



Pre-Famine Irish in Vermont, 1815–1844

On the eve of the immense migration of Irish spawned by the Great Famine of the late 1840s there was already a significant Irish presence in the Green Mountain State.

By VINCENT EDWARD FEENEY

In the summer of 1832, Nathaniel Hawthorne, then an unknown writer, visited Burlington. At the time, the little village on the shore of Lake Champlain was experiencing unprecedented prosperity. Since its founding in the 1780s, merchants in Burlington had conducted a strong water-borne trade with middlemen in St. Jeans on the Richelieu River in Quebec, but the opening of the Champlain Canal in 1823, which connected the northern lake to the bustling commercial centers of Albany and New York City, had made Burlington an important port. In warm-weather months small sloops, double-masted schooners, narrow canal boats, and puffing steamboats daily moved people, goods, and produce in and out of the bustling harbor at Burlington Bay.

In a short sketch published in 1835, Hawthorne recorded his impressions of Burlington. He remarked on the lofty outline of the Green Mountains to the east of the village, the curved, sandy beach at the bay, the wharves and warehouses at the water's edge, the "handsome and busy

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square” (now City Hall Park) at the center of the town, the presence of houses roofed in tin “in the fashion of Montreal,” and the large brick customs house which reminded him “that this inland port is a port of entry, largely concerned in foreign trade, and holding daily intercourse with the British Empire.” In this international setting, Hawthorne noted, people from everywhere in North America could be found: “merchants from Montreal, British officers from the frontier garrisons, French Canadians . . . Scotchmen of a better class, gentlemen of the South on a pleasure-tour, country squires on business; and a great throng of Green Mountain Boys, with their horse-drawn wagons and ox-teams, true Yankees in aspect, and looking more superlatively so, by contrast with such a variety of foreigners.”¹

But nothing impressed Hawthorne more about Burlington “than the great number of Irish emigrants” to be found there. In his unflattering description they were everywhere: “lounging” around the wharves, “swarming in huts and mean dwellings near the lake,” and “elbow[ing] the native citizens” out of work. If his words hinted of Yankee prejudice, they were at least on the mark in one respect: Burlington did have a large Irish population.

This evidence of a substantial Irish presence in Burlington, and, as we shall see, elsewhere in Vermont in the early nineteenth century, is important, for it reminds us that on the eve of the immense migration of Irish spawned by the Great Famine of the late 1840s there was already a significant Irish presence in the Green Mountain State. A few historians have noted these early arrivals in a cursory way,² but none attempted a detailed investigation of where they came from in Ireland, their route to Vermont, where they made their new homes, and what kinds of occupations they took up. This article attempts to fill in some of those gaps.

Long before the potato blight forced thousands from their homeland, Irish emigration to the New World had increased significantly. Between 1815 and 1845, 800,000 to 1,000,000 Irish emigrated to North America, about double the number that had done so in the previous two hundred years.³ What had happened?

The answer lies in a number of circumstances. Most important was a recession that followed the wars of the French Revolution. As long as Britain was mired in conflict with France, Irish agriculture prospered. Irish beef and Irish dairy products fed British soldiers and seamen. When the wars ended in 1815, Irish agriculture collapsed. In addition, demobilized Irishmen, who constituted a large portion of the British military, returned home to a weakened economy. To this desperate economic situation add recurring outbreaks of smallpox, typhus, and cholera, the

periodic failure of the potato crop, and political tensions, and there was reason enough to leave.

In addition, the ills of home contrasted sharply with the perceived bounty of America. Irish veterans of the War of 1812 described North America as an “arcadian paradise,” where a man with little means could “live like a prince.”⁴ Letters home from those who had already made the crossing encouraged others to follow. In 1837, Bernard Brewin in Underhill wrote to his mother and father in County Leitrim: “I would be very[?]glad[?]you would send Catharine to this Country for She would do well. Girls can get two Dollars per week where I was last Summer [Boston].” He went on to say, “I think that brother William would do well by coming here. I would encourage him to come for he will do well if he works well.”⁵ To people long suffering under an oppressive political, social, and economic system, North America was an attractive alternative.

A key factor in bringing Irishmen to Vermont was its location—its proximity to Lower Canada (Quebec). To encourage immigration to the vastness of British North America, England made passage to the United States more expensive than to Canada by imposing tariffs on fares to the former colonies.⁶ Moreover, Canadian vessels bringing lumber to Britain, which formerly had returned with empty holds, now offered inexpensive travel back to British North America. The net result was that between 1816 and 1836 most immigrants from Ireland landed, not in the United States, but in the Maritime provinces, Quebec City, and Montreal. Lower Canada saw a dramatic increase in its Irish inhabitants to an estimated 6.3 percent of the population in 1844, more than the province’s English, Scots, and Welsh population combined.⁷ Small Irish communities dotted the length of the St. Lawrence River.

But many Irish immigrants used their Canadian landfall as the first step on a journey to the United States. “Amerikay” was the land of liberty while Canada was still part of the Empire that they sought to escape. And the Canadian economy, only poorly developed, offered few jobs, while industry in the United States was booming. Irishmen recently landed in the New World streamed across the border into the American northeast.

Vermont, particularly northwestern Vermont, was uniquely accessible to these wandering Irish. From LaPrairie, just across the St. Lawrence from Montreal, a traveler could either take a coach or, beginning in 1836, a railroad car the fifteen miles to St. Jeans on the Richelieu River. St. Jeans was the northern terminus of a maritime commerce that connected Canada to the Lake Champlain ports of Burlington, Plattsburg, and Whitehall. Every other day steamboats from the Lake Champlain

Transportation Company carried passengers from the docks at St. Jeans into the heart of New England. Burlington, because it was one of the largest ports on the lake—and also the center of a growing industrial and mercantile economy with plentiful jobs—became the objective of many of these backdoor Irish entrants into the United States. In the settling of the Irish in Vermont in the days before the Great Famine of 1845–1848, it was not the southern part of the state, but the northwest, that first experienced large-scale Irish immigration.

Northeastern residents of the United States watched in disgust as Irish immigrants poured across the border. One American, a tavern keeper in upstate New York not far from Lake Champlain, expressed the thoughts of many:

They [the Irish] will soon have five to one against us,—Scotch and Englishmen. . . . They are very noisy people when they drink; they hitherto received from [the Canadian] government five pounds, with some rations, each family, as an encouragement to settle and clear the forest; when the allowance is consumed they almost invariably slip over into the United States; there is no stability in their loyalty to our government.⁸

Whatever the accuracy of the tavern keeper’s comments on the character of the Irish, he was certainly correct in emphasizing their numbers.

From bits and scraps of information one gets a glimpse of this waterborne migration. As early as 1822 Burlington’s *Northern Sentinel* reported that “an unusual number of Irish emigrants have arrived [in Quebec City] the present season, in a distressed and starving condition,” and many of them have come to the Burlington area.⁹ In 1827 Gideon Lathrop, captain of the steamboat *Congress*, wrote with dismay in his logbook that an Irish woman “delivered of a son on deck.”¹⁰ That same year an Englishman, traveling south on the lake, noted a large number of Irish on board, and lamented how sad they looked in their homeless state, particularly one young woman “better dressed than the rest of the group of strangers, sitting apart from all the others, on a bundle containing her scanty store of worldly goods and gear, tied up in a thread bare handkerchief. Her face, covered with a much worn black lace veil, was sunk between her knees.”¹¹ A few years later, the *Burlington Sentinel* reported on the trauma of an Irish family named Higgins. It said that the Higginses had lost their eleven-year-old son Michael while traveling from St. Jeans.¹² The parents did not know whether the boy had been left behind in Canada or had drowned, along the way. Through the newspaper they pleaded for information, but whatever happened to Daniel Higgins is unknown.

In the summer of 1832 the American authorities put a halt to Irish

immigration via Lake Champlain, not due to any political or social factors, but for health reasons. In that year cholera spread in Ireland, and immigrants carried the disease to the New World. Fearing an epidemic, the Canadian authorities established the infamous Grosse Isle quarantine station on the St. Lawrence River, just down river from Quebec City. There ships were stopped and passengers examined. If disease was present, everyone was quarantined on the island. But some infected people slipped through, only to bring sickness to Quebec City and Montreal. In June, American steamboat companies operating on Lake Champlain curtailed trips to St. Jeans. Not until late summer that year did passenger ships again ply the waters between Burlington and St. Jeans, and the Irish pipeline resumed.¹³

THE JOURNEY

We have little or no detailed information on how most Irish immigrants to Vermont left Ireland, what their trans-Atlantic voyage was like, or why they came to be in the Green Mountain State. But records and letters left by three families—the Shirlocks, O’Haras, and Donaghys—provide insights if not total explanations.

