

American Growing Pains:

Rioting in New York City

and the Formation of a Jacksonian Identity, 1828-1857

By: Jackson Loop

Advisor: Sean Adams, Ph.D.

History Department, University of Florida, 2014

Table of Contents:

Introduction.....	1
An Ambivalent Era	7
The Astor Place Riot, 1849.....	26
The Great Police and Dead Rabbits' Riots, 1857	43
The Jacksonian Identity	60
Bibliography	64

Introduction

On the night of May 10th, 1849 a crowd numbering around 10,000 people filled the streets outside of the Astor Place Opera House in Manhattan, New York City. By the time the state militia managed to forcibly disperse the crowd, dozens were dead and more than a hundred were injured. On June 16th, 1857, two factions of the police force in New York City fought outside City Hall, brawling violently and leaving around 50 men injured. Throughout the early weeks of July in that same year, various gangs of the city's slovenly Sixth Ward took advantage of an internal conflict in law enforcement by rioting openly against one another, inflicting indiscriminate property damage, and looting trains.

The social context surrounding these disturbances hardly correlates well with such aggression. The election of Andrew Jackson saw more inclusive voting rights for the lower classes. American Protestantism underwent dramatic change, empowering individuals with control over their own destinies, rather than damning them from birth. Financially speaking, the early nineteenth-century American citizen enjoyed a booming economy, enhanced communication technologies, and the ability to manage their own finances and entrepreneurial interests at will. These were the rational outlets given to each (white, male) American citizen. So why were the people of antebellum New York City—the strongest, richest metropolis in the United States—behaving so aggressively, so frequently? Who were the participants in riots? Was there an overarching agenda for this era of unrest, or were these people inherently volatile? What were they taking issue with exactly, and why were the conventional, legal means provided not working?

Combining newspapers, diaries, and broadsides with secondary source materials on the period from 1828-1861 has revealed a notable trend: although America formally completed its

political revolution in the 1770s and 80s, a cultural one continued well into the nineteenth century and beyond. Despite its increasingly egalitarian appearance in theory, New York City was a place marred by income inequality, disillusionment, classist behavior, and severe fragmentation. These were not simply wanton “thugs,” as some historians and contemporaries have dismissed them.¹ While motivations for particular rioters varied, this project argues that all participants were bolstered by America’s newfound political theories of egalitarianism and individualism, and that these riots represent a complex, nuanced debate as Americans attempted to strike a balance between their security and their liberty. It was dissuasion from job loss and political disenfranchisement, not simply barbarism, which led citizens from various walks of life in New York City to utterly reject deference and hierarchy, and violently fight against what they believed to be encroachments on their rights. In short, this period of violence was a step in a slower, more systemic overhaul of American society and identity, to match the rapid political and economic changes that occurred after the Revolutionary War. This project aims to fully analyze these riots in their own right, and contextualize them within their zeitgeist of alienation, cutthroat politicking, and an emerging system of market capitalism. There are few who would argue that people, in any time or place, risk their lives in demonstrations without good reason. That being considered, to simply brush over these events is to do a serious disservice to those who participated in their making.

Each of these three riots has been treated quite differently by historians. The Astor Place Riot of 1849, easily the most famous and bloodiest riot of antebellum America, has drawn the most attention. Entire books are dedicated to this incident, such as Richard Moody’s work, *The Astor Place Riot* (1958), whose title alone demonstrates the event’s independent noteworthiness in early American history. The Great Police Riot of 1857 attracts much less consideration, and

¹ Herbert Asbury, *The Gangs of New York* (New York: Paragon House, 1927), 105.

no books have been published on the event alone. The general distress following the Police Riot—usually titled with its most violent manifestation: “The Dead Rabbits Riot,” is oftentimes addressed as simply an aftereffect of the law enforcement’s divisiveness. In their incredibly exhaustive work, *Gotham*, Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace dedicate a disappointing seven out of twelve hundred pages to these two occurrences. Most importantly, and perhaps most unfortunately, some predominant scholarship has a tendency to analyze antebellum civil disturbances as merely precursors to the “impending conflict” of the Civil War, and the riots against conscription that New York City experienced in 1863.²

To be fair, the primary source material leaves some firsthand material to be desired. Members of mobs and gangs are difficult to accurately evaluate. Oftentimes undereducated members of the lower classes, they leave little behind in the way of formal, personal records. The New-York Historical Society provides some material from secondhand witnesses not involved with the rioting themselves, or broadsides with poems summarizing the events, but this project mainly utilizes New York’s newspapers, both mainstream and fringe, to attempt to measure public opinion before, during, and after these civil disturbances. This methodology does not presume that each rioter read the daily news, but it does contend that through researching a large sample of presses, one can attempt to reconstruct the “pulse” of New York City, so to speak, and extrapolate how various groups responded to these developments.

The secondary source material on New York City’s broader trends during this era is more sizeable. For many, the metropolis has become a case study for early American capitalism. The population spiked there during the first half of the nineteenth century, race relations became complex in the face of increased immigration, and class distinctions became more palpable each

² *Ibid*, 101.; David Grimsted, *American Mobbing 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

year. Sean Wilentz's seminal work, *Chants Democratic*, outlines these occurrences exhaustively. A new economy was unfolding, based largely on rapid production through unskilled labor. Innovations in transportation and communication fractionized shipping costs. Cumulatively, these events became known as the Market Revolution, and have since gained much attention in academia.

Outside of the new economy, another point of analysis focuses on this period's transformations in politics. Andrew Jackson and the Second American Party System, centered on Whigs and Democrats, dominated American thought. Harry L. Watson's work *Liberty and Power* works through this party system, discussing the era as an attempt to find a middle ground between authoritarianism and a mob-like democracy. Many historians have argued that the debates between these two parties were what affected this era's developments most, but more recent scholarship has denounced this claim. Scholars such as Wilentz and Michael Zakim have instead contended that both political parties were inhabited by the nation's elite, and that to focus on only this echelon of Jacksonian America is too narrow an approach.³ For this analysis, I have taken this stance, arguing that frequent riots, as extra-legal behavior, demonstrated serious political stagnation in America, and that to focus solely on their political context would result in an incomplete account. The Age of Jackson was a time of grassroots political organization. The "common man's" era was at hand, and a "bottom-up" historical approach—focusing mostly on presses and eyewitness accounts over speeches, elections, or the diaries of politicians—seems most appropriate.

One final source of empowerment for antebellum Americans was religion, which has also attracted its due attention in academia. The Second Great Awakening, a period of great

³ Michael Zakim, "Creating A Democracy of Common Men," in *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson*, ed. Sean Adams (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 170-193. Also discusses the balance that Watson handles in *Liberty and Power*, but focuses on a heavily theoretical argument, rather than one based on the era's politics.

revivalism, has received ample attention in secondary literature, like Whitney R. Cross' work, *The Burned-Over District*. Cross covers material on the massive revivals that took place in upstate New York, and discusses the new role religion began to play in American society. Sermons on self-control and personal development replaced ideas like predestination. Folding material on religion into this project will demonstrate that in nearly every facet of nineteenth century America—from banks to ballot boxes, churches to theatres—non-elite citizens were demanding more recognition and control in the political sphere from the upper classes.

Moving chronologically, this project begins with the Second American Party System and the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828. Drawing heavily on both mainstream and radical newspapers from the *New York Herald* to Mike Walsh's *The Subterranean*, New York City becomes characterized not only by conflicts amongst political parties, but also dissatisfaction between citizens and their elected officials. I will argue that this era—with its political stagnation, ultraist religious movements, and tumultuous economics—pushed people toward violent behavior as a means to express dissatisfaction when legal outlets failed them. An engagement with each individual riot will follow. An analysis of the Astor Place Riot will discuss the role income inequality played in transforming a theater performance into a massive, bloody discourse on class. A single chapter dedicated to both the Great Police and Dead Rabbits' Riots will highlight how the notion of individualism reigned supreme in not only New York's streets but also the halls of its government, as a fight between the New York State Legislature and its largest metropolis sent the city into chaos over ethnic tensions and economic downturn in 1857. The final section is dedicated to a comparative analysis, tying these three riots together, expanding upon the broader, more theoretical implications of rioting in antebellum New York,

and discussing how this city's violence represented a sophisticated, street-level discourse on the relationship between the individual and the state.

An Ambivalent Era:

Political & Religious Empowerment Alongside Economic Disparity, 1828-1849

For some, the arrival of Andrew Jackson on the national political stage was a new beginning. For others, it seemed like the end of America as they knew it. Born in frontier Tennessee in 1767, Jackson represented the non-elite, whose election guaranteed a new beginning in American government. Those who lived during the Colonial Era and the Revolutionary War were dying out. A new generation, characterized by its voiced separatism from the monarchies and aristocracies of Europe, was taking over. This generation, the generation of Jackson and his “common man” mentality, viciously polarized the fledgling United States. Lower classes were tapped into for the first time, given suffrage, and encouraged to actively participate in politics. Simultaneously, however, income inequality spiked, craftsmen lost their jobs in favor of unskilled labor and mass production, and corruption ran rampant in many municipal governments. This discrepancy—the political empowerment of the “common man” and his simultaneous disenfranchisement—became the seminal political characteristic of the 1830s and 40s in New York City. Average Americans, energized by their newfound standing in society, now refused to accept their disempowerment, and, being dwarfed economically by the wealthier classes and silenced by corrupted politicians, resorted to violence as a means to express their grievances.

Politics

It is important to realize exactly how new and experimental the American Republic was, and how much this shaped the mentalities of those who lived during this time period. Harry L. Watson concisely summarizes what role government played in the growing nation: “Unlike the

European powers, the United States lacked such signs of national greatness as glittering cities, fabled ruins, or a polished literary culture. It boasted instead of popular self-government.”¹ It is not enough to simply say that nineteenth-century Americans were concerned with their politics. In regards to a national character or cultural production, there was little else to highlight. Thus, for some, an elected official did not embody only an agenda or platform. A way of life was at stake.

Andrew Jackson entered this environment on the national level in 1824, when he was defeated by John Quincy Adams in his first bid for the presidency. Jackson did, however, gain the majority in the popular vote—the earliest election in which this discrepancy between the Electoral College and the populous occurred—demonstrating his clout as a populist figure. He ran again in 1828, this time consolidating his supporters into a newfound Democratic Party, and defeated Adams easily. Many historians argue that this election, its campaign techniques, and its party-based politics began a new era in American government, known as the Second American Party System.²

The Second Party System was defined by the battle between Jackson’s Democrats and his opposition, the Whigs. The system truly came to fruition during the elections of the 1830s and early 1840s, and was characterized by voter enthusiasm and severely partisan politicking. Newspapers became openly affiliated with one party or the other. Groups that had hitherto gone unnoticed in politics—the landless, the lower class, immigrants—became active during the Jacksonian Era. Appealing to the populace became a strong asset for a candidate, as Jackson realized and exploited, continually stressing his time spent in the military. Practices like the caucus, defined by historian Thomas Coens as a “private, extra-legal meeting of legislatures to

¹ Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 42.

² The Second Party System was defined by the binary between Whigs and Democrats, while the First Party System involved Federalists and Democratic-Republicans.

make party decisions and nominations, were criticized as exclusionary and undemocratic."³ American politics were changing, and indirect representation was no longer appropriate.

It is important to note that although this era activated the “common man” politically, this development was extremely limited. First, and most obviously, despite being expanded, this democracy consisted of white men. Coens argues that Jackson’s era “was relatively uninterested in expanding the right to vote among segments of society that did not enjoy it,” meaning African Americans and women.⁴ While this may be well known, it should always be presented for consideration when discussing the Era of Jackson as a time of supposedly widespread democratization.

Nevertheless, things were looking up for many New Yorkers at the ballot box. Even though Coens argues that most states expanded their voting rights either before or after Jackson’s presidency, there is another issue to be considered: voter significance. In 1824, six of the twenty-four states in the Union did not consider a popular vote in the presidential election, opting instead for the decision to be made by their legislatures. In 1828, only two—South Carolina and Delaware—continued this practice. By 1832, when Jackson ran for his second term, only South Carolina remained in this camp.⁵ While this trend dates back to earlier elections, its continued progression after Jackson’s arrival is noteworthy. Not everyone was included, but those citizens who were began to wield greater power at the polls.

Voter turnout, while difficult to accurately survey, is also a point of contention. Richard P. McCormick’s work, “New Perspectives on Jacksonian Politics,” demonstrates that the

³ Thomas Coens, “The Early Jackson Party: A Force for Democratization?,” in *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson*, ed. Sean Adams (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 233.

⁴ *Ibid.* 233.

