sup> The Irish Catholic component of the miniature consists of all persons of the surname Ryan, including their wives and daughters.<sup>38</sup> We collected vital data from the moment they first appeared in Quebec in the 1790s down to 1920, and they are compared with French Canadian and Anglo-Protestant samples drawn also by surnames.<sup>39</sup> Ryan is one of

35 The birth cohorts consisted of 100% of births in 1859; 100% of Protestants and Irish Catholics and 50% of French Canadians in 1879; and 10% of all births in 1899. For details, see S. Olson, P. Thornton, and Quoc Thuy Thach, “Dimensions sociales de la mortalité infantile à Montréal au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Annales de démographie historique* 1988 (Paris, 1989), pp. 299–325; Patricia Thornton and Sherry Olson, “Infant Vulnerability in Three Cultural Settings in Montreal, 1880”, in Alain Bideau *et al.*, eds., *Infant and Child Mortality in the Past* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 216–241, and “A Deadly Discrimination Among Montreal Infants, 1860–1900”, *Continuity and Change*, vol. 16, no. 1 (April 2001), pp. 93–135.

36 Homonyms are frequent, for example 30 John Ryans and two dozen Margaret Ryans in the 1860s panel. We have cited full names to permit reference to an original document. Those referred to simply by a “given” name all bear the surname Ryan.

37 For discussion of the 12-surname sample and the controls exercised over the panels of the 1860s and 1890s, see Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton, “La croissance naturelle des Montréalais au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Cahiers québécois de démographie*, vol. 30, no. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 191–230; and, for a broader view of event history analysis, George Alter, “Casting Spells: Database Concepts for Event History Analysis”, *Historical Methods*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1999), pp. 165–176. The census of 1901 is helpful because street addresses can be matched with addresses reported in cemetery registers, tax rolls, and city directories.

38 We employed a single common name in the French Canadian community, and ten names (more and less common) in the Anglo-Protestant community. This yielded a sample of approximately 1,000 couples who lived in Montreal between 1840 and 1900. This involved collection of 600 marriages of Irish Catholics, 1,100 baptismal records, and 1,000 burials; a complement of information from six manuscript censuses (1842, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, and 1901); about 50 annual city directories; and municipal tax rolls at five-yearly intervals, 1847–1906.

39 The choice of surnames is of critical importance, although patronymic samples are not unusual in historical demography: cf. Jean-Pierre Bardet, *Rouen aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles : les mutations d'une espace social* (Paris, 1983); Paul-André Rosenthal, *Les sentiers invisibles. Espace, familles et migrations dans la France du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: EHESS, 1999). We sifted 350 indexed repertories of the 500 deposited in the Archives nationales du Québec for Montreal. The corpus of several thousand notarized acts contains more acts for the long-lived and property owners, somewhat fewer for the first generation of Irish Catholic immigrants.

**Table 4** Sizes of Surname Samples in Three Cultural Communities, 1861–1901

| Year | Persons per household |       |            |            |       |            |                         |       |            |
|------|-----------------------|-------|------------|------------|-------|------------|-------------------------|-------|------------|
|      | Number of households  |       |            | Ages 15–19 |       |            | Declaring an occupation |       |            |
|      | French                | Irish | Protestant | French     | Irish | Protestant | French                  | Irish | Protestant |
| 1861 | 50                    | 52    | 59         | 3.26       | 3.63  | 3.37       | 1.92                    | 1.60  | 1.92       |
| 1871 | 97                    | 56    | 63         | 2.93       | –     | 3.05       | 1.55                    | 1.71  | 1.75       |
| 1881 | 113                   | 65    | 76         | 2.88       | 3.31  | 3.72       | 1.83                    | 2.03  | 2.18       |
| 1891 | 142                   | 81    | 81         | 2.68       | 3.32  | 3.66       | 1.58                    | 2.02  | 2.03       |
| 1901 | 174                   | 82    | 106        | 2.79       | 3.23  | 3.17       | 1.69                    | 1.80  | 1.81       |

*Source:* Manuscript census; household head bears one of 12 surnames.



**Table 5 Infant Mortality in Three Birth Cohorts, Expressed as a Percentage of Those Who Survived at Least One Day**

|           | Number born |       |            | % who died |       |            |
|-----------|-------------|-------|------------|------------|-------|------------|
|           | French      | Irish | Protestant | French     | Irish | Protestant |
| 1859      | 1,955       | 866   | 705        | 25.2       | 17.5  | 17.0       |
| 1879      | 2,644       | 881   | 1,045      | 19.4       | 13.7  | 14.8       |
| 1899–1900 | 1,739       | 259   | 271        | 22.7       | 15.4  | 16.6       |

*Source:* Birth cohorts, Thornton and Olson, “A Deadly Discrimination”.

the most common surnames in all Ireland, and we might as easily have chosen Kelly, Brennan, or Gallagher.<sup>40</sup> Sample sizes are shown in Table 4, and comparison with the birth cohorts — with respect to men’s occupations, household rents, infant mortality, and birth spacing — allows us to assert that the Ryans adequately represent the trajectory of the larger Irish Catholic population of Montreal for at least the period from 1860 to 1900.

In the three birth cohorts we tracked (born 1859, 1879, and 1899), infant mortality among Irish Catholics was consistently 30 per cent lower than among French Canadians and very close to that of Anglo-Protestants, who were much better off in terms of income and status (Table 5). Cultural affiliation exerted a statistically significant effect decidedly more powerful than purchasing power or occupational status. This finding undermined our initial hypothesis, that the poverty gap would explain differential survival rates, and we were forced to rephrase the question: What cultural practices might have had such an impact? Analysis of birth intervals suggested that Irish Catholic mothers were breastfeeding their infants longer (close to 12 months) and introducing food supplements later. The estimates in Table 6 are based on the percentage of birth intervals greater than 18 months.<sup>41</sup> In nineteenth-century Montreal, as in Paris or Manchester, early weaning was a critical factor, making the child vulnerable to infections of the digestive tract

40 The surname Ryan draws somewhat more heavily from a belt of counties across southern Ireland (Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Kilkenny, and Wexford) than we would expect from the distribution of origins reported in Catholic marriage records over the 1840s decade.

