

American Racism: A Case Study of Irish Immigration

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ABSTRAKT

Během tří století před vznikem Irského svobodného státu v roce 1922 emigrovalo do Ameriky více než sedm milionů Irů. Vztah mezi Američany a těmito irskými přistěhovalci se průběžně měnil. Tato práce se zabývá zejména důvody rasismu ze strany bílých Američanů vůči Irům a také následnými podněty pro přijetí Irů do americké společnosti jako bílých. Práce se zpočátku zaměřuje na kolonizaci Irska Velkou Británií, která započala vnímání Irů jako nižší rasy. Dále práce zkoumá významné události americké historie, které formovaly vztah bílých Američanů a Irů. Práce v závěru shrnuje, že i když získali Irové v Americe status bílých občanů již v polovině devatenáctého století, nebyli plně přijati do americké společnosti až do začátku dvacátého století.

Klíčová slova: imigrace, emigrace, rasismus, Irové v Americe, katolíci, Spojené státy, Irsko, otroctví, abolicionismus, Keltové, kolonizace, velký hladomor, občanská válka, politické karikatury, Sociální Darwinismus

ABSTRACT

In the three centuries prior to 1922, more than seven million Irish immigrated to America. The relationship between white Americans and these Irish immigrants changed over time. This thesis aims at the origins for white American racism against the Irish and the reasons that they ultimately accepted the Irish into American society as fellow whites. The thesis firstly focuses on the colonization of Ireland by Great Britain, which began the perception of the Irish as a lower race. It further studies significant events in American history that formed the relationship between white Americans and the Irish. Ultimately, the thesis concludes that even though Irish-Americans were given their status as whites in the mid-nineteenth century they were not fully assimilated into the American society until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Keywords: immigration, emigration, racism, Irish-Americans, Catholics, United States, Ireland, slavery, abolitionism, Celts, colonization, Great Famine, Civil War, political cartoons, Social Darwinism

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INTRODUCTION

The emigration of Irish to North America played a significant role in shaping the history of both Ireland and the North Atlantic world. As many as seven million people emigrated from Ireland to North America between the early seventeenth century and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921-22. Irish, in spite of the small size of their home country, played an important role in the commercial and industrial revolutions that transformed the North Atlantic world. But the role they played was not always clear. Sometimes it was even tragic, because it was not easy to settle and adapt to the changing conditions both in their homeland and in North America.¹

In reaction to the Kennedy assassination, U.S. Senator, sociologist, and fellow Irishman Daniel Patrick Moynihan astutely stated that “to be Irish is to know that in the end the world will break your heart.”² The Irish experienced many difficulties both in Ireland and in the United States. When the first Irish emigrants arrived to the New World, they often worked as slaves under terrible conditions together with blacks. Later, in the nineteenth century, a great hostility between the Irish and blacks emerged, as they competed against one another on the labor market. To distinguish themselves from their competitors, the Irish set out to prove their whiteness. They sold their votes to the Democratic Party in the mid-nineteenth century in exchange for a new racial identity. During the first years of the American Civil War, Irish soldiers sacrificed their lives for the Union Army in great numbers, but in 1863 their aims started to differ from the aims of the Union, which started to include emancipation, and they abandoned their military support. This did not improve their situation in the United States very much, and Social Darwinism also played its part. Irish-Americans were acknowledged fully as American citizens in the beginning of the twentieth century during an assimilation process also called Americanization.

¹ Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3.

² Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “Daniel Patrick Moynihan Quotes,” Goodreads, accessed April 22, 2014, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/219349.Daniel_Patrick_Moynihan.

1 BEGINNINGS OF IRISH EMIGRATION

1.1 English Colonization and Transatlantic Emigration

Through the woods let us roam,
Through the wastes wild and barren;
We are strangers at home!
We are exiles in Erin!³

In order to better understand the position of Irish immigrants in America, it is necessary to first focus on the English colonization of Ireland, which coincided with the British venture to the New World. During the reign of Elizabeth I, England wanted to regain authority over Ireland, which it had lost in the late sixteenth century. When the transatlantic emigration from Ireland began in the sixteenth century, a system of new laws and land ownership (as well as religion) had already been imposed on Ireland by its English colonizers.⁴

By 1500, the royal control over Ireland was confined only to the English Pale, a coastal strip with its center in Dublin. Other parts of Ireland were Gaelic and mainly under Irish law. The issue of how to treat the Gaelic Irish rose to the fore during the period 1565-1575 when English colonies were established in the Gaelic parts of Ireland.⁵ When the English government decided to bring the whole of Ireland under English control in 1565, an offensive dimension was added to previous strategic considerations. The colonizers were aristocrats rather than mercenaries, and they could justify their actions by seeking the public good, although some of them were seeking private gain in colonizing the original inhabitants. This period produced many justifications for colonization and conquest. Sir Henry Sidney, lord deputy of Ireland from 1565 to 1579, was the leading figure behind the colonization and received considerable support from the English government. He viewed

³ Padraic Colum, ed., *Anthology of Irish Verse* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), 261-63, accessed February 27, 2014, <https://archive.org/details/anthologyirishv00colugoog>.

⁴ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

the Gaelic Irish as unreliable and able to be subdued only by force, whereas the Old English living in Ireland could be civilized by persuasion.⁶

Many differences existed between the English colonizers and Gaelic Irish, mainly in their cultures, religious beliefs, lifestyles, etc. During the Norman offensive in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, England established title to most of Ireland by right of conquest. Although the Irish recaptured much of Ireland in the following two centuries, they never established legal title to the land. So taking back the land, to which England had legal title, was an easy answer to the question of English colonization. The early conquerors believed that the people living under Gaelic rule could be civilized and be English subjects once the tyrannical Gaelic system of government and law was abolished. However, this idea and plan to civilize the Gaelic Irish was not widely accepted, leading to unrestrained cruelty and inhumanity during the colonizing expeditions of Essex in 1574 and Gilbert in 1569. They regarded the Irish as uncivilized, which justified what historian Nicholas Canny referred to as “indiscriminate slaying and expropriation.”⁷

1.1.1 Reasons for Unethical Colonization

One reason for the negative English approach towards the Gaelic Irish is that this was the first time that a larger number of Englishmen actually came into close contact with Gaelic Irish in their native environment. A serious issue was the nature of Catholicism in Gaelic areas, which was often harshly criticized for unorthodox practices and differed greatly from the Episcopal Church in the area of Pale, even though Catholicism was under strong criticism in Pale as well. Thus the English adventurers, who were mostly extreme Protestants, immediately labeled the Gaelic Irish as pagans. English adventurers saw a difference between Christianity and civilization, and they believed in the idea that “a people could be civilized without being made Christian but not Christianized without first being made civil.”⁸ And if it were admitted that the Irish were Christian, they would have to be recognized as civilized as well. As they were proclaimed pagans, it was only one

⁶ Nicholas P. Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 30, No. 4 (October 1973): 576-78, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.k.utb.cz/stable/1918596>.

⁷ Nicholas Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization," 579-83.