⁵ *Presidential Elections 1789-2008* (Washington: CQ Press, 2009).

strongest jump in turnout did not occur until the late-1830s and 1840s.⁶ While turnout did spike some from Jackson's arrival in 1824, historians do agree that the more significant, quintessential, and novel characteristic of Jackson's party system was its intense citizen participation, particularly in local politics. Despite excluding minorities, and only limitedly democratizing the electorate, Jacksonian era politicians innovated mobilization and organization, which brought popular participation to unprecedented levels.

Philip Hone, mayor of New York City in 1825 and 1826, stated in his diary that the "degree of spirit and zeal" during the election season of 1834 was "never before witnessed." On Election Day, Hone described "several riots yesterday in the Sixth Ward," which carried on into the next day, and involved the beating and trampling of several "respectable persons." Later in the week, Hone continues once more:

Last day of the election; dreadful riots between the Irish and the Americans have again disturbed the public peace [...] a band of Irishmen of the lowest class came out of Duane Street from the Sixth Ward poll, armed with clubs, and commenced a savage attack upon all about the shop and hall;. There was still much severe fighting and many persons were wounded and knocked down. The Irishmen then retired and the frigate was drawn away, but in a few minutes the mob returned with a strong reinforcement and the fight was renewed with the most unrelenting barbarity.⁷

Hone was not alone in his accounts. A prominent New York merchant named John Pintard noted in a letter to his daughter that the election of 1828 was "the most contested election that has ever occurred in this city, and the greatest number of votes taken." Pintard noticed this and

⁶ Richard P. McCormick, "New Perspectives on Jacksonian Politics," *The American Historical Review* 65, no. 2 (1960): 296.

⁷ Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone 1828-1851*, ed. Bayard Tuckerman (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1889), 1:99-100.

recorded it, despite defining himself an apolitical man, whose “days for being jostled at the polls are gone by.”⁸

The Commercial Advertiser, a mostly anti-Jackson, Whig favoring newspaper, also discussed the intensity of elections in an article from 1834. Criticizing Tammany Hall, a Democratic political machine that dominated New York City’s municipal politics for decades, the paper voices frustrations over the institution’s hypocritical calls for “moderation,” “peace,” and “tranquility” during election season:

At the time of the first election of Gen. Jackson, the same description of men in the Sixth Ward, displayed the same ferocious spirit at the poll. For hours, on the second day of the election, the ballot-boxes were wholly inaccessible to the opponents of Jackson. Their challengers were knocked down and dragged out—the ballot-boxes for a time were taken out of the possession of the Inspectors—carried round the room, and used for their own purposes among the crowd [...] So, also, of the election of 1832. Are the memories of these gentlemen really so short that they cannot extend back even two years?⁹

Even though the writings from *The Commercial Advertiser* were partisan to say the least, when corroborated with accounts like those of Hone and Pintard, historians can draw solid conclusions regarding the era: elections were rowdy, and, according to some accounts, municipal governments like New York’s had little control over this.

It is clear then, that the significance of these electoral contests, and the role the parties played within them, cannot be underestimated. While this new intensity and its sometimes violent manifestations came long before that of Astor Place, Jacksonian politics had obviously electrified the American people, and this became a problem in and of itself. Empowered

⁸ John Pintard, *Letters from John Pintard to His Daughter Eliza Noel Pintard Davidson, 1816-1833* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1941), 42.

⁹ *Commercial Advertiser*, Oct. 1, 1834.

Americans varied greatly in their agendas, and splintered into a vast amount of small parties, which often focused on a single issue or demographic. The Second Party System, however, with its vicious campaigning and bribing often stamped out these factions in favor of the two central parties: Whigs and Democrats. This political bottlenecking greatly contributed to the hostilities of the 1840s and 50s, after Americans—or, at least those who made it to the polls unharmed—found their grievances either ignored or absorbed by the mainstream political parties.

New York City offers a case study in this phenomenon in one of the era's most famous fringe groups, the Loco Focos. Splintering away from the Democrats, they were founded in 1835 as the Equal Rights Party, swearing to work against any further development of a National Bank, which they viewed as an elitist and oppressive institution. The name change occurred in October of 1835 during a committee meeting in which Tammany regulars, seeking to oust the fringe group from their policy making, cut the gaslights to halt any actions of their adversaries. The faction promptly struck matches bearing the brand name Loco Foco, and continued to reverse any resolutions made in favor of banker interests.¹⁰

Single-issue political factions like the Loco Focos were typical of the era. *Young America!* was a newspaper which harped on land as a natural right. In a manifesto published on November 22nd of 1845, it called for the prohibition of paper money, requesting that all debts become debts of honor.¹¹ Another paper, *The Man* demanded nearly communistic workers' rights, stating that "As republicans, we should legalize no inequalities, and recognize none but those of nature; and the laborer should be paid in proportion to his usefulness; or, in other words, every man should receive from the community as much of the labor of the community as he

¹⁰ Fitzwilliam Byrdsall, *The History of the Loco-Foco or Equal Rights Party: Its Movements, Conventions, and Proceedings With Short Characteristic Sketches of Its Prominent Men* (New York: Clement and Packard, 1842), 22-28.

¹¹ *Young America!*, Nov. 22, 1845.

might throw of useful labor into the common stock."¹² Anti-rent, anti-debt, anti-class—the only characteristic that captures all of the varying sentiments displayed in such presses as these is a highly varied and individualized frustration with the status quo.

Radical movements like these were inherently fragmentary and sporadic. As Joshua Greenberg argues in his study of labor activism in the Age of Jackson, “workers and intellectuals moved around and pushed for more equitable outcomes, seldom, if ever becoming lifetime members in one labor organization.”¹³ Smaller startup groups were oftentimes criticized by those larger, more successful parties as unauthentic or redundant. If they originated in a rural environment, urban movements, which were developing in hotbeds of commercial activity like New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, would discredit small town radicals as underdeveloped or too agrarian to have truly experienced the negative effects of capitalism. This factionalism was highly pervasive, and not limited to labor organizations.¹⁴ Coupled with the strength of the two mainstream parties, this fragmentation ultimately led to radical Jacksonian movements being largely ineffective.

The Loco Focos disappeared by the mid-1840s. The abolitionist Liberty Party existed in its truest form only for a decade. Each third party—the Free Soil Party, the Know-Nothing Party—would eventually dissipate and be absorbed by Whigs and Democrats. As historian Anthony Gronowicz argues, the groups were often “bribed into compliance,” as the “emerging capitalist order” began to manipulate all levels of American politics.¹⁵ In this way, the Second

¹² *The Man*, Feb. 18, 1834.

¹³ Joshua R. Greenberg, “Radicalism in the Age of Jackson,” in *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson* (see note 3), 413.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 413-417.

¹⁵ Anthony Gronowicz, *Race and Class Politics in New York Before the Civil War*, (Boston: North Eastern University Press, 1998), 84.

Party System managed to tread a very fine line by expanding suffrage and citizen participation, while simultaneously limiting the changes affected by that expansion.

Thus, although the Era of Jackson is oftentimes understood as a time of increased democratization, this belief is slightly inaccurate. Despite affording greater voting rights to the working class, politicians operating within the ubiquitous Second Party System continually stamped out or sidestepped interests outside their own. Historian Robert Cook discusses how this development in political participation would be problematic in a time period when many citizens “continued to believe, on the basis of their own revolutionary experience, that the people, as the country’s supreme sovereigns, had every right to act extra-legally in order to right the wrongs done to them.”¹⁶ New York City was no exception to this philosophy. Continually ineffectual politics and unstable employment would lead many in the 1840s and 50s to violently assert their political beliefs in the street, rather than through the legal channels offered by the government.

Religion

The political sphere was not the only place in which the common man was gaining new power. Churches also began catering to the new "common man" identity. The Second Great Awakening is defined by historians as a gradual increase in religious affiliation from 1780-1820, and a massive spike in the half a century thereafter. Many established Protestant practices and philosophies, from paying for pew positions close to the pulpit to predestination, were utterly rejected. The movement instead favored an egalitarian, humanistic approach to religion that encouraged positivism and empowered the individual—all of which fortified the ongoing

¹⁶ Robert J. Cook, "Fanfare for the Common Man? Political Participation in Jacksonian America," in *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson* (see note 3), 537.

political and economic trends of Jacksonian America. Simultaneously, however, the Awakening would inspire anti-Catholic movements throughout the era, which would lead to numerous violent riots against Irish immigrants and their churches in the following decades.

The blending of religion and politics is expounded upon at length in Whitney R. Cross' work, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850*. Cross focuses on the region of upstate New York, which was particularly struck by revivalism during these fifty years. He examines the movement's large meetings, arguing that "they became more democratic as they became more effective."¹⁷ Indeed, Charles Finney, a particularly famous preacher of the movement, realized exactly how to appeal to his audiences, stating personally that "the impassioned utterance of a common exhorter" was more effective than any lofty, poetic "exhibitions of rhetoric."¹⁸ Cross describes Finney's sermons as "simple," "short," and "cogent."¹⁹ In nineteenth-century America, the preacher was expected to build a case for religion that was appropriate for his audience. Contemporaries called these methodologies "new measures."

For Finney, a lawyer in his early professional life, "new measures" meant a change not only in articulation or rhetoric, but also a broader shift from the American revival culture as it was at the turn of the nineteenth century. As historian Eric Schlereth argues, religious meetings across the United States commonly witnessed "emotional and visceral conversion experiences," which could inspire convulsions, weeping, or even barking in attendees. By the 1820s and 30s, preachers like Finney had begun to visit the rapidly growing towns throughout New York,

¹⁷ Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), 173.

¹⁸ Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles Grandison Finney* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1876), 91.

¹⁹ Cross, 173.

highlighting the power an individual could wield over his own destiny, by developing a "more restrained revival experience devoid of physical and emotional outbursts."²⁰

This approach can be easily noted in Finney's sermon entitled "Sinners Bound to Change Their Own Hearts." The first in a collection he printed himself in 1836, this work conveys principles so absorbed by modern sensibilities, that one may not initially recognize their revolutionary character. Finney argues against a "constitutional change," stating that attempting to transform a sinner holistically is simply impossible, and instead favors the "implantation of a new principle," implying control and consent in a decision to move toward God. He unpacks the Calvinist sentiments that he was working against, stating that "It has been common for those who believe that sinners are *unable* to change their own heart [...] and instead of commanding them to make them a new heart, have told them to pray that God would change their heart." He continues on, tearing down these stale ideas, and erecting fresher ones that emphasize each individual's power, even in the face of God. "Sinner! Instead of waiting and praying for God to change your heart, you should at once summon up your powers, put forth the effort, and change the governing preference of your mind."²¹

Even though Christianity and its doctrine of selflessness, camaraderie, and sublimation (losing one's self into a greater power or institution) seemingly oppose the ruthless competition seen in nineteenth-century economic and political developments, Finney bridges these ideas brilliantly. During this time period, Western Europe, namely France, was experiencing a religious downturn due to political revolutions and rapid industrialization, but church attendance in the United States was soaring. Empowering the individual in relationship to God provided

²⁰ Eric Schlereth, "Religious Revivalism and Public Life," in *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson* (see note 3), 111.

²¹ Charles Grandison Finney, *Sermons on Important Subjects* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1836), 1-43.

American Protestantism a certain flexibility, which helped the institution navigate a time period characterized by widespread divisiveness in culture, politics, and economics.

The politicization of Protestantism in America soon exacerbated tensions already present in areas of intense religious diversity like New York. Religious rhetoric became a staple in discussions of class, immigration, and even public health. Protestants inspired by Finney's humanistic discourse criticized Irish Catholics as sheepish, hierarchical, and thereby susceptible to vice and slovenliness. This had particularly interesting effects during an outbreak of cholera in 1832, when the disease was idealized as a “scourge, a rod in the hand of God,” eliminating those in the poorest, and oftentimes mostly Irish areas of the city.²² The Irish were arriving in swaths by the 1840s, and some Americans—especially those out of work—began to take on a truly anti-papist tone, surely assisted by the spike in Protestant religious fervor discussed here.

The city's presses concretize just how fragile many Americans believed their experimental democracy was, even in regards to religion. Protestant publications such as the *Protestant* began to circulate explicitly anti-Catholic material on a weekly or daily basis. In 1834, Samuel F. B. Morse also weighed in, posting several letters in the *New York Observer* concerning a "Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States," in which he describes the Catholic Church as "political despotism, disguised under a religious name."²³ For some, the influx of Irish was an actual threat dispatched by European monarchists attempting to establish a Catholic foothold in America.

American Catholics did not leave their defamation in the public sphere unanswered. In 1835, when the New York Protestant Association met to discuss the role of popery in America, a

²²Gardiner Spring, *A Sermon Preached August 3, 1832, a Day Set Apart in the City of New-York for Public Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer* (New York: Jonathan Leavitt, 1832), 44.