William Shirlock’s route to Vermont owed more to chance than design. He was born in County Kildare in 1809 to a Catholic family. His father, a veteran of the British navy, had served for many years on the flagship of Admiral Nelson. The Shirlocks must have struggled financially, for all four of the Shirlock children eventually emigrated to America. William left from Dublin in 1831, on board a ship bound for New Orleans. Along the way, however, he came down with “ship fever,” the common name for typhus, and when his ship made a stop at Quebec City he was put ashore. Recovering from his sickness, the young Irishman made his way to Montreal. Though his motivation is unknown, his objective was Vermont. Did he have a relative there, or a former neighbor? The answer is lost in time. From Montreal he traveled to St. Jeans and caught a boat to Burlington. From Burlington Shirlock began walking. He traveled east along the Winooski River to Montpelier, then south following the Dog River. Fifty-five miles later, in the town of Royalton, he stopped, settled, and put down roots. He must have found the place congenial, for three years later his brother Francis joined him.¹⁴

Unlike Shirlock, the O’Haras traveled specifically to Vermont. Oliver and Mary O’Hara were Protestants from a Scottish background living in Bogue’s Town, County Antrim, in the early 1840s. They had a small farm of twenty acres and some common grazing land on the hillside. But with eleven children they just got by. They were, as one family member later wrote, “comfortably poor.” When their sons Alexander and John

announced they were going to America, mother and father decided they should all go rather than see the family splintered. As Mary had a brother, Thomas McIver, living in Derby Line, Vermont, the Green Mountains became their destination. They sold their farm, packed some family possessions, and went to Belfast. There they hoped to take passage on the *Independence*, an American clipper, but it sailed before they arrived.

Instead of a fast clipper the O'Haras found themselves aboard the *Exito*, a converted lumber ship. The family later described their seaborne home as "big and clumsy and a wretched sailor." The voyage was long. They left Belfast Lough, sailing past the old Norman fortress of Carrickfergus, on June 1, 1842. At one point they encountered a storm so fierce that it drove the old boat back 200 to 300 miles. Finally, six weeks and three days after leaving Belfast they arrived at Quebec City: July 17, 1842.

They did not tarry. The next day they caught a steamboat to Montreal, and at LaPrairie took "the cars" to St. Jeans. Once there they acquired a wagon, and with Oliver and son John walking, traveled to Derby Line, just inside the Vermont border with Quebec. There Uncle Thomas met and sheltered them until they could support themselves. Eventually the family settled in the town of Holland, adjacent to Derby.¹⁵

The experience of the Donaghys, like that of the O'Haras, demonstrates the importance of family connections in bringing newcomers to Vermont. At the beginning of the 1830s, a young couple, Michael and Bridget "Biddy" Donaghy, decided to leave their home near Dungannon, County Tyrone, for America, possibly because Michael knew that a brother was slated to inherit the family farm. Their destination was Vermont, where a relative, Hugh Donaghy, either another brother or an uncle, had already settled in Brandon. What originally brought Hugh to Vermont can only be guessed at, but it is interesting to note that a William Donaghy is mentioned in the land records as buying and selling land in Middlebury as early as 1788,¹⁶ and a John and William Donaghy were among the original proprietors of Poultney in 1761.¹⁷ Could it be that the Donaghys of County Tyrone had a Vermont connection going back to colonial times? Whatever the antecedents, Michael and Biddy made their way to North America, stayed for a brief time in Montreal, and by 1834 were situated in Ferrisburg, a few miles south of Burlington.¹⁸

And they too continued the cycle of bringing over more family members. In August 1840, Michael's brother in Tyrone wrote him a letter:

Dear Brother you wrote that you would take Hugh without any expense on me I am satisfied to let him go he is taller than you and is 12 weight and if you send for him he is determined to stay with you [?] he makes you a recompense.¹⁹

Apparently the brother was hard-pressed, for in the same letter he mentions to Michael that he now has three daughters and ten sons. The father's hopes for relief appear to have been met, however, for young Hugh left for America in 1843. Where he eventually settled is unrecorded.

The experiences of the Shirlocks, O'Haras, and Donaghys shared some similarities. First, they came from counties in the northern half of the country. Secondly, they came to Vermont via Canada. Finally, in two of the cases, that of the O'Haras and the Donaghys, there were already family ties to Vermont. Shirlock, while he does not appear to have had any previous connection to Vermont, and only fortuitously ended up in the Green Mountains, was responsible for bringing other family members to the area. Historians of the Irish diaspora, who have seen this pattern elsewhere, have called it "chain migration."²⁰ Over and over again, we will see that family ties played an important part in bringing the pre-Famine Irish to Vermont.

SIX IRISH COMMUNITIES

Like the Shirlocks, O'Haras, and Donaghys, most Irish immigrants to Vermont scattered across the state, settling wherever jobs and opportunities presented themselves. By the early 1840s there were Lynchs in St. Johnsbury, O'Gradys²¹ in Shelburne, Hanleys in West Rutland, and Ennises in Marshfield. These Irish men and women lived solitary existences, strangers in a strange land. Frequently they had no Old Country neighbors with whom to gossip or share memories of home. Moreover, unlike eighteenth-century Irish emigrants, the majority of the post-1815 Irish were Catholics: But in Vermont there were no Catholic churches to give comfort and a sense of belonging. There were, however, a few places in the Green Mountains where the Irish clustered, maintained a separate identity, and eventually built vibrant Catholic communities: Burlington, Fairfield, Underhill, Moretown, Middlebury, and Castleton.

The largest Irish settlement in Vermont in the pre-Famine years was Hawthorne's Burlington. Given Burlington's status as a port of entry this is understandable. Many Irishmen first set foot in the United States when they walked off the gangplank onto the wharf in Burlington. Poor and desperate for work, they took what they could find. Fortunately, Burlington in the 1820s and 1830s was a boom town. The opening of the Champlain Canal had led to unprecedented prosperity. Businessmen like Judge Timothy Follett built docks and warehouses on the lake, and shipbuilders turned out new vessels to carry the increased traffic. Retail establishments went up on Water and Church Streets. Down at Winooski Falls on the northeastern edge of town a local business group operated one of Vermont's largest textile mills. Everywhere there was

construction, on small tenements and hotels by the lake, to the large estates of the wealthy on Burlington's "hill." Unlimited employment was available for those willing to work. As a result population jumped from 2,111 in 1820 to 3,526 ten years later, a 60 percent increase.²² Burlington was now Vermont's largest town. People began calling it "the Queen City."

As suggested by Hawthorne's comments, many of those newcomers were Irish, constituting about 11 percent of the population.²³ What Hawthorne perceived as overwhelming numbers, however, may have been an illusion, created by the fact that the Irish congregated along Water Street, the roadway closest to the lake. Water Street was an Irish enclave. It was as if once the Irish disembarked in Burlington, they dropped their bags, too poor or too tired to move further, and settled in. By the early 1840s, the Irish provided much of the labor on the waterfront and operated almost all the small businesses along Water Street. The two hotels on the street, Hart's and Soregan's, were Irish owned, as were the three grocery stores—[Mc]Canna's, Killins', and Bradshaw's.²⁴ On the waterfront, an Irish person could find most of life's necessities supplied by his fellow countrymen. The area would remain an Irish neighborhood down to the end of the nineteenth century.

Fairfield, the second largest Irish community in the state, stood in stark contrast to Burlington: It was and is a rural farming community. It lies a dozen miles south of the Canadian border and ten miles east of Lake Champlain. Through the town's two-hundred-year history it has never numbered more than 2,600 residents, most of whom have been small farmers scattered over a hilly terrain. At various times these hardy country people made their living raising sheep, dairying, and making maple syrup. Except for corn and hay for livestock, they raised few crops; pasturage was always more important than tillage. What was not produced or made on the farm was purchased or ordered at the few shops in the tiny villages of Fairfield and East Fairfield or in nearby St. Albans. This was the rural community that drew unusual numbers of Irish in the 1820s and 1830s.

What attracted them? Other than a gristmill and an iron forge there was no industry in Fairfield—no textile mills, no quarries, no canals. None of the usual works that one associates with the immigrant Irish. What Fairfield had was land. In the years following the War of 1812, Fairfield, like many rural Vermont towns, experienced a decline in population—from 1,618 in 1810 to 1,573 in 1820²⁵—caused when Vermonters caught the Genesee or Ohio "fever" and gave up their hard-scrabble hillside farms for the flat, fertile soils of western New York, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois. What they left behind was inexpensive

farmland which lay virtually in the path of the Irish entering Vermont from Canada.