⁸ Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization," 585.

more step to declaring them barbarians, a characterization further cemented when the colonizers witnessed the appearance, habits, and agricultural methods of the native Irish.⁹

Another crucial point is that many of those who traveled to Ireland were widely traveled and some well read. From contemporary travel literature, like Johann Boemus (1555), they familiarized themselves with the European standards of how the barbarian society appeared. They had a preconception of barbarism and tried to find it in Gaelic life. The Irish practice of transhumance, which means a seasonal movement of people with their livestock between fixed summer and winter pastures, was taken as a proof that the Irish were nomads and therefore barbarians. Another common characterization of the Irish was that they were licentious and often incestuous. Persuaded by such dubious stereotypes, Englishmen considered Gaelic Irish barbarous and justified their conquest of Ireland on moral and civil bases. Although most colonizers claimed religious conversion as their purpose, they failed in this regard, blaming the barbarous ways of Irish life. So they decided to civilize the Irish first.¹⁰

The civilizing of Ireland and the means used were often compared to the Roman precedent. This can be explained by the notion of England as the new Rome, the center of civilization. On this basis, a justification of the cultural process by which Irish could be reduced to servitude and killed or dispossessed if they refused was used by some colonizers. There was a sense of cultural superiority among the English.¹¹ Irishmen could no longer be protected by English law. As Edmund Spenser explained in 1596, only by force can “the stubborn nation of the Irish” be brought “from their delight of licentious barbarisme unto the love of goodnesse and civillity.”¹²

1.1.2 How the Colonization of Ireland influenced the venture to the New World

English colonizers categorized Irish natives as the most barbarous of peoples and argued that it was their duty to restrict them in their actions and help them achieve liberty through subjection. This idea was not completely original, because many English associated with colonization were familiar with the Spanish attitudes towards Indians, like

⁹ Canny, “The Ideology of English Colonization,” 584-86.

¹⁰ Ibid., 587-88.

¹¹ Ibid., 590-92.

¹² Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596), ed. Alexander B. Grosart (Cork: CELT, 2010), accessed February 27, 2014, <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/E500000-001/>.

their concept of cultural classification, and they might have been influenced by Spanish precedents. Colonizers of the New World used the concept of cultural evolution sharpened further by the Irish experience. Writers and adventurers who had both Irish and American experiences frequently compared the manners of Gaelic Irish with the habits of Native Americans. And later, similar accusations were brought against blacks in the New World. Both the Indians and blacks were accused of being lazy, idle, dirty, and licentious – as the Irish were – but not much effort was ever made to transform them from their supposed state of degeneracy. Indeed the English colonists tried hard to establish inferiority in other peoples so they could justify their acts of aggression.¹³

1.2 Early emigrants

Records of early emigration from Ireland are so incomplete that it is almost impossible to state the precise number of emigrants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A rough estimate of 300,000 to 500,000 emigrants during these almost two centuries is relatively small compared to the huge migrations of the nineteenth century, but it is substantial to the Irish population, which was 2.3 million in 1754. These early migrations reflected the socioeconomic and political dislocations resulting from rebellions, wars, growing commercialization of Irish life and the increasing appeal of the New World as a new chance and retreat. The Protestants generally perceived their emigration as a compulsory escape to a land of freedom. On the other hand, the Catholics considered the emigration a forced banishment and most proved hostile towards emigration, expecting harsh treatment and discrimination in colonies dominated by Protestants. Only the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the American Revolution united Catholics and Protestants with the same goal – an idealized America where all Irishmen could find opportunity and refuge.¹⁴

The majority of Catholics who ventured to the New World in the 1600s and 1700s were indentured servants, who exchanged free passage for several years of bonded labor concluded by a promised material reward. Their emigration is not surprising for the poverty, legal proscription, and Protestant prejudice they had to face in Ireland, but the tradition and experience from hardships and discrimination that many Irish Catholics

¹³ Canny, “The Ideology of English Colonization,” 595-98.

¹⁴ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 137-38.

experienced in colonial America reinforced cultural biases and combined to inhibit a large-scale emigration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁵

1.2.1 White Slaves

The conditions generally were quite harsh for the white settlers in the seventeenth century. Virginia's governor stated in 1671 that in the colony's early decades 80 percent of the indentured servants died shortly after their arrival from the climate, disease, or overwork. Moreover mistreatment of the colonial servants was common. Irish Catholics suffered even greater abuse, partly because many of them were not able to bargain for favorable treatment; partly because of the Anglo-Protestant prejudice; and also because most of them were carried to colonies dominated by plantation agriculture. In Barbados in the seventeenth century, Irishmen were described as poor people who were just permitted to live, and who were mocked by blacks and labeled as white slaves. They worked like dogs in the tropical sun wearing little clothing. And even when they were free, the lack of farmland and competition from slave labor condemned most of them to live from hand to mouth. In the southern mainland colonies, similar treatment was common. In eighteenth-century Maryland, the plantation owners "legislated long service terms, imposed savage punishments for running away, and, according to judicial records, combined overwork with inadequate food and clothing."¹⁶

After finishing their service, few Irish Catholic servants became free farmers. More probably they remained laborers. Just a few went farther north, as the Protestants in New England were extremely hostile. In the early 1700s in Newfoundland, English officials often noted that majority of Irish workers were paid in liquor and "remained in an almost perpetual state of drunkenness and debt peonage."¹⁷ In the end, all the colonial governments, even those initially Catholic, passed restricting legislation on the importation of Irish Catholic servants and restricted their religious practices. Before the American Revolution in the late eighteenth century, Catholicism was scarcely tolerated.¹⁸

Of course, not all of Irish Catholics experienced colonial America as slaves, especially those who were educated, skillful and possessed some capital. A few were lucky enough to

¹⁵ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 139-42.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 144-45.

become plantation owners or traders. Thomas Burke, who practiced law and entered politics, even succeeded in becoming governor of North Carolina in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless such achievements were highly exceptional, as most Irish Catholic emigrants lived short, brutish, and poverty-stricken lives, unhappy, rootless, and alienated.¹⁹

However the political and economic reasons for defending black slavery were more convincing than those defending indentured servitude. In the two decades preceding the American Revolution, indentured servitude declined in urban areas, a result of the possibility of freedom in exchange for military service. After the war, the servitude mainly involved Irish and German ethnic minorities. However by the early nineteenth century, the number of indentured slaves was no longer significant.²⁰

¹⁹ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 145-47.

²⁰ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991), 32.

2 FROM REVOLUTION TO THE CIVIL WAR

The American Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century stopped the Irish immigrants from coming to the New World. But after the revolution, from 1783 to 1814, about 100,000-150,000 emigrants sailed to America. The embargo on American and British trade affected also the commerce between Ireland and America. Moreover the traffic in Irish servants stopped because Britain could not rely on American courts to compel contracts of indenture. In addition, Irishmen emigrating during wartime feared impressments into the British Navy. After the end of revolution in 1783 and with the establishment of the American Republic, emigration of Irish of both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds started to be even more appealing. The religious and political liberty made America ostensibly the land of freedom and promise for Irish emigrants.²¹

2.1 From the white American point of view

Before the U.S. Civil War, Irish Catholics were ascribed very similar characteristics as blacks. Such adjectives as savage, bestial, wild, low-browed, simian, sensual, lazy or groveling were common. This is not surprising, as blacks and Irish very often lived together in the same neighborhoods, did the same hard work mostly in transportation and domestic service, and often shared the same fate of forced emigration. Moreover sex between black men and Irish women was common. Most native-born white Americans could not even think of Irish Catholics as being white before the Civil war.²² Until the 1830s Irish-Americans and blacks lived side by side without any significant discord.