²³ Samuel F. B. Morse, *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States, Originally Published in the New York Observer* (New York: American and Foreign Christian Union, 1855), 5.

crowd of Catholics arrived, forced their way into the meeting, and broke furniture and fixtures.²⁴ Nativists immediately condemned the riot in their presses to characterize the Irish as predisposed to unruliness, and the cycle continued. The rivalry between Catholics and Protestants had repeated manifestations throughout New York City for the remainder of the nineteenth century and beyond.

These developments in the religious climate of America are noteworthy for several reasons. For one, this religious schism would be the cause of several disturbances in the 1840s and 50s, particularly the Dead Rabbits Riot of 1857, which was fought largely between nativist gangs and their immigrant enemies. Secondly, and more importantly, these cases attest to the existence of a fervent divisiveness in antebellum New York. Obviously, the idea of a largely poor and starving mass of immigrants being pawns in an international conspiracy is simply ludicrous, but not in a way that discredits the reasonability of all those Protestants who may have believed in it. Larger forces were at work. Inspired by a revolution, religious revivals, and the expansion of suffrage, Americans in the Jacksonian era were more than prepared to push their individual viewpoints not only in the press, but the streets as well, if they felt threatened. This stood true for all points of contention in New York, whether they were religious, political, or economic.

Economics

The most striking aspects of change in Jacksonian America are those of the economy. The Market Revolution intensified a capitalist tradition that dated back to the developing

²⁴ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 544-545.

nation's colonial past, with troubling consequences in urban areas like New York.²⁵ Class divisions became more pronounced; much to the dismay of those citizens who swore by America's egalitarian image. Tensions rose as income inequality and factory production began to limit social mobility and inflict job loss. A boom-and-bust cycle began, and government regulations either assisted these collapses or struggled to keep up with the rapid expansion of the market. These developments, especially when considered alongside the aforementioned changes in religion and politics, portray America as a highly pressurized society. Newspapers regularly reported on instances of rioting over a variety of issues including the price of bread, racial tensions, or even the prison system. When provided context, it becomes clear that the rapid changes of the Jacksonian Era were causing prosperity for some, but marginalization and alienation for many others.

The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed widespread improvements in agriculture, infrastructure, and industry. Despite how polarized the Second Party System was, most everyone found a way to agree on America's internal improvements, probably because they were so profitable. The Erie Canal is the most famous example. Opened in 1825, the 364 mile trench that connected the Hudson River to Lake Erie was in some ways just as poetic as it was practical. The canal personified the idea that even nature was subject to the will of the people, just as the government, the church, and the economy had become. It slashed the cost of shipping in and out of the interior and caused a spike in New York City's port traffic. The entire nation celebrated its completion.²⁶

The clamor of urban life in the States has been romanticized by both contemporaries and historians, but unfortunately, this growth was not entirely positive. The lives of early stock

²⁵ Brian Phillips Murphy, "The Market Revolution," in *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson* (see note 3), 96.

²⁶ Burrows and Wallace, 420-431.

brokers contrast severely with those rag pickers and scavengers who perused the city's streets for valuable refuse. In his famous work *Chants Democratic*, Sean Wilentz argues that New York ranks second to none "as a disaster of laissez-faire urban development." The upper class began to further dominate politics, and as immigration spiked, overcrowding, disease, and death ran rampant. Wilentz provides the humbling statistic that "by the mid-1850s, city officials estimated that half of the children born in New York would not live to the age of six."²⁷ Disparate standards of living defined nineteenth-century New York, and would eventually be the main cause of several civil disturbances. Fleshing out all the troubles of nineteenth-century American capitalism is impossible, but it is essential to inspect at least some aspects briefly, in order to demonstrate how and why this time period of desperation produced such widespread unrest in not only the lower, but the increasingly threatened middle classes as well.

An interesting starting point is found in the Supreme Court case *Laidlaw v. Organ*, which is famous for establishing *caveat emptor* in the United States. Oftentimes translated simply as "let the buyer beware," *caveat emptor*, while commonly stipulated in most transactions today, was not necessarily preached during the early 1800s. On February 18th, 1815, Hector Organ bought 111,000 pounds of tobacco from Peter Laidlaw, the same morning that the War of 1812 ended. The English had placed an embargo on the United States during the conflict, which had dropped the price of tobacco significantly throughout the duration of the conflict. Laidlaw was unaware that the embargo had been lifted, and sold Organ the tobacco at a price that was now well below the market's average. The next day Laidlaw's company forcibly repossessed the tobacco, and Organ responded with a lawsuit. John Marshall, the then-chief Supreme Court judge decided in favor of Organ.²⁸

²⁷ Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 109.

²⁸ *Laidlaw v. Organ*, 15 U.S. 178 (1817).

While this court case may not be famous among non-legal circles, it importantly established the precedent that the government was no longer responsible for assisting parties like *Laidlaw* who were involved in unfavorable transactions. Extrapolating from *Laidlaw*, it is clear that capitalism—indeed, a seriously unsympathetic, individualistic breed of it—had gained steam in America. Thus, this court case becomes useful as a vignette that embodies the truly divisive, turbulent economic era that was on the horizon.

The class often cited as the most impacted by this turbulence is that of the artisan. Since the Renaissance, artisans enjoyed a monopoly over the production of a variety of goods. This tradition not only granted them the privilege of wealth, but also demanded respect. Young men yearning to become master craftsmen had to work their way through the ranks, and this hierarchical, Old World form of manufacturing was imported into the United States. However, the arrival of mass production, with its emphasis on unskilled labor, would change this system greatly. Overthrowing a custom dating back to the 1500s cleanly is difficult, especially one as exclusionary and privileged as artisan manufacturing. This shift would have severe consequences in politics, both legal and extra-legal.

The speed demanded of production by developments like the telegraph and the Erie Canal dismissed the slow, meticulous methods associated with artisans. Brain Phillips Murphy argues in his article on the Market Revolution that "Crucial to the economic viability of the apprenticeship system was a belief that an artisan had a right to earn a living through their work [...] Yet this proved to be a customary protection that offered little insulation from the forces unleashed by the Market Revolution."²⁹ Goods were being moved quicker and sold faster, and artisans were no longer able to keep up with demand. Increased factory production made perfect sense to the capitalist, the financier, and the rest of the mercantile bourgeoisie. But, as argued by

²⁹ Murphy, 100.

Murphy, this shift represented the loss of a not only a job, but a culture. It is imperative to realize that for these men, unemployment was a matter beyond finance; it symbolized an infringement upon their dignity.

This mentality can be noted in a pamphlet distributed in 1837 by a Philadelphian mechanic (as artisanal producers were broadly labeled), with a title invoking Thomas Paine: *Common Sense*. Describing himself as "pinched for the common necessities of life," and "unjustly held as an unthinking portion of mankind," the anonymous writer argues to his cohort that they "are not degraded subjects to an absolute monarch, or enslaved serfs to a despotic tyrant—we are free men, we are Americans..."³⁰ If the stakes are not argued strongly enough in these quotes, one final statement truly encapsulates the pride artisans associated with their work: "We should have starvation and pauperism glaring upon us, and to that, I, as an individual, will never submit. I will never eat the bread of idleness, or be fed as a pauper. Perish the idea. NO, sooner, will I fight, bleed, and, if necessary, die; but I will die a free-born American."³¹ The years of the 1840s and 50s would demonstrate that this mechanic and many other Americans were not using this rhetoric lightly. Many of the arrested demonstrators from the Astor Place Riot were employed, threatened craftsmen, and the ranks of gangs like the Bowery Boys were swollen with journeymen who opted out of the craft-based economy due to low wages, turning instead to the streets for a sense of financial autonomy.

Exacerbating the problems that artisans underwent were the economic panics that plagued the United States regularly in an era of light regulation. Antebellum America averaged a recession every 11 years.³² The most notable for this project is the Panic of 1837, brought on through a bubble created by land speculation as the nation expanded westward. As prices

³⁰ A Mechanic, *Common Sense* (Philadelphia: Charles Bell, 1837), 1.

³¹ *Ibid.* 30.

³² See also: Panics of 1792, 1796, 1819, 1825, 1857

dipped, banks ceased their lending, and suspended specie payments on paper money.

Unfortunate citizens with bank notes often rushed to these institutions, only to find that they had lost their entire savings.

The practice of suspending gold and silver payments was blatantly illegal and classist behavior. As argued by Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace in *Gotham*, metropolitan bankers succeeded in Albany at suspending the laws that banned them from withholding specie and continued conducting business as usual. In fact, now that they were able to issue notes without having to redeem them, banks did so in abundance. The authors state that "Merchants in debt were delighted: though legally obligated to pay their debts in specie, it was now impossible to do so, and this saved them from collapse."³³ Business owners began issuing their own I.O.U.s or resorted to bartering. Cartoons depict crowds rushing to banks for their specie, while others lay in the street, destitute and oftentimes drunk.³⁴ Creditors that survived the crisis were depicted as plump and comfortable. Estimates placed one-third of all New Yorkers out of work.³⁵ Class divisions and income inequality, while slippery ideas that remain difficult to pin down in the United States to this day, were at least becoming more prevalent during these hard times.

Conclusions: Fusing Politics, Religion, and Economics

Jacksonian New York—with its credit crunches, its radical political movements and their failures, its revolutionary religious ideas—is difficult to characterize neatly. However, one sentiment that was consistently prevalent was that of disillusionment. Despite being empowered at the polls and given greater control in the church and economy, the underlying narrative shows that many Americans were not offered tangible benefits from these developments. Unsteady

³³ Burrows and Wallace, 614.

³⁴ "The Times," illustration from the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661304/>.

³⁵ Burrows and Wallace, 617.

employment and an ineffective, two-party government left citizens feeling frustrated but not entirely defeated. Extra-legal action, like rioting, offered another channel of expression that would be utilized repeatedly throughout the remainder of the antebellum era to voice a variety of sentiments about politics, economics, and immigration.

Conditions on the streets were already beginning to fray well before the disorder of Astor Place in 1849. By the 1830s vigilante justice had gained its own clout in the form of gangs. Moving beyond simple private vendettas or matters of street honor, many developed political connections and tampered with elections.³⁶ With faltering wages, unemployment, and the collapse of artisanal production, the "strut and swagger" of street life had developed into a greater source of self-esteem than the workplace for many young men.³⁷

It did not take much to push nineteenth-century New Yorkers to violence. *The Commercial Advertiser* reported on a riot on the first of July in 1834 over a woman being accused of stealing a pair of shoes. During her arrest, 200 people crowded around to chant "State Prison monopoly! Down with the store!"³⁸ Less than a week later, a group of African-Americans attacked and vandalized a chapel that refused to allow an abolitionist group to rent the space for a meeting. The tenth of July witnessed three abolition riots.³⁹ In 1837, the price of flour spiked and inspired a crowd to assault a store, smashing furniture and hurling barrels of flour out of windows into the street.⁴⁰ The variety of topics and causes for this violent behavior demonstrates not that these groups were poorly organized or simply bloodthirsty, but rather that the issues at hand were part of larger trends, and that the individualistic culture sparked by Andrew Jackson's

³⁶ Wilentz, 262.

³⁷ Elliot J. Gorn, "'Good-Bye Boys, I Die a True American': Homicide Nativism and Working-Class Culture in Antebellum New York City," *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 2 (1987): 407.

³⁸ *Commercial Advertiser*, July 1, 1834.

³⁹ *Commercial Advertiser*, July 8-10, 1834.

⁴⁰ Burrows and Wallace, 611.

election had inspired citizens to engage in politics at several levels. In the 1840s and 50s, rioting only worsened, as Americans attempted to assert their individual power over the state's, and correct what they believed to be seriously egregious infringements on their liberty and economic autonomy.

The Astor Place Riot, 1849:

Anti-Aristocratism Voiced with a Cobblestone

The city and its presses were well aware of the rising tensions in the days before New York's Astor Place Riot of 1849. A feud between American actor Edwin Forrest and his British rival William Charles Macready had already achieved as much publicity as nineteenth century technology allowed. Macready was scheduled to perform *Macbeth*, and on May 10th a crowd of 10,000 besieged the Astor Place Opera House. The state militia arrived, attempting to maintain order through warning shots and vocal demands. After being jostled and heckled, they eventually aligned themselves, aimed into the crowd at close range, and fired several times. At least 25 died, and well over 100 were injured in the fracas.