The Irish craved land. Owing to various English colonization schemes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was virtually impossible for a Catholic, and even members of dissenting Protestant religions, to own land in Ireland. One of the attractions of the New World was the possibility of acquiring land. In the 1837 letter of Bernard Brewin already cited, he proudly tells his parents that he owns his own farm “and got a deed for ever of it,” something that they could not do in Ireland. In this same vein there is a well-known story in Rutland, perhaps apocryphal, about John Hanley, reputed to be the first Irishman to settle in that area. In 1843 he and his wife bought a small farm of twenty-one acres, and then a few years later bought a large parcel that was nothing more than a worthless, rocky mountain. His neighbors chided him that he only bought it so that he could tell his family back in Ireland that his land was so extensive that it would take him all day to walk over it—as indeed it would.²⁶ Even if just a story, it is a story that underlines the importance the Irish put on land ownership. To this day, this rocky crag just west of Rutland is known as Hanley’s Mountain.

Exactly who were the first Irish to settle in Fairfield is open to dispute, but evidence suggests it was Peter and Lawrence Kirk, the McEnany brothers (Hugh, James, Patrick, and Matthew) and Patrick Deniver, all of whom hailed from County Louth and may have emigrated together. Although their names first appear on the U.S. Census of 1830, there is some evidence that they arrived in Fairfield shortly after the War of 1812.²⁷ They were soon joined by two unrelated Ryans, Thomas and James, Patrick King, James Carroll, and Peter Michael Connelly. In the 1830s a flood of others followed, and while most counties in Ireland were represented among the Fairfield Irish, the group had a decided orientation of people from Louth and nearby Meath and Cavan.²⁸ Did those pioneer Irish, the Kirks, McEnanys, and Denivers, send word back home and encourage others to follow? Probably, for members of the McEnany family were still arriving in Fairfield in the mid-1830s.

The Fairfield Irish were almost all Catholic, but there were a few exceptions, the most important being Elder William Arthur, pastor of North Fairfield’s Red Brick Baptist Church in the early 1830s. Arthur had come from Ballymena in County Armagh, had spent some time in Canada, come down to the United States, married, and settled down in Vermont. In 1830 his wife gave birth to a son, Chester A. Arthur, a future president of the United States.

For the Catholics, Fairfield may have had another attraction besides land: its proximity to Catholic churches in southern Quebec. In the

years between 1818 and 1854, Rev. Pierre Marie Mignault, the priest at St. Joseph Church, Chambly, just outside Montreal, periodically made visits to Fairfield and other northwestern Vermont communities.²⁹ In cases where a priest was needed immediately, Chambly was relatively close. A well-known story in Fairfield tells of Bridget Deniver, Patrick's wife, who in the 1820s gave birth to twins. Wanting her children to be baptized as soon as possible, she and her sister walked with the infants the fifty miles to Chambly and then back again.³⁰

Unlike the experience of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England Irish, the Fairfield Irish maintained their sense of identity through the sheer size of their community and ties to their church. As news of Fairfield's Irish community spread it became a magnet for Irish immigrants who had settled elsewhere. Michael Connolly, who had been living in Hinesburg, Vermont, moved to Fairfield in the 1830s and bought 100 acres.³¹ In 1840, Francis McMahan of nearby Highgate acquired land in Fairfield.³² Others gravitated to Fairfield after spending many years in Canada. Lawrence and Catherine Foley, for example, left Ireland for Canada in 1830, remained there twelve years, and then moved to Fairfield in the early 1840s. Patrick and Catherine Howrigan from Clonmel, County Tipperary, settled in Henryville, Quebec, not far from Chambly, in the 1830s, and in 1849 moved to Fairfield with their three Canadian-born children and bought a farm from another Irishman, Thomas Fitzgerald.³³

By 1840 the Irish were a considerable presence in Fairfield—about 283 residents out of a total population of 2,448 (11.5 percent)³⁴—and were doing quite well. Many owned farms. Fairfield land records for the 1830s show Conleys, McEnanys, Sharkeys, Maloneys, O'Briens, Rooneys, Kirks, Tierneys, Ryans, and Malones constantly buying and selling land.³⁵ Generally, the land they acquired lay along the high ridges, the Yankees being reluctant to sell off the more fertile lowlands. This was ironic for the highlands had the best sugar bushes and in later years provided a good income from the annual run of maple sap.³⁶ A number of the new arrivals did quite well. Patrick Houston, who had moved to Fairfield from Swanton in the 1830s, quickly became one of the richest men in town, owning real estate in 1850 valued at \$5,000.³⁷

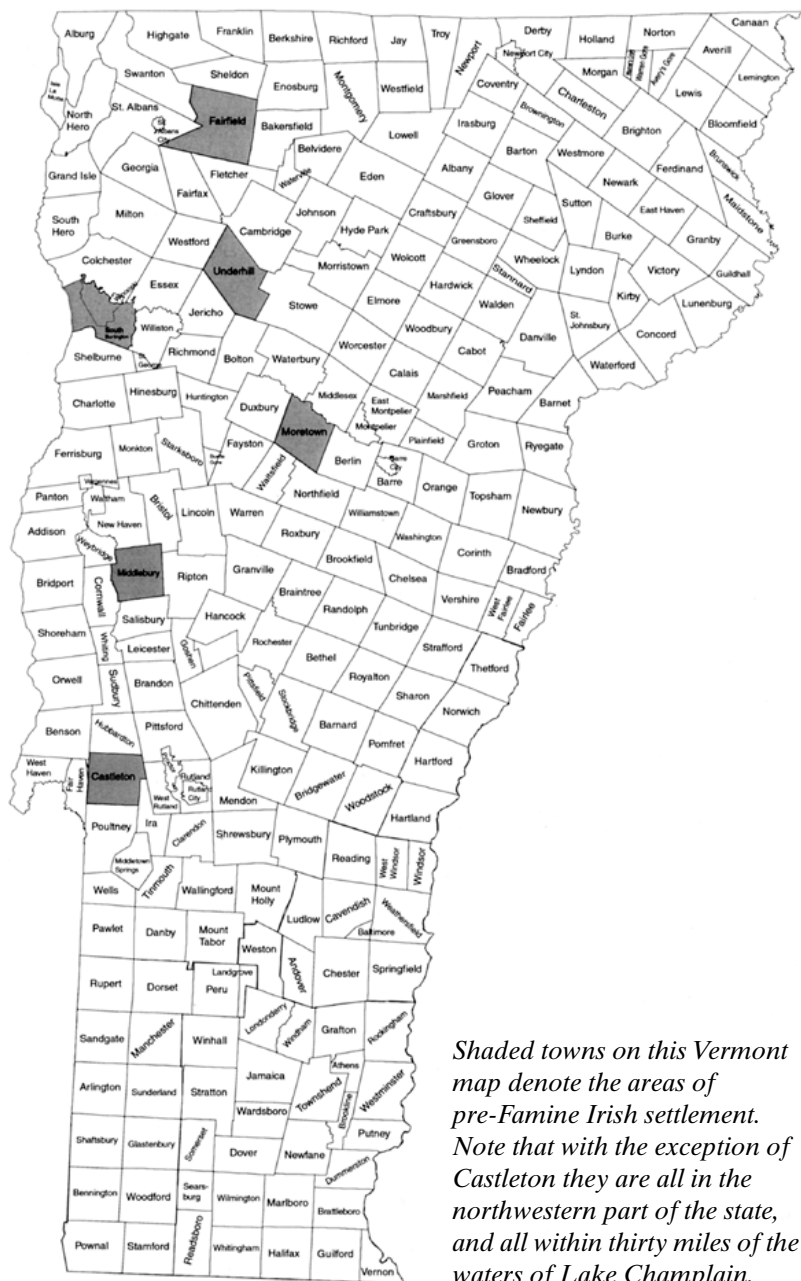
Increasingly, the Irish were an accepted part of Fairfield life. Though an Irishman would not be elected a town selectman until 1859, as early as 1836, Thomas O'Brien became the first Irishman elected to local office in Fairfield when he was chosen one of the road surveyors at the annual town meeting.³⁸ When the great deluge of starving, diseased, and demoralized Famine Irish poured into the United States in the late 1840s, the Irish of Fairfield were already a long-established, thriving community.