Ireland has an old antislavery tradition, which started in 1177 at the Council of Armagh, where trading in English slaves was forbidden. Irish-Americans were urged by their compatriots in Ireland to join the anti-slavery movement in the United States. Daniel O'Connell was tightly connected with the abolition movement and the Catholic and Irish presses both in the United States and Ireland frequently published his speeches from parliament and notes from meetings of his organization, the Loyal National Repeal Association. This Irishman, who founded the church-supported Catholic Association and

²¹ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 169-79.

²² David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 133-34.

who was a member of the House of Commons, was popular among Irish all over the world.²³

O'Connell and other Irish abolitionists were initially heard by Irish-Americans. In summer 1841, an *Address from the People of Ireland to their Countrymen and Countrywomen in America* was drawn up, signed by sixty thousand people in Ireland, and presented to the American people for the first time on 28 January 1842 at a meeting in Faneuil Hall in Boston. Abolitionists made a special effort to attract Irish-Americans to this meeting through posting handbills and advertisements in a Catholic paper, the *Boston Pilot*. In the last paragraph, the *Address* says:

Irishmen and Irishwomen! treat the colored people as your
equals, as brethren. By all your memories of Ireland, con-
tinue to love liberty – hate slavery – CLING BY THE ABOLITION-
ISTS – and in America you will do honor to the name of Ireland.²⁴

At least four thousand people took part in this meeting, including many Irish from Boston and its surroundings. The abolitionist newspaper the *Liberator* prophesized it would influence the whole country, but this turned out to be overenthusiastic. Bishop John J. Hughes of New York, who was the most influential leading figure of Irish in America, distrusted the origin of the *Address*. If it were proven authentic, he stated that every Irishman should discard and oppose the address as it comes from a foreign source and that naturalized Irishmen do not have different duties from native-born Americans. The key arguments were given at the meeting of Irish miners in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. They labeled the *Address* as a fabrication and stated they did not want to consider colored people as brethren. “We do not form a distinct class of the community, but consider ourselves in every respect as CITIZENS of this great and glorious republic – that we look upon every attempt to address us, otherwise as CITIZEN, upon the subject of the abolition of slavery, or any subject whatsoever, as base and iniquitous, no matter from what quarter it may

²³ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5-7.

²⁴ Daniel O'Connell, *Address from the People of Ireland to Their Countrymen and Countrywomen in America* (Library of Congress, 1841), 1-2, accessed March 31, 2014, <https://archive.org/details/addressfrompeopl100ocon>.

proceed.”²⁵ In 1843, O’Connell warned the Irish living in America that if they stayed in such a land and supported slavery, they would no longer be recognized as Irishmen.²⁶

2.2 From the Irish point of view

After the end of Napoleonic wars between Great Britain’s coalition and France in 1815 and before the Great Famine in Ireland in the late 1840s, between 800,000 and 1,000,000 Irish immigrated to North America. The number of emigrants was twice that of the last two hundred years. Not only the number, but also the character and composition of pre-Famine emigration differed significantly. Because of the postwar economic crisis in Ireland, emigration affected all social groups from wealthy Protestant artisans and farmers to poor Catholic subtenants, farmer’s sons and laborers. Peace between France, Britain, and the United States restored the sea-routes between Ireland and North America, and the New World remained the most sought-after destination of Irish emigrants. Emigration had become an integral part of Irish life even before the potato crop failures of 1845 – 1850.²⁷

That is not very surprising because the outbreak of the Great Famine was preceded by similar catastrophes in agriculture. During 1816-1818 about 50,000 Irish died of starvation or disease caused by abnormally cold and wet weather, which damaged the potato and grain crops. Periods of drought and extreme rain injured the harvest again in 1830 and only help from North America in the form of shipments of Indian meal saved Ireland from starvation. In the following decade, the potato crop harvest failed eight out of ten years, and between 1840 and 1844 the crops failed three more times. No wonder the Irish chose to emigrate.²⁸

2.2.1 The Great Famine

Between the summer of 1845 and the early 1850s, every potato harvest on the whole Irish island failed either totally or partially, resulting in perhaps a million deaths and giving rise to an exodus of another 1.8 million islanders to North America. As potatoes were basically the only food for most Irish people, the crop failure resulted in a catastrophe leading to starvation and diseases, where emigration seemed like the only way to escape

²⁵ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, March 24, 1842, quoted in Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 13-14.

²⁶ Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 10-23.

²⁷ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 193-99.

death and suffering. Even though the crop harvest failed many times before 1845, it never failed in such a scale. The blight was caused by a fungus, *Phytophthora infestans*, which appeared suddenly and destroyed the potatoes immediately. In 1845 the blight struck only 30 to 40 percent of the total potato harvest, and therefore many farmers suffered but few starved. The next year the blight hit the fields again and destroyed almost the entire harvest. The Irish experienced harsh suffering caused by a lack of food. This curse upon the potato crop continued until the early 1850s.²⁹

Ireland received help from Britain, which arranged the distribution of Indian corn from America to the suffering island. As Irish peasants did not have money to buy food, public projects such as building roads, were established. Moreover, Irish-Americans sent millions of dollars and almost one million dollars worth of food to Ireland. Despite the help and charity provided, between 1.1 and 1.5 million people died because of starvation or diseases related to famine. In total, the famine emigration from Ireland was startling. Over 2.1 million Irish, which made about one-fourth of the pre-Famine population, left Ireland and sailed either to North America, Great Britain, Australia or elsewhere. That means that in eleven years more people left the island than in preceding two hundred and fifty years.³⁰

When the fleeing Irish stepped on American soil, they were given the same jobs and living areas as blacks. This inevitably led to miscegenation. The 1850 census registered a new class of “mulattoes,” counting 406,000 nationwide, of which 15,000 were registered in Pennsylvania, the largest number among the free states. The possibility of sexual relations between European-Americans and blacks was not accepted by the general white American public. But the closer the blacks and Irish-Americans were to each other, the stronger the hostility started to emerge between them.³¹

When Irish-Americans refused to recognize the Irish abolitionist Daniel O’Connell and joined the proslavery part of American society, not even the massive immigration of Irish people caused by the Great Famine after 1845 changed anything in their attitudes towards blacks. If they had abolitionist opinions in Ireland, they did not follow and continue in these convictions in America. Instead Irish-Americans stressed and valued their whiteness, because it brought them political rights and jobs. In short, Irish-Americans and blacks

²⁸ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 205.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 280-81.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 280-91.

became staunch enemies. So the Irish immigrants voted for the proslavery Democrats and when they went to the polls in New York in 1850, they shouted phrases like “Down with the Nagurs!” and “Let them go back to Africa, where they belong.”³² On the political scene, Irish Americans established a solid attachment to the Democratic Party and already by 1844 formed a solid bloc of voters on the opposite side of the free black persons, who voted for Republicans. The victory of the Democratic president Polk at 1844 polls has been accounted to the Irish voters.³³

³¹ Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 40.

³² Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 136.

³³ Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 75.