Although often oversimplified by popular histories and legend, the events that night were in fact a sophisticated political discourse articulated at the street level. While their republican form of government was more than a half-century old, Americans had yet to refine the interplay between liberty, law, and money. Citizens seemed ready to politicize most anything, but had a particular distaste for the productions of their previous colonial power, England. Combing through newspapers, eyewitness accounts, and numerous pamphlets and publications distributed in the months that followed reveals that the riot of Astor Place embodied a strange interaction between the masses and authority; one steeped in issues of vigilantism, identity, and class.

Origins: Forrest, Macready, and the Edinburgh Hiss

The 23-year-long relationship of Forrest and Macready is often cited as the main cause of the riot, and fortunately for historians, the celebrity culture revolving around them is well recorded. While at times lighthearted, a more serious analysis of the interaction between these

two actors offers insight into exactly how and why cultural productions like theatre were often highly politicized, particularly in the early United States, which was in the process of establishing its own international artistic merit on the global stage.

The Astor Place Opera House represented the new nation's desire for international recognition, and catered mostly to the "uppertens," the richest ten thousand citizens of New York. A dress code was enforced, intent on preventing the admission of any ill-mannered, lower-class New Yorkers. However, just a short walk away was the less elite Bowery Theatre, a hall emblematic of "lowbrow" entertainment, whose performances reduced the importance of acknowledgement from the Old World, and instead sought to establish a more egalitarian form of theatre. In the 1800s, performing on a raised stage did not entitle an actor to many privileges, and this was becoming particularly true in the United States. Heckling was a tradition that dated back to Shakespeare, and in a nation founded on the substitution of hierarchy with meritocracy, the relationship between spectator and entertainer became even more volatile. It was in this decidedly political form of theatre that the rivalry between Forrest and Macready would become the origin of the worst riot in the history of antebellum America.

The American Edwin Forrest became known by the 1820s for his distinctively nativist adaptations of European characters, focusing on developing an image of masculinity, individual strength, and physicality, even if sometimes this process involved a diversion from the original text.¹ Photographs of Forrest reflect this persona aptly. His portraits depict him as stern, with broad features and a mess of shaggy hair. These details, while perhaps seemingly frivolous to the modern viewer, were absolutely paramount in the nineteenth century, a time in which a man's stage presence spoke volumes not only about his abilities as an actor, but also his political allegiance.

¹ Richard Moody, *The Astor Place Riot* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), 27-41.

In contrast, William Macready was well-received in the more exclusive halls of the United States. As early as 1826 it was clear that while theatre offered an opportunity for international exchange, his prejudice against American culture could never be left entirely at home. In Philadelphia, the Englishman embarrassed a prop maker, stating that the arrows crafted for his performance of *William Tell* were of an "inferior American quality." He apologized following an outpouring of denunciations from personal letters and press reviews.²

When Macready toured the United States from September of 1843 to October of 1844, his reception was lukewarm, and the local presses continually compared his performances to Forrest's. Macready's diary characterizes him as exceedingly frustrated with his being considered alongside such an actor as Forrest: "He is not an artist. Let him be an American actor—and a great American actor—but keep on this side of the Atlantic, and now one will gainsay his comparative excellence."³ To Macready, it was obvious that his lack of success was due to the unrefined tastes of American audiences, which were ill-trained and indiscriminating.

Unlike Macready, Forrest's second European tour of 1845 was garnering improved reviews from newspapers, but not the audience. Historian Richard Moody describes this discrepancy, stating that the presses "spoke of 'a conception mellowed by experience,' 'masterly design,' a performance 'more chaste than heretofore.'" There were a few derogatory press references to 'his spasms of rage' and to his lack of study'; but these were less upsetting to Forrest than the concerted catcalls and hisses that seemed to arise with organized regularity from various sections of the house."⁴ It is difficult to say whether or not such heckling was orchestrated by Macready himself, who was perhaps still bitter about the tepidity of his reception in America, but

² Ibid. 30.

³ William Charles Macready, *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1912), 230-231.

⁴ Moody, 46-47.

it is probable that Forrest had not yet dismissed this notion. Later in his tour, Forrest was turned down by an English company in Paris run by two close friends of Macready. But in 1848, when it was clear that Macready and Forrest were headed into a full blown rivalry, the Englishman roundly denied interfering with Forrest's tour of Europe.

Tensions spilled into conflict on March 2nd, 1846 when Forrest personally hissed Macready during his performance of *Hamlet* in Edinburgh, Scotland. Macready was livid, dramatically describing the action as unparalleled "in all of theatrical history," and calling Forrest "a low-minded ruffian" in his diary.⁵ The feud began to draw attention, and Forrest wrote a letter of defense to the *London Times*, that truly embodied the irreconcilable philosophical differences between Macready and himself. Calm in his tone, the American simply describes two modes of discourse he engaged in as an audience member: "approbation and disapprobation." For Forrest, hissing and booing was "a salutary and wholesome corrective of the abuses of the stage." He continues in his letter, stating that "The truth is, Mr. Macready thought fit to introduce a fancy dance into his performance of 'Hamlet,' which I thought, and still think, a desecration of the scene."⁶ Like those spectators of the Bowery Theatre—described by the poet Walt Whitman as "full-blooded" and driven by pure "electric force and muscle"—Forrest had little interest in offering Macready's performance deference or restraint.⁷ As an American (indeed, a theatrically experienced one), he believed he was entitled to his opinion, but the manner and timing of its delivery were apparently not a primary concern.

⁵ Macready, 327.

⁶ H.M. Ranney, *Account of the Terrific and Fatal Riot at the New-York Astor Place Opera House* (New York: H.M. Ranney, 1849), 9.

⁷ Walt Whitman, *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman: The Complete Prose Works*, ed. Richard Maurice Bucke (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), 190.

"The Fatal Night": The Violent Rejection of Macready and the "Codfish Aristocracy"

Macready and Forrest were both scheduled to perform *Macbeth* in May of 1849 at the Astor Place and Broadway theatres, respectively. The Englishman's engagement on May 7th soon devolved into what the former mayor of New York City Philip Hone described as a "riot"—although it was much smaller than what was to come three days later—when pro-Forrest attendees showered Macready with "missiles, rotten eggs, and other unsavory objects, with shouts and yells of the most abusive epithets." Most everyone was well aware that much of Europe was in actual revolt throughout 1848, and Hone's tone of disgust and fear bears some similarity to the contemporary aristocrats of the Old World: "...the respectable part of our citizens will never consent to be put down by a mob raised to serve the purpose of such a fellow as Forrest." Indignant, forty-seven "uppertens" encouraged Macready to finish his short series of engagements at Astor Place. This brazen move, however, would only further agitate those "kindred rowdies" Hone wished to suppress.⁸

The *New York Herald* published a letter on May 9th, 1849, under the title "Macready and Forrest," alongside an article on the small riot of the 7th measuring over a column and a half, clearly implying that this rivalry was becoming a source of great attention in the city. The letter stated that social elites—including Washington Irving and Herman Melville—implored Macready to reconsider his decision to cancel his remaining shows, and assured the actor "that the good sense and respect for order, prevailing in this community, will sustain you on the subsequent nights of your performances."⁹ Historian Sam Haynes writes that "In rallying around the beleaguered British actor, the city's cultural elite added a new element to the tense situation,

⁸ Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone 1828-1851*, ed. Bayard Tuckerman (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1889), 2:360.

⁹ *New York Herald*, May 9, 1849.

stirring pent-up resentment among laboring classes toward Gotham's 'kid glove aristocracy.'"¹⁰ As demonstrated by the previous chapter, "pent-up resentment" can hardly summarize the state of affairs in New York City. Aside from the minor riots that were occurring in the city with striking regularity, employment remained inconsistent, and working-class consciousness—while unable to gain much traction in the political sphere—was, at the very least, becoming palpable.¹¹

This fact was demonstrated on the night of the 9th when, in light of the petition released by the representatives of the city's wealthy, individuals posted an inflammatory notice throughout various working-class districts. Focusing on a rumor that the crew of a British vessel in port was attempting to "make a show of support" for Macready, it read:

WORKINGMEN, SHALL AMERICANS OR ENGLISH RULE IN THIS CITY?

The crew of the British steamer have threatened all Americans who shall dare to express their opinions this night, at the ENGLISH ARISTOCRATIC OPERA HOUSE! We advocate no violence, but a free expression of opinion to all public men!

WORKINGMEN! FREEMEN! Stand By Your LAWFUL RIGHTS!¹²

The rivalry between Macready and Forrest had evolved into a full blown class conflict. The Astor Place Opera House, with its dress code and upholstered seats, was no longer simply a venue of high culture, but an exclusionary, aristocratic, and therefore English institution. For the writers and believers of the handbill, operating within a framework of English cultural imperialism and performing European high art for international approval was sickening enough, but English actors and sailors conspiring with American elites represented a cause for massive

¹⁰ Sam Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 102.

¹¹ Brian Luskey, "The Ambiguities of Class in Antebellum America," in *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson*, ed. Sean Adams (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 200. Other riots include: anti-abolitionist, 1833; election riots, 1834; flour riots, 1837.

¹² *New York Herald*, May 10, 1849.

demonstration. Macready had become a common enemy for the poor man, the Irishman, and the nativist alike.

Fifteen minutes before curtain time Astor Place was "packed almost solid" with demonstrators and onlookers.¹³ A detachment of police was stationed inside the theatre, prepared to maintain order if Macready was assailed a second time. Sure enough, by the third scene all action onstage was drowned out by a group of Forrest supporting attendees. No arrests were made immediately, as authorities attempted to remain tactful, knowing that heavy handedness would most likely result in widespread disapproval. Meanwhile, the crowd outside the theatre—described by presses, coroner's inquests, and secondary sources as consisting of mostly young men—began an assault on the building. Although, according to the *Post*, most of the paving stones in the immediate area had been carted away earlier by order of the Mayor, members of the crowd apparently found a new source of bricks. In his testimony the Clerk of the Police Sidney H. Stewart stated that "the majority of those throwing stones were boys from the ages of 12 to 18 years," amounting to a very small percentage of the total crowd gathered. He continued, describing the crowd as "determined to accomplish some particular act [...] although they only threw stones."¹⁴ Though young, the purposeful nature of the crowd noted by Stewart should be given weighty consideration. Perhaps, as the *Post* argued, being "that age when the temperament is most excitable," assisted in the first stones being cast, but the rioters apparently shifted away from simple mischief, considering that of the forty-seven total arrests made, most were employed craftsmen.¹⁵

In a time before policemen carried guns—in fact, the Astor Place Riot would become a

¹³ Moody, 137.

¹⁴ Ranney, 21.

¹⁵ *New York Post* May 11, 1849; Leo Hershkowitz, "An Anatomy of a Riot: Astor Place Opera House, 1849," *New York History* 87 (2006), 287.

strong example for those wishing to arm them later on—the state militia was the secondary tier of law enforcement, akin to today's National Guard. On the afternoon of the 10th, Major-General Charles W. Sandford mustered 200 men and awaited further instructions, which arrived between eight and nine o'clock. As he and his troops came closer to the theatre, it became clear that the rioters found a new target. The barrage of stones on the men was described as "incessant." Sandford attempted to maintain order in his ranks, despite many of his men being dangerously injured. Claiming that he warned the crowd several times to disperse beforehand, he ordered his troops to fire above the rioters' heads. "A shout then came from the mob, 'They have only blank cartridges, give it to them again,' and another volley of stones came instantly."¹⁶ By attempting to disperse the crowd, the militia appeared to be defending Macready and the "aristocratic" Opera House. The crowd had shifted from "young boys" throwing rocks at a building, to something more violent and purposeful.

This shift in attack from the building to the public authorities is well documented, and critical to a more theoretical interpretation of the rioters' actions. Many sources discuss other civilians angrily intervening in arrests, deeming the actions of the police unlawful, or stealing the badges of policemen as trophies of victory. Quotes from the crowd cited widely include "Burn the damned den of the aristocracy," or "You can't go in there without kid gloves on. I paid for a ticket, and they would not let me in, because I hadn't kid gloves and a white vest, damn 'em!" Ned Buntline, a prominent author and diehard patriot, was said to have fancied himself a sort of leader of the riot—he even brought a sword to boost this image—and paraded in front of the crowd shouting, "Workingmen, shall Americans or English rule? Shall the sons whose fathers drove the baseborn miscreants from the shores give up their Liberty?" Some groups arrived in firemen's uniforms, equipped with ladders to better invade and destroy the building. Another

¹⁶ Ranney, 23.

man bared his chest shouting "Fire into this. Take the life out of a free-born American for a bloody British actor. Do it, Ay, You darsn't!"¹⁷ Considering these quotes alongside one another, it is clear that the events of May 10th could not have represented simply the savagery of a few young boys. Moreover, although it is the most tangible, most easily summarized cause, it is simply too reductive to attribute the entire riot to a feud between two actors. Instead, it seems that at least for those few quoted here, some greater forces were at work. In the newly founded republic, a man's position in society was not to be determined by vests and gloves. Thus, on May 10th, Astor Place witnessed a protest against exclusion, against social immobility, against the upper classes, and against any form of authority that represented such ideas by working against the demonstrators.

