UNPOLISHED EMERALDS IN THE GEM STATE: HARD-ROCK MINING, LABOR
UNIONS AND IRISH NATIONALISM IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST AND IDAHO,
1850-1900

by

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ABSTRACT

Irish immigration to the United States, extant since the 1600s, exponentially increased during the Irish Great Famine of 1845-52. For many Catholic Irish, the legacy of colonization and the Famine intensified an existing narrative of forced exile and dispossession. It also endowed them with a predisposition to identify similarities between colonial exploitation and capitalism. These factors fed a growing Irish nationalism on both sides of the Atlantic, protean in the 1700s, which reified in the 1800s, around Anglophobia. In the Mountain West where mining spearheaded exploration and settlement, the Irish made up the largest ethnic group in hard-rock mines in the latter part of the 1800s. Here, their Irish nationalism primed them to unionize miners to resist the exploitative power of industrialists. In Idaho this labor activism, predominantly led by Irish immigrants and their progeny, evidenced itself most profoundly in the Coeur d'Alenes in the last decade of the nineteenth century. This paper contributes original research to Irish ethnicity in the West, particularly in Idaho, a topic understudied and often overlooked.

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INTRODUCTION

"Every Union should have a rifle club…. so that in two years we can hear the

martial tread of 25,000 armed men in the ranks of labor."[1]

The words above are from Ed Boyce, President of the Western Federation of

Miners (WFM), in his 1897 address at the union's annual conference. Boyce, who

immigrated to the United States in 1882, became active in the labor movement and

unionization in Idaho and the West, yet never lost his passion for Ireland's liberty. Even

after his retreat from labor issues in his later reincarnation as a wealthy mine owner, he

continued to pursue the cause of freedom for Ireland.[2] The spirit of Irish nationalism,

fueled by oppression and English tyranny, found a natural outlet in the labor movement

in the United States, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth-century, through

people like Boyce.[3] He once compared capitalists to Tories and working people to the

American patriots who defeated them. Traditionally, historians have studied the Irish

contribution to the labor movement in large Eastern cities and manufacturing areas,

overlooking the considerable, often overwhelming, involvement of Irish immigrants and

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[1] Vernon H. Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict: Labor Relations in the Nonferrous Metals Industry Up to 1930*, (1950; repr., New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 67.

[2] David M. Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale: The Irish in the West, 1845-1910* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 301.

[3] Eric Arnesen, *Encyclopedia of US Labor and Working-Class History,* ed., vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2007), 471.

their descendants in union activities in the West.[4] Boyce's story highlights Irish

involvement in the Western labor movement, the long term influence of Irish

nationalism,[5] and the role Irish immigrants played in the history of Idaho and the West.

They, like many East European, Scandinavian and Southern European immigrants

labored in the Western extractive industries, the backbreaking, inconstant, life-shortening

toil that helped fuel the nation's rise to preeminence. Their story, the story of "non-

Anglo-Saxon whites" in the West, is underrepresented and practically undocumented in

Idaho. This shortfall is addressed in this paper; it focuses on the Irish in the American

labor movement in the West, and specifically in Idaho in the second half of the nineteenth

century.

In order to speak to the lacuna, particularly in Idaho of Irish immigrants'

contribution to the state's history, the importance of mining to the West cannot be

underestimated. Development, settlement and Euro-American expansion west of the

Mississippi River received its impetus through mining. From California to South Dakota,

as well as northern Idaho to southern Arizona, the lure of mineral wealth drew millions of

migrants to land previously known only to Native Americans and some fur trappers.[6]

Like so many other groups whose history became "white," Irish history in the West in

general, and Idaho in particular, is camouflaged in current discourse by their success and

integration to the American mainstream. Undoubtedly, their white skin privileged them

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[4] Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (New York: Pearson Education, 2000), 112; Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale,* 290.

[5] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 301. The author believes Boyce's Irish nationalism gave rise to his militancy, something that predated his identity as a worker.

[6] Mark Wyman, *The Hard Rock Epic*: *Western Miners and the Industrial Revolution, 1860-1910* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1979), 18.

above Native Americans, African Americans, and people of color generally, but the

experience of the Famine generation and those that came after it, inestimably contributed

to the settlement of the American West, including Idaho. As one of these immigrants,

Boyce's time as an Idaho miner, prisoner, union organizer and state senator illustrates

these efforts, specifically in mining unionization.[7] Prior to Boyce leaving Ireland, Irish

immigration to the United States had a centuries old pedigree. It began in the 1600s, the

majority of it Protestant, but in the years following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, it

increasingly became a Catholic phenomenon.[8] The change in immigration exponentially

enlarged during and after the Great Famine (1845-52), where it became a deluge,

inundating North America with desperate refugees, overwhelmingly Catholic, starving,

often disease ridden, with few skills or material goods to help them start a new life in the

US.[9]

Like all refugees and immigrants they brought with them visible and invisible

baggage that helped to define their experiences in the US. Colonization compounded by a

devastating famine rendered them suspicious of the state apparatus, of Protestantism and

of societal constructions that resembled a colonial paradigm.[10] As fashioned in the US,

the existential lesson of the Great Famine---Protestant England had tried to exterminate

Irish Catholics---intensified the link between colonial abuse and labor misuse. Often, the

Catholic Irish identified capitalists in the US as Anglo-American Protestants. This

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[7] William Gaboury, "From Statehouse to Bull Pen: Idaho Populism and the Coeur d'Alene Troubles of the 1890s," in *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 1 (January 1967), 16. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40488223 (accessed October 13, 2016).

[8] Kirby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 198.

[9] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 99.