41 Longer intervals reflect the braking effect of lactation on fertility, and we include only the mothers whose (first) child lived the full 12 months. The method of estimation is most appropriately applied under conditions of high or “natural” fertility, as described by François Nault, Bertrand Desjardins, and Jacques Legaré, “Effects of Reproductive Behaviour on Infant Mortality of French Canadians During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, *Population Studies*, vol. 44 (1990), pp. 273–285. Cultural differences in feeding practices and cultural impacts that outweigh purchasing power are reported for nineteenth-century European cities (Thornton and Olson, “A Deadly Discrimination”) and present-day developing countries (Jean Golding, Paule M. Emmett, and Imogen S. Rogers, “Gastroenteritis, Diarrhoea and Breastfeeding”, *Early Human Development*, vol. 49 [1997], supplement S83–S103).

**Table 6** Estimated Percentage of Mothers Breastfeeding

|      | French | Irish | Protestant |
|------|--------|-------|------------|
| 1860 | 88.6   | 88.8  | 82.4       |
| 1880 | 72.5   | 87.0  | 82.4       |
| 1900 | 62.5   | 75.5  | 76.8       |

*Source:* Birth cohorts of Thornton and Olson, “A Deadly Discrimination”, by method of Nault, Desjardins, and Legaré, “Effects of Reproductive Behaviour on Infant Mortality”.

and resulting in fatal dehydration. The syndrome referred to in nineteenth-century records as “infant cholera” or even as “teething” corresponds precisely to the “weanling diarrhea” observed today in tropical developing countries.

Despite their relative success, we observe among Irish Catholic infants the impact of variations in local environments. In 1860 residence in a narrow court, back alley, or rear housing increased an infant’s risk of dying in summer. In 1880 living in a street of higher-than-average rents reduced the risk to which the infant was subject, and by 1900, as the city grew larger, denser, and dirtier, the proportion of deaths attributed to intestinal causes increased.<sup>42</sup> Other factors played a role, such as the readier acceptance of vaccination by Irish Catholics and Anglo-Protestants.<sup>43</sup> Irish Catholic infants seem to have been advantaged by the fact that their mothers had (on average) married later in life than the French Canadian and Protestant women in our samples (Tables 7 and 8) and by a wider spacing of births. Short birth intervals were rare among Irish Catholic mothers, and many of the second-generation women of Irish origin seem to have maintained a longer period of breastfeeding (unlike French Canadian women) and thus, despite the degradation of sanitation in a more densely populated urban environment, succeeded in protecting their infants. In the cohort of 1899, belonging to an English-speaking family (whether Catholic or Protestant) improved the odds of a child’s survival by a factor of 1.3, and the odds were further improved (1.15) if the family lived in a district with at least 30 per cent English-speaking households.<sup>44</sup> A sanitary “topography” reflects confinement of French Canadians to crowded, poorly serviced zones, segregated from the anglophone power base; Irish access to

42 Among infants who survived the first 24 hours, diarrheal disease, including attributions such as “weakness and teething” (with the same seasonality), accounted for nearly half of all deaths of infants under one year.

43 Thornton and Olson, “A Deadly Discrimination”. Vaccination had been widely practised in the home countries of England and Ireland, and Anglo-Protestant households often required their Irish Catholic servants to be vaccinated.

44 For details of the logistic regression, see Thornton and Olson, “A Deadly Discrimination”.

**Table 7 Median Age at First Marriage by Gender and Cultural Community**

|         | French Canadian |      |     |      | Irish Catholic |      |     |      | Protestant |      |     |      |
|---------|-----------------|------|-----|------|----------------|------|-----|------|------------|------|-----|------|
|         | Women           |      | Men |      | Women          |      | Men |      | Women      |      | Men |      |
|         | n               | Age  | n   | Age  | n              | Age  | n   | Age  | n          | Age  | n   | Age  |
| 1840-59 | 63              | 23.1 | 46  | 25.5 | 76             | 22.0 | 31  | 25.0 | 32         | 23.6 | 41  | 26.4 |
| 1860-79 | 132             | 20.6 | 91  | 22.3 | 87             | 22.0 | 45  | 24.0 | 63         | 23.4 | 38  | 24.2 |
| 1880-89 | 86              | 21.1 | 52  | 23.8 | 64             | 23.9 | 26  | 25.7 | 47         | 23.5 | 25  | 26.1 |
| 1890-99 | 70              | 20.6 | 35  | 22.2 | 70             | 24.7 | 33  | 28.2 | 62         | 24.6 | 30  | 25.6 |
| 1900-19 |                 |      |     |      | 92             | 25.0 | 45  | 25.9 | 110        | 25.0 | 47  | 26.4 |

*Source:* Surname samples, marriage records matched to baptismal record or age reported in census.

**Table 8 Percentage of Persons Aged 15–49 Who Are Married**

|       | French Canadian |     | Irish Catholic |     | Anglo-Protestant |     |
|-------|-----------------|-----|----------------|-----|------------------|-----|
|       | Women           | Men | Women          | Men | Women            | Men |
| 1860s | 66              | 61  | 59             | 59  | 58               | 60  |
| 1890s | 58              | 60  | 45             | 46  | 48               | 53  |

*Source:* Surname samples, decade panels (Thornton and Olson, “A Deadly Discrimination”).

healthier habitats was favoured by their participation in municipal politics, in coalition with Protestants who needed Irish votes to preserve their shrinking electoral base.