To the disbelief of many who had dared the citizen soldiers to fire, the militia did exactly that, effectively ending the riot, but not without awful consequences. The diary of a prominent New York merchant, Edward Tailer, offers historians an intimate entry describing the carnage he witnessed the following day:

"I went to the fifteenth ward station house, and there the scene was truly tragical. On a bench at the end of the room lay the dead body of a tall, genteel looking man [...] he had been shot through the brain. Next to him was a man of middle stature, with the whole of the cap of his skull blown off, then came a man, who had a throat wound. Besides those victims on the floor, lay the body of a young man, and then one with dark whiskers, shot in the right breast, a thin faced man, apparently a mechanic, shot in the neck; a man of somewhat similar appearance, shot in the abdomen, and an elderly man, shot in the right cheek; who had been conveyed from the street to the theatre, and thence to the station house. Making 8

¹⁷ Moody, 155.

bodies in all. There was also another body, of a common looking man, and never in my life do I remember of having seen such an awful and tragical scene, and I pray never to behold another. And perhaps I never shall, as such a tragical transaction as this has never occurred in New York before.”¹⁸

Aftermath: Disparate Interpretations

Like Tailer, the city and its presses were reeling with shock. Nothing like this had ever happened in the United States. Classism and partisanship reared their ugly heads in the following weeks. Full-fledged accounts of the riot were published, complete with illustrations. Some presses venerated the actions of the military, while others deemed the loss of life needless. Demonstrations and speeches were held throughout the city, and the militia remained present for several days. Inspecting this polarity of the city concerning the riot reveals the tensions of Astor Place as perhaps more deep-seated than was first thought.

The extant diaries—those of Philip Hone, George Templeton Strong, and Edwin Tailer—offer a convenient place to start this discussion. The keeping of a diary, as well as its subsequent survival and reprinting, is a privilege afforded most frequently to the upper class. These entries offer an insightful look into how affluent echelons of New York City reacted to the events. Hone's entry on the 11th, in which he walks "to the field of battle in Astor Place," aptly summarizes the schism that developed in the city within just a day: "Groups of people were standing around, some justifying the interference of the military, but a large proportion were savage as tigers with the smell of blood."¹⁹ One can deduce which of the two camps Hone

¹⁸ Edward Neufville Tailer Diaries, 1849-1917. New-York Historical Society, Patricia D. Klingenstein Library.

¹⁹ Hone, 362.

belongs to from the muted tone of his entry. As a member of the elite, he clearly paints those working against the military as barbaric by likening them to animals.

One can find a similar mentality in the diary of George Templeton Strong, who was clearly concerned about the safety of the "uppertens" in the days following the riot. He stated on May 11th that the "blackguards swear they'll have vengeance," and finished the entry by recording that he was on his way to clean his pistols. That night he described the remaining troops around Astor Place with reassurance and excitement, writing that "Everything looked much in earnest there [...] ready to sweep the streets with grape [a particular type of cannon fire designed specifically to tear through crowds at close range] at a moment's notice." His tone then shifts to mockery of the crowds still present, stating that "Some of the Calvary were badly hit with paving stones, but as soon as the Unwashed were informed that unless they forthwith took themselves off they'd be treated with a little artillery practice, they scampered."²⁰ This rhetoric is clearly opposed to the demonstrators, and in favor of the use of necessary force in protecting uppertens and preventing further disturbances.

On the opposite end of the spectrum were men like Mike Walsh, an Irish immigrant, printer, orator, and member of the New York State Assembly. He published a short-lived paper in the 1840s entitled *The Subterranean*, which touted a manifesto arguing for the prevention of wealth concentration, equality across classes, and the security of "a comfortable existence to the poorest individuals." The paper described the "uppertens" as "unprincipled demagogues [...] wrapped up in their own aggrandizement."²¹ On the 11th Walsh organized a meeting in a park near the Opera House, during which, in the words of the *Tribune*, he "succeeded in a speech in which he almost exhausted the vocabulary in his denunciations of what he termed the murder of

²⁰ George Templeton Strong, *Diary of George Templeton Strong*, ed. Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 1:351-353.

²¹ Mike Walsh. *The Subterranean*, July 15, 1843.

his 'innocent follow citizens' at the Italian Opera House." Italy, rather than England, symbolized not only European high culture through its famous opera productions, but also popery, hierarchism, and social immobility. The reporter of the *Tribune* continues, stating that Walsh compared the actions of the military to "the most despotic acts of the Czar of Russia," who offered *armed* demonstrators three warning shots, as opposed to the militia's one, before shooting into a crowd. Walsh argued for a "reorganization of the masses," in opposition to "aristocratic politicians" and stated that the "unnecessary slaughter [...] would react on the authorities in a most fearful manner sooner or later."²² Radical figures like Walsh saw these events as bound by neither time nor geography. Comparing the riot to events in Russia and the opera house to institutions of Italy, Walsh understood the events of May 10th as equal to insurrections against tyrannical states and oppressive, stagnant social practices. Interestingly, no grand motive appears in the accounts by Hone or Strong. The "Unwashed," as Strong describes them, are offered little analysis by the merchant. Nowhere in Hone's diary are the "tigers," "savage with the smell of blood," represented as citizens potentially voicing sentiments beyond that of simple barbarity.

This dichotomy also existed in the press. The *Post* utterly condemned the riot, describing it as "an insurrection against personal liberty, against personal safety [...] altogether without provocation." Speaking entirely in absolutes, they continue, arguing that "there was no wrong, no injury, no insult of which the rioters had to complain, no infringement of any of their rights, real or imaginary, no encroachment even upon their amusements," and finally summarizing the riot as "an act of wanton and unmingled brutality."²³ The *Herald* also positioned itself staunchly against the rioters, arguing that New York, "as the great metropolis of the Union," must be "an

²² *New York Tribune*, May 12, 1849.

²³ *New York Post*, May 11, 1849.

exemplar to the other great populous communities," by crushing "mobocracy" into "utter and helpless impotency."²⁴ Few passages from articles like these took time to ask why the rioters had demonstrated in the first place, and instead deployed platitudes about order and lawful behavior.

In the days following the riot the *Tribune* took a moment to criticize its competitors, as nineteenth-century presses were wont to do, stating that "in treating this deplorable event it appears to me [it was not uncommon for contemporary newspaper writers to acknowledge themselves, even if the article was not an editorial] that the press has been sadly deficient in not striking at the root of the evil." Arguing that the petition demanding Macready's return was this "root," the writer describes its signers as self-proclaimed "men of intelligence, education, and respectability," who acted wrongly by striving to "exasperate and inflame the worst passions [...] and bring them [the rioters] to the scene of action in increased numbers."²⁵ In a rare moment of attempted contextualization, this writer criticized the upper class for its lack of foresight, and wondered if Macready's departure would have ended the demonstrations without death.

Apart from the immediate interpretations from newspapers, an account of the riot published in the form of a thirty-two page pamphlet was distributed later in the year by H.M. Ranney. It comes complete with verbatim testimony from many police officers and eyewitnesses, and also offers some pro-Forrest invective for context. When commenting on the significance of the petition in support of Macready, Ranney states that "The contest took on a new character [...] The question became not only a national, but a social one. It was the rich against the poor—the aristocracy against the people; and this hatred of wealth and privilege is increasing over the world, and ready to burst out whenever there is the slightest occasion. The rich and well-bred are too apt to despise the poor and ignorant, and they must not think it strange

²⁴ *New York Herald*, May 15, 1849.

²⁵ *New York Tribune*, May 12, 1849.

if they are hated in return."²⁶ Following a lengthy account of the riot itself, Ranney finished his text with a section entitled "Where Lies the Blame?," which takes on a certain sociological tone. Not blaming any particular party, the writer instead argues for collective responsibility: "Society, by an unjust distribution of the avails of industry, enables a few men to become rich, and consigns a great mass to hopeless poverty, with all its deprivations and degradations. This poverty produces ignorance, the sense of injustice, groveling tastes, and a loss of all high ambition [...] The only wonder is that more crimes are not committed against both property and life."²⁷ While perhaps slightly condescending, Ranney is comparatively sympathetic when juxtaposed with the previous quotes from the *Post*, *Hone*, or *Strong*.

Ranney continues, stating that "Thousands of poor people know that they are robbed and plundered every day of their lives—they feel bitterly the hardships and injustice of their lot; but how calmly do they wait God's justice to set them right! How few of them comparatively attempt to right their own wrongs, and to seize upon a portion of what society withholds from them!" The account's length indicates that Ranney was assisted by the passage of time in his analysis, but his conclusions should not be discredited by this fact. The idea that the mob was "but a symptom of our social condition," while difficult to apply in the midst of terrifying disorder, is nonetheless compelling, and was not often found in the publications responding to the events of May 10th.²⁸

A similar pamphlet was released by "An American Citizen" in 1849 as a rejoinder to a compilation of letters arguing against the treatment of Macready by Americans. The writer is vehemently opposed to the actions of the state and the military, describing the events as a "great crime," and also denouncing the treatment of the rioters by the press: "The *Courier*, the

²⁶ Ranney, 19.

²⁷ Ibid. 30.

²⁸ Ibid. 30-32.

Commercial, the *Mirror*, the *Express*, the *Tribune*, and that miserable apology for a newspaper, the *Day Book*, fairly dared any one to attend at the Opera House on the night of the 10th to hiss Mr. Macready. Those who hissed him on the night of the 7th were denominated "rowdies," "ruffians," "blackguards," "rabble," "lower classes," "the worst kind of Loco Focos." He continues, defacing the Mayor as a disgrace to the city, whose "memory will be followed by the execrations of all who hate tyrants, aristocrats, and cowards." Also working like Ranney to contextualize the night's events, the "American Citizen" argues that the causes of the riot "lie deeper" and are to be "found in our social system: in the presumption and arrogance of a class; in the servile and disgusting imitation by the wealthy few of the habits and customs of European, and particularly British aristocrats." This writer embodied the frustrations of those who felt disenfranchised by the distribution of wealth, condemning the slightest hint of any "odious distinctions which the rich have always been prone to establish between themselves and the poor [...] until insuperable social barriers have been erected..."²⁹ More extreme than both Ranney and the writers of the *Tribune*, this particular American viewed the relationship between the "uppertens" and the riot to be a direct one, worthy of over 100 pages of invective.

Conclusions

Noting the disparate conclusions drawn in the press, it seems that the Astor Place Riot can be read as one point of contention in an ongoing, multifaceted debate. Domestically, as mentioned by Ranney and implied through the fear of individuals like Hone and Strong, the riot represented class conflict. Internationally, the disturbance embodied the desire for recognition of American theatre, and the cultural rejection of England to match the political ousting of the

²⁹ An American Citizen, *A Rejoinder to the Replies from England, Etc.* (New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1849), 115-117.

Crown. Speaking theoretically, the riot can be argued as a stage in the oftentimes violent formation of a distinctly American identity. Today, dress codes in theatres are no longer the subjects of riots. But in early America, the experimental nature of republicanism pervaded all levels of society. In a way, American citizens were still testing the boundaries of their rights, and before the arming of the police force, these tests often took a violent form. In a state where all voices supposedly counted equally, any form of suppression—even if it was lawfully executed—could potentially be opposed. In such an environment, almost all forms of dissent can be bolstered by a sociopolitical cause. A concrete example in regards to Astor Place can be found in John McCloskey, who testified in the inquests that followed the riot, and deemed himself a captain of the Forrest Guards. These men were a faction that, as historian Leo Hershkowitz argues, was "one of many little-known paramilitary organizations, probably using patriotism to mask varying political or social agendas. They were part of many semi-secret, extra-legal groups like the Order of Patriotic Americans, or the Rynders' Guards, or Empire Guards."³⁰ The fact that these groups could be described as "many," and can be categorized under the idea of "patriotism," speaks volumes about the culture of vigilantism in the early United States. If the common man was to take on a role in society equal to that of an elite, if he was to have control over his business, his afterlife, and his political affiliations, he would surely desire to implement such control directly, especially if he felt some force was infringing upon his rights. This mentality was witnessed in full force on May 10th at Astor Place.