3 RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS

Inhabitants of Ireland were not race-conscious in a way that Irish-Americans became. Most Irishmen never faced any people of African descent in their life and they probably traditionally associated black with evil. Beliefs appear in the Irish folk wisdom that the devil can turn people black or turn them inside out. Irish-American folklore also contains stories of ancestors who, when they arrived to the New World and saw a Black person for the first time in their life, jumped from the boat in horror believing they saw a devil.³⁴ Even though the white skin of Irish-Americans made them qualified for membership in the white race it did not secure their acceptance as white. Instead, they had to earn the admission hard.

3.1 Racialist Anglo-Saxon concept

The first people who claimed to be Americans stressed their Anglo-Saxon origin. However there has never actually been any specific and distinct Anglo-Saxon race throughout the history. England comprised a mix of Northern Germany tribes that settled there in the fifth century, but who did not completely replace the Celtic tribes that already lived in England. The Viking invasion later brought other groups from Northern Europe and Normans joined the mixed English population by Conquest. The term Anglo-Saxon was used to describe the white people living in the United States in comparison with blacks, Indians, Mexicans, Spaniards or Asiatics. It was continuously stressed that it were the descendants of Anglo-Saxons who successfully colonized the eastern coast and established free government.³⁵

As a historian Reginald Horsman states, an Irishman might be characterized as lazy, ragged, dirty Celt when he came to New York, but if his children would settle in California they might be commended as part of the coming energetic Anglo-Saxons ready for the plunge into Asia.³⁶ Similarly, another historian Matthew F. Jacobson suggests, that Irish immigrants could be labeled and despised as Celts and pose a threat to the republic if they settled in Boston in 1877, while at the same time in San Francisco they could become

³⁴ Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 137.

³⁵ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 4.

³⁶ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 4.

proper members of The Order of Caucasians for the Extermination of the Chinaman and defend the U.S. soil from the invasion of “Mongolians”.³⁷

Robert Knox, an anatomist who gave lectures in England during the 1840s and 1850s and is an author of a book called *Races of Men* published in 1850, claimed, that race is everything. He discarded the existence of Causasian race and claimed instead that there are numerous unmixable races within Europe itself. He described the Celtic character in general very negatively and as an example used Ireland. He said that the Celtic character was restless, uncertain and composed of fanaticism, in favor of war and disorder. He also suggested that the Celtic race should be removed from the soil of England for its safety.³⁸

Another theory, which appealed especially to some nationalists and Irish-American politicians who hated the English, was that Americans are a completely new race. But the majority of Americans still considered themselves as the most gifted descendants of Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Interestingly the famous geographer and textbooks writer Jedidiah Morse claimed in 1789, that the American people are descended from the English for the most part and he called them Anglo-Americans. He admitted that they are intermingled with Dutch, Irish, Germans, French, Scotch, Swedes and Jews, but he surely did not believe that this intermingling influenced the core character of Anglo-Americans. Of course blacks and Indians were not anyhow embraced in the description of American people.³⁹ In the first half of the nineteenth century the description of “American” race was connected with its supposed history. Roots of this race were often described as Caucasian, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon, and the Americans race was depicted as the most vigorous branch of the latter. Furthermore some nationalist, in particular those of Irish origin, favored to think of “Americans” as a distinctive race combined of the best characteristics of Caucasians.⁴⁰

Another theory claimed that the children of Irish, German or French immigrants born on the American soil do not differ from other Americans. Whereas blacks are absolutely different from the Americans as it was at the first time they stepped upon the American soil. And that the “coarse skin”, “big hands and feet”, “the broad teeth” or “pug nose” of

³⁷ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1998), 5.

³⁸ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 71-73.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

⁴⁰ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 164.

Irish and German immigrants would disappear in a generation or two. However, there was little consent among white Americans regarding this theory.⁴¹

James Buchanan, the 15th president of the United States, serving in 1857-1861 immediately prior to the American Civil war, who held Mexicans in contempt, thought of the Americans as an “ideal mixed blend” composed not only of Anglo-Saxon race, but in which also English, Germans, Scotch-Irish, Irish, Welsh, French and other Europeans were all intermingled. Caleb Cushing, an American diplomat who served as a U.S. Congressman from Massachusetts and Attorney General under President Franklin Pierce, was also for accepting other whites into his superior race. He considered the white men equal, whether they would be Saxons of England or Celtic of Ireland. But of course he rejected the Indians, Asians and blacks.⁴² All of these various theories and opinions only confirm the statement that the term *race* is a construct and that it is changeable under circumstances.

3.2 Concept of Whiteness

As many historians found out, racial whiteness can be rather changeable. For example the hostility between English and Irish in the nineteenth century was at that time a racial conflict between Anglo-Saxons and Celts. However when Irish emigrated to North America, they took part in a politics of white supremacy often side by side with Anglo-Saxons, with whom they would emphatically deny their racial equality would it be in a different setting.⁴³

For the Europeans who ventured to the New World it was their whiteness that enabled them to enter. On the other hand those who arrived between 1840 and 1924 experienced an environment, where race was the predominate aspect for discussing citizenship and relative merits of people. In American political culture the issue of whiteness never completely lost its significance. Mexican annexation, black Emancipation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow practices, Indian Wars, Asian immigration and Exclusion, Hawaiian and Puerto Rican annexation as well as Philippine conquest kept the whiteness question alive. Similarly with the massive immigration of Irish immigrants during the Famine period in Ireland, the question of whiteness became problematic again. By the 1860s some native born

⁴¹ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 44.

⁴² Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 251-53.

⁴³ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 13.

Americans saw Irishmen as savages, with no respect for law and characterized them as wild and ferocious. It is worth remembering that the original idea aroused already during the English colonization of Ireland, and the first Englishmen who ventured to the New World later recognized the Indians in the same way and gave them the same attributes as they had given to native Irish before.⁴⁴ And the same history repeated with blacks.

3.3 Irish versus Black laborers

The hatred between Irish and Black laborers was not rooted simply in the competition they presented to each other and in the similar conditions under which they had to work, because only that might have raised a feeling of solidarity. The reason was hidden deeper, in the racial consciousness and color prejudice. There was generally a notable decline in socioeconomic conditions of blacks from 1830 to the Civil War. One of the signs of this deterioration was the gradual elimination of the black artisan. By 1838 thirty percent of the 506 male black mechanics and tradesman in Philadelphia did not ply their trade because of color prejudices. White artisans held the power over the labor market by not accepting black apprentices and trainees.⁴⁵

Between 1834 and 1849 Philadelphia experienced many conflicts between Irish and black inhabitants. Only nine major mob attacks are documented, but there were many other smaller incidents that did not get its way to the newspapers. The “Flying Horse Riot” of 1834 in the streets of Philadelphia caught considerable attention. The merry-go-round called by the owner “Flying Horses” was favored by both black and white people and skirmishes, not necessarily racial, about seating preference were common. On August 12, 1834 a mob of several hundred young white men started to fight with the blacks and totally destroyed the attraction. Then the mob moved on and attacked homes of blacks in the side streets. The next evening they ruined the African Presbyterian Church and a place called “Diving Bell,” a grog shop and lodging house for men of all colors. The rioters broke windows, doors and furniture of private homes of black people, driving the inhabitants naked into streets and beating anyone they could. However there must have been some kind of deal between the mob and white inhabitants, as their houses were illuminated and intentionally left alone whereas the black people’s houses were attacked with certainty. A

⁴⁴ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 8-38.