Following Irish offspring into the third generation, we find, in both habitat and employment, a decided upward mobility. Analysis of rents shows a steady increase in the mean size of dwellings in Montreal from 1860 to 1900 and a more substantial improvement for Irish Catholic households relative to French Canadian. At the end of the century Irish couples in their thirties nearly always had a reasonable space in a street of less-than-average density and greater-than-average rents, in contrast to French Canadian couples in the same age set, who more often occupied smaller spaces (two or three rooms) at lower rents, in streets of higher density.<sup>45</sup>

Housing preferences suggest a conscious strategy. Decennial censuses from 1881 to 1901 show a slightly larger mean size for Irish Catholic households, with a larger number of persons able to contribute to the rent. Although these families were rarely homeowners, status as tenants preserved their flexibility in response to employment opportunities. This can be seen among policemen and firemen, who moved when stations opened in new neighbourhoods, and in the case of James Ryan, father and son, specialized printers, who moved their families from the West end to the East when the wallpaper factory relocated in response to a tax “bonus”.<sup>46</sup> Frequent moves enabled the Irish to take advantage of any improvement in household purchasing power to opt for streets of higher median rent, lower population density, and more effective public sanitation. Policeman Cornelius Ryan and his wife Bridget

45 These findings are consistent with observations reported for six Canadian cities in 1901 by Peter Baskerville and Eric W. Sager, *Unwilling Idlers: The Urban Unemployed and Their Families in Late Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998). The weaker position of French Canadian couples is more understandable when we recognize the much earlier age at which they were setting up their households. For discussion of the rental tax roll and methods employed in its analysis, see Jason Gilliland and Sherry Olson, “Claims on Housing Space in Nineteenth-Century Montreal”, *Urban History Review*, vol. 26, no. 2 (1998), pp. 3–16.

46 The family of wallpaper printers moved from Sainte-Cunégonde to the planned industrial suburb whose history is recounted by Paul-André Linteau, *Maison neuve : comment des promoteurs fabriquent une ville* (Montreal: Boréal, 1981).

**Table 9 Occupational Status of Irish Catholic Household Heads**

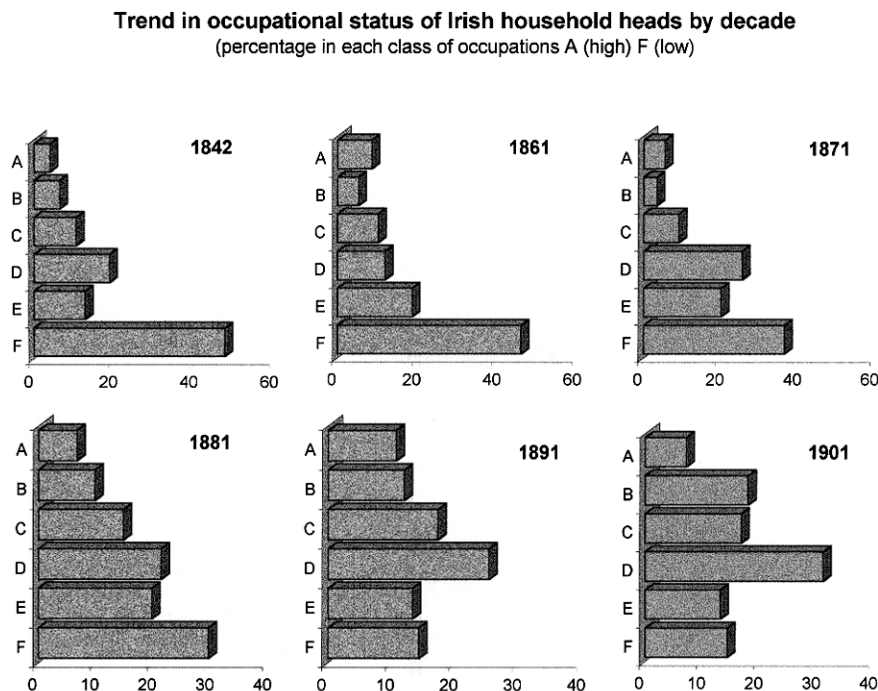
| Status   | 1842<br>% | 1861<br>% | 1871<br>% | 1881<br>% | 1891<br>% | 1901<br>% |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| A (high) | 3.9       | 8.5       | 5.5       | 6.6       | 10.7      | 7.1       |
| B        | 6.4       | 5.2       | 3.4       | 9.8       | 12.0      | 17.9      |
| C        | 10.5      | 10.2      | 9.1       | 14.7      | 17.3      | 16.7      |
| D        | 18.8      | 11.9      | 25.5      | 21.3      | 25.3      | 31.0      |
| E        | 12.8      | 18.6      | 20.0      | 19.7      | 13.3      | 13.1      |
| F (low)  | 47.5      | 45.8      | 36.4      | 29.5      | 14.3      | 14.3      |
| n = 100% | 1,245     | 59        | 95        | 61        | 75        | 84        |

*Sources:* Surname samples from census manuscripts. Status categories are defined by median rents for male household heads of the several occupations, as reported in tax roll of 1861: (A) the bourgeoisie of merchants and manufacturers; (B) petite bourgeoisie of notaries, doctors, architects, and traders; (C) white-collar workers such as agents and bookkeepers, together with the broader set of clerks; (D) skilled workers such as machinists, printers, and joiners; (E) “semi-skilled” painters, carters, and shoemakers; and (F) labourers.

Campbell, for example, remained tenants from 1873 to 1901, but moved from dwellings at \$30 or \$40 annual rent to those at \$90 or \$100, from two rooms to five. (Of ten born, they lost one child.) While Montrealers continued to think of Griffintown and the canal frontage as the quintessential Irish neighbourhood,<sup>47</sup> our “miniature” shows continual decentralization, and by 1901 two out of three Irish Catholic families were living outside that district, in newer and healthier habitats.