[10] David. M Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press 1989), 8.

exacerbated a conflation of capitalism and colonialism in Irish immigrant communities. Irish nationalists, politicians, churchmen and those who benefited from Anglophobia on both sides of the ocean, interpreted the Famine as genocide.[11] Irish-Americans for generations perpetuated this narrative, forming a story of exile, oppression and dispossession by English colonial exploitation.[12] It helped to unify Americans of Irish heritage, regardless of class, under the banner of freedom for Ireland. The Famine's importance to the immigrants and their progeny, rightly or wrongly, is hard to overestimate. Indeed, in Boyce's notebook where he transcribed dozens of Irish ballads and poems while in the West, nearly all are concerned with Irish exile, nationalism and liberty.[13]

  This Irish sense of exile and oppression expressed itself in one form in union activism through the emerging Western labor movement in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. Here Irish immigrants and their descendants recognized similarities between colonialism and capitalism, which energized working-class resistance to the abuses of the Gilded Age.[14] Many workers viewed labor and capitalism through a prism that highlighted the parallels of British injustice with capitalism's inequality. The late 1800s served as the highpoint of Irish nationalist influence, and awareness of Ireland's colonial situation among the American public. As historian Eric Foner documents, the Irish Land League spawned its counterpart in the US, the American Land League, raising

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[11] Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish in America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 188-9.
[12] Ibid., 188.
[13] Edward Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Joel E. Ferris Research Archive at the Northwest Museum of Arts (Spokane, WA), box 6, folder 4.
[14] Arnesen, *Encyclopedia of US Labor*, 471.

awareness throughout the US about Irish nationalism and land reform efforts.[15] At its highpoint, 1,500 branches dotted America, becoming a *cause celebre*, mobilizing people of all ethnicities and backgrounds.[16] It brought together strands of Irish nationalism, American reform efforts and the labor movement in an unprecedented protest of growing inequality in the US, and continuing inequality in Ireland. In the mining West, Irish immigrants and their progeny formed an outsized force in the drive for unionization. Understandably, they were among the most active supporters of the Land League, fueled by Patrick Ford's *Irish World and Industrial Liberator*, a weekly paper ubiquitous in western mining communities.[17]

The preponderance of Irish immigrants and their offsprings in the unionizing efforts of the West,[18] illustrates an approach to labor matters that related exploitation by the wielders of capital in the US to exploitation and dispossession by the British.[19] The apotheosis of this involvement in the labor movement, in Idaho hard-rock-mining, is most notable in the 1892 and 1899 Coeur d'Alene Mining Wars. Though Irish influence in Idaho mining unions had antecedents in the 1860s and 1880s, Irish immigrants and their descendants were most evident in the Silver Valley. Here they established and staffed unions in the region, with Boyce being chief among them, eventually rising to the head of the Western Federation of Miners. Throughout America, Irish immigrants and their children often labored in industries owned or operated by Anglo-American Protestants.[20]

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[15] Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 156.

[16] Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, 156.

[17] Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 301.

[18] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 290.

[19] David Brundage, "After the Land League: The Persistence of Irish-American Labor Radicalism in Denver, 1897-1905," in *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 4.

[20] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 15.

Frequently, the antagonisms of the Old World transferred to the New World complicating economic relations with ethnic animosity. For many Irish working-class people, the identification of British colonial oppression with Anglo-American capitalistic exploitation necessitated only a small paradigm shift. In the red in tooth and claw, industrialization of the last half of the nineteenth century immigrants provided the muscle that propelled the US to economic prominence. In Idaho and much of the Mountain West, this entailed hard-rock mining where danger increased proportionately with the enlarged scope and complexity of mining operations of the Gilded Era. Mining transformed from small scale independent operators who mostly utilized water to uncover minerals to heavily capitalized concerns that employed hundreds of men boring into the Earth. Inherently dangerous, unsafe and unhealthy it extolled a heavy price in life and limb. Boyce recounted how smelter fumes poisoned him and berated himself for becoming almost numb to the staggering number of injuries and deaths in the occupation. Indeed, Boyce's own autopsy report lists silicosis and his mining past as factors in his death.[21] In this environment, miners unionized for pay commensurate to the risks they took and to improve safety. It is easy to see how miners, when owners resisted these efforts, interpreted it as an attack on their lives and welfare. This had obvious parallels for Irish miners in the West, the largest ethnic group in the industry, with British oppression. In the Coeur d'Alenes in the 1890s, the Irish dominated union leadership and their spirit of Irish nationalism influenced the organization and conduct of those unions.

The impact of Irish nationalism in the labor movement, historiographically centered in the big cities of the East, if mentioned at all, is clearly understudied west of

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[21] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Coroner's Autopsy Report, box 4, folder 33.

the Mississippi. Coming out of the new social history spawned in the tumultuous 1960s, new western history arose in the 1980s with its rejection of Fredrick Jackson Turner's Frontier thesis and American triumphalism. This history emphasized the racist, sexist and ethnocentric nature of the traditional narrative of white European males conquering the West. By considering, among many deconstructions, women, people of color, Native Americans and those with different religious and cultural backgrounds, the new western historians painted a more inclusive and accurate portrait of the West.[22] In line with this, investigating ethnicity brings another hue to the palette. In the traditional literature westward expansion is often glossed as a white Euro-American enterprise when in fact it involved millions of immigrants who lived in a liminal world. As historian David Roediger terms it in *Working Towards Whiteness*, they were "inbetween" not fully white, American or part of the mainstream.[23] In many cases, such as the Irish and Italian, their religion also made them suspect. The West is a place not often associated with the Irish, because the "master narrative" of the West is associated with Anglo-Saxon Protestant America conquering and settling it.[24] This West, whether it be Jeffersonian yeoman country, John O'Sullivan's land of Manifest Destiny or Turnerian frontier country, is a mythical imagined place, but according to the traditional narrative not one where Irish Catholics are supposed to be. Though the Cornish had a strong presence in many mining communities in the West, those with a British or Anglo-American Protestant background

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[22] John R. Wunder, "What's Old about the New Western History: Race and Gender," in *The American West: The Gendered West*, ed. Gordon Morris Bakken and Brenda Farrington (New York: Garland Publishing, 2001), 103.

[23] David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 50.

[24] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 99.

usually were a minority. In the Coeur d'Alenes Irish, Southern Europeans and

Scandinavians made up the vast majority of miners and when they unionized those

representing capital labelled them foreigners, unassimilated and acting outside of

American mores. Their ethnicity continued to be vital to how they perceived themselves

and how the powerful treated them.[25] It also played its part in the communities they

established and how they responded to conditions in their new home. In this spirit this

thesis uses Irish nationalism in the Mountain West and specifically in Idaho to illustrate

the important contribution Irish nationalism made to mining unionization that goes

unnoticed in the literature.

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[25] Bunker Hill leadership made the foreman a Cornishman, in 1900, "to keep their Irish miners in line." Katherine G. Aiken, *Bunker Hill: The Rise and Fall of a Great Mining Company, 1885-1981* (Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 2005), 35.