⁴⁵ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 100-1.

reason for the attack was identified as the issue that some employers hired rather black workers than white thus many white laborers were out of work. Moreover, as if to stress the complaint, five days after the end of riots a group of whites attacked black people working in a coal yard in Schuylkill, Pennsylvania. A significant number of these rioters were identified as Irish on the basis of their surnames.⁴⁶

And this riot was nothing exceptional. On the contrary, these race driven riots were common during the Jacksonian period of around 1820 to 1845. At least seventy percent of cities with more than 20,000 citizens experienced some major disorder between 1830 and 1865. And at such a scale, the disorder becomes order and a part of people's lives. Citizens in the antebellum America had the privileges to sell themselves piecemeal, to vote and a kind of unwritten rule to riot. And thanks to the absence of anything like a modern state, only volunteers were expected to take action and assist the mayor in case of any disorder. The role of so-called volunteer fire companies in the riots cannot be omitted. They represented the center of riot and disorder and fought over a control of certain territory with arson as their most powerful weapon. Each of these fire companies was in alliance with some street gang with names like Bouncers, Rats, Stingers, Bleeders, Hyenas, Deathfetchers and so forth.⁴⁷

3.4 Irish versus German immigrants

Both Irish and Germans formed a significant proportion of the total immigration to America, which peaked in 1840s. German immigrants were generally perceived as less dangerous or distinctive from the white Americans than the Irish. The reason probably was the longstanding perception of Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic races as interconnected and many Anglo-Saxons traced their origins among the noble and freedom-loving Germanic peoples. Another difference between Irish and Germans when settling down in the New World was the place of their settlement. While Irish immigrants stayed in the industrialized and multicultural Northeast, Germans settled in the West. Moreover German religious diversification made it harder for German Catholics to identify themselves within a unified German racial entity. Nevertheless they were not considered white similarly as Irish

⁴⁶ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 125-27.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 131-44.

immigrants and sometimes they were referred to as stealing jobs of “white people” or as “red-bearded” Teutons.⁴⁸

3.5 Labor organizations

Labor organizations fulfilled an important role for the Irish workers both in Ireland and in the New World. In Ireland there is a long tradition of labor organizations starting in 1641 with a secret society called the Defenders. The Whiteboys emerged later in the eighteenth century, their name coming from the fact that its members wore white shirts as a disguise. Other societies included Molly Maguires, Levellers or Right Boys. They usually protected farmers from enclosure, eviction and rent increases, sometimes using violence and destroying fences, crops, and livestock. They were not restricted by religion and worked both in Catholic as well as Protestant backgrounds. The Ribbonmen were the most influential secret society in Ireland in the nineteenth century where they fought against falls in grain prices. This society firstly interfered in the United States in 1834 along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal where 1,800 Irish immigrant workers were employed by agents under contract with the company. The conflicts lasted until 1839 and were caused by different reasons. Firstly Irish workers from two different Irish counties, Cork and Longford, fought for the job control along the canal. Secondly the dismissal of workers was followed by beating and in the end killing the offending supervisor. In 1835 they struck for higher wages and later another dispute arose between two Irish groups. In 1836 Irish workers fought a group of Dutch and native-born Americans who rejected to join a strike. In spring 1838 Irish laborers burned shanties of German workers as they feared lower wages caused by German presence. In August 1839 one hundred armed Irish laborers attacked two sections where German workers were employed. Maryland militia had to restore order, shooting at least eight laborers, seizing 120 weapons, destroying shanties and taking twenty-six prisoners. All these incidents were attributed to an organized society widespread throughout the whole States. The strikes and incidents at other constructions were very similar in character to that on Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.⁴⁹

Series of assaults and murders in Pennsylvanian anthracite coal fields during the 1860s and 1870s confirmed the existence of the secret Irish terrorist organization called Molly

⁴⁸ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 46-47.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 92-94.

Maguires, greatly feared by the Americans. Trials and executions of the culprits presented a spectacular climax to this unique affair in American history. Molly Maguires were surrounded by a mist of uncertainty and ambiguity, depicted either as terrorists and sociopaths or innocent victims and proletarian revolutionaries. But since the 1870s they were commonly depicted mainly by the newspapers as inherently evil Irishmen terrorizing the anthracite region for twenty years and in the end brought to justice by James McParlan, a detective employed at the Pinkerton's national detective agency.⁵⁰ The history of Molly Maguires still remains a mystery, as the historians will probably never know for certain who and what the Molly Maguires were.

⁵⁰ Kevin Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3-5.

4 AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Don't stop a moment to think, John.
Our country calls then go,
Don't fear for me nor the children, John,
I'll care for them you know.⁵¹

These are the first words of a very popular song in the United States during the summer of 1861 called *Take Your Gun and Go, John*. Author of lyrics is unknown, but the music is by H. T. Merrill and the whole song is inscribed to the Maine volunteers. It is sung from the perspective of a woman who encourages “John” to enlist in the American Civil War and she assures him that she can manage household until he comes back home.⁵²

Although still debated, the reasons for the Civil War are usually agreed to have been the federal against states' rights, expansion of abolitionist movement, the future of labor in the period of Western expansionism, the question of slavery and the election of 1860 where the Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln was elected. After four years the war ended in favor for the Northern states known as the “Union” which defeated the Southern “Confederacy.” This conflict claimed more lives than all of the other wars fought by the United States combined, with casualties around 600,000. The victory of the “Union” brought an official end to slavery. Other changes included for example the breakthrough in medicine and advancement of women, who were trained as nurses and acquired both status and pay for their work. However, it is still questionable whether the war actually improved or worsened the racist and ethnocentric attitudes.⁵³ For the purposes of this thesis it is not possible to describe the causes and results of the American Civil War in more detail and expand on this topic. Nevertheless attention has to be paid to the Irish participation in the Civil War as it shaped American attitudes towards Irish-Americans and had a significant impact on the result of the war.

⁵¹ H. T. Merrill, “Take Your Gun and Go, John,” (Chicago: Root & Cady, 1862), accessed April 11, <http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/catalog/levy:090.056>.

⁵² E. Moore Quinn, “Introduction: The Irish in the American Civil War,” *Irish Studies Review* 18, no. 2 (May 2010): 135, accessed April 11, 2014, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=6571ac63-5af4-41f4-97a9-b4ecb5275b19%40sessionmgr4001&hid=4207>.

⁵³ E. Moore Quinn, “Introduction: The Irish in the American Civil War,” 135-36.