Entry to desired habitat was also favoured by a shift in the occupational profile. As depicted in Figure 2 (Table 9), where occupations of household heads are classed by their rent-paying capacity, the shift appears gradual, but we shall see that it reflects a transition from one generation to the next. When they arrived, immigrants plugged into the regional economy as best they could, with young women taking up domestic service in the towns and cities, and young men more often clearing or logging (beyond the city limits) or following the seasonal opportunities of public works. We identified, for example, a cluster of sons, brothers, and in-laws who in 1823 were hauling stone for the locks on the Lachine Canal, in 1836 toll-farming and doing roadwork on the plank turnpike between Chambly and Longueuil. In 1843 one member was security agent and witness to the strike on the Beauharnois Canal, another a subcontractor on the widening of the Lachine Canal, and in 1851 foreman on railway construction near Sherbrooke. By 1856 the entire

47 For example, H. B. Ames’s treatment of poverty in *The City Below the Hill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972 [1902]).



Occupationes are categorized from A (high) to F (low, mainly labourers)

**Figure 2** Trend in occupational status of Irish Catholic household heads by decade. Source: Surname samples from nominative censuses.

family was installed in Montreal as contractors and subcontractors: fencing the new municipal reservoir, excavating for the gas company, and removing debris from the fire of Christ Church Cathedral; their wives were keeping a fruit store, a hotel, and a junk store in optimal locations. Having arrived in the late 1820s, that particular extended family had a head start, but subsequent generations behaved in much the same way, deploying a persistent sibling solidarity and the same resonance of occupations that Rosenthal and Bertaux have observed in extended families in France.<sup>48</sup> In 1891, for example, near the Grand Trunk station, Maggie was keeping house for her four brothers, all recently arrived, the men working as porters on the trains or in a railside hotel. Ten years later, one had died, one was managing the hotel and a household of eight employees at the same downtown location, another had a family in newer lodgings, and Maggie was keeping house for her husband and three children as well as a widowed brother and his two babies.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson, eds., *Pathways to Social Class: A Qualitative Approach to Social Mobility* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); Rosenthal, *Les sentiers invisibles*.

Homeownership was achieved late in life and with difficulty.<sup>49</sup> Francis, in the late 1850s, built four little houses near the canal. When he died (1878), leaving his wife Bridget Sheehan with ten children (seven minors), she renounced the estate (that is, the debts), sold the meagre furniture (her son bought the clock), and continued to take in washing. A year later she married the widower next door; her daughter married the widower's son, and 12 years later Frank junior, through the new building and loan society, managed to pay off the house his father had built.<sup>50</sup> In the absence of property as security for a contractual dower,<sup>51</sup> Irish Catholic marriage contracts of the 1870s and 1880s often included a commitment to make payments on a life insurance policy, and in several cases the widow used her claim to buy the house. Bridget Boland, a carter's wife, ill and illiterate, willed a small one-storey wooden house to her two daughters who were dressmakers; her brother left them an adjoining lot, and 12 years later the two women, spinsters close to 40, borrowed to finish the brick cladding on a two-storey house.<sup>52</sup>

Of the entire set of household heads in the Irish Catholic panel of 1861, nearly half (46 per cent) were labourers, active on the docks, on the diggings and dredging works, in the streets, and in the stables (Figure 2). They made a better living in summertime and years of active construction (1856 and 1871) and were vulnerable in a fierce winter or a year of depression such as 1873. The sample of 30 years later (1891) can be divided in two: half born in Ireland, half in Canada, fathers and their married sons. Forty per cent of the fathers were still labourers, among the sons a single individual. That discovery led us to review the French Canadian sample, and here, too, by comparing fathers who had immigrated from the countryside with their city-raised sons, we observe a comparable upward mobility, evident in rents paid, space occupied, and occupational profile. Their advance was less obvious than among the Irish because it was masked by the continued arrival of villagers whose low incomes reduced the French Canadian average.<sup>53</sup>

49 For further discussion of home ownership among Irish Catholics, see Peter Baskerville, "Homeownership and Spacious Homes: Equity Under Stress in Early Twentieth-Century Canada", *Journal of Family History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (April 2001), pp. 272–289; Gilliland and Olson, "Claims on Housing Space"; Robert D. Lewis, "Homeownership Reassessed for Montreal in the 1840s", *Canadian Geographer*, vol. 34, no. 2 (1990), pp. 150–152.

50 ANQM, Acts of notaries McIntosh, June 24, 1873; Wright, June 27 and July 2, 1878 (also numerous leases); Tutelles, May 25, 1878; acts of Lafleur, May 27, 1858; March 22, 1859; July 4 and 28, 1870; and September 1, 1889.

51 On this subject, see Bettina Bradbury *et al.*, "Property and Marriage: The Law and Practice in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 26, no. 51 (May 1993), pp. 9–39.

52 Will of Bridget Boland, wife of Cornelius Ryan, act of notary H. D. Côté, November 28, 1884; act of Lighthall, June 30, 1899. To her son, who had already married and presumably had his share, Bridget left \$4.

53 Analyses of our three infant cohorts show that over one-third of French Canadian parent couples had immigrated from rural habitats, obscuring the upward mobility of those who had arrived earlier. By implication, despite the attractive power of Montreal and fuller employment (as shown in Baskerville

A factor in their upward mobility was an employment revolution of the 1880s, a decade of relatively sustained economic growth.<sup>54</sup> Expansion of an urban economy is nearly always founded upon a leap of construction and transport sectors, and the Irish used these sectors as springboards for enterprises in excavating, hauling, and delivery or to apprentice their sons in printing and metallurgy, jobs with a future.<sup>55</sup> Youth of the third generation of Montreal Irish were moving into large bureaucratic firms like the railways, post office, and telegraph companies, in concentrations double than expected. Where their fathers were often self-employed pedlars, shopkeepers, or scavengers, the younger men were employees but in a much higher class of jobs: they became travellers (travelling salesmen), elevator mechanics, insurance agents, and managers. Among the young women who in 1891 reported employment outside the home, only one-third were servants; the others were working as teachers and nurses, typists and telephone operators. In 1901 a higher share of the income of Irish Catholic households was earned by youth between the ages of 15 and 29 (35 per cent compared to 27 per cent in other households).