CHAPTER ONE: COLONIZATION: PRELUDE TO POVERTY

From the late twelfth century Ireland had been the subject of varying degrees of

encroaching English power, but it was not until the 1500s under Henry VIII that a policy

of increased control and domination of Irish affairs set the pattern for the coming

centuries. Prior to Henry, the Irish had suffered, or enjoyed, various degrees of English

overlordship, to the point whereby in the late 1400s the invaders had become more Irish

than the Irish themselves. They intermarried with the natives, spoke Gaelic, assumed

Irish customs and adopted the laws of the land. [26] Henry's efforts to establish hegemony

over Ireland did bring the elite to heel, at least for a time, and in 1541, "King of Ireland"

became the monarch's title rather than "Lord."[27] Yet, his lasting legacy in Ireland, like

the church he spawned, was accidental. Up to Henry VIII's break with Rome, all, at least

nominally, bowed before one religious authority. While Henry and his Protestant

successors could insist upon religious purity in areas under their direct control, most of

Ireland was not, and only certain elites felt the need to accept Protestantism whereas the

majority remained Catholic. But in the 100 years or so after Anglicism became the state

religion, divisions among English monarchs and Parliament hardened the divide between

Catholics and Protestants, associating Catholicism with disloyalty, rebellion and

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[26] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 15.
[27] R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), 3.

treachery.[28] The introduction of religion to political differences, engendered extremism and bigotry, and gave rise to sectarian divisions. This divisiveness transferred to Ireland where those who dominated the political, economic and social polity were Protestant, loyal to the Crown, and those who were colonized, disaffected and militant were Catholic.[29]

One way to pacify an alienated possession is to populate it with non-native people, who owe their allegiance to the occupying power, by enticing loyal subjects to transplant with the lure of free land. England's policy of "plantation," designed intentionally with this goal in mind, witnessed the first large scale attempt in 1556 under Queen Mary.[30] There were further plantations in Leinster, Munster and Ulster in the 1500s, but the 1609 Ulster Plantation succeeded most comprehensively in terms of removing and keeping native Irish Catholics from owning land.[31] Those who settled on the land, punitively confiscated for rebellion or the perceived threat of rebelliousness, had to be Protestant and English or Scottish. English authorities believed that these would be loyal subjects of the monarch in contrast to the perceived hazard Catholics represented to England's security.[32] Over the next twenty-five years this encouraged the migration of at least 100,000 from England and Scotland to Ireland, a group who gravitated toward those areas where Protestants had already settled, furthering the membership and resentment in the dispossessed Catholic class.[33] These policies encouraged the development of dual

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[28] Nicholas Canny, "Early Modern Ireland," in *The Oxford History of Ireland*, ed. R.F. Foster (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), 113.

[29] Canny, "Early Modern Ireland," 132.

[30] Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland* (1936; repr., London: Routledge, 1995), 177.

[31] Ibid., 232.

[32] Canny, "Early Modern Ireland," 115, 113.

[33] Ibid., 118.

communities, colored by religious and ethnic divides. Here the vast majority of Catholics in Ireland saw themselves, in the words of historian Nicholas Canny as being "wrongfully dispossessed of their rights and property during a century of confiscations---making way for Protestant intruders." [34] This intensified the link, in the minds of the dispossessed, between Protestantism, Englishness and oppression. In this manner, the planters and those who followed them used religion as a tool to discriminate against the majority so as to maintain their hegemony and economic well-being at the expense of the native population.[35]

In the mid-1600s, when King and Parliament set upon each other in the English Civil War, the native Irish rebelled, retook much of the land previously confiscated and committed atrocities upon the settlers. The massacre of some of these Protestant settlers by Catholics, wildly exaggerated in England, enraged Cromwell and his supporters.[36] In pursuit of Royalists, rebellious Irish, and to avenge the slaughtered Protestants, Cromwell went to Ireland in 1649 where he decimated, depredated and deracinated with the fervor of the zealot.[37] After his conquest, he dispossessed Catholics as punishment and as a means to compensate his soldiers and those who had financed the expedition. Cromwell's brutality further associated Protestantism (of any variety) with Englishness and massive land expropriation in the eyes of native Irish, just as their Catholicism stamped them as disloyal and perfidious. In the wake of Cromwell's campaign, historians estimate that

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[34] Canny, "Early Modern Ireland," 118, 133.
[35] Terry Golway, *For the Cause of Liberty* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 60.
[36] Canny, "Early Modern Ireland," 121.
[37] Ibid., 122.

one-third of the Catholic population may have died and only twenty percent of the land remained in Catholic hands with most of it being of the least productive variety.[38]

English political and religious issues again embroiled Ireland, in 1690, when William of Orange invaded the island to subdue Catholic Irish support for James II. Protestant support for William, particularly in Ulster, proved the plantation's descendants to be loyal subjects of the realm in contrast to the disloyal, rebellious, untrustworthy Catholics.[39] In the wake of William's victory at the Battle of the Boyne came a series of laws, beginning in 1695 and later modified and strengthened, which severely restricted civil rights and economic opportunities for Catholics.[40] Presbyterians also faced some discrimination under the penal laws, although to a lesser degree. The primary intent of these sanctions aimed for the permanent reduction of Irish Catholics to a subservient class ensuring the dominance of the Protestant Ascendency, as the ruling elite came to be called.[41] More severe and restrictive than previous prohibitions they banned Catholicism itself, in addition to prohibiting Catholics from engaging in any form of education, commerce, military office and rights of citizenship including voting.[42] Catholics were barred from purchasing land and land already owned, upon the owner's death, had to be subdivided between all his sons unless one converted to Protestantism in which case he inherited it all.[43] Conversion to Anglicanism remained the only way to avoid the burden of all these laws. The penal laws, not fully repealed until 1829, helped enable the ruling

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[38] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 21.
[39] Canny, "Early Modern Ireland," 126.
[40] Curtis, *A History of Ireland*, 284.
[41] Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 27.
[42] Ibid, 27.
[43] Ibid.

elite to stay atop Irish society and to maintain its link to England.[44] The restrictions on

buying and bequeathing land explicitly encouraged subdivision of existing holdings.