4.1 Irish in the U.S. Army

Irish-Americans often joined the military in order to improve their poor socioeconomic conditions and in the 1850s immigrants formed the majority of army personnel where most were of Irish origin. This remained a reason for joining the army also during the American Civil War, as Irish soldiers could earn a lot of money by enlisting. As the immigrant participation in the military constantly increased since the 1820s, the U.S. Army started to be concerned and limited enlistment of immigrants. But after some findings it was concluded that even though the immigrants can be more disobedient, they are usually of the same quality as the native soldiers and moreover are less likely to desert. In 1842 the Secretary of War John C. Spenser suggested that the Army should accept immigrants who wanted to become naturalized American citizens. Within five years restrictions disappeared and the only condition remained the knowledge of English language. Religion could be seen as a distracting problem, but it seemed not very important in the Army, as there were many religious groups and those who rejected the Protestant religious services quietly were not visibly impacted. Harsh treatment of Catholics was actually caused by many other factors including their status of immigrants, poor laborers and their reluctance in submitting to the Army's religious practice. Catholic soldiers were mistreated particularly during the time of war with Mexico, whose inhabitants were Catholics as well. As a result the most cases of mass desertion among Catholics in the U.S. army took place.⁵⁴

4.2 Irish in the American Civil War

At the 1860s election Irish-Americans remained faithful to the Democratic Party. Republicans seemed to be too much concerned with the conditions of black workers in the South than with poor Irish laborers. Irish-Americans also feared that if the Republicans would win and slavery would be abolished, the freed black people would take over their jobs. In order to ensure that Irishmen would be fighting on the side of the Union they had to promise them some extra benefits, like enlistment bonuses, extra rations, state subsidiaries for soldier's families or incorporating Catholic chaplains. The Irish motivation to join the army, apart from these bonuses, was a hope to restore the freedom of Ireland

⁵⁴ Susannah Ural Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 31-36.

from the British oppression, maintain American Union together with the basic economic need.^{55 56}

4.2.1 The Irish Brigade

Irish and Irish-Americans formed significant military reinforcements in the Union Army between 1861 and 1865. It is recorded that nearly 150,000 were in service, not only in the Irish Brigade, but a significant number as volunteers in non-Irish regiments. The soldiers of the five-regiment Irish Brigade were famous for their toughness and bravery, sometimes called the “Fearless Sons of Erin”. The brigade numbered 3,000 men at the beginning of 1862 in the training camp, and as stated in a very detailed book *The Irish Brigade and Its Campaigns*, the total number of killed, wounded and missing soldiers of the Irish Brigade that the author captured was 1,852.^{57 58}

As Pierson states in his book, which praises the Irish involved in the American Civil War, Irish people in Northern States responded quickly and volunteered for the Union as they felt that the safety of the home of their exiled race was at stake and that principles of democracy and Constitution were threatened. They were therefore patriots, not mercenaries, and had the same right to fight for the Union as the native-born Americans had, together with German and Polish immigrants. The author also adds that many young Irishmen wanted to learn the art of war with a hope that one day they will use it in their own mother country.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the historian Susannah Bruce argues that many Irishmen saw an opportunity in the Civil War to improve their lives in America. They perceived the war in a way of what impact it will have on their own communities. And as long as their objectives were identical with the Union’s objectives, they would volunteer to its service.⁶⁰

Therefore the Irish-American military service improved the perception of Irishmen among native-born Americans even though some anti-Irish prejudice still remained. However since 1862 the Union’s cause embodied also emancipation and simultaneously

⁵⁵ Susannah Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 42-43.

⁵⁶ “The Irish Brigade”, History.com Staff, A+E Networks, 2010, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/the-irish-brigade>.

⁵⁷ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 2.

⁵⁸ John S. Pierson, *The Irish Brigade and Its Campaigns* (New York: William McSorley & Co., 1867), 599.

⁵⁹ Pierson, *The Irish Brigade and Its Campaigns*, 5-6.

Irish-Americans started to realize the massive physical toll the war demanded from them as many lied dead on the Virginia and Maryland battlefields. In 1862 Irish opinions on the war were mixed and their common goal was preserving the Irish-American interest rather than the American one. Emancipation also posed a threat of the stronger competition from free blacks in the labor market. Moreover blacks were the only group in America that Irishmen could claim they are above in the socioeconomic system and with emancipation this would not be true anymore. All these facts combined to the decline of the Irish-American support for the Union war effort since 1862.⁶¹

4.2.2 Summer of Irish Rage

Irish-Americans in the North clearly indicated that they would fight for the Union, but they would never fight for freeing the black slaves. And when the government tried to force them to serve in the army through a draft, their patience was all over. The New York draft riots started on July 13, 1863 and lasted for five days. The mob contained not only Irish Catholic laborers but also German and other immigrants as well as skilled laborers and native-born Americans. The rioters targeted African Americans, abolitionists, Republicans and anyone else who they might think responsible for the perceived injustices. New York was soon on fire as the fire crews were involved in the riots. The Colored Orphans Asylum was burnt, whose residents barely escaped, millions of dollars worth of property was destroyed and the rioters also directly or indirectly contributed to the deaths of over one hundred people. However there were also some Irishmen fighting on the other side and helping police to restore order. Eventually, the Irish Catholic community stopped defending what happened and over the next two years New York Democrats collected enough money to buy the exemption of nearly every drafted man who did not want to serve.⁶²

Unfortunately these riots reinforced or renewed most of the stereotypes about Irish among the native-born Americans. Forgetting that there were also other people than Irish Catholics involved in the riots, the press put all the blame on them and they were again depicted as animal-like and lower in the society. The decline of support of the Republican

⁶⁰ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 41.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

⁶² Susannah Ural Bruce, "Summer of Irish Rage," *America's Civil War* 22, no. 1 (March 2009): 24-31, accessed April 11, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/docview/223361579>.

party among Irish in America was also seemed by many Americans as unpatriotic and disloyal and it contributed to the image of the Irish which endured for decades presenting them as violent, disloyal and threatening everything good in America.⁶³

4.2.3 Irish in the Confederate Army

However Irish immigrants did not serve only on the side of the Union army, even though most of them lived in the North. Around 20,000 joined the Confederate army, which is a considerable number, taking into account that approximately 85,000 Irish immigrants lived in the eleven Southern states which became known as Confederacy. Thus when immigrants from Ireland arrived, they had to cope not only with the assimilation in a new land, but also with becoming Confederate in 1861. So it can be concluded, that the Civil War did not set only American against American, but also Irish against Irish for some time. The paradox in contradictory Confederate opinions, when they at one side offended Irishmen and immigrants in general, and on the other side served with them on the same battlefield, soon took its toll. And when the “Yankees” came from the North to the South Irish welcomed their compatriots again as their brothers and not enemies. When the war ended, the Irish and also other defeated whites from the South, had to redefine themselves as Southerners and as Americans. And the racial ideology claiming white supremacy was their means how to achieve that.⁶⁴

4.3 Political Cartoons after the Civil War

Popularity of political cartoons in America began with the Benjamin Franklin’s “Join, or Die” cartoon firstly published in the Pennsylvania *Gazette* on May 9, 1754. The cartoon portrayed a snake cut into eight pieces each of which represented one of the colonial governments. Franklin hid a meaning into the cartoon based on a superstition that a severed snake could revive if rejoined before sunset. In this way he intended to drive the American colonies to unite for common defense and security. The cartoon later appeared many times in the American history. The success of political cartoons and technological advances in

⁶³ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 182-89.

⁶⁴ David T. Gleeson, ““To live and die [for] Dixie”: Irish civilians and the Confederate States of America,” *Irish Studies Review* 18, no. 2 (May 2010): 140-48, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=6571ac63-5af4-41f4-97a9-b4ecb5275b19%40sessionmgr4001&hid=4207>.

printing enabled printing cartoons regularly in the antebellum American weeklies such as *Harper's Weekly* or *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.⁶⁵

4.3.1 American Protestant Press

During the middle of the nineteenth century many racist cartoons were published in Protestant American press which depicted the Irish as less human and sometimes compared them to black people. The very famous cartoon published by *Harper's Weekly* in 1876 and created by the famous political cartoonist Thomas Nast shows an Irishman on scales of civic merit with a black man, showing both of them at the same weight level.⁶⁶ Both are depicted as grotesque in appearance, equally dangerous to the republic and ignorant.