Longer schooling seems to have played an important role in access to new types of employment which required reading, spelling, keeping accounts, and speaking two languages. The census samples show a somewhat higher percentage of Irish Catholic children aged 5 to 14 in school relative to French Canadian children in 1871 and 1881. In both communities, opportunities for schooling, as reflected in signing capacity (Table 3 and Figure 3), may help explain the upward mobility associated with urban upbringing; fragmentary information suggests that Irish Catholic families were taking advantage of all the school systems: Catholic and Protestant, English and French, private and public.<sup>56</sup> Thus the improvement in economic status, demonstrated by the rent distribution at the end of the century, was made possible by the initial export of labour of young men into land-breaking and public works and young women into the domestic sector, and by reorientation of the next generation toward education. Childless but successful couples like the O'Briens, the hotelkeeper, and the contractor had all sent their nephews to school or seminary; and even among life-long labourers and ser-

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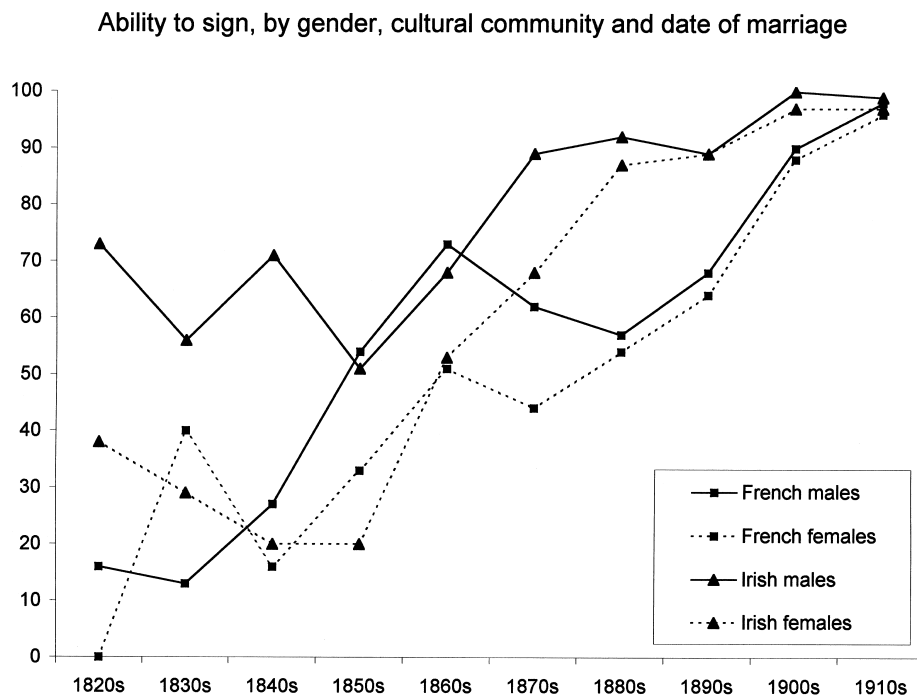
and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*), wages were perennially depressed by the large pool of arrivals, and the economic structure was shifted toward a "cheap labour" mix. Cf. Roma Dauphin, *Économie du Québec, une économie à la remorque de ses groupes* (Laval: Beauchemin, 1994).

54 For other observations of a relatively prosperous decade, see Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993).

55 On the logic of these sectors as springboards, see Sherry Olson, "Ethnic Strategies in the Urban Economy", *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1991), pp. 39–64.

56 Public support was provided to Catholic parish schools as well as Protestant schools; Montreal received little provincial subsidy, and local property tax was allocated to the respective boards by religion of the property owner rather than by numbers of children to be served. The same religious orders often operated side-by-side schools and academies with several fee structures.





**Figure 3** Ability to sign, by gender, cultural community, and date of marriage. Source: Surname samples from registers of Catholic marriages and baptisms.

vants numerous individuals left a critical legacy of a few dollars to a nephew or niece.<sup>57</sup>

### The Social Costs

The picture was not rosy for all that. Among the sacrifices should be noted the loss of a language, and with it a certain framework of culture which had to be rebuilt. The precursor generation was more often integrated into the French Canadian community, immigrants of the 1840s often became bilingual, and after 1860 the “national” parishes created for English-speaking Catholics reinforced a process of anglicization.<sup>58</sup> We have no way of knowing to what extent Gaelic was ever spoken in Montreal, and its rapid disap-

57 In addition to education, the other explicit purpose of such legacies was to protect a daughter, niece, or sister by a small income “not subject to any control by her husband”.

58 The subsequent important role of the Catholic parishes in construction and negotiation of an “Irish Catholic identity” is addressed by Rosalyn Trigger, “The Role of the Parish in Fostering Irish-Catholic Identity in Nineteenth-Century Montreal” (MA thesis, Geography, McGill University, 1997); Brian P. Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850–1895* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993).

pearance was only the completion of destruction begun in Ireland. The Irish community showed slow growth, resulting from the combined effects of the abrupt decline of immigration, the tradition of later marriage, and more widely spaced births. Between 1860 and 1900, the Irish Catholic sample increased by half, while the Anglo-Protestant sample doubled and the French Canadian sample tripled.<sup>59</sup>

Maternal protection, which operated to the advantage of infants and small children, had little effect once children reached adolescence. In 1860 one-fifth of the Irish Catholic population were living outside their families (family of origin or marriage), including nearly half of the young women between 15 and 29 (46 per cent). This age set proved especially vulnerable to tuberculosis and violence, both aggravated in an alcoholic economy which relied on the contractor's ration of rum, the army's allowance for beer, and the barrels of whiskey conveyed to poll towns. Burial registers for Irish Catholic men, relative to French Catholics, show greater numbers of drownings, deaths in prison, and burials outside holy ground.<sup>60</sup> Some of these were the "downwardly-mobile". Despite solidarities of brothers and sisters, the Atlantic crossing sliced through family networks, and the lone servant who fell ill was often abandoned to an institution; hence the larger number of deaths of young women at the Hôtel-Dieu, some of them attributed to what were thought of (even then) as "childhood diseases" like scarlet fever and measles, a consequence of their exposure as children's nurses. As long as British regiments were garrisoned in Montreal (to 1871), the number of illegitimate births registered "to unknown parents" remained considerable (one in eleven in 1859); if we presume that most were firstborns, it implies that an important share of young women carried the blame of "unwed mother" and often, to recover a job as domestic servant, abandoned the child to the Grey Nuns. In nine cases out of ten the foundling died within a few weeks.<sup>61</sup>