This, with the denial of additional land acquisition, contributed to a critical cause of

discontent in Ireland, namely land scarcity for the great majority.[45] Further land

expropriation in this period led historian R. F. Foster to estimate that in the early 1700s,

75% of the population occupied only 14% of the land.[46] Differing only by degree of

severity, another historian's estimate is that Catholics owned less than ten percent of the

land by 1714, evidence again of people pushed to the margins with little control over

resources.[47] In Ireland the cumulative effects of these policies mean that those in power,

who owned and ruled the land, were predominantly Anglican, and gravitated towards

England as their socioeconomic, philosophical, religious, and political center.[48]

This orientation towards Britain, further solidified by the Act of Union passed in

1800, officially made Ireland part of the United Kingdom. The Act of Union dissolved

the Irish parliament, in its place Irish representatives sat in the British parliament, and it

institutionalized direct rule from London.[49] In the wake of American independence,

revolution in France and a zeitgeist of Painite insurrection, the elimination of a somewhat

independent Irish government, notwithstanding its Ascendancy constituents, made sense

in government circles. Conditioned to seeing Ireland as suspect and having witnessed its

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[44] Curtis, *A History of Ireland*, 85.
[45] R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, *The Great Famine,* ed. (1956; repr., Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1996), xii.
[46] R.F. Foster, "Ascendancy and Union," in *The Oxford History of Ireland*, ed. R.F. Foster (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), 137.
[47] John Conroy, *Belfast Diary* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 19. He quotes Robert Kee.
[48] Canny, "Early Modern Ireland," 132.
[49] Thomas Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament, Ireland 1846-1847: Prelude to Hatred* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1982), 39.

disturbing tendency of inviting Britain's enemies to its shores, the polity reacted quickly

to a nominally non-sectarian 1798 United Irishmen rebellion. The idea of Catholics and

poorer Protestants aligned in militancy for an Irish nation drove the Crown to embrace

union as a prophylactic measure.[50] And in Ireland the Ascendancy broadly lurched

toward union as a guarantee of their paramountcy amidst growing Catholic demands for

civil rights.[51] Supposedly the Act of Union embraced Irish people as equal subjects, on

the same footing as all Britons, an important point that those who later indicted the

British government over its actions, or inaction during the Famine years, seized upon.

The accusation is that a starving Dubliner should have been treated no differently than a

starving Londoner, but most definitely received dissimilar treatment. A further case is

made that if the Irish parliament had remained in Ireland, even as a creature of the

Ascendancy, this government would have been much more likely to alleviate distress. By

meeting in Dublin, though lightly affected by famine compared to the west, they could

not have eluded the Famine's consequences like a London parliament engaged in

managing an empire did.[52] Nor could they have as easily avoided victims driven from the

land by starvation, disease and eviction.

The land issue is critical in understanding the impoverishment of the masses.

Notably, as most people lived as tenants, failure to pay rent could remove them from the

tracts they depended on as their only source of food.[53] Boyce's place of birth, County

Donegal, with subdivision and monoculture dependence rampant, exemplified the

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[50] Golway, *For the Cause of Liberty,* 90.
[51] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 87.
[52] Ibid., 286.
[53] Thomas Keneally, *Three Famines: The Politics of Starvation* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 68.

precarious state of the population.[54] It did not take much to threaten survival in these

communities. Moreover, the land system, which the government proved unable or

unwilling to reform, provided disincentives to make improvements to holdings.[55] If a

tenant enhanced his acreage, the landlord did not pay for this or make an allowance for it.

Perversely, the land now being more valuable the owner had an incentive to evict the

current occupant and to rent the plot out at a higher rate to someone else.[56] Absentee

landlords, who represented one of the largest class of landowner had no emotional

connection to the people nor could they see their suffering so they easily evicted those in

arrears.[57] Historians R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, aver "the extent to

which tenant and landlord were separated from each other could scarcely be paralleled

elsewhere in Europe," negating any thought of *nobles oblige* or duty to the tenant in hard

times.[58] Indeed, by 1800, with the vast majority of property in the hands of the

Ascendancy, the Anglican Church and descendants of planters, most of the population

found themselves divorced from the primary source of wealth and income in a mainly

agrarian country.[59]

By 1829 the Crown rescinded the last of the penal laws, but the great bulk of

people in Ireland existed as uneducated, immiserated and landless Catholic agrarian

workers.[60] Though many restrictions on Catholics had been relaxed or even repealed,

Catholicism still engendered suspicion in England and among the Protestant Ascendancy,

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[54] E.R.R. Green, "Agriculture," in *The Great Famine* ed. R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (1956; repr., Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1996), 110.

[55] Edwards and Williams, *The Great Famine,* x.

[56] Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, 22.

[57] Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament*, 44.

[58] Edwards and Williams, *The Great Famine,* ix.

[59] Canny, "Early Modern Ireland," 128.

[60] Golway, *For the Cause of Liberty,* 67.

a group ever aware of being an island amongst a sea of disaffection. However, the reality

most Irish were daily assaulted with remained grinding poverty, generally in the

provinces of Connacht and Munster, and specifically on the Atlantic seaboard.[61]

Approximately, fifty percent of the people, out of a population of 8.5 million were

extremely poor and hazardously susceptible to the vagaries of life.[62] Furthermore, an

immense growth in population exerted even more pressure for land, increasing rents and

rural agitation while decreasing agrarian wages because of labor oversupply.[63] This huge

population explosion between 1750 and 1841, from "2.6 million to 8.5 million" occurred

with no attendant industrialization or economic expansion.[64] In fact, industrialization in

Britain undercut nascent Irish industry causing chronic unemployment, with Ireland

suffering little to no investment in an overwhelmingly rural peasant land.[65] Hundreds of

years of land expropriation, discrimination, marginalization and exploitation had left at

least half the Irish population in extreme poverty, constantly vulnerable to life's

exigencies.[66]

Adding to the widespread poverty, according to historian Kirby Miller, the market

revolution of the late 1700s increased "the relative pauperization of the Irish" through

"the process of commercialization itself, occurring as it did in a colonial appendage...and

under a grossly inequitable system of landownership."[67] By 1800 Ireland's economic

activity centered on raw material exports, particularly foodstuffs to Britain whose

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[61] James S. Donnelly Jr., *The Great Irish Potato Famine* (Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton, 2001), 3.
[62] Ibid., 11.
[63] Ibid., 45.
[64] Ibid., 4.
[65] Ibid., 11; Edwards and Williams, *The Great Famine,* x.
[66] Cormac O'Grada, "Industry and Communication, 1801-45," in *A New History of Ireland*, ed. W.E Vaughan, vol. 5, bk. 1 of *Ireland Under the Union* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 138-9, 144.
[67] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 32.

overwhelming economic dominance regulated trade for its benefit, and subjected Ireland to inexpensive English imports decimating embryonic Irish industries.[68] So, while Ireland entered into the expanding market economy of the world, it did so on the periphery, exploited for its resources emphasizing cash crops, necessitating coin to pay rents, with its growing population increasing pressure for land owned by the few. Furthermore, the better the land the more likely its monopolization for grazing or tillage, which pushed the poor onto marginal acreage even more difficult to subsist upon. In particular, the poor land of the Atlantic seaboard became heavily populated precisely because it consisted of the least desirable and productive tracts. Moreover, proportional rent in Ireland exceeded most other countries, while tithes and taxes also burdened the population, further immiserating those least able to withstand the market's demands.[69]