Twenty miles south of Fairfield and a dozen miles east of Burlington, Irishmen congregated in another rural town: Underhill. In the 1820s, Underhill, which lay just west of Mount Mansfield, was known primarily for lumbering, sheep raising, and farming. As loggers clear cut stands of trees, the hillsides quickly became grazing lands. In 1840 there were more sheep than people in town, 3,433 to 1,441.³⁹ Certainly raising sheep was an occupation Irishmen knew something about, but logging also attracted them. In 1841 a young Irishman named Daniel Wall who had initially settled in Shelburne went into partnership with a fellow countryman by the name of Patrick Green, bought forest land in Underhill, and logged there the rest of his life. In later years Daniel's wife Bridget was a well-known figure, walking the roads of Underhill, smoking her corn cob pipe, and conversing with neighbors in her native Gaelic.⁴⁰

Wall, however, was not the first Irishman in Underhill. That distinction goes to two brothers, John and Felix Doon, from County Armagh. They had come down from Canada in 1823, landing on St. Albans' Maquam Shore, and made their way to Underhill.⁴¹ There they took up residence on a ridge overlooking a fertile vale called Pleasant Valley. Through the 1820s and 1830s Underhill attracted other Irish people, with the earliest arrivals—as we saw with the previously mentioned Brewin letter—writing home and encouraging friends and relatives to follow. Soon there were Breens, Barretts, Shanleys, Flynns, and others scattered across the valleys and hills. By 1840 about 9 percent of Underhill's 1,441 residents were Irish.⁴² Locals called the track running along the ridge near the Doon place, "the Irish Settlement Road." Like Fairfield, the Underhill Irish community was well established before the Famine Irish landed on America's shores.

While logging and sheep raising brought in money to the early Irish in Underhill, it was often not enough. Frequently they had to find other work to supplement their incomes. One alternative was the Massachusetts textile industry, as some of the Underhill Irish had worked in linen mills in Ireland. Each winter bands of Underhill men would put together a few belongings, kiss their loved ones goodbye, and trek down to Worcester, Massachusetts, not to return until spring. While they were gone wives and older children maintained the household, saw to the livestock, and made preparations for spring. This cycle repeated itself well into the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴³

A town further removed from Vermont's northwestern corner, but one that shared characteristics with Underhill, was Moretown. Situated thirty miles east of Burlington Moretown is a mountainous region with a long narrow valley watered by the Mad River running through its center. Like Underhill, its extensive forests attracted loggers and its fertile



Shaded towns on this Vermont map denote the areas of pre-Famine Irish settlement. Note that with the exception of Castleton they are all in the northwestern part of the state, and all within thirty miles of the waters of Lake Champlain.

vale provided excellent farmland. Here a settler could manage a small farm and earn ready cash in lumbering. The only industrial works in the valley were the numerous sawmills along the river.

The name of the first Irish settler is unknown, but by the late 1830s a dozen or so Irish families lived in the town. They were Lees and Millers, Nichols, Keltys, Devines, McCormicks, Cashmans, and Mahannas (Mahoney?), about fifty people in all, constituting about 4–5 percent of the total population.⁴⁴ Most of them congregated on South Hill, which in later days came to be called Paddy Hill. The Moretown Irish community would grow dramatically with the arrival of a railroad in nearby Northfield in the late 1840s.⁴⁵

Another township that had a significant Irish presence in the years prior to the Famine was Castleton. In the 1830s it had about fifty Irish residents out of a population of 1,700.⁴⁶ Their presence was probably related to the town's proximity to Whitehall, New York, the northern terminus of the Champlain Canal that lay only fifteen miles away. Many of the workmen who built the canal were Irish, and when the work was done some simply settled in nearby communities. That was the case with Bryan McKean of Sligo, who settled in Castleton in the 1820s.⁴⁷ In addition to canal builders who settled in the area a continual flood of Irish traveled the canal. One report in 1826 said that a hundred Irishmen a week were passing through Whitehall.⁴⁸ Certainly some of them chose to stay as well.

One other Irish community worth mentioning was Middlebury. Today noted primarily for its college, in the first half of the nineteenth century Middlebury was an important industrial center. Besides the usual assortment of gristmills and sawmills, Middlebury was home to a number of large textile factories and a marble works. In the warm-weather months goods produced in Middlebury were shipped via Otter Creek to Lake Champlain, and from there to Quebec to the north and New York City to the south. With so much economic activity, in the first three decades of the nineteenth century Middlebury's population expanded rapidly. In 1840 it stood at 3,161, making it one of the most populous towns in the state. Irish men found work as laborers in mills and marble quarries, while Irish girls could always find positions in the textile works. Five years before the Great Famine, 163 Irishmen and women were living in Middlebury, over 5 percent of its total.⁴⁹

REVEREND JEREMIAH O'CALLAGHAN

The presence of so many Irish Catholics in northern Vermont in 1829 prompted the Reverend Benedict Fenwick, the Bishop of Boston, whose far-flung diocese then included all of New England, to dispatch a

priest to the Green Mountains to assess the situation. Exactly what his emissary, the Reverend James Fitton, reported to the bishop is unknown, but the broad outline is not hard to guess. He would have confirmed that there were indeed many Catholics in Vermont, both Irish and French Canadian. And there were also problems. Without priests too many Catholics were being married by justices of the peace, and many drifted away from the Church. One had even become a prominent Protestant clergyman.

This was James Daugherty.⁵⁰ From County Derry, Daugherty had been raised “a conscientious Catholic,” and emigrated with his two brothers at about age 20 in 1819 to South Hero, Vermont. There, under the instruction of a Congregational minister, the Reverend Asa Lyon, he prepared to enter college. Lyon must have been a profound influence on young Daugherty, for when the Irishman eventually graduated from the University of Vermont in 1830 he entered the ministry. He spent the next thirty-five years first as the Congregational pastor in Milton, and later in Johnson. Clearly, from Boston’s standpoint, something needed to be done.

Apparently alarmed by Fitton’s assessment, Fenwick himself visited Burlington in 1830, celebrating mass at Howard’s Hotel on Court House Square,⁵¹ where only a few years before an aging Marquis de Lafayette had welcomed visitors. The bishop must have agreed with Fitton’s assessment and begun looking for a priest to assign to Vermont. The problem was, there were no priests to spare in America. Quebec might have helped, but their priests were French speakers, and Fenwick’s pressing need was for someone who could speak English, and, ideally, Gaelic. It was at this juncture that Fenwick met one of the most eccentric men ever to tread the roads and mountains of Vermont, and one destined to lead Vermont’s Irish Catholics for twenty-five years.

His name was Jeremiah O’Callaghan. Fifty years old when Bishop Fenwick met him in 1830, O’Callaghan had already lived a tumultuous life. Born into a Gaelic-speaking family near Macroom, County Cork, his parents were poor people, “of no large estates.”⁵² With seventeen children to support, life for the O’Callaghans was a constant struggle. Those were the days when owing to the Penal Laws few Catholics owned land, they could not sit in the Dublin Parliament (or later the Westminster Parliament), or hold political office. As a young man Jeremiah must have read with horror of the suppression of the United Irish Rebellion in Antrim and Wexford, although his native Cork was spared that catastrophe. Though later in life O’Callaghan became a prolific writer, he tells us little of his early days at home.

In 1805 he was ordained a priest. For fourteen years he ministered in

Cork, but in 1819 O'Callaghan's theological ideas ran afoul of his bishop. This stemmed from O'Callaghan's view of money lending. As the Cork priest watched his countrymen suffer in the economic collapse that followed the Napoleonic Wars, he concluded that their distress resulted from having borrowed money at interest. He came to believe that all money lending—even at what objective observers might call fair interest rates—was usury, and contrary to the teachings of Christian charity. Not content simply to argue his ideas, O'Callaghan turned his beliefs into actions. This put him at odds with his bishop. The climax to their dispute came when O'Callaghan refused the last rites to a dying man unless he promised to return his “ill-begotten” profits. This was too much; the bishop dismissed O'Callaghan from the diocese.⁵³

Then began a difficult ten-year period in O'Callaghan's life. An ordained priest, committed to serving his church, he was an exile, wandering from diocese to diocese, country to country, seeking a position. He spent time in France, then returned to teach school in Cork, and in 1823 traveled to North America. There he applied to the Dioceses of New York and Baltimore, and the Archdiocese of Quebec. Everywhere he was turned down: No one wanted this combative and eccentric priest. That bishops who were in desperate need of priests rejected his offer of service underlines the low regard in which he was held. With North America shunning him, O'Callaghan returned to Ireland.