As mentioned, Hershkowitz also articulates that of the forty-seven arrested, all were employed, most being craftsmen. This fact debunks assertions like those of Ranney that "poor" people were subject to vices which led them to violence, contending instead that the mob consisted mostly of "members of the ubiquitous and more economically threatened middle

³⁰ Hershkowitz, 291.

class."³¹ Combining this "threat"—namely the replacement of craftsmen with unskilled labor—and the individualistic, vigilante culture associated with those organizations like the Forrest Guards, one finds the perfect recipe for violent, extra-legal behavior like that of the Astor Place Riot. While a crowd of 10,000 can hardly voice an opinion coherently or lawfully, it can be argued that after some scrutiny the disturbance seems timely, and its causes become systemic in nature.

³¹ Ibid. 288.

The Great Police and Dead Rabbits' Riots:

Individualism and Gang Culture, 1857

For many nations around the world, the 1850s were a time of top-down urban overhaul. Politicians in Europe, namely France, created standardized architecture and city planning, keen on preventing a repeat of the unrest witnessed in 1848. But, as articulated by historians Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace, New Yorkers pursued no such change: "There would be no grand design, for there was no grand designer, no political authority able or willing to unilaterally reorganize the flow of people and goods..."¹ While Paris was undergoing a political and social stabilization, New York remained volatile and fragmentary. Conflicts between classes, ethnicities, faiths, and even levels of government were becoming increasingly routine.

In 1857, in the midst of a slumping economy, a schism developed within New York's police force, which culminated in the Great Police Riot, a brutal conflict in which officers bludgeoned each other outside City Hall, leaving over 50 injured. Gang members took advantage of the lapse in law enforcement. For weeks there was looting of stores and trains as well as open battling between immigrants and their nativist enemies. The most intense manifestation of this conflict, entitled the "Dead Rabbits' Riot," took place on July 4th, and was the bloodiest civil disturbance since the Astor Place Riot of 1849. Juxtaposing the interpretation of the gang riots with the police schism suggests that these groups, New York's "rowdies" and "b'hoys," as well as the feckless, divided law enforcement that attempted to work against them, both personified an individualistic Jacksonian mentality. Rather than act within conventional channels, which they deemed suppressive or ineffective, participants on both sides of the law utilized extra-legal means to try to compensate for disillusioning circumstances.

¹ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 822.

The Gangs of New York

Gangs were ubiquitous in antebellum New York City, making a brief overview of their activities necessary before an in-depth analysis of the riots of 1857. Their membership of mostly young, unemployed journeymen was often hired to support politicians, fire departments, or businesses, usually through strong-arming and intimidation. Gang life offered a number of opportunities beyond simple money making. For example, gangs could assist in the rigging of an election in exchange for policies that targeted rival groups once their candidate took office. Strangely, this sometimes became a more effective means to gain a desired outcome than voting, since politicians tampering with ballots had become commonplace. Speaking theoretically, gang members could also regain the masculine autonomy that they once enjoyed through craft-based work.² Simply put, gang life was empowering for those who had become economically or politically marginalized.

One particular broadside, composed from prison sometime in the 1860s, recounts the benefits of the transition from apprentice to "Cross-boy" in full:

"When I was an apprentice I lived up on the square,
 I had no pocket money, and I thought it wasn't fair,
 I resolved to leave my master, 'twas much against his will,
 I resolved to be a Cross-boy, let luck be what it will [...]
 A sporting pair of kicks, and a targ and kady too,
 A jerkin pair of quills, all so polished and so new,
 A sporting gold thimble and cambrie so fine,

² Elliot J. Gorn, "'Good-Bye Boys, I Die a True American': Homicide Nativism and Working-Class Culture in Antebellum New York City," *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 2 (1987): 407.

On the Broadway and Battery I'm bound for to shine.

This individual makes clear exactly how much one stood to gain from opting out of traditional work. Beyond his new shoes, pride and a sense of camaraderie are also palpable in the closing lines. He commends the "cracksman" and the "knocksman" who enjoy life's "sweetest joys," and counts himself as "one of the B'hoys."³

As an empowered collective, gangs used their stature to express a variety of sentiments, through not only muscle, but also dress. Standardized clothing, while presumably handy for identification during turf wars, was also utilized to undermine class divisions and inspire fear. The True Blue Americans, an Irish gang from the Bowery, wore stovepipe hats and long coats, a traditionally upper-class form of dress worn by merchants and clerks. The Bowery Boys, a nativist gang, were also known to dress formally while on patrol.⁴ It is not difficult to imagine the terror this undercutting of long-held sartorial distinctions would have inspired in the upper classes.

At the core of every gang was a common ethnicity or platform, which made them excellent candidates for political work. The Bowery Boys were nativists and staunchly anti-Catholic. The Dead Rabbits, formerly members of the Roach Guards, consisted of Irishmen. Mike Walsh's gang, the Spartan Band, was more politically oriented, specifically anti-Whig, and attacked that political party's headquarters in 1840. While volumes could be dedicated to describing these virtually numberless factions and their splinter groups, it is most important to note how gangs, as radical, intimidating groups of unemployed men, began to shape local politics throughout the 1840s and 50s. Inspired by either economic hardship or ethnic friction—

³ *Cross Boy: Composed in Sing Sing Prison, by one of the B'hoys*, broadside between 1858 and 1869 (Patricia D. Klingenstein Library, New-York Historical Society).

⁴ Burrows and Wallace, 633-634.

problems that the two party system was not handling well—gangs acted as an extra-legal force for a variety of political platforms throughout the Jacksonian era.

The Context: Nativism as a Radicalizing Force, Fernando Wood and Albany

In 1844, James Harper, representing the American Republicans—an extremely nativist, anti-Catholic party, that was a part of the national Know Nothing movement—was elected as New York City's mayor. The first third party candidate to hold the office in the history of the Second Party System, Harper functioned as a microcosm for the radicalized state of 1840s New York politics. Still recovering from the Panic of 1837, both New York and Philadelphia were becoming increasingly defined by ethnic tension and dire economic competition. Although Harper's administration was short-lived, it helped heighten these frictions substantially. Nativist gangs inspired by Harper's election increased in number, and only became more volatile when he lost his office after one term. For this reason, the effectiveness of the police became an extremely worrying issue, namely for New York's bourgeoisie, and by 1857, partisan-motivated intervention from the state capital would inspire gang-like, pugnacious action in not only New York's gangs, but also its law enforcement.

The American Republican Party was founded on Anglo-Protestant fear of increasing immigrant populations and the diminishing role of craft-based production in the economy. In the first half of the 1800s New York City's population had swelled tenfold to over 600,000 people and by 1850 half of these residents were foreign born. A poor standard of living—for both foreigners and natives—was becoming a fact of life, and many found a convenient scapegoat in the Irish. Struggling to establish their homes during the recession, Irishmen frequented

almshouses and charity organizations, and were viewed by nativists as deadweight.⁵ Harper belonged to this camp openly, and purged foreigners from the government payroll upon taking office.⁶

Crime, alcoholism, and even the lack of religion in schools—Harper's cohort believed these issues were all brought on by foreigners, and they sought to eliminate such vice through both law and brute force. The nativist contingent in Philadelphia utilized the latter method in 1844, burning several Catholic churches in May and July.⁷ Some in New York celebrated the actions, but many more were frightened. Whigs, who had supported Harper and his desire for a return to a conservative, eighteenth-century republican ideal, now feared the American Republican movement as too extreme. By the next election the party's constituency had decreased dramatically, and although nativism was momentarily eliminated in politics, its practitioners continued to exist outside lawmaking.

For New York City's nativists, Harper's ousting from office meant that the legal means of working against the Irish had failed. Rather than continue living unemployed and in the midst of what they viewed to be an international Papal conspiracy, these groups opted for vigilantism, carrying their politics back into the street. Some historians argue that nativism experienced a period of decline throughout the 1840s, and that the increasingly contentious issue of abolition as well as the Mexican-American War overtook anti-papal sentiments in the public's mind. However, historian Robert Francis Hueston notes a continued "muted hostility" in the press, and Burrows and Wallace state that nativist gang activity swelled following the failure of Harper's

⁵ Gorn, 393-394.

⁶ Burrows and Wallace, 632.

⁷ David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 218-219.

administration.⁸ In 1853, George Templeton Strong reported on a "No-poperly riot" in his dairy.⁹ In May of the next year the *Tribune* reported an attack on a street preacher and his congregants by some 300 Irishmen shouting "Damn the Know-Nothings."¹⁰ That fall, nativism returned to New York in full force when Fernando Wood, an Irish sympathizer, electrified the city with his bid for mayor.

Irish and German citizens were enamored of Wood, the self-proclaimed "protector of the poor."¹¹ As a Democrat, he was affiliated with the growing political machine, Tammany Hall, which had become quite proficient at exploiting the immigrant vote. His election in 1854 became reminiscent of those conducted in 1828, with polling centers devolving into places of violent demonstration. The *Tribune* reported that a band of Irishmen attacked deputies that were challenging the validity of their citizenship documents, resulting in the death of one election official. His funeral also witnessed unrest, as native-born Americans attempted to move in on the Irish rioters and Catholic churches nearby.¹² Authorities successfully quelled the disturbance with little damage, but it is important to note that the frequent nature of these post-Astor Place riots was beginning to disturb the public mind. New York was already experiencing minor riots regularly, on top of the typical corruption, vice, and crime found in a nineteenth-century city. Circumventing corrupted local officials, fearful bourgeois citizens advocated a revamping of the city's police and pressured state officials in Albany. Upstate New York had very few urban centers, none of which rivaled the city of New York, making it a much more "congenial

⁸ Robert Francis Hueston, "The Catholic Press and Nativism, 1840-1860" (dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1972), 129.

⁹ George Templeton Strong, *Diary of George Templeton Strong*, ed. Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 2:140.

¹⁰ *New York Tribune*, May 29, 1854.

¹¹ Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), 722.

¹² Grimsted, 227.

stamping ground for such reformers."¹³ Albany's officials began their intervention after Wood took office, resulting in a drawn out legal battle between New York City and the capital that defined the Mayor's administration in its entirety.

The relationship between city and state was hardly established in the 1850s. Only recently had district-level courts decided that city governments were subordinate to that of Albany.¹⁴ The newly founded Republican Party had taken control there, and while court decisions held weight, Mayor Wood, who had developed a local image as a staunch, centralized reformist, had a tough time abiding by them. New York City had political clout. There were even small meetings petitioning for the city's secession from the state of New York throughout the antebellum era. But now the leader of the greatest metropolis America had to offer was demoted to the same level as an official from any small upstate village. Wood was not insusceptible to the Jacksonian tradition of defying laws deemed unjust, even if this resistance ultimately ended in violence, and this proved true in 1857, when he and his supporters worked against new excise legislation from Republican state legislatures, as well as the police force sent to enforce it.

The Metropolitan Police Act of 1857 shifted control of the city's police to a state-appointed commission. The act was highly contentious. Writers at the *Tribune* favored the legislation, describing it simply as an attempt to end the political abuse of the police "for the aggrandizement of one man [Wood]."¹⁵ *Harper's Weekly* felt differently, titling the conflict between Wood and Albany the "Police War," and arguing that such blatantly partisan behavior would result in American democracy becoming barely "worth an epitaph."¹⁶ Wood remained

¹³ Burrows and Wallace, 835.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 836.

¹⁵ *New York Tribune*, May 11, 1857.

¹⁶ *Harper's Weekly*, May 9, 1857.

steadfast, arguing in a lengthy message published by the *Herald* that the acts of Albany were comparable to monarchical Europe. The message from the Mayor's office includes a full-blown analysis condemning each stipulation recently passed by the state government, and describes his resistance of the Metropolitan Police bill as a "sacred duty." Wood, believing his city to be "abused," "derided," and "conquered," encouraged the incumbent police to join him in his rejection of the new Metropolitan force.¹⁷ 800 men and 15 captains stayed on the Municipals, most of them foreign-born Wood supporters. The Metropolitans grew to around 300 with 7 captains, mostly Anglo-Americans.¹⁸ In the following weeks, the police joined the city's factionalized ethnic conflicts. Gang culture was no longer simply the conduct of a few "thugs" or "rowdies." In the coming weeks, turf wars and skull cracking became the business of law enforcement officials and Bowery ruffians alike, as each party involved attempted to assert their various agendas. The Municipals fought for their livelihood in an unstable economy, while the nativist Metropolitans attempted to rid the government of Wood and his corrupted, foreign-born force. In Jacksonian New York, the relationships between classes, politicians, ethnic groups, and policemen were still evolving, but Mayor Wood was truly putting them to the test. When the police schism came to a tipping point, it exposed the border between New York's gangs and its government as highly permeable. Emphasizing their understanding of justice over any legislation, these individuals utilized extra-legal means—either preempting or ignoring the power of officials at both the local and state levels—to take on issues they believed endangered them, their state, or their ethnic group.

¹⁷ *New York Herald*, May 5, 1857.