This intrusion of modernity, encompassing the market revolution and its attendants---Anglicization, competition and individualism---often evoked a violent reaction from the tightly woven weave of kith and kin who valued blood-ties over competing loyalties in rural society.[70] Likewise, in towns, most small and rural, the familiarity of neighbors or fellow parishioners, orientated on tight communities created bonds inimical to the market impinging on a barter economy. And though commercialization and English customs, such as primogeniture versus partible inheritance, had eroded some ties in the late 1700s, the relationship remained strong and emphasized communal objectives over individual gains.[71] Indeed, much of the land on

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[68] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 32.
[69] Ibid., 49.
[70] Ibid., 54.
[71] Ibid.

the Atlantic seaboard existed as joint tenancy, the rundale or clachan system, antithetical to improved or innovative agricultural methods. [72] This system of landholding predominated in Boyce's hometown area[73] indicating the community his grandparents and parents inhabited. In this environment economic factors, such as dowries, partible inheritance care in old age, and reciprocal labor, reinforced bonds and sometimes extended to include neighbors as well as kin. In response to modernity's assault on these bonds, Miller avers, "secret agrarian societies" who agitated for a "moral economy" often engaged in threats, intimidation, ostracism and violence.[74] The inequities in Irish society, understood by those at the bottom as the results of dispossession and a violation of mores, created an environment where rural violence held greater sway in Ireland in the early 1800s than in any other country in Europe.[75] However, these were not radical bomb throwers, but conservative groups of the poor to middling type who tried to preserve established patterns of economic and social relations.[76] The oppressive economic issues that taxes, tithes, rents and evictions represented were in the foreground, but paradigmatically violence formed a response to the encroachment of capitalism and competitive relations in a communal, agrarian, pre-monetized traditional way of life. Foner describes these agrarian secret societies as "trade unions of the poorest agrarian classes" presaging their transfer from a rural Irish setting to a more urban American scene.[77] In eastern Donegal, Boyce's county of birth, secret societies existed since at least

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[72] Green, "Agriculture," 113.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 61-3.
[75] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 47.
[76] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 62.
[77] Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, 166.

the 1810s, indicative of the fraught relationship between land owners and the poor and the ethno-religious divide.[78] So even before the cataclysm of the Famine, the society Boyce entered had a community tradition of organizing to resist their oppressors.

The increasingly Catholic nature of Irish immigration to the US in the 1830s brought these traditions to an expanding America that ravenously absorbed the mostly low-skilled Irish. Here, they occupied the bottom rung of Euro-American society taking menial jobs as laborers and domestics. Often they were used to replace slaves, who were a sizeable investment, whereas the Irish were inexpensive and disposable.[79] Their invisible baggage manifested itself through violent reactions to the terrible conditions they endured as one of the lowest forms of hired laborer enlisted to do the life-sapping infrastructure development in the growing market economy.[80] Many Americans interpreted this belligerence atavistically. But, more correctly it is the evidence of a heritage of 'retributive justice,' straining for a moral economy in a transforming America arching toward modernity away from traditional rural community norms.[81] Foner wonders if "the resistance of the Irish to 'Americanization'" was the resistance of a pre-modern people to the modernization, the transformation, of the 1800s.[82] Indeed, it often expressed the desperation of men, crushed vise-like in a ruthless labor apparatus emasculating as it immiserated immigrant workers.[83] Even faction fighting amongst the

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[78] Brendan MacSuibhne, "'Bastard Ribbonism': The Molly Maguires, the Uneven Failure of Entitlement and the Politics of Post-Famine Adjustment" in *Ireland's Great Famine and Popular Politics* ed. Enda Delany and Brendan MacSuibhne (NY: Routledge, 2016), 192-3.

[79] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 63.

[80] Ibid., 65.

[81] Kevin Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 8.

[82] Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, 26.

[83] Ryan Dearinger, *The Filth of Progress: Immigrants, Americans, and the Building of Canals and Railroads in the West* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 44.

Irish may be attributed to the quest for survival rather than replaying ancient animosities in the New World.[84]

Inter-ethnic battles, however, do attest to the local and regional identity of most Irish immigrants prior to the latter half of the nineteenth century. Certainly, prior to Daniel O'Connell's political mobilization of the Catholic masses in the early 1800s[85] the idea of an Irish nationality superseding local and regional ties is anachronistic. It would take the work of nationalists, in Ireland and the diaspora, throughout the 1800s to mold an Irish nationalism that allowed provincialism to yield to a supra-identity. In the 1830s and '40s, rising nativism in America culminated in the Know Nothings of the 1850s, whose great bugaboos embraced the Irish and Catholics.[86] This undoubtedly assisted the formation of a Catholic Irish nationalist and persecuted identity, something the Catholic Church also propagated. In light of nativism and anti-Catholic bigotry the Protestant Irish diaspora in the US, beginning in the 1830s, distanced and differentiated themselves from the Irish Catholic immigrants, by identifying as Scotch-Irish.[87] This process quickened with the arrival of every boatload of the wretched, infirm and penurious Great Famine refugees. This event, which deluged North America with Irish, overwhelmingly Catholic refugees exponentially increased the formation of a national Irish identity in Irish America and in Ireland itself. This identity often intertwined the experiences of "Anglicized" Irish immigrants and those steeped in a traditional Gaelic communal way of life, exhibiting a specifically Irish response to their new home. The Great Famine, 1845-

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[84] Dearinger, *The Filth of Progress*, 48.
[85] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 163.
[86] Ibid., 80.
[87] Ibid., 3.

52, a tragedy of the utmost significance in Ireland's modern history, inundated the US with Irish, predominantly Catholic refugees and fundamentally altered American history.[88] Boyce would not be born until ten years after the end of the Famine, but its effects would be felt far into the future at home and abroad. Indeed, the years just before he emigrated, famine again stalked Ireland raising the specter of mass death just as occurred in the 1840s.[89] This kept the issue topical and it is inconceivable that Boyce would not bear the imprint of such a cataclysmic event.

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[88] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 97, 90.