The Gilded age, how the period in the United States starting after the Civil War, involving Reconstruction and ending with the beginning of the Progressive Era in 1900 was satirically called, gave preconditions for the further development and popularity of political cartoons. It was partly due to expansion of new technologies of mass circulation but also because of the intensity of partisan debate. These cartoons reflected the society and were full of prejudices of the white, Protestant, middle-class majority and showed the regional and partisan conflicts within this prevailing society in the United States. The Gilded-Age politics dealt with several issues including gender, ethnicity, religion and also struggle over material resources in more and more stratified economy.⁶⁷

In order to gain more votes, Democrats started to look for Irish working-class votes, but that meant that Irish had to be “whitened” first. So the new immigrants started to be defined as a white ethnic group rather than a race, which was not a case with the African Americans status. But this process of whitening had limits and that can be seen when analyzing the cartoons portraying Irish people in an ape-like way. As Rebecca Edwards points out in her work, a lot of native-born American Protestants continued to think of Irish people as “ignorant aliens, easily corrupted, subservient to illegitimate authority (that is, the Pope), and subversive democracy.” This antipathy could be felt the most in cities like

⁶⁵ Cian T. McMahon, “Caricaturing Race and Nation in the Irish American Press, 1870-1880: A Transnational Perspective,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 36-37, accessed April 4, 2014, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=5662a1de-8592-4d09-9c12-8c338cf15ee6%40sessionmgr4002&vid=1&hid=4207>.

⁶⁶ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 4.

New York, where the political organization Tammany Hall, which helped immigrants, most notably the Irish, provided potent leadership for large groups of immigrant voters.⁶⁸

4.3.2 Irish-American Catholic Press

Caricatures humiliating Irish people, depicting them as simian, violent, thuggish with jutting jaw, sloping forehead and simian nose appeared in Protestant periodicals like *Harper's Weekly*, *Puck* and *Judge* in the post-war years. But to take into account both halves of this struggle between Irish and native-born Americans, attention has to be paid also to the political cartoons that were published in the Irish-American Catholic papers. Between 1870 and 1880 the three leading Irish American weeklies included the *Boston Pilot*, *New York Irish World* and *New York Irish-American*. Even though they had different relations with the Catholic Church all three agreed that Irish people had right to self-government. Such policy was caused by the fact that the periodicals were considerably read in Ireland as well.⁶⁹

A historian McMahon argues in his article, that by overestimating the influence of the host's community the transnational dimensions of Irish immigrant identity had not been fully examined. He states that Irish living in America attributed their local troubles to the global drama between freedom and tyranny. Mass migration contributed to developing a huge readership between Irish Americans and by the 1870s the leading weeklies counted their readers in tens of thousands. But the readership of these periodicals extended over the New World, as the immigrants to America stayed in touch with their relatives and friends around the world by exchanging written and printed words on regular basis. By combining ethnic solidarity and civic republicanism, Irish living in the United States developed statuses as both Irishmen and Americans and saw themselves as immigrants and emigrants at the same time.⁷⁰

Irish-American Catholic papers were behind in adopting the political cartoons compared to the Protestant American Press because of lower circulations, limited revenue and smaller staffs. The *New York Irish World* was the first to change this trend in the early

⁶⁷ Rebecca Edwards, "Politics as Social History: Political Cartoons in the Gilded Age," *Magazine of History* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 11, accessed April 4, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/docview/213729518/fulltext?accountid=15518>.

⁶⁸ Rebecca Edwards, "Politics as Social History: Political Cartoons in the Gilded Age," 11-12.

⁶⁹ Cian T. McMahon, "Caricaturing Race and Nation in the Irish American Press," 33-36.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

1870s and started to regularly publish political cartoons on the front page. 1870s were golden years for Irish-Americans. They acquired a loud voice and increasing control of political machines, such as New York's Tammany Hall. The growth of Irish-American periodicals also meant creating a stronger bond among the Irish community in America, as well as their families and friends abroad. No wonder that native-born Americans started to fear the power of the strong community of Catholic Irish that were brought to America by decades of mass migration and changed the socio-political landscape of urban America. In Irish American papers the American opinion was depicted in a far more skeptical way and portrayed nativism as a transnational conspiracy dead set against the Catholic Irish community. They argued that the newspapers both in America and Europe worked to spread lies about Ireland and Irish people.⁷¹

But there was another problem that Irish Catholic faced and depicted in their cartoons and that was the oppression from the British Empire they experienced and which colonized the world. These cartoons also supported the will of Irish nationalists to sympathize with non-white peoples around the world and wanted to present the Irish struggle as part of an international fight for freedom from British rule that overcame color distinctions. Some cartoons published in the *Irish World* connected the famines in Ireland and India as being caused by British misgovernment. They also connected Irish suffering with that in Asia and Africa, blaming the British Empire as an initiator.⁷²

⁷¹ McMahon, "Caricaturing Race and Nation," 37.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 42-46.

5 AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

5.1 Social Darwinism and Americanization

Social Darwinism contributed to the poor perception of the Irishmen already worsened by the result of their actions in the Civil War and their disagreement with the emancipation. From the beginning of the twentieth century the process of Americanization began in the United States. The different ethnic immigrant groups had to be transformed into Americans in order to stay in the country, and accept the American culture, customs and values.

5.1.1 Social Darwinism

Social Darwinism is generally perceived as something bad in the history. It is based on Charles Darwin theories and his books *On the Origin of Species* first published in 1859 and *The Descent of Man* published firstly in 1871, but his theories on biological evolution are misapplied to the evolution of societies and place different cultural groups on a ladder of evolution.⁷³ It basically claimed that the English society was on the top of the scale while all other groups such as Irish or Italians were below. It was founded on the principles of the survival of the fittest and laissez-faire approach. Darwinism became well established by the 1870s in the United States, although not accepted by all American scientists.⁷⁴

Darwinism naturally presented a threat to the Roman Catholicism by its denial of any supernatural force. And the Social Darwinism, which extends the theory of the “survival of the fittest” to economic and political domains, posed further threat to the Roman Catholics. A militant nativist response to the huge waves of Irish and German immigration was presented by the Know-Nothing movement emerging right before the Civil War. And the following increase in immigration of Italians, Polish, Lithuanian and others in the 1800s gave rise to a new form of anti-Catholicism – the American Protective Association (APA). The consequences for Roman Catholics involved the advocacy of sterilization of the “feebleminded” and the introduction of intelligence tests to eastern European immigrants which would demonstrate their inferiority. Simultaneously a caricature of an Irish servant girl with a mouth as a baboon and horns on her head was published by the *New York*

⁷³ John van Wyhe, “Darwin’s Publications,” Darwin Online, accessed April 20, 2014, <http://darwin-online.org.uk/contents.html>.

⁷⁴ Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as model and nature as threat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 104.