The politicization of Irish interests resulted, inevitably, in bitter compromises, artful ambiguities, and contradictions which at the time seemed black humour, such as *God Save the Queen* "intoned by the Irish faithful" as they entered St. Patrick's for the dedication in 1847<sup>62</sup> or the St. Patrick's Day toast of Irish Catholic employers in 1852, drunk three times three, to Ireland's tem-

59 Net migration, estimated for the 1860s and 1890s, was close to zero and accounted for a smaller portion of population turnover than natural causes (births and deaths). For analysis of reproduction rates, see Olson and Thornton, "La croissance naturelle".

60 For drownings, work accidents, and deaths from exposure, see also ANQM, Crimes et enquêtes du Coroner, Plumitifs.

61 See Peter Gossage, "Les enfants abandonnés à Montréal au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle : la Crèche d'Youville des Soeurs Grises, 1820-1871", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 40, no. 4 (Spring 1987), pp. 537-559; Claudette Lacelle, *Les domestiques en milieu urbain au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980); and, on families' dependence on orphanages and *crèches* for temporary protection of children during periods of economic pressure, Bradbury, *Working Families*.

62 *La Minerve*, March 18, 1847.

perance crusader Father Mathew.<sup>63</sup> Scores of incidents illustrate the sensitivities of Irish workers to their rights, among them a walkout by waiters in the employ of the city's most prominent hotel: the management had vaccinated them in June (1885), then "shut them up" for six months to reassure the tourists. In January, when thanks was being given in the churches for the end of the smallpox epidemic, the waiters again in solidarity "walked out" for the afternoon (between the lunch and dinner services) after the head waiter was sacked and fined by the court.<sup>64</sup> Later that year, a full contingent of Irish workingmen's societies spent entire days negotiating every phrase of a letter of congratulation to Archbishop Taschereau of Quebec upon his elevation to the Cardinalate, since he was the uncompromising foe of the Knights of Labor, the "secret society" which defended their employee rights.<sup>65</sup>

By 1901, when the census was taken, Canadian racism had been deflected from Irish Catholics toward new streams of immigrants from Ukraine and Ruthenia, and in Montreal "otherness" was characterized by Italian and Syrian (both Catholic), Chinese, and Jewish.<sup>66</sup> Ironically, Irish Quebeckers were caught up in the imperial project of the Boer War; Irish Catholic union members found themselves embroiled in hostility to Italian, Chinese, and Jewish immigrants; and the Irish of Montreal were torn by disputes for control of the Catholic hierarchy in Canada and the United States. As the conflict heated up in Ontario and New England, the Irish, as a tactic for defence of their separate (Catholic) schools, joined in a racism of language, making French Canadians rather than Irish Canadians the scapegoat population.<sup>67</sup>

Despite the efforts of parishes, unions, schools, savings banks, and temperance and mutual assistance societies, Irish youth remained vulnerable to the end of the century. While some were able to take advantage of tensions in the political structure, others were disadvantaged.<sup>68</sup> Violence was so firmly anchored in political mores, the alcohol trade, and the labour market that one

63 *The Pilot*, March 23, 1852.

64 *Montreal Star*, January 6, March 10, and April 5, 1886.

65 *Montreal Star*, June 5, 9, and 16, 1886; July 1, 22, 24, 25, 27, and 28, 1886.

66 See, for example, editorial in *La Presse*, April 21, 1899; or full-page treatment of the city's Chinese, Italian, Jewish, and Syrian "colonies", *La Patrie*, October 17, 1903, p. 20, with a complexity of stereotyped impressions and cartoons of the opium smoker, fortune teller, and "une grosse maman".

67 Mark McGowan, "Rethinking Catholic-Protestant Relations in Canada: The Episcopal Reports of 1900–1901", *CCHA Historical Studies*, vol. 59, no. 11–12 (1992), pp. 11–33; Matteo Sanfilippo, "L'image du Canada dans les rapports du Saint-Siège, 1622–1908", *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 5 (Spring 1992), pp. 9–24; Robert Choquette, *Language and Religion: A History of English-French Conflict in Ontario* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1975); views of Henri Bourassa in *Le Devoir*, July 20 and 27, August 20, and September 12, 14, and 15, 1910; recollections of Omer Héroux in *Le Devoir*, souvenir number of October 25, 1952, pp. 97–103; "Langue et religion, la leçon du Congrès", *La Patrie*, September 12, 1910; Yves Roby, "La paroisse franco-américaine (1850–1976)", in Courville and Séguin, eds., *La Paroisse*, pp. 251–264.