[89] Ely M. Janis, *A Greater Ireland: The Land League and Transatlantic Nationalism in Gilded Age America* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 2015), 25-26.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GREAT FAMINE: STARVATION FED NATIONALISM

Famine periodically stalked Ireland in the 1800s, but the extent and severity of the

potato failure in 1845 caused great concern when society realized that a third of the crop

failed. Approximately 4.7 million people depended on the potato as their primary source

of nutrition, and out of that about three-quarters almost entirely depended on the potato

supplemented with milk and fish.[90] Those in this category consumed on average 12

pounds of potatoes a day.[91] Though the poor might have had some fowl or a pig these

paid the rent, meat being a luxury outside their means.[92] Alarmed by the extent of the

potatoes' failure, the British Prime Minister Robert Peel, imported maize from the United

States at government expense. He hoped to keep the price of grain down so people could

replace potatoes with maize. Part of the attraction of maize lay in its relative newness to

Ireland so no existing trade existed, therefore the government would not be competing

with the private sector. Combined with the repeal of the Corn Laws, the government's

introduction of maize helped keep prices down and reduced profiteering, assisting in

feeding some on maize, a grain cheaper than other food.[93] Peel's decision to repeal the

Corn Laws, laws that artificially inflated grain prices protecting British and Irish

producers, came from a longstanding policy objective, but the potato blight's arrival in

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[90] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 1.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament*, 33.
[93] Ibid., 53.

Ireland hastened the issue.[94] Though a hugely divisive policy, with most in Peel's

Conservative party vehemently opposing it, Peel pursued it at great political cost. Irish

agricultural products were still exported because the government estimated it would have

to pay for them to stay in Ireland, and maize was a much cheaper option. However, those

most in need of help lived outside the cash economy and would have no way of buying

maize.[95] In response to this, the government arranged public works to employ the

destitute. These works employed people building roads, improving land, constructing

harbors and succeeded reasonably well in providing relief to perhaps as many as 700,000

people at its height in August 1846.[96] This generally assisted the worst off in surviving

those months by bridging the sustenance gap between life and death.

However, August 1846 brought a complete failure of the potato crop. Peel's Tory

government had fallen in June 1846 and the Whigs assumed power, led by John Russell,

who retained Charles Trevelyan as head of the government's relief efforts. In Russell's

administration Trevelyan dominated those bureaucracies attempting to provide relief,

earning himself a reputation in popular Irish history as "the Great Satan of the Irish

Famine," according to author Cecil Woodham-Smith.[97] Trevelyan, subscribed to

Malthusian theories of overpopulation and extrapolated from the works of Adam Smith

and John Stuart Mill the uselessness of government action in the face of famine.[98] As an

evangelical Protestant he believed in Providentialism, a principle that saw the hand of

god in people's worldly situation, elevating the worthy and casting aside the

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[94] Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, 49.
[95] Ibid., 55.
[96] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 55-6.
[97] Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, 61; Keneally, *Three Famines*, 61.
[98] Keneally, *Three Famines*, 64-5.

undeserving.[99] His anti-Irish prejudice, racially motivated in the terms of the day,

reflected much of the English middle and upper-classes' moralism, which posited that

congenital defects in Irish character created the problems that bedeviled Irish society.[100]

Trevelyan was just one of the "free-trade radicals" in government that understood their

laissez faire and non-intervention worldview as the acme of scientific and philosophic

thinking.[101] Broadly speaking, the Whig government and the British establishment

concurred with Trevelyan's perspective on life, and had their views reinforced by the

highly influential press of the day.[102] In conformity with this outlook, Trevelyan decided

that in the event of another potato failure the government would not encumber the free

market's operation by intervening in the food supply.[103]

Therefore, Trevelyan introduced a new plan of relief for Ireland in light of the

complete failure of the August 1846 potato crop. Public works would continue, but the

government would no longer pay half the cost, the local district would have to bear all the

expense and the government refused to provide food or interfere with supply and

demand.[104] The plan imagined starving people earning money on the public works

enabling them to buy food, which merchants would import because they knew people

would have money, and the government agreed not to import food undercutting

businesses' profit.[105] However, the work paid too little to buy enough food, many were

already in early stages of starvation. This meant they could not work ably, and during

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[99] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 20.
[100] Keneally, *Three Famines*, 67; Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 20.
[101] Keneally, *Three Famines*, 74, 69.
[102] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 29-32; Michael De Nie, "The Famine, Irish Identity, and the British Press," in *Irish Studies Review*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1998): 27.
[103] Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, 91.
[104] Ibid., 106.
[105] Ibid., 107.

inclement weather work stopped as did full wages.[106] The resulting mass death seen in

some areas in January 1847 demonstrated to the government its plan's gargantuan

ineffectiveness.[107] Therefore, Trevelyan devised a new program involving soup kitchens.

The Quaker's efforts to feed the starving at no charge through soup kitchens had been

effective where it had been implemented on a small-scale, so Trevelyan decided to end

the public works and resort to free soup.[108] Despite its many faults, free soup generally

was the most successful plan the government devised to stave off starvation, nicely

complementing Trevelyan's constant concern with saving money by its relative

economy.[109] Nonetheless, soup kitchens were a stop-gap measure while the government

searched for a permanent solution to the seemingly interminable question of famine in

Ireland and its supposed drain on the public purse.[110]

The answer came in amendments to the Poor Laws. This involved having "Irish

Property pay for Irish Poverty," in essence ending all government support and placing the

burden of feeding the starving on Irish rate payers.[111] At this stage "Famine fatigue"

circulated in Britain with feckless landlords blamed for of much of Ireland's woes.[112]

They were accused of failing to improve land, invest in tenants, and carry out obligations

as befitting a lord, because of their profligate dissipated lifestyle. Furthermore, as Famine

and death increased, multitudes of desperate, starving and diseased Irish people searching

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[106] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 78.
[107] Ibid., 91.
[108] Ibid., 78, 81.
[109] Ibid., 90; Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, 171.
[110] Christine Kinealy, "Potatoes, Providence and Philanthropy: The Role of Private Charity During the Irish Famine," in *The Making of the Famine*, ed. Patrick O'Sullivan (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 143.
[111] John Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps),* (Glasgow: Cameron & Ferguson, 1861), 107. https://archive.org/details/lastconquestofir00mitc (accessed October 1, 2016).
[112] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 92-5.

for haven inundated several major British cities. As paupers they fell under the Poor Law,

funded by the cities' residents, thereby increasing British ratepayers' taxes. This

encouraged the idea that Irish landlords were dumping their responsibility on Britain's

doorstep.[113] In many cases this is an accurate portrayal of Irish landlords, but perhaps it is

more correct to call a majority of them landlords who owned property in Ireland as a

direct result of hundreds of years of English hegemony. This domination created

conditions that enabled the exploitative land system with the indigenous majority

relegated to renters in their own land, and many landowners were indifferent to their

plight. In Ireland, Woodham-Smith states little "paternalism, such as existed in England,"

could be found, but absentee landlords abounded who squeezed as much rent from the

people to spend in Britain or further afield in Europe.[114] Regardless, in June 1847 most