¹⁸ Burrows and Wallace, 839.

The Great Police Riot: "A Disgraceful State of Affairs"

By mid-June the conflict within the police was getting out of hand. The Metropolitans and Municipals were purposely working against one another. Criminals arrested by one group would be released by the other. Station houses were contested territory, and while battles within the police over the legitimacy of the Metropolitans continued, crime worsened. Political cartoonists had a field day with the farce. *Harper's* published one cartoon with two policemen walking alongside the same man. His dress is that of a typical Bowery ruffian. The policemen are depicted as salesmen of law enforcement, competing over their arrestee with different pitches, the Municipal officer saying, "Remember the Old Shop, Sir; business conducted on the usual principles. Always gave satisfaction, I believe?" The newer policeman offers "An entirely new assortment of goods—handcuffs in every style [...] only give us a trial."¹⁹ Competition, while beneficial in the economic sphere, was seriously hindering the efficiency of the police. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* also weighed in, printing a two-page story on a fictional character, Mr. Sempronius Jones, an ignorant, genteel man visiting from a rural district. He beholds the Metropolitan police with great respect, but is disgusted by the filth accruing in the city's streets. Jones notifies two quarreling policemen nearby, one, an Irishman in favor of Wood, and the other, a native representing Albany. They suddenly find a common ground in the visitor's naiveté: "The policemen stood silent for a moment, starting at our friend, and at one another. Then the native American slowly broke into a broad grin, and the son of Erin burst out into a loud roar of laughter, both assuring Mr. Jones that they certainly *would* mention the fact in their next report."²⁰ These satires suggest that New Yorkers had lost what little faith they already

¹⁹ *Harper's Weekly*, July 4, 1857.

²⁰ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 20, 1857.

had in their law enforcement. Public safety was even more of an issue than before and soon enough the fragmented police would shift the conflict from comedy to tragedy.

On June 16th, the city commission representing the Republican Governor of New York, John King, appointed Daniel Conover to the office of Street Commissioner. Mayor Wood also claimed to hold this power, and appointed a Charles Devlin, allegedly at the cost of a \$50,000 bribe. When Conover came to City Hall to claim his office, Municipal officers forcibly ejected him from the building. He hurriedly obtained a warrant for Mayor Wood's arrest, but when a Metropolitan police captain arrived to carry out the deed, he was also ejected. 300 Municipal officers guarded the Mayor's office, and when fifty Metropolitan men arrived to reinforce their captain, a brutal fight ensued. Gang members beholding the scene joined the fight for the Irish, Wood-supporting Municipal forces. The two branches of police fought brutally for a half an hour, until the militia arrived to quell the disturbance.²¹

Accounts published the next day described a horrific scene. The *Times* reported that "The scene was a terrible one; blows upon naked heads fell thick and fast, and men rolled helpless down the steps, to be leaned upon and beaten till life seemed extinct."²² One broadside from Boston recounted the violence in detail, stating that "Some were wounded in the belly, and some upon the head, and others from the nostrils perhaps a gallon bled." Citizens and gang members that had gathered took on a savage attitude against their victims and "pursued and beat any and all whom they suspected of being a Metropolitan officer," while shouting "Fernandy Wood!" and "Down with the Black Republicans!" Many sustained severe head injuries from clubs. The night ended with 52 total wounded.²³

²¹ Leo Hershkowitz, *Tweed's New York* (Anchor Press: Garden City, 1977), 58-59.

²² *New York Times*, Jun. 17th, 1857.

²³ Herbert Asbury, *The Gangs of New York* (New York: Paragon House, 1927), 108-111.

As per usual, editors were quickly polarized by the riot. A broadside from New York openly took the Mayor's side, with a chorus reading, "Governor King get out of the way, that is what I heard the people say."²⁴ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated* was also sympathetic to Wood, describing the move by the Metropolitanans as a "grand coup d'état." The newspaper's account took on the diction of a military history, depicting the Municipal forces as a "solid Phalanx," that handled its clubs "with grace and vigor."²⁵ Others condemned the conduct of the Mayor and his supporters viciously. Titling the police fight "The Late Wood Rebellion," the *Post* offered the Mayor no deference in an article from the 18th of June entitled "A Type of Human Degeneracy." The writers compared Wood's career path to the reproductive capability of "the degenerated stock of our species": "Their degeneration is inevitably progressive and before they reach its utmost limit they are providentially struck with sterility [...] We are reminded of this beneficent provision of the Divine government by the sudden sad disgraceful termination to which the apparently promising career of Mayor Wood has been brought by the degenerating tendencies of his personal character."²⁶ Sentiments this severe were not exactly common, but the conflict between Wood and King had clearly struck a political nerve in New York, leaving the city simultaneously polarized and disenchanted in regards to the government.

While some venerated one police force over another, others conveyed shame and embarrassment. *The Sun* published an article on the 16th entitled "A Disgraceful State of Affairs," and another the following day under the question "What are we Coming to?" Both articles lamented the "spirit of party" and the power it wielded over New York's government, stating that "In the political strife [...] the interests and common welfare of our city are lost sight

²⁴ *Riot in the City Hall Park*, broadside June 18, 1857 (Patricia D. Klingenstein Library, New-York Historical Society).

²⁵ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 27, 1857.

²⁶ *New York Post*, June 18th, 1857.

of, and men holding public trusts have become so absorbed by party tactics that they forget the duties they owe to their constituents."²⁷ As can be noted here, the Great Police Riot struck New York's upper classes in a way that riots in the past had not. Obviously, citizens remained concerned about public safety, but this time they were also befuddled by the ineffectuality of politicians, shifting the dichotomy from mobocracy against order to party against people. Instead of roundly condemning participants as savage or brutal like many had after the Astor Place Riot, New Yorkers often blamed Mayor Wood, Governor King, or both for refusing to cater even to the safety of the citizenry, let alone its political desires. Regardless of which party or individual citizens sided with, one thing was clear to all camps: both the city and the state of New York were being governed in a pathetic manner.

This remained true in the following weeks. Through some judicial connivance, Mayor Wood managed to avoid his arrest, and the city continued to have two police forces until July, when the Supreme Court finally deemed the Metropolitan Police Act constitutional, effectively dissolving Municipal forces. Within a few days, however, the typical patriotic parades and inebriation associated with Fourth of July celebrations devolved into chaos, as the city's gangs joined in on the police conflict, taking advantage of Governor King's untrained Metropolitans, and the ex-Municipal officers joined the brawl.

The Dead Rabbits' Riot: "Civil War in the 'Bloody Sixth'"

On the weekend of Independence Day in 1857 the Dead Rabbits, an Irish gang, allied themselves with several other factions and conducted a full scale assault on their enemy, the nativist Bowery Boys. The groups clashed at various locations throughout the city's Sixth Ward, one being the Five Points, the location of New York's most famous slum, and one of the largest

²⁷ *New York Sun*, June 16th, 1857.

areas of interaction between nativists and their ethnic nemeses. The Metropolitan forces were being specifically targeted by the Wood supporting Irish gangs. The Bowery Boys backed the new police force, successfully repelling several attacks, erecting barricades in the street, and waging war against the Rabbits for hours. At least twelve died in the fighting, which eventually escalated from fisticuffs to pistols. It was the bloodiest riot since Astor Place eight years earlier. Violence erupted again the next day, and on various dates throughout July.

Some presses depicted the actions of the Dead Rabbits as purely criminal, but upon further analysis this argument seems to ignore the context of the riot. The *Sun* spearheaded this approach, arguing that the Rabbits were "burglars, river thieves, rowdies [...] the terror of the ward, and to them can be traced nine tenths of the outrages which are perpetrated in the vicinity." In contrast, the same article describes the Bowery Boys as "honest men," respectably employed as "mechanics," and "firemen."²⁸ The most egregious error in establishing this binary is that it disconnects the gang fights from New York's political climate, and focuses too closely on the bloodshed of July 4th. The intimacy of this conflict with the Great Police Riot is critical for understanding how disillusionment—caused by a combination of party politics and ethnic polarization— among both gangs and the police pushed those involved to blatantly disregard the law in pursuit of individual agendas.

While there was simple looting and warring over territory in the Sixth Ward and around the Five Points throughout July, the combatants were also weighing in on the debate between Mayor Wood and Albany. One broadside highlighted how the gap between the lawful and lawless had closed entirely:

"The new Police did join the Bowery boys in line,
With orders strict and right accordin;

²⁸ *New York Sun*, July 7, 1857.

Bullets clubs and bricks did fly, and many groan and die,
 Hard road to travel over Jordan."²⁹

Irish Municipal forces were also present. The *Post* stated that the old police was "known, in some instances, to have mingled with the riotous crowds, urging men to resist the police, and joining in assaults upon them." The Police Commissioners agreed that the Dead Rabbits were not acting alone. The letter written to request the deployment of the militia articulates that "Our force [the Metropolitans], though strong, are driven by combinations of men seeming to be under orders of experienced policemen, and others of desperate character, from point to point."³⁰ The mostly foreign Municipal forces, who had lost their jobs in the middle of a recession due to legislation produced by a partisan, largely Anglo-American state government, had no intentions of going quietly. They believed this development was an attack not only on the political autonomy of their city, but also their personal financial independence, engineered entirely to aid the development of the young, and still mostly rural, Republican Party. With this in mind, they deemed the Metropolitan Police Act a completely reasonable cause for extra-legal behavior, and violently worked against its supporters.

The Metropolitans thus found themselves in a trial by fire, with their already shaky reputation crumbling by the day. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated* described the new force as hardly present on July 4th, testifying that "the authorities had nothing to do with the ending of the riot," insisting instead that "it died out because the parties engaged in it absolutely became fatigued and tired of their work."³¹ Those that did show were largely ineffective. Historian Herbert Asbury described a lone policeman who was "knocked down and his clothing stripped from his

²⁹ *Dead Rabbits' Fight With the Bowery Boys*, broadside, 1857 (Patricia D. Klingenstein Library, New-York Historical Society).

³⁰ *New York Post*, July 6, 1857.

³¹ *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, July 11, 1857.

body" and "fearfully beaten with his own nightstick."³² At this point the militia was the only viable law enforcement agency in New York, which, in a country still terrified of tyrants and standing armies, also had its own negative implications. The idea that a militia could be mustered and not subsequently disbanded, but instead utilized by power mongers like King or Wood for suppression, was truly terrifying to early Americans, and, in 1857, seemingly realistic.

The disorder showed little sign of letting up. George Templeton Strong worried about the "Blackguardism" that was pushing New York into "something like a state of anarchy." On July 14th he described riots from the previous two days as "instigated, some say, by the old police if not by Wood himself." While Strong may have relied on hearsay for this particular entry, the city's presses were repeatedly churning out disconcerting articles on a variety of other disturbances, which seemed to be occurring both with and without the involvement of the Municipal police. The *Sun* reported a "Wholesale Highway Robbery" in their July 6th issue. A mob stopped all trains between 14th and 16th streets, robbed conductors and harassed passengers, claiming they were "levying toll."³³ The *Tribune* wrote on a "serious riot" on the 12th of July, when German and Irish populations in the 17th ward worked together against the new police, resulting in the death of one German blacksmith. Tensions continued rising in German communities throughout the month, but eventually abated. The Metropolitans armed some officers in several districts, a new armory was built much closer to the Sixth Ward, and the city eventually regained peace.³⁴

³² Asbury, 113.

³³ *New York Sun*, July 6, 1857.

³⁴ *New York Tribune*, July 12, 1857.

Conclusions

Extrapolating from such an incredibly convoluted series of events is difficult. Unlike the Astor Place Riot, these disturbances involved a variety of parties over multiple days, and are thus less easily summarized. However, this juxtaposition has shown that the Great Police and Dead Rabbits' Riots are critical for understanding how the accentuation of the individual over the state and its authorities was paramount in the process of developing a Jacksonian character, not only for the working class, but also within the government itself.

The Great Police Riot is noteworthy because it represents a discourse essential to antebellum America. Simultaneously, it embodied and inspired the disillusionment experienced by so many riotous New Yorkers. The combatants' disenchantment has already been articulated: the Municipals were disaffected by their job loss, while the Metropolitans viewed Wood and his supporters as defiant, and an example of the dangers associated with allowing foreign interests to bleed into the government. Both groups were frustrated by party politics, arguing that Wood and King were utilizing the police to enhance their power. But, most interestingly, because the police were associated with the state, the riot became an embarrassing facet of the governmental ineffectiveness that each group was working against so desperately.