He did not stay long. In 1829 he learned that the Diocese of New York had received a new bishop, and that an old acquaintance and fellow Corkonian, Rev. John Power, had been appointed vicar general. Anxious to return to the ministry, O'Callaghan made his second voyage to the New World, but when he approached the authorities in New York, the answer, again, was no. Here, however, fate stepped in. While in New York he chanced to meet Boston's Bishop Fenwick. Fenwick was desperately in need of priests to minister in his far-flung diocese, and here was O'Callaghan, anxious to serve. That this energetic, middle-aged priest was bilingual, speaking English and Gaelic, was a bonus: Many of the faithful in Vermont spoke only the language of the Old Country. The bishop decided to take a chance. After further discussions in Boston, Fenwick appointed O'Callaghan missionary to Vermont.

That summer O'Callaghan traveled to Burlington, the site chosen as the center of his mission. Along the way he stopped and celebrated mass wherever he found groupings of Irish Catholics: Wallingford,⁵⁴ Pittsford, Vergennes, and finally Burlington. Once settled in the lakeside village the Irish priest assessed his charge:

Catholics, principally Irish immigrants were as sheep without shepherds, scattered through the woods and villages, amidst the wolves in

sheep's clothing—amidst fanatics of all creeds, or rather of no creed; all enticing them by bribery and menaces to protracted meetings, Sunday Schools and so forth. As I was the very first Catholic pastor sent to them, their joy seemed to know no bounds on my arrival. There were eight congregations, varying from 10 to 100 (in number), from 20 to 30 miles asunder. I was hardly able to visit them all in two months.⁵⁵

He reported back to Boston that in Burlington alone there were a thousand Catholics.⁵⁶

The difficulty of administering to his flock, rather than dampening his spirits, served to motivate him. After wandering so long in the desert, he described his work in Vermont as “the same thing as laboring in Paradise.”⁵⁷ O’Callaghan had found a home.

Immediately upon arriving in Burlington, O’Callaghan undertook the task of building a church. In this he was helped by a local resident, Colonel Archibald Hyde, who may have been as eccentric in his own right as O’Callaghan. Hyde was a prosperous Protestant lawyer known for his liberal religious beliefs and Democratic politics, and for the eccentric manner of his dress: He wore the old-fashioned “small clothes, wore knee and shoe-buckles or long boots, and withal a long cue hanging down his back.”⁵⁸ Perhaps his backward-looking dress betrayed a Romantic nostalgia for the past, and presaged the future, for, “much to the surprise of his acquaintances” in the mid-1830s he converted to Catholicism. Even before he converted, however, he had given O’Callaghan five acres on the northern edge of Burlington for a church. With Hyde’s donation, and the contributions of hundreds of Irish and French-Canadian Catholics, in 1832 Burlington had its first Catholic church: St. Mary.

While his church was under construction, and throughout his twenty-five-year Vermont ministry, O’Callaghan rode a circuit, bringing the sacraments to the scattered Irish. Riding north he would visit St. Albans, say mass, perform marriages, hear confessions, and then move on to Fairfield, where the home of Thomas Ryan served temporarily as a church. From there he might go on to Bakersfield, Cambridge, Jeffersonville, and Underhill. For those Irishmen who spoke little or no English O’Callaghan resorted to his native Gaelic. On other trips he might visit Waterbury and Moretown, or move south to Vergennes, Rutland, Fair Haven, and Bennington. At times he ministered as far south as western Massachusetts.

In 1837 Bishop Fenwick assigned another Irishman, Rev. John Daly, a Franciscan, to lighten O’Callaghan’s load. Daly was made responsible for seeing to the needs of Catholics in the southern part of the state.

While O'Callaghan based his ministry in Burlington, Daly made Middlebury and Castleton the center of his work. Already in 1835 the Irish in Castleton under the leadership of the McKean family had purchased a building on the main street of the village and renovated it into a church: St. John the Baptist, the second Catholic church in Vermont after St. Mary. These two churches were followed in 1840 when the energetic Daly completed construction of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Middlebury. Through the efforts of Daly and O'Callaghan, the Catholic Church was firmly established in Vermont by the end of the 1830s.

But O'Callaghan was a firebrand, controversy and trouble his constant companions. His nature demanded confrontation. One bishop who worked with him in the 1840s and 1850s privately remarked that many churchmen "considered [O'Callaghan] crazy. In fact he was."⁵⁹ Not long after settling in Vermont, he began writing newspaper articles for the *Burlington Free Press* and the *Burlington Sentinel*, and books attacking local customs and institutions. His favorite themes were opposition to usury, and therefore the local banks, the widespread practice of selling or renting church pews—which he considered simony—the failure of parents to give children the names of saints, the widespread practice of having marriages performed by justices of the peace, and what he called "store pay"—paying in kind rather than with cash. Those who challenged his views he considered not just misguided, but evildoers out to wreck the holy mission of his Catholic Church.

O'Callaghan was particularly sensitive to criticism from the Protestant clergy, who, he was convinced, were bent on converting Irish and French Catholics. He referred to them as "The clouds of false teachers rushing out of their lurking places [to] wage open warfare with the whole Christian Religion."⁶⁰ Perhaps he had the case of James Daugherty in mind. There is no record that the two ever met, but certainly they knew of each other, and O'Callaghan must have lamented Daugherty's apostasy.

His first public foray against the Protestant establishment was a criticism of the Reverend James Converse, minister at Burlington's Congregational church. Converse, apparently in a sermon delivered in 1834, repeated the widely held belief that Catholicism, with its hierarchical structure, was inimical to republicanism. In a booklet published later in the year, *A Critical Review of Mr. J.K. Converse's Calvinistic Sermon*, O'Callaghan argued that contrary to the views expressed in that homily, there was no contradiction between Catholicism and democratic government. As evidence the Irish priest cited the republican governments that once existed in the city-states of Venice and Genoa.

Not content to simply make his counterpoint, O'Callaghan went one step further to castigate Converse's "Calvinistic system" as "dark [and] intolerant . . . tending to inflate and electrify his Calvinistic hearers into furious hatred towards all other Congregations."⁶¹

Converse, however, was small potatoes in O'Callaghan's battle with Vermont Protestantism. The archenemy was the Right Reverend John Henry Hopkins, Episcopal bishop of Vermont. O'Callaghan's fight with Hopkins may have been as much personal as theological, for the bishop was a fellow Irishman, although from a different background. Hopkins was Anglo Irish. His ancestors came to Ireland from England on the heels of William III's victory over James II in the 1690s. They were adherents of the Church of Ireland (Anglican). John Henry Hopkins was born in Dublin in 1792, and with his parents eight years later came to America, where the family settled in Pittsburg. In his early years the future bishop worked as an ironmaster, then turned to the law, and eventually became an Episcopal priest. In 1831 he was appointed rector of St. Paul's church, Burlington, and the next year was named the first Episcopal bishop of Vermont.

Between these two Irishmen in Burlington, each representing traditions that had long been hostile to each other in Ireland, there was bound to be trouble. Hopkins was the first to open the battle. In two books, *Primitive Creed* (1834),⁶² and *Primitive Church* (1835),⁶³ he argued that the idea that the bishop of Rome was the head of the Christian church was supported neither by scripture nor by the early church fathers.

How O'Callaghan must have seethed at this challenge to his own deeply held beliefs. For the next two years he researched his response. In a letter that appeared in the *Burlington Sentinel*, February 10, 1837, O'Callaghan in his combative style announced that his book answering Hopkins's allegations would soon be out and that "Facts and truths which you did not expect shall meet your eye, in their innate and natural features, stript naked of all party colouring."⁶⁴ When the 323-page book appeared in March with the uncompromising title *The Vagaries and Heresies of John Henry Hopkins, Protestant bishop*, it contained a lengthy defense of papal supremacy, mainly borrowed from the writings of European churchmen, and a critique of Bishop Hopkins. For the doctrinaire O'Callaghan, Hopkins was a man who was all things to all people—"the Catholick, the 39 Article Protestant, the Methodist, the Calvinist, the Presbyterian, and even the Universalist"—because he believed nothing himself.⁶⁵ For O'Callaghan, Hopkins's religious tolerance was evidence of theological muddiness and further proof of the necessity of having a church with one head.