Irish landlords did not have the means to support the starving as many had gone bankrupt

with disease stricken, starving tenants unable to pay rent or perform useful work.[115]

In September 1847, Trevelyan closed the soup kitchens and the new Poor Law's

consequences began to manifest themselves. Because a landlord had to pay to support the

poor, it became in his best economic interest to shift the destitute from the local area to

somewhere else. Tenants' rent arrears and rising poor rates provided an inducement for

landlords to clear estates.[116] Another incentive to depopulate the countryside involved the

prevailing thought amongst the elite, that Ireland had a "'surplus population,'" and the

only permanent cure to endemic poverty in Ireland was to consolidate small holdings by

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[113] Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, 282-4.
[114] Ibid., 21.
[115] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 101.
[116] Ibid., 139.

removing tenants, which allowed the implementation of modern agricultural methods.[117]

Compounding this was an on-going agricultural shift from tillage toward pastoralism that

necessitated clearing tenants in order to increase grazing acreage. Evictions made up a

great part of the searing Famine memory and contributed to the violence of the times. In

Boyce's hometown, a secret society in 1848 assassinated a landlord, who had been

evicting tenants in arrears, in his own home.[118] Two years later local authorities in the

area petitioned the government for greater powers of coercion to quell outrages inspired

by evictions.[119] By the end of the Famine, according to historian James Donnelly, "mass

emigration and mass death" achieved this goal of clearing broad swathes of the country's

population from the land, furthering nationalist claims of planned eviction, and exile.[120]

One of these nationalist polemicist John Mitchel, claimed the Famine a government plot

of enforced starvation and "wholesale murder."[121]

The 1847 potato crop was not assaulted by blight, but because of the lack of seed

potatoes and the physical debility of the diseased and starving only a small amount of the

usual crop had been planted.[122] However, based on the lack of blight, Trevelyan declared

the Famine over. He then transferred the remaining government responsibility to the Poor

Law Commissioners to oversee the collections and expenditures on programs for the

destitute, and went on vacation.[123] Clearly, any idea of the Union putting the citizens of

Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom on an equal par existed only in theory. With

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[117] Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps),* 65; Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 161.
[118] MacSuibhne, 'Bastard Ribbonism,' 198.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 161.
[121] Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps),* 31.
[122] Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, 361.
[123] Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, 303.

the cessation of government funding for any relief programs, the notion of imperial

accountability also ended.[124] This, despite hundreds of thousands who continued to die of

starvation and disease in a devastated country.[125] And again widespread blight struck in

1848, but, as Woodham-Smith avers, "Trevelyan was already determined on ruthless

economy" leaving Ireland to "failure, bankruptcy and starvation. …"[126]

In all, historians estimate that in the years of 1845-1851 a million people died, and

between 1845 and 1855, 2.1 million emigrated.[127] The approximate equations are an

eighth of the population died while a quarter departed, denuding Ireland of one third of its

people. In these numbers some saw the Famine as the worst excess possible, perpetrated

on a colonized people by a ruthlessly violent overlord.[128] It immediately gave rise to

accusations of genocide, the deliberate starvation of a people with an attendant forced

mass depopulation of the land.[129] This became the popular history extolled by nationalists

in Ireland and in the diaspora until the second half of the twentieth century.[130] Only then

did this interpretation begin to be seriously questioned, imputing the British government

with ineptitude, callousness, and incompetence but concluding, in the words of Edwards

and Williams that "no conspiracy to destroy the Irish nation" existed.[131] Yet, if this is the

mainstream view in Ireland it is still a contentious point in the US where the Famine is

seen by many as evidence of genocide.[132] But in much of the US, Irish-Americans will

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[124] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 186.
[125] Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger*, 328.
[126] Ibid., 363-8.
[127] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 171, 178.
[128] John Waters and David Lloyd, "Confronting the Ghosts," *in Irish Hunger*, ed. Tom Hayden (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart, 1997), 28.
[129] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 226.
[130] Ibid., 244.
[131] Edwards and Williams, *The Great Famine,* xi.
[132] Reginald Byron, *Irish America* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 58.

label one an "apologist" for the British government if one attempts to deny genocide, even allowing that the Famine comes close to it, and the chasm between popular history---genocide---and academic history---indifference, incompetence, ill-advised economic theories, racism, bigotry---remains.[133] In the US, Irish-American groups pressured politicians to have the Great Famine taught in high schools with Holocaust studies.[134] This has been combated by Irish-American scholars, but this "extreme instrumentalist agenda" has resulted in a least six states teaching the Great Famine as evidence of "British genocide," according to historian Peter Gray. The insistence on seeing it as genocide is evidence of the centrality the Famine played, and its persistence in forming Irish-American identity.[135]

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[133] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 209.

[134] Peter Gray, "Memory and the Commemoration of the Great Irish Famine," in *The Memory of Catastrophe*, ed. Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004), 59.

[135] Ibid., 60.

CHAPTER THREE: FIERCE IRISH NATIONALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Irish immigration to the US began to be a factor in Irish life in the 1600s and the

Famine period exponentially intensified a centuries old phenomenon.[136] But because of

its devastation and subsequent charges of genocide, it receives pre-eminence in the

discourse, and is particularly suited to engendering a nationalist agenda. Generally, the

Famine immigrants were the poor who typically had not emigrated whereas many of the

slightly better off with greater economic and educational skills had already departed.

Those who made it to shores of the US, refugees from the poorest most traditional and

rural areas had the least ability or wherewithal to survive.[137] A great number of these

immigrants lived outside of the Anglicized parts of Ireland with little knowledge of

market economies or modernity. Many spoke Gaelic as a first language and represented

those most steeped in the customs and culture of Irish life.[138] The absolutely destitute

made up a majority of the million plus dead, predominantly the Atlantic seaboard

population from the most marginal land.[139]

When they arrived in the US they faced nativism, sectarianism, discrimination

and their utter poverty.[140] For these immigrants, historian Thomas Brown says "the

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[136] Kevin Kenny, *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 29.
[137] Byron, *Irish America*, 53.
[138] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 280.
[139] Ibid., 295.
[140] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 42.