This was a paradox steeped in the complexities of early American politics. As articulated by historian David Grimsted: "American political theory had long stressed the centrality in the social structure of the individual rather than the state: here the state was to have little power [...] Democratic government was not only to reflect the will of the people but also was not to interfere with the proper private will of the individual."³⁵ In the Jacksonian era, this mentality, which minimized the role of the state, plagued the government's very own employees, the Metropolitans and Municipals clearly being no exception. Thus, because of its participants, this

³⁵ David Grimsted, "Rioting in the Jacksonian Setting," *The American Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (1972): 361-397.

riot offers a unique glimpse into a theoretical conflict experienced by riotous New Yorkers and policemen in the antebellum era: locating the roles of the individual and the government in a supposedly egalitarian democracy. If even policemen were struggling with their positioning in relation to the state, where did that place the average citizen? If the Mayor himself was unsure about how much power to afford his superiors, how could other, less powerful individuals not feel the same? In this way, the Police Riot is essential for a comprehensive analysis of Jacksonian rioting, because it demonstrates that civil unrest was indeed a broad cultural process affecting many societal echelons of America, rather than simply the actions of a "barbaric" few.

The Dead Rabbits and Bowery Boys, despite being afforded less legitimacy by both contemporary press and historians, were just as much a part of this process as the most peaceable demonstrator. They serve as a prime example of individuals radicalized by poor job security and an ineffectual government. Much like the Forrest Guards of Astor Place, they knew better than to trust politicians to carry out their varying, somewhat extreme agendas, and certainly had little faith in the police to enforce what laws they did support. Thus, by comparatively analyzing both the actions of the state and their supposed polar opposite in this section, it seems clear that violent, individualized, extra-legal conduct had entirely infused itself into America's political discourse, not just on the street, but also literally in the halls of government.

The Jacksonian Identity:

Violence & Individualism as a Stage in American Democracy

Historians have produced many viable approaches to assessing the "Concept of Jacksonian Democracy."¹ Frederick Jackson Turner took a sectionalist angle in the early 20th century, arguing that the era was defined by frictions between the interests of the southern, northern, and western regions of America. By the 1940s, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. argued that class tensions defined the period. The Second Party System was also highlighted as a major influence by a number of historians. The debate continues, as scholars seek to build a comprehensive understanding of the antebellum era.

A review of antebellum America's worst riots reveals several noteworthy trends that can assist in the development of a broader, more inclusive assessment of the time period. While the source material may demonstrate how and why economic and political forces made rioting "endemic in the social process of mid-nineteenth century New York," historians should also strive to inquire about the implications and end results of such a process, both tangible and theoretical.² This section aims to assess the role of rioting in America outside of New York, and draw interpretive conclusions about what effects extra-legal action had on the development of America's government and cultural identity.

Before assessing the United States as a whole, it is necessary to defend the claim that New York, although quite different from the rest of the United States, can act—at least in regards to extra-legal behavior—as a microcosm for the nation as a whole. While disparate in their causes, death tolls, and effectiveness, historian David Grimsted states that nationally "Between 1828 and 1833 there were some twenty incidents of riot, in 1834 at least sixteen riots took place,

¹ Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as a Test Case* (Atheneum: New York, 1961).

² Adrian Cook, *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* (The University Press of Kentucky: Lexington, 1974), 19.

and in 1835 the number increased to thirty-seven..."³ This count does not include the 1840s and 50s, which hold the two bloodiest of America's antebellum riots in New York, as well as virtually innumerable minor incidents nationwide.

This project has attempted to address why extra-legal action was so regular in nineteenth-century America, using New York City as a test case. Grimsted and others have claimed that the era's riots should be read "not as revolution or even illegality but as an enforcement of justice within the bonds of society—an immediate redressing of moral wrongs or a removal of social dangers that for various reasons could not be handled by ordinary legal process."⁴ Thus, while often stigmatized today as a brutal crime, rioting, as a vehicle for immediately delivering the demands of the people, was an essential aspect of American political discourse, particularly when the conventional, legal methods of expression were not functioning properly.

The fact that riots occurred so frequently and were so varied in their causes is a byproduct of the individualistic milieu inspired by Andrew Jackson's election and the socioeconomic changes that followed. Citizens of the United States were fully applying the rights afforded to them by the government and then some. From Jackson's resistance of the Supreme Court in his continuation of the Indian Removal Act, to Fernando Wood's resistance of Albany, all the way down to the resistance of the most basic laws in the Dead Rabbits' and Astor Place Riots—from top to bottom the United States was defined by positioning individuals over institutions, namely, in these cases, the law, and the authorities that enforced it.

In this way, rioting can be seen not only as a discourse over particular legislation, economic tribulations, or ethnic tensions, but also as a facet of the formation of a Jacksonian character or identity. What role was the new "common man" going to play in America? The

³ David Grimsted, "Rioting in the Jacksonian Setting," *The American Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (1972): 362.

⁴ *Ibid.* 365.

theories of equality and egalitarianism had been established on paper, but where exactly were their limits in reality? Were everyone's needs truly equal, and, if not, whose were more important? These were clearly questions being posed throughout the antebellum era, especially by riotous individuals.

Materials on the formation of an American identity are largely deficient in addressing the role violent behavior played in this process. Historian Michael Zakim handles these themes at length in his article on the development of the "common man" and this being's position in American society as a whole. He contends that through the assistance of contemporary literature on self-control, as well as technologies that enhanced collective thought (statistical shirt sizes, for example, began to force people to think of themselves in relation to others), helped in the process of "integrating personal autonomy into a universal net of obligations."⁵ But this approach focuses only on those groups who were "integrated" through legal means. Daniel Walker Howe addresses issues of identity in his book *Making the American Self*, analyzing how America's most prominent thinkers of the 18th and 19th century contributed to the development of American "self-construction," and how this occurrence shaped the mechanisms of the nation's democracy.⁶ However, by focusing almost exclusively on works from figures like Benjamin Franklin, Jonathan Edwards, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, Howe's approach is narrowly focused and uninterested in what role the actual "common man" may have played in the creation of his own image.

While rioters could not be afforded the same audience as great thinkers such as Thoreau,

⁵ Michael Zakim, "Creating A Democracy of Common Men," in *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson*, ed. Sean Adams (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 174.

⁶ Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge:1997), 3-5.

the process they were engaged in was just as essential, if not more directly so, to the development of individualism and the establishment of its importance in American democracy. To work alongside Howe's methodology, rioters and gang members from the era may not have read Emerson's essay, "Self-Reliance," but they obviously exercised its tenants in full force. Its most famous quote, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines," condemns societal pressure and any individual who blindly conforms to groups or belief systems.⁷ The rioters handled here, refusing to accept what they believed to be a demotion in status or an infringement upon their personal liberties, carried this quote into action, risking their lives to uphold their individual mindsets, rather than unnecessarily adhere to even the most established laws.

Summarily speaking, nineteenth-century rioting, as an "immediate redressing of social wrongs" can act as a street-level parallel to the discourse of even the most educated members of America's elite. As seen here, the Astor Place, Great Police, and Dead Rabbits' Riots all offer a view into the sentiments of those marginalized from or disillusioned with the standard, legal methods of expression during the Era of Jackson. As the nation began to apply its political doctrine and individual ambition and meritocracy slowly replaced Old World institutions and social practices, extra-legal action became a tool deployed frequently and viably by many to assert a number of interests, and ensure that this process continued to reflect the desires of the lower classes. In a government where the people became the dominant sovereign, street violence was always steeped with the complexities inherent to a young nation in the midst of a cultural, political, and economic transition.

⁷ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays on Manners with Other Essays*, ed. Eunice J. Cleveland (Longmans, Green, and Company: New York, 1915), 36.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

BROADSIDES

Cross Boy: Composed in Sing Sing Prison, by one of the B'hoys. Broadside between 1858 and 1869. Patricia D. Klingenstein Library, New-York Historical Society.

Dead Rabbits' Fight With the Bowery Boys. Broadside, 1857. Patricia D. Klingenstein Library, New-York Historical Society.

Riot in the City Hall Park. Broadside June 18, 1857. Patricia D. Klingenstein Library, New-York Historical Society.

COURT CASES

Laidlaw v. Organ, 15 U.S. 178 (1817).

DIARIES/CORRESPONDENCES

Edward Neufville Taler Diaries, 1849-1917. New-York Historical Society, Patricia D. Klingenstein Library.

Hone, Philip. *The Diary of Philip Hone 1828-1851*, edited by Bayard Tuckerman. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1889.

Macready, William Charles. *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, edited by William Toynbee. New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1912.

Pintard, John. *Letters from John Pintard to His Daughter Eliza Noel Pintard Davidson, 1816-1833.* New York: New-York Historical Society, 1941.

Strong, George Templeton. *Diary of George Templeton Strong*, edited by Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas. New York: Macmillan, 1952.

NEWSPAPERS

Commercial Advertiser

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper

Harper's Weekly

The Man

New York Herald

New York Post

New York Sun

New York Times

New York Tribune

The Subterranean

Young America!

PAMPHLETS/BOOKS

An American Citizen. *A Rejoinder to the Replies from England, Etc.* New York: Stringer & Townsend, 1849.

A Mechanic. *Common Sense*. Philadelphia: Charles Bell, 1837.

Byrdsall, Fitzwilliam. *The History of the Loco-Foco or Equal Rights Party: Its Movements, Conventions, and Proceedings With Short Characteristic Sketches of Its Prominent Men.* New York: Clement and Packard, 1842.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays on Manners with Other Essays*, edited by Eunice J. Cleveland.

Longmans, Green, and Company: New York, 1915.

Finney, Charles Grandison. *Memoirs of Rev. Charles Grandison Finney*. New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1876.

Morse, Samuel F. B. *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States, Originally Published in the New York Observer*. New York: American and Foreign Christian Union, 1855.

Ranney, H.M. *Account of the Terrific and Fatal Riot at the New-York Astor Place Opera House*. New York: H.M. Ranney, 1849.

Whitman, Walt. *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman: The Complete Prose Works*, edited by Richard Maurice Bucke. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902.

SERMONS

Finney, Charles Grandison. *Sermons on Important Subjects*. New York: John S. Taylor, 1836.

Spring, Gardiner. *A Sermon Preached August 3, 1832, a Day Set Apart in the City of New-York for Public Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer*. New York: Jonathan Leavitt, 1832.

Secondary Sources

ARTICLES

Coens, Thomas. "The Early Jackson Party: A Force for Democratization?." In *A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson*, edited by Sean Adams, 232-259. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Cook, Robert J. "Fanfare for the Common Man? Political Participation in Jacksonian America."

In A Companion to the Era of Andrew Jackson, 532-548.

Gorn, Elliot J. "'Good-Bye Boys, I Die a True American': Homicide Nativism and Working-

Class Culture in Antebellum New York City." *The Journal of American History* 74, no. 2

(1987): 388-410.

Greenberg, Joshua R. "Radicalism in the Age of Jackson." *In A Companion to the Era of*

Andrew Jackson, 412-432.

Grimsted, David. "Rioting in the Jacksonian Setting." *The American Historical Review* 77, no. 2

(1972): 361-3927.

Hershkowitz, Leo. "An Anatomy of a Riot: Astor Place Opera House, 1849." *New York History*

87 (2006): 277-311.

Luskey, Brian. "The Ambiguities of Class in Antebellum America." *In A Companion to the Era*

of Andrew Jackson, 195-212.

McCormick, Richard P. "New Perspectives on Jacksonian Politics." *The American Historical*

Review 65, no. 2 (1960): 288-301.

Murphy, Brian Phillips. "The Market Revolution." *In A Companion to the Era of Andrew*

Jackson, 95-110.

Schlereth, Eric. "Religious Revivalism and Public Life." *In A Companion to the Era of Andrew*

Jackson, 111-129.

Zakim, Michael. "Creating A Democracy of Common Men." *In A Companion to the Era of*

Andrew Jackson, 170-193.

BOOKS

- Asbury, Herbert. *The Gangs of New York*. New York: Paragon House, 1927).
- Burrows, Edwin G., and Wallace, Mike. *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Cook, Adrian. *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863*. The University Press of Kentucky: Lexington, 1974.
- Cross, Whitney R. *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959.
- Grimsted, David. *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Gronowicz, Anthony. *Race and Class Politics in New York Before the Civil War*. Boston: North Eastern University Press, 1998.
- Haynes, Sam. *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010.
- Hershkowitz, Leo. *Tweed's New York*. Anchor Press: Garden City, 1977.
- Howe, Daniel Walker. *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge:1997.
- Moody, Richard. *The Astor Place Riot*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958.
- Presidential Elections 1789-2008*. Washington: CQ Press, 2009.
- Watson, Harry L. *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006.
- Wilentz, Sean. *Chants Democratic*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

---. *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006.

DISSERTATIONS

Hueston, Robert Francis. "The Catholic Press and Nativism 1840-1860" Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1972.