While O'Callaghan alienated many Protestant Vermonters with his

critical religious writings, he created more enemies in the political arena. This stemmed from his beliefs about usury. The Bank of the United States, established in 1819, was up for congressional renewal in 1836. Rechartering became a principal issue in the presidential campaign of 1832: Andrew Jackson, the incumbent president, and his Democratic Party opposed it, and Henry Clay's Whigs favored renewal. Given his distaste for banks it was no surprise that O'Callaghan was an avid Jacksonian. In subsequent years he became a Democratic spokesman, exhorting his fellow Irishmen to oppose the Whigs, and allied himself with the *Burlington Sentinel*, the local Jacksonian weekly.

O'Callaghan's efforts on behalf of the Democrats drew the ire of the Whig newspaper, the *Burlington Free Press*. In October 1837, the editor of the *Free Press* deplored the "incendiary political rantings" of "this Reverend Paddy," and pointed out that "according to his [O'Callaghan's] own showing, [he] has thrice been spewed from the Church and his native country as a shatter-brained disorganizer."⁶⁶ Burlingtonians were aware of O'Callaghan's colorful past, as he had related it in a short autobiographical section in his 1834 book, *Usury, Funds and Banks*.⁶⁷

Among his own people the stubborn Irishman was popular: Like them he came from peasant stock, knew their language, and he courageously took on the role of spokesman for the Irish community. But he had as many enemies as friends. Burlington's Protestant clergy viewed him with derision, and the *Free Press* dismissed him as an incompetent. Villagers on the streets probably thought him a crackpot, a classic exemplar of Irish loose thinking. Even French-Canadian members of his church found him difficult, for he had little empathy for their language or their culture. Few would have been surprised if a backlash developed to his aggressive ways.

And there may have been a backlash, but the facts are sparse. What is known is this: On the night of May 9, 1838, Burlington's little St. Mary church burned to the ground. Many people, including O'Callaghan, believed it was arson. Even the *Burlington Free Press*, no great friend of O'Callaghan's, reported that "There is not a doubt but that it was the work of an incendiary as no fire had been used in the building for several weeks."⁶⁸ Within a few days of the fire, Catholic and Protestant citizens of Burlington formed a committee to investigate, but, if they ever found anything, it was never reported. O'Callaghan later charged that the committee did investigate "and in their inquiring found out more than they thought prudent to report."⁶⁹ He maintained that the fire was started by a few students and "low" merchants, a "band of fanatics in hatred of the Catholic religion."⁷⁰

Whatever the cause, the destruction of the church was promptly put

right. O'Callaghan quickly raised money—relying only on contributions and studiously avoiding loans—much of it coming from liberal Protestant Burlingtonians, and construction was soon underway. His new St. Mary, located at the southeast corner of St. Paul and Cherry Streets, close to the center of the village and a stone's throw from the Irish tenements at the waterfront, was completed in 1841. Once again the Reverend O'Callaghan had a church from which to lead northern Vermont's Irish community.

VERMONTERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE IRISH

Did the burning of the original St. Mary church, if indeed it was the work of an arsonist, symbolize widespread hostility toward Irish Catholics? There is no simple answer. On the one hand, Vermonters empathized with the Irish for the deplorable conditions under which the British had forced them to live. The *Northern Sentinel*, in an editorial on July 5, 1822, pointed at the distress in Ireland and said "strange has been the mismanagement and neglect evinced by the British government, ever since the conquest of that island."⁷¹ The same paper in 1825 commented that, "The condition of the lower class of people there [Ireland], is to be lamented by every friend of humanity and by every patriot." To relieve Irish distress, the *Sentinel* called on the British government to end absentee landlordism.⁷²

Some Vermonters equated the plight of the Irish under English rule with their own history of rebellion against the Crown. A schoolteacher in Bennington put it this way:

The American (though in full possession of his darling liberty) can never fail of commiserating the destiny of the Irish exiles, when he thinks of what would have been his fate, had the plans of our own Washington and the fortitude of our Revolutionary patriots failed. . . . We trust that she [England] will ere long listen to the dictates of justice, reason, her own honor, and the voice of the world, by emancipating the Irish Catholic from his present, degrading slavery.⁷³

Burlingtonians went so far as to form a Repeal Group in 1843 to support Daniel O'Connell in his efforts to bring about legislative independence for Ireland.⁷⁴ The leaders of this organization were primarily Yankees, prominent members of Burlington society. They included Heman Lowry, formerly the longtime "high sheriff" of Chittenden County, and at this time United States marshal for the district of Vermont, and Nathan Haswell, grand master of the Grand Masonic Lodge of Vermont and Burlington's representative to the state legislature in 1836–1837.

Empathy for the Irish abroad, however, did not always translate into sympathy for them at home. Except for the *Burlington Sentinel*, when

the local press mentioned the Vermont Irish, it was usually in a negative way. Newspapers constantly depicted the Irish as a lawless people, prone to crime, drunkenness, and disease. When the steamer *Phoenix* burned and sank in Lake Champlain in 1819, and a large sum of money being transferred to a bank was reported missing, the press was quick to charge that the thief was an Irishman.⁷⁵ In 1829, there was a report that an Irishman, John S. Barcomb, who “speaks the French language better than the English,” had stolen \$4,300 in Montreal, and the authorities in Quebec offered a reward of one hundred dollars for his capture.⁷⁶ And when an outbreak of smallpox occurred in Royalton in 1842, it was commonly believed that it had been introduced by “an Irishman who was riding in the stage with Mrs. Gibbs.”⁷⁷ The Irish were the scapegoats for whatever ills afflicted society.

When the Vermont press did not portray the Irish as criminals, it cast them as either dullwitted and naive, or as the happy-go-lucky, not-a-care-in-the-world, stage Irishman. A play titled *Eskah*, written by a Burlingtonian and performed in the Queen City in 1830, included a character, Muckle O’Crie, who was described as “a fair picture of the jolly, unsuspecting and superstitious Paddy.”⁷⁸ Jokes, in which the punchline depended on the simple-mindedness attached to the Irish, were a commonplace in the Vermont press beginning in the late 1820s. This one, from the *Burlington Free Press*, April 14, 1843, is representative:

A man told his Irish servant to wake him at six-o’clock. Pat waked him at four—observing that “he came to tell him he had two hours yet to sleep.”⁷⁹

The depictions were not cruel but condescending.

Religion was a sore point. Protestant New England had a long history of antipathy toward Roman Catholicism, exacerbated by long years of war with Catholic New France, and here now were large numbers of Irish Catholics coming to live in the midst of God-fearing Vermont Protestants. In general, like Bishop Hopkins, Vermonters thought Catholics reactionary, and their religious beliefs incompatible with democracy. An editorial in the *Burlington Free Press* in 1835 expressed these sentiments. Quoting a Virginia paper, it said “All know the distinguishing trait of Catholics, among the unenlightened mass at least, to be blind and unqualifiedly submissive to their priest . . . which has kept Catholic Europe so far in the rear of modern enlightenment.”⁸⁰ John Stephen Michaud, born and raised in Burlington in the 1840s, and later a Catholic bishop, wrote that in the days before the Great Famine, “opposition to the Catholic Church [in Vermont] was bitter.”⁸¹

The pope, because he embodied the hierarchical nature of the Church, came in for particular scorn. When the editor of *The Rutland Herald*

heard rumors in 1842 that the Catholics in Castleton were thinking of starting their own newspaper, he wrote:

They [the Catholics] have at Castleton, a meeting-house for jabbering mass, a priest to pardon sin and give tickets for a passage to Heaven, and now a Printing Press, with its immense power, to be added to the facilities for building up the Pope of Rome.⁸²

Theresa Viele, a Louisiana Catholic temporarily residing in Burlington with her soldier husband, commented that she was astonished at how Vermonters characterized the pope as “innately depraved.”⁸³

But this picture of intense anti-Catholic feeling in Vermont must be balanced, for there is much evidence of tolerance and even acceptance. Rev. James Fitton remarked that in his initial visit to Vermont the authorities in many localities invited him to say mass in the schoolhouse or the town hall, and “occasionally, where liberality permitted, in the meeting house, and not infrequently where a Catholic had never been seen, much less a living Catholic priest.”⁸⁴ He went on to say, “the Green Mountain Boys ever seemed, from some cause or other, more open-hearted, courteous and obliging. . . . than citizens of certain other states.”⁸⁵ Even Rev. O’Callaghan, himself an intolerant man, acknowledged that “the only open enemy who ever came out against him in his twenty-four years labor in the Vermont mission” was a man in Tinmouth who criticized the Catholic priest on the grounds that there was already enough religion in town:⁸⁶ an attack aimed more at religion in general than Catholicism in particular. Interestingly, this comment by O’Callaghan was made a number of years after his church burned to the ground, and suggests that he had changed his mind as to the cause of the fire.