Evening Telegram in 1886. Conservatives used Darwinism to justify the social and economic hierarchy and the social scientists and liberal reformers used it to legitimate the program of eugenics and social engineering. Moreover the scientific theory of evolution was not formally condemned and Roman Catholicism had to deal with it many times during the twentieth century. This process reached its climax in 1950 when the Pope Pius XII conditionally approved the theory. The phenomenon of emerging sciences such as Social Darwinism, eugenics and anthropology is particularly visible at the American Expositions that took place across various states in the United States at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century.⁷⁵

5.1.2 Americanization

Americanization of the immigrants means their assimilation in the United States. The issues arising with the large numbers of immigrants who came into the United States became serious in the beginning of the 1900s. As Huebner states in his article, in 1904 the number of immigrants was 812,870 and in 1905 it reached 1,026,499. Their concentration was particularly high in the North, mainly in the big cities, where about fifty percent of the total population in 1900 was of foreign parentage and more than twenty percent were immigrants. While in the South the proportion of immigrants was only 5.9 and 2.1 percent.⁷⁶

School and trade unionism represented the main forces used for the purposes of Americanization. The Irish of the upper class were not only very active union members but they were often in control of the unions. Nonetheless the Irish of the lower classes were shiftless and their membership was unstable. Other force acting in Americanization was the physical environment and the presence of American life, even though it could not have a strong impact in the environment of colonies comprised of the same nationality. But still the Irish immigrants were thought to have receptive minds and a higher ability to assimilate into American society than for example the Italians who did not forget about their home country. Another factor having the power to influence the assimilation of immigrants was

⁷⁵ R. Scott Appleby, "Exposing Darwin's "hidden agenda": Roman Catholic responses to evolution, 1875-1925," in *Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion, and Gender*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers, John Stenhouse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 176-79.

⁷⁶ Grover G. Huebner, "The Americanization of the Immigrant," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 27, no. 3 (May 1906): 191-92, accessed April 22, 2014, http://www.jstor.org.proxy.k.utb.cz/stable/1010522?__redirected.

the Church, mainly Catholic as most of the immigrants were of this denomination. Especially Irish Catholics were influenced by the Church as their attendance was high.⁷⁷

One of the other forces of assimilation, which affected only the English speaking immigrants, was the press. And from the newspapers published at the beginning of the twentieth century it follows that the Irish, together with the English, Welsh, Germans and Scandinavians, were actually welcomed in the United States. Therefore the Huebner's article suggests that in the beginning of the twentieth century the United States finally took a positive attitude towards the Irish immigrants.⁷⁸

5.2 American Expositions 1876 - 1916

Between the years 1876 and 1916 nearly one hundred million people acted as fairgoers in the exhibitions that took place throughout the United States. Themes of these expositions were mainly focused on the progress and evolution of humans with displays from around the world divided according to race and nationalities. Although Native Americans and blacks were presented in these exhibitions very distortedly, the impression of other non-white peoples from around the world was twisted similarly.⁷⁹ Irish villages were also present at these fairs. The artificially built Irish villages depicted villagers in their daily routine and traditional crafts. People and culture of these villages were always presented as primitive in order to assure the white American visitors of their cultural superiority.⁸⁰

The Centennial Exhibition organized in Philadelphia in 1876 had so far the largest attendance of all exhibitions held in the United States. This exhibition attracted almost ten million people, which comprised nearly one-fifth of the American population at those times. The visitors were not only members of the upper classes, but considering the unstable economic situation in America, emphasis was put on attracting also working classes to exhibits showing comparative racial and material progress. The idea behind was to give workers in the new world a sense of superiority over those in the old world and to

⁷⁷ Huebner, "The Americanization of the Immigrant," 194-210.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 211-12.

⁷⁹ Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions 1876-1916* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 2-29.

⁸⁰ Stephanie Rains, "Colleens, cottages and kraals: the politics of 'native' village exhibitions," *History Ireland* 19, no. 2, March/April 2011, accessed March 20, 2014, <http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/colleens-cottages-and-kraalsthe-politics-of-native-village-exhibitions/>.

enable them to discover new practical ideas in matter of technology. Directly opposite the Main Building the “Centennial City”, a shantytown full of cheap entertainment and vices, grew as a contrast to the exhibition. After an incident in which two women, one of them referred to as Irish Maggie, visited several saloons together with an exhibitor James M. Canfield and the man was discovered dead the next day, the police investigated the whole area and the shantytown had to be destroyed consequently.⁸¹

At the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition 1893, celebrating the 400th anniversary of the landfall of Columbus, the whole exposition was divided into two main areas: The White City and the Midway, which represented the non-white races. The Midway gave a scientific and ethnological approval of viewing the non-white people as barbaric and childlike.⁸² It represented non-white people on a descending scale of humanity. However, two German and two Irish villages, which represented the Teutonic and Celtic races, were closest to the White City. Thus these two races were considered the least inferior at the end of the nineteenth century. In the middle of the Midway there were the Asians and at the end of this imaginary scale there were the Native Americans and blacks. Walking through these expositions the Americans could compare themselves scientifically with the others, seeing humanity and progress at its highest level down to its lowest animalistic origins. At another exhibition in Atlanta in 1895 Senator Ben Tillman during his speech warned among others against the problem with immigration in the North, where the ignorant foreigners live at the bottom of society.⁸³ The problem of immigration was still discussed at the San Francisco’s Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915. Here the idea of Race Betterment have been developed which led to a concern about the future of American civilization as affected by increasing immigration.⁸⁴

From the arrangement of the exhibitions it is apparent that Irish or German immigrants still were not considered one hundred percent equal to the white Americans at the end of the nineteenth century. Even though these exhibitions showed the Irish in their native villages in Ireland and not in America, a link with Irish-Americans must have been clear. Hence Irish-Americans were already generally considered white, they were not seen as rightful American citizens.

⁸¹ Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 32-35.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 65-75.

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined important aspects that could influence the position of Irish immigrants and their descendants within American society. Their social status in America started to be shaped as early as the British colonization of Ireland began. British colonizers who already condemned the Irish living in Ireland and who later colonized the New World did not change their attitudes toward Irish immigrants in America.

Unlike blacks who experienced similar mistreatment and were an object of strong racism in the United States, Irish-Americans never received any help from anyone. Fate did not spare the Irish people at all. They were forced to emigrate from their home island due to adverse conditions caused by both the British oppression and a natural catastrophe. They had to face harsh treatment when they arrived in North America, and their struggle to earn white racial classification among native-born Protestant Americans took hundreds of years.

On the other hand, Irish-Americans won a place inside American society much earlier than, for example, blacks. As an example and a sufficient proof, the ethnicity of American presidents can be examined. Presidents of Irish descent were common phenomena since the nineteenth century in the United States including Andrew Jackson, John Fitzgerald Kennedy or Ronald Reagan. On the other hand, the first black president of the United States was not elected until the twenty-first century. Furthermore Barack Obama is actually of Irish origin on his mother's side.

Fundamental events of American history which influenced the lives of Irish people in America and the Americans the other way around are studied in this work, including the British Colonization of Ireland, American Revolution, the Great Famine in Ireland, American Civil War, Reconstruction and various expositions that took place across America at the turn of the twentieth century and had a massive influence on the perception of race and whiteness as such. But it is not possible to record the destiny of Irish-Americans as unified, because each person is individual. And when the huge number of Irish immigrants scattered around the whole United States is considered, it is natural that their fates diverged. Therefore, in order to reduce the studied immigrant group, this thesis mainly focused on the Irish Catholic immigrants who settled in the northeast United States, as they created the majority of the whole Irish emigration.

⁸⁴ Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 225.

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