68 In 1901 adolescents living with a widowed mother or father were often employees in a cotton mill, silk mill, or cigar factory, jobs very different from employment by the railways, postal service, or telegraph company.

can only infer that the strategy of both employers and governments was to keep the pressure-cooker operating just below the level of explosion. Elections of 1832, 1834, 1841, 1842, 1844, and 1846, the Beauharnois strike (1843), the Gavazzi affair between Protestants and Catholics (1853), and a murder on July 12, 1878, were occasions when the lid blew off, and authorities — the mayor, the clergy, and the commander of the troops — hastened to readjust the pressure gauge.<sup>69</sup>

### The Challenge of Interpretation

The upward mobility of Irish Catholics in Montreal presents a challenge to assumptions that have been made about the nature of restraints on advancement of Irish immigrants in other cities.<sup>70</sup> It challenges also deep-rooted assumptions about the “Protestant ethic” as a factor in the creation of wealth.<sup>71</sup> In interpreting the Montreal situation, we dare not take at face value the North American myth that group “achievement profiles” are determined by personal ambition, and we are reluctant to employ the terms of a mid-twentieth-century “individualistic liberalism” such as “middle-class Canadian values”.<sup>72</sup> We seek cautiously to provide evidence for structures of difference, and, by bringing forward complementary micro sources, to identify feedbacks in the behavioral system. In such a system, we see religious affiliation simply as one of several pointers to the network in which group values were maintained or adjusted. The values were not necessarily defined in religious terms, nor in ways consistent with other groups who shared the same formal “religion”. Evidence of group behaviours and living standards suggests that in Montreal — and therefore in the larger Canadian urban context — religious affiliation, taken alone, is not sufficient to define the effective

69 Inquests reported December 3, 10, and 24, 1844; Robert Sylvain, “Le 9 juin 1853 à Montréal : encore l’affaire Gavazzi”, *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, vol. 14, no. 2 (September 1960), pp. 173–216; John C. Fleming, *Orangeism and the 12<sup>th</sup> of July Riots in Montreal* (Montreal, 1877).

70 For review of this literature, see Amy Greenberg, “The Irish in the City: Recent Developments in American Urban History”, *Cambridge Historical Journal*, vol. 42 (June 1999), pp. 571–581; Howard M. Gitelman, “‘No Irish need apply’: Patterns and Responses to Ethnic Discrimination in the Labor Market”, *Labor History*, vol. 14 (1973), pp. 56–68. Canadian historians have long since refuted the argument of H. C. Pentland, “The Development of a Capitalistic Labour Market in Canada”, *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, vol. 25, no. 4 (1959), pp. 450–461.

71 For a more up-to-date and more nuanced inquiry, with evidence for the Irish Catholic situation in various parts of Canada in 1901, see Peter Baskerville, “Did Religion Matter? Religion and Wealth in Urban Canada at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: An Exploratory Study”, *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 34, no. 67 (2001), pp. 61–95.

72 Even more extreme is the phraseology of “self-discipline” or the objections to “joie de vivre” or “drink and pleasure”, which contemporaries employed as well as sociologists of the 1930s and 1970s. See discussions in Baskerville and Sager, *Unwilling Idlers*; also Gordon Darroch and Lee Soltow, *Property and Inequality in Victorian Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). Much the same “culture of striving” was preached and published in all three communities of nineteenth-century Montreal.

network of group interactions. Further, how the network evolved depended in part upon how it was laced into other networks.<sup>73</sup>

Evidence from New York and Boston, and in particular Sallie Marston's analysis of Lowell, Massachusetts, demonstrates the importance of political clout which the Irish obtained by their concentration in a particular electoral district.<sup>74</sup> In Montreal, political clout was equally important, but it came instead from command over a small "swing vote" in numerous districts of the city. This advantage was available as early as the 1830s and was still effective in municipal politics in 1901.<sup>75</sup> Immigrants arrived from Ireland intensely politicized, and their experience of tactics and negotiation could be readily applied in the colonial and parliamentary context of British North America. In each cohort, the journalism of Empire renewed the mobilization around home-country issues, expanded the global network of "children of the Emerald Isle", and consolidated their political know-how: how to appropriate the rhetoric of the New World, how to enforce solidarity, how to drive a bargain, and when to compromise.<sup>76</sup>

We have seen that the economic drive of Irish Catholics of Montreal was favoured by an array of well-maintained strategies, in particular later marriage, longer breastfeeding, solidarity of brothers and sisters, a search for literacy in institutions of both languages and religions, assemblage of households of larger size and multiple bread-winners, and a preference for low-density streets. The couplings in the set of strategies were advantageous. Better housing, for example, favoured child survival, and the surviving child in turn began contributing to the family's capacity to pay a higher rent or a sib-

73 See, for example, the discussion of "ethclass" by Claire McNicoll, *Montréal, une société multiculturelle* (Paris: Belin, 1993); for a review of Lutheran versus Catholic values as determinants in family formation, see Kevin McQuillan, *Culture, Religion and Demographic Behaviour: Catholics and Lutherans in Alsace, 1750–1870* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

74 Sallie A. Marston, "Neighbourhood and Politics: Irish Ethnicity in Nineteenth Century Lowell, Massachusetts", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 73, no. 3 (1988), pp. 414–432; also Susan I. Hautaniemi, Alan C. Swedlund, and Douglas L. Anderton, "Mill Town Mortality, Consequences of Industrial Growth in Two Nineteenth-Century New England Towns", *Social Science History*, vol. 23 (Spring 1999), pp. 1–39; Grace, "The Irish in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada". William M. Jenkins makes the same argument in his comparison of Buffalo, New York, with Toronto, where Irish Catholics were few and dispersed ("Geographical and Social Mobility").

75 Representation of Irish Catholics in City Council is reviewed by Paul-André Linteau, "Le personnel politique de Montréal, 1880–1914. Évolution d'une élite municipale", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 52, no. 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 189–215.