Perhaps Vermont was more tolerant toward Catholicism than elsewhere in New England. Certainly Vermonters were attracted to the new and unusual in religion. Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, was born in Sharon, Vermont, in 1805, and John Humphrey Noyes, who established the Oneida Community in New York with its unusual sexual practices, was born in Brattleboro in 1811. The Catholic Church itself appealed to the spiritual and Romantic sensibilities of many Vermonters in the early nineteenth century. There were a number of prominent conversions. Chief among them were Fanny Allen, Ethan’s daughter, who eventually became a nun; Orestes Brownson, editor of the *Boston Quarterly Review*; and DeWitt Clark, editor of the *Burlington Free Press* in the late 1840s. Whatever the reason, Vermont seems to have been less antagonistic to the incoming Catholic Irish than elsewhere in New England.

CONCLUSION

On the eve of the Great Famine of 1845–1848 that was to bring hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the Emerald Isle to North America, the Irish already had a significant presence in Vermont. They worked in a variety of occupations. In Fairfield, Irish farmers tilled their own land; in Underhill and Moretown, Irish loggers cut back the forest; and in Burlington and Middlebury dozens of Irish laborers worked on the docks, operated lathes and looms, and clerked and tailored. As hapless immigrants fleeing the potato famine poured into the Green Mountains a network of earlier Irish settlers was already in place: to welcome, to guide, and to advise.

The pre-Famine Irish were instrumental in establishing the Catholic Church in Vermont. By 1840 Catholics could attend services in their own church structures in Burlington, Middlebury, and Castleton, or if living in an outlying area, await the periodic visit of one of the state's resident priests. Just as important to these new arrivals, the priests—Jeremiah O'Callaghan and John Daly—were themselves from the Old Country, and put an Irish stamp on the Catholic Church in Vermont, sometimes to the annoyance of the state's many French-Canadian Catholics.

In some ways the pre-Famine Irish in Vermont were different from those who came later. Where these earlier immigrants had come primarily from the region north of a line running from Dublin to Galway, with the Famine there was a noticeable shift to emigration from the south. The new immigrant was more likely to come from Cork or Clare than Louth, Cavan, or Tyrone. In addition, while the old Ireland-to-Canada-to-Vermont route remained important, Irish immigrants coming to Vermont were now just as likely to have entered the United States via Boston or New York.

Perhaps the biggest difference between the earlier and later immigrants, however, was not where they came from, or how they got here, but the Vermont they found. The earlier group arrived in a Vermont barely touched by industrialization. Outside of those who found work in the textile mills of Burlington, Colchester, and Middlebury, most labored in small shops, gristmills, and sawmills, while others farmed the land or logged the woods. The Famine Irish who arrived in the late 1840s found Vermont in the midst of a mini-industrial revolution. Railroad construction boomed, employing hundreds of Irishmen. When the tracks were laid the rapidly expanding marble and slate industries offered more work. It was the Famine Irish, with their limited skills and desperate situation, who became the workforce in this mini-industrial revolution, and in the process obscured our knowledge of the Irish who came before them.

NOTES

¹ Anonymous [Nathaniel Hawthorne], "The Inland Port," *The New-England Magazine*, No. 9 (December 1835): 398–409.

² For studies of the pre-Famine Irish in Vermont see James O'Beirne, "Some Early Irish in Vermont," *Vermont History* 28 (1960): 63–72; T.D. Seymour Bassett, "Irish Migration to Vermont Before the Famine," *Chittenden County Historical Society Bulletin* 4 (1966), and chapter 3 in his *The Gods of the Hills: Piety and Society in Nineteenth-Century Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 2000); and chapter 1 in Brian Walsh, "Dreams Realized: Irish-Americans and Progress, Burlington, Vermont, 1830–1910" (Master's thesis, History Department, University of Vermont, 1993). Two works that deal with Irishmen who played important roles in eighteenth-century Vermont are Aleine Austin, *Matthew Lyon: "New Man" of the Democratic Revolution, 1749–1822* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981), and John Duffy and Eugene Coyle, "Crean Brush vs. Ethan Allen: A Winner's Tale," *Vermont History* 70 (Summer/Fall 2002): 103–110.

³ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 193.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁵ Bernard Brewin, letter to his parents, 18 January 1837, in possession of John Leddy, Burlington, Vt. In Ireland the name Brewin is usually spelled Bruen or Bruin.

⁶ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 194.

⁷ D. Aidan McQuillan, "Beaurivage: The Development of an Irish Identity in Rural Quebec, 1820–1860," online posting, <http://members.tripod.com/gail25/que4/htm>, 25 October 2004.

⁸ Quoted in O'Beirne, "Early Irish in Vermont," 66.

⁹ *Northern Sentinel*, 2 August 1822.

¹⁰ Gideon Lathrop, "Diary of Gideon Lathrop, 1823–1839," typescript, Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vermont.

¹¹ Quoted in Bassett, "Irish Migration."

¹² *Burlington Sentinel*, 19 August 1836. The newspaper changed its name from the *Northern Sentinel* in the early 1830s.

¹³ Lathrop.

¹⁴ Evelyn M. Wood Lovejoy, *History of Royalton, Vermont, with Family Genealogies, 1769–1911* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Printing Company, 1911), 957, 958.

¹⁵ C.H. Willey, "Some Historical Facts About the O'Hara Family," typescript, 1893, Vermont Historical Society.

¹⁶ Samuel Swift, *History of the town of Middlebury in the county of Addison, Vermont* (1859; Rutland, Vt.: C.E. Tuttle Co. [1971]), 178.

¹⁷ Abby Maria Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Burlington, Vt.: A.M. Hemenway, 1868), 3: 997.

¹⁸ The family name changed over the years. Originally spelled Donaghy, and sometimes Donoghue, by the end of the nineteenth century it was spelled Donoway.

¹⁹ Peter or Thomas Donaghy to Michael Donaghy, 4 August 1840, Donoway Family Papers, Shelton Museum, Middlebury, Vt., Box 56, Folder 8.

²⁰ "Chain migration" characterized Irish settlement patterns everywhere in North America and the Antipodes. For a fuller discussion of this phenomenon see Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Toronto: P.D. Meany Company, 1996).

²¹ The O'Gradys came from Queens County, Ireland, and settled in Shelburne about 1800. They are mentioned as operating an inn there in 1808. See Marie Harding and Charlotte Tracy, *The History of Shelburne* (Burlington, Vt.: Queen City Printers, 1989), 14. One son, John O'Grady, became a well-known steamboat captain on Lake Champlain in the 1840s, and another son or grandson, William, born in Shelburne in 1823 and graduated UVM in 1848, was the first superintendent of schools in San Francisco in 1856.

²² U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Fourth Census*, 1820, and *Fifth Census*, 1830.

²³ This figure is from Brian Walsh's study of the Burlington Irish in which he counted the number of individuals with Irish surnames in the Manuscript Schedule of the 1840 Census. Not until the 1850 Census was place of birth recorded. Counting surnames has certain problems, one of them being the inclusion of individuals whose names might be Irish but could also be English or Scottish. A far bigger problem in the pre-1850 census numbers, however, is underreporting, because only the name of "head of household" is listed, followed by the number of individuals living in that household. If a young, single, Irishman boarded in a home where the owner had an English surname, the presence of an Irishman would not show up in the count. In calculating the numbers of Irish in Fairfield, Underhill, Moretown, Castleton, and Middlebury, I have used the same method as Walsh. I believe, however, that those numbers, if they err, do so on the conservative side, and that in fact, there were significantly more Irish people in the towns mentioned than those reported in this article.



²⁴ From a list of business advertisers in *Walton's Register and Farmer's Almanac for 1842* (Montpelier, Vt: E.P. Walton and Sons, n.d.).

²⁵ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Third Census*, 1810, and *Fourth Census*, 1820.

²⁶ Charles Morrissey, "The Case for Oral History," *Vermont History* 31 (July 1963): 153.

²⁷ Reverend James E. Horan, "History of St. Patrick's Parish, Fairfield, Vermont," typescript, Special Collections, Bailey-Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont, 3.