realities of loneliness and alienation, and of poverty and prejudice. … a pervasive sense

of inferiority, intense longing for acceptance and respectability, and an acute sensitivity

to criticism" bedeviled them.[141] This engendered an overwhelming desire for inclusion,

respect, and recognition in American society despite an inferiority complex. Irish

nationalism existed as one way to obtain this acceptance.[142] In Irish-American

communities a common belief persisted that an independent Ireland would bolster their

sense of self-respect in the face of nativism. Another central tenet of Irish-American

identity insisted that a self-governing Ireland would have prevented the Famine's degree

of devastation.[143] Great Famine emigrants reinforced each other's narrative of English

oppression starving them into exile in the US, where nativist hate originated in English

hate of the Irish.[144] The local institutions of Irish-American society reinforced these

beliefs and taught hate of the English, provoking a nationalistic view of the Famine.[145]

Irish fraternal societies arose from deep roots in the soil of Irish liberty sustaining an anti-

English narrative. For example, Boyce when in Butte, joined the Robert Emmet Literary

Association where he railed against the British government.[146] And he could have joined

any number of other Irish organizations, like the Ancient Order of Hibernians, or

contributed to the many causes, such as the 'Revolutionary or special arms fund' that

kept the idea of British tyranny alive.[147] A narrative also serves as a psychological coping

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[141] Thomas Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism, 1870-1890* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1966), 23.

[142] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 171.

[143] Frank Costello, "The Deer Island Graves, Boston: The Irish Famine and Irish-American Tradition" in *The Irish World Wide: The Meaning of the Famine,* ed. P.M. O'Sullivan, vol. 6 (Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press, 1997), 123.

[144] Dolan, *The Irish in America*, 188.

[145] Ibid., 189.

[146] Emmons, *The Butte Irish,* 298.

[147] Ibid., 302.

method to make sense, to explain or rationalize why tragedy descended upon the victims. The unknown is made known by defining the enemy; identifying the cause of misfortune, enabled a retaliatory course of action and returned agency to the life of the victim. Exemplifying this, historian Dennis Clark quotes a military training manual published in 1853, aimed at Irish-Americans, that exhorted them to 'swear by the suffering of your millions starved to death by design,' clearly imparting a narrative of British genocidal intent for the immigrants' consumption.[148]

Reinforcing a sense of grievance and also keeping Irish liberty topical, politicians in the US found Irish nationalism as a means to an end, namely vote-getting. Therefore they happily espoused a cause that galvanized Irish-American voters without necessarily having to do anything more than make speeches and promises.[149] This allowed politicians, whether truly sympathetic or not to Irish freedom, to inculcate the notion that Irish nationalism must be part of the Irish-American identity. In fact, Democratic Party leaders of all backgrounds found it essential to play the Irish nationalist card. This card allowed Irish-Americans to use their growing political muscle in the US to denounce British domination of Ireland, while politicians of all stripes realized the value in pandering to Irish Anglophobia for their votes.[150] This political activism served a dual role for Irish-Americans; one being agitation for social, religious, economic, and political rights for themselves in the US and the other being Irish independence. In the mere fact of having political organizations, Irish-Americans found a sense of belonging in the US,

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[148] Dennis Clark, *Irish Blood: Northern Ireland and the American Conscience* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1977), 7.

[149] Byron, *Irish America*, 54.

[150] Karl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 161-2.

with civic discourse involving them in American institutions as enfranchised people exercising their rights of citizenship.[151]

Not only did politicians in the US use Irish nationalism to further their agenda, but Irish politicians came to the US to raise funds and support for Irish issues. They presented Britain as an unjust oppressor still victimizing Ireland, constantly reenergizing the nationalist enterprise amongst the diaspora. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Boyce, or any Irish immigrant in a city with a large Irish community could have attended any of the numerous gatherings featuring Irish politicians and literary figures.[152] Throughout the 1800s giants of Irish constitutional nationalism, Daniel O'Connell, Michael Davitt, and Charles Stewart Parnell came to the US crossing the country to garner funding and support for Irish freedom. Likewise, those who espoused the violent overthrow of the Crown such as James Stephens of the Irish Republican Brotherhood successfully collected money for revolutionary activities.[153] Certainly, part of the Irish-American experience involved financial and moral support for Irish nationalist causes. This continuing even after Irish independence, especially evident in the late 1960s when violence erupted in Northern Ireland.[154]

While politicians and the Irish diaspora in the US found Irish nationalism a useful device for practical social reasons, remembering the Great Famine as murder and exile concomitantly served the revolutionary nationalist cause. The aforementioned John Mitchel, who in particular is identified with the call for the violent overthrow of the

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[151] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 172.
[152] Emmons, *The Butte Irish,* 86.
[153] Wittke, *The Irish in America*, 153.
[154] Clark*, Irish Blood*, 6.

British regime in Ireland, tirelessly propagated the idea of the Great Famine as intentional English genocide. Indeed, the standard Irish interpretation of the Famine, on both sides of the Atlantic until the 1950s, echoed Mitchel's "The Almighty sent the potato blight, but the British caused the Famine."[155] In his framing of the Famine, the genocidal intent of a coldhearted imperial government, which cared more for "'political economy'" than people caused it.[156] Mitchel, an Irish nationalist who witnessed the ravages of the Famine, eventually advocated rebellion and the Crown convicted him of sedition. After being deported to Australia he later escaped to the United States, where he wrote extensively agitating for Irish freedom from British dominion.[157] According to Mitchel's account of Irish history, it encompassed centuries of oppression by Britain, a nation of tyrants who manufactured famine intentionally to deracinate the Irish and kill as many as possible.[158] Almost immediately, Mitchel's accusation of genocide became embedded as a fundamental principle of Irish nationalism.[159]

Mitchel may have been the most prominent proponent of genocide but he was not the only one, with narrative and exegesis about the Famine being led by politicians and biased historians enabling its use in the nationalist campaign.[160] Other diasporic writings on the Famine, mainly emanating from the US where many of those who had suffered the depredations of the Famine found refuge, echoed Mitchel's account. Diasporic militancy followed a long line of Irish rebels, fleeing repressive rule in Ireland, who found a haven

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[155] Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)*, 219.

[156] Ibid., 107.

[157] Golway, *For the Cause of Liberty*, 119-120, 138.

[158] Foster, "Ascendancy and Union," 170.

[159] Gray, "Memory and the Commemoration," 49.

[160] Mary Daly, "Revisionism and Irish History: The Great Famine," in *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy,* ed. D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (New York: Routledge, 1996), 71.

in the US.[161] The American Revolution fathered the French Revolution, with both inspiring thoughts of freedom and liberty in Ireland. When those thoughts were voiced or acted upon, treason in the eyes of the ruling power, Irishmen escaped to the US and the Continent from where they redoubled their propaganda and militancy against the British.[162] Exemplifying their influence, a copy of