76 For the keenest sense of the intense communications between Ireland, Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia, see Thomas Keneally, *The Great Shame and the Triumph of the Irish in the English-Speaking World* (New York: Anchor, 1998). Notable examples of the complex rhetoric of Canadian loyalties are two pamphlets: Thomas D'Arcy McGee, *The Irish Position in British and in Republican North America. Montréal, A Letter to the editors of the Irish Press irrespective of party* (Montreal, 2nd ed., 1866); and *The Case of St. Patrick's Congregation as to the erection of a new canonical parish of St. Patrick's, Montreal, published by order of the committee of the congregation* (Montreal, 1866). These are contextualized and cited at length in Trigger, "The Geopolitics of the Irish-Catholic Parish".

ling's school fee. The findings strongly suggest age at marriage as a variable which possessed cultural meaning and obtained cultural reinforcement and which had a powerful impact on both the demographic system (certainly on net reproduction rates)<sup>77</sup> and the potential for accumulating resources. In other words, culture is a package deal. Neither Catholic faith nor the King's English explains breastfeeding or housing standards, nor does a perennial fondness for "The Dear Little Shamrock". These are merely pointers to a network which bundled, reinforced, and transmitted a wide array of cultural practices. The demographic analyses suggest a fusion of identities, religious and patriotic;<sup>78</sup> transmission of the package, with very modest changes, allowed the rising generation of Irish Catholic young people to pursue an upward path. The transmission system for shifting the gears between generations involved the full breadth of family connections.<sup>79</sup>

If these interpretations are correct, they reinforce the approach to social history that is sometimes described as "microhistory". Montreal is richly endowed in nominative sources, and the scholar is torn, as in other large cities, between a strategy of applying rather arid methods for studying great masses of people from massive sources, or, at the other extreme, using a rich and diverse documentation to study a very few people, seeking the individual personality, the unique event, or the dramatic sequence. The challenge is to integrate the two approaches by meshing our samples and matching our records. We chose to interrogate at length small pools of witnesses, to trace them into the third and fourth generations, and to situate them in their social networks. At the same time, we sought to ground these little samples in reasonably comprehensive sources, entire birth cohorts, entire tax rolls (1848, 1861), and a city-wide census (1842), to compile lifetime paths and family narratives into a moving picture of a group trajectory.

In targeting an entire population — mobile, urban, mostly illiterate at the outset — we have little in the way of self-reflective documents, and we are forced to rely on behavioral evidence to infer motivation, agency, and strategy. In trying to understand the relation between geographic mobility and social mobility, in particular the experience of the Irish diaspora, we conclude by proposing three viewpoints that may be useful in thinking about some other group, some other era, or some other city: first, the adolescent's outlook on the future; secondly, a woman's perspective; and thirdly, the retrospective of the child of immigrant parents.

77 Olson and Thornton, "La croissance naturelle".

78 Trigger, "La vie des paroisses catholiques irlandaises".

79 This is consistent with the approach taken by Bertaux and Thompson, *Pathways to Social Class*; Rosenthal, *Les sentiers invisibles*; Randy Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880–1920* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998); Roger V. Gould, "Multiple Networks and Mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1871", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 56 (December 1991), pp. 716–729.

Youths in their teens and twenties were, as we have seen, taking strategic decisions: to leave home (for example, to cross the Atlantic), to marry or to wait, to seek work or stay in school, to head for the big city or the frontier, to go into a business as simple as cab-driving, root beer manufacture, or a partnership in stitching grainbags. They were advised and badgered by their families, their relatives, their pastors, and their entire cultural milieu, but inevitably they faced new situations. Postponement of marriage, for example, was an adaptation that reflected at once the pressures of their families and the appearance of new opportunities and values.<sup>80</sup> Evidence of the constraints as well as the liberation associated with the legal age of 21 is provided by the six marriages, all in the Irish Catholic sample, celebrated the morning after that empowering birthday.

The church was cognizant and explicit about the mother's role in cultural transmission, but we have touched here, in our analysis of breastfeeding, on cultural practices that involved sisters, aunts, and grandmothers. The life of St. Bridget herself testifies to a powerful feminine culture in ancient Ireland, resistant to patriarchy. The Irish diaspora is distinguished by its high proportion of women and, in the stream of Irish immigration to Canada, the exceptional number of young single women.<sup>81</sup> Except for unmarried servants, women's economic activities are underestimated in the census and can be teased out of other records with difficulty.<sup>82</sup> The Montreal samples reveal among Irish women a relative economic autonomy, a longer life outside the married state,<sup>83</sup> and a wide and varied experience of urban life.

Can we imagine the impact of the migration experience upon the oncoming generation? Each John Ryan who emigrated had conceived a scheme to deflect a destiny: to peddle some trinkets or seek gold, to acquire a horse, a

80 See, for example, Unni Wikan, "Sustainable Development in the Mega-city", *Current Anthropology*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1995), pp. 635–648.

81 Charlotte Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in New Zealand, 1853–1871* (Auckland: Allen and Unwin/ New Zealand Historical Branch, 1990); Maria R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Patrick O'Sullivan, ed., *Irish Women and Irish Migration* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1995).

82 See Susan B. Carter and Richard Sutch, "Fixing the Facts: Editing of the 1880 U.S. Census of Occupations with Implications for Long-term Labor Force Trends and the Sociology of Historical Statistics", *Historical Methods*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 5–24; Mary Ann Poutanen, "'To indulge their carnal appetites': Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal" (doctoral dissertation, History, McGill University, 1997); and, for examples from the "miniature", Sherry Olson, "Feathering Her Nest in Nineteenth-Century Montreal", *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 33, no. 65 (May 2001), pp. 1–35, and "'Pour se créer un avenir': stratégies de couples montréalais aux XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 51, no. 3 (Winter 1998), pp. 357–389.

83 This assertion, taking into account the years before marriage, the years of widowhood, and the women who never married, is based on comparison of our surname samples from the censuses of 1861 and 1891 for girls and women 15 or over, whose presence (or death) in Montreal could be confirmed over the next ten years (usually in the census of 1871 or 1901). Thornton and Olson, "La croissance naturelle".

cart, and a stable. Each Peg or Mary, to outwit a destiny she feared in the Old Country, had a vision of how she would support herself, how she would expand her options for finding a life-partner or exercise a little greater control over the health and opportunities of her children. When their children cast a glance backward at the trajectory, did they find support for their own willingness to take risks? For their own impatience to exercise a choice? For their right to demand a voice, a vote, or a fair wage? It seems to us that their expectations would be heightened by the observation that their own parents, in crossing the Atlantic, had gambled and — in their children's advances if not their own — had won.