²⁸ Of all the early pre-Famine Irish residents of Fairfield we know only the counties of origin of a few. That information comes from inscriptions on gravestones and from work done by Thomas Howrigan, M.D. of Fairfield, who reviewed applications for citizenship in Franklin County for the nineteenth century. What that information showed was an unusually high number of immigrants from County Louth. Early Fairfield-area families with County Louth connections: Duffy, King, Sharkey, McEnany, Kirk, Killin, Brady, Clark, Kane, Ryan (James), Clinton, Conlin, and Denver. From nearby Counties Cavan and Meath: Sheridan and Crosby.

²⁹ Reverend James Fitton, *Sketches of the Establishment of the Church in New England* (Boston: Patrick Donahoe, 1872), 242.

³⁰ Horan, "St. Patrick's Parish," 4.

³¹ Town of Fairfield, *Land Records*, vol. 9, deed dated October 5, 1830, 393.

³² *Ibid.*, vol. 10, deed dated April 20, 1840, 482.

³³ Thomas, Robert, and Harold Howrigan, interview with the author, Fairfield, Vermont, June 22, 2003.

³⁴ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Sixth Census*, 1840.

³⁵ *Fairfield Land Records*, vols. 8–10.

³⁶ Howrigan interview.

³⁷ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Seventh Census*, 1850. The Fairfield Houstons seem to have been Catholics, for the family is buried in Fairfield's Catholic cemetery. However, most Houstons associated with Vermont were of Ulster Scots Presbyterian background, coming from County Derry in the eighteenth century. In Vermont they were prominent in the Londonderry and Walden areas. It is possible, of course, that the Fairfield Houstons were originally Protestants, but converted to the church of their Irish Catholic neighbors.

³⁸ Town of Fairfield, *Town Meeting Records*, March 7, 1836.

³⁹ Loraine Dwyer, *The History of Underhill, Vermont* (Underhill, Vt: Underhill Historical Society, 1976), 8.

⁴⁰ Neil Bartlett, *From the West Side of Mount Mansfield* (Tucson: Arizona: W.N. Bartlett, printed by Alphagraphics, 2000).

⁴¹ Interview conducted in 1990 by Underhill schoolchildren with Mrs. Thelma Stone, descendant of Felix Doon and Margaret Malone. Typescript of the interview in the author's possession.

⁴² U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Sixth Census*, 1840.

⁴³ Stone Interview.

⁴⁴ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Sixth Census*, 1840.

⁴⁵ Mary Reagan, *A Brief History of Moretown, Vermont, for the Celebration of Moretown's Heritage and St. Patrick's Church Centennial* (Moretown: 1982). The post-Famine Northfield Irish have been well documented in Gene Sessions, "'Years of Struggle': The Irish in the Village of Northfield, 1845–1900," *Vermont History* 55 (Spring 1987): 69–95.

⁴⁶ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Sixth Census*, 1840. This figure of approximately fifty Irish Catholics in the area is confirmed in Claire Burditt and Sylvia Sullivan, eds., *Castleton Looking Back: The first 100 years* (Castleton, Vt: Castleton Historical Society, 1998), 28.

⁴⁷ Peter Patten, interview with the author, Fair Haven, Vermont, January 24, 2005. Patten is a native of Fair Haven and an amateur historian whose Irish-American ancestors settled in the Castleton-Fair Haven area in the 1840s.

⁴⁸ Gwilym R. Roberts, *New Lives in the Valley: Slate Quarries and Quarry Villages in North Wales, New York, and Vermont, 1850–1920* (Somersworth, New Hampshire: New Hampshire Printers, 1998), 336.

⁴⁹ U.S. Census, Manuscript Schedule, *Sixth Census*, 1840.

⁵⁰ Committee of the Associated Alumni, *University of Vermont Obituary Record* (Burlington: 1895), 49.

⁵¹ Fitton, *Sketches*, 244.

⁵² Rev. Jeremiah O'Callaghan, *Usury, Funds and Banks; also Forestalling Traffick and Monopoly; likewise pew rent and grave tax, together with Burking and Dissecting: as well as the Gallican Liberties. Are all repugnant to the Divine and Ecclesiastical laws and destructive to Civil Society. To which is prefixed a Narrative of the Author's Controversy with Bishop Copping and of his sufferings for justice sake* (Burlington, Vt.: Printed for the author, 1834), 4–64.

⁵³ O'Beirne, "Early Irish in Vermont," 69.

⁵⁴ In Wallingford, O'Callaghan stayed at the home of James Shirlock. Was this a brother of William Shirlock of Royalton? William did have a brother named James who settled in Vermont.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Howard Coffin, *An Inland Sea* (Burlington: The Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington, 2001), 6,7.

⁵⁶ Rev. Frederick R. Wilson, "A History of Catholicism in Vermont," *Vermont History* 21 (July 1953): 212.

⁵⁷ O'Callaghan, *Usury*, 4-64.

⁵⁸ Hemenway, *Gazetteer*, 1: 626.

⁵⁹ Quoted by Professor Thomas Moriarity in a lecture, "From the Cork Gaeltacht to Holyoke, Massachusetts: The Turbulent Career of Reverend Jeremiah O'Callaghan," Fletcher Free Library, Burlington, Vermont, 12 March 1996.

⁶⁰ Rev. Jeremiah O'Callaghan, *Creation and Offspring of the Protestant Church and the Vagaries and Heresies of John Henry Hopkins, Protestant bishop* (Burlington: Jeremiah O'Callaghan, 1837), iii.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶² John Henry Hopkins, *Primitive Creed* (Burlington: John Henry Hopkins, 1834).

⁶³ John Henry Hopkins, *Primitive Church* (Burlington: John Henry Hopkins, 1835).

⁶⁴ *Burlington Sentinel*, 10 February 1837.

⁶⁵ O'Callaghan, *Creation and Offspring*, 122.

⁶⁶ *Burlington Free Press*, 13 October 1837.

⁶⁷ O'Callaghan, *Usury*, 4-64.

⁶⁸ *Burlington Free Press*, 11 May 1838.

⁶⁹ Quoted in *Metropolitan Catholic Almanac, and Laity's Directory for 1839* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas Jr., 1839), 116.

⁷⁰ Quoted in John G. Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (New York: J.G. Shea, 1886-1892), 3: 488.

⁷¹ *Northern Sentinel*, 5 July 1822.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 17 June 1825.

⁷³ Quoted in O'Beirne, "Early Irish in Vermont," 65.

⁷⁴ *Burlington Free Press*, 6 July 1843.

⁷⁵ Ralph Nading Hill, *Lake Champlain: Key to Liberty* (Woodstock, Vt.: The Countryman Press, 1987), 200.

⁷⁶ *Northern Sentinel*, 27 March 1829.

⁷⁷ Hope Nash, *Royalton, Vermont* (Royalton: Town of Royalton, 1975), 23.

⁷⁸ *Northern Sentinel*, 1 January 1830.

⁷⁹ *Burlington Free Press*, 14 April 1843.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 31 July 1835.

⁸¹ Rev. John S. Michaud, "The Diocese of Burlington," *History of the Catholic Church in the New England States*, ed. William Byrne (Boston: 1899), 131.

⁸² Quoted in Roberts, *New Lives in the Valley*, 337.

⁸³ Teresa Viele, *Following the Drum: A Glimpse of the Frontier Life* (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1858), 30.

⁸⁴ Fitton, *Sketches*, 243.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁸⁶ O'Beirne, "Early Irish in Vermont," 70.

Pre-Famine Irish in Vermont, 1815–1844 - Vermont Historical Society. vermonthistory.org. Views. The pre-Famine Irish were instrumental in establishing the Catholic Church in Vermont. By 1840 Catholics could attend services in their own church structures in Burlington, Middlebury, and Castleton, or if living in an outlying area, await the periodic visit of one of the state's resident priests. Just as important to these new arrivals, the priests—Jeremiah O'Callaghan and John Daly—were themselves from the Old Country, and put an Irish stamp on the Catholic Church in Vermont, sometimes to the annoyance of the state's many French-Canadian Catholics. In some ways the pre-Famine Irish in Vermon... Welthey Durkee (born Crampton) was born at birth place, Vermont. Welthey married Horace W. Durkee circa 1835. Horace was born on October 24 1811, in Swanton Falls, Franklin, Vermont. They had 4 sons: Samuel Crampton Durkee and 3 other children. Welthey DURKEE (born CRAMPTON) Welthey DURKEE (born CRAMPTON). Welthey DURKEE (born CRAMPTON) was born to Samuel CRAMPTON. Welthey married Horace W. DURKEE. Horace was born on August 24 1811, in Swanton Falls, Franklin, Vermont, United States. They had 4 children: Samuel Crampton DURKEE and 3 other children. Welthey Durkee (born Crampton) Welthey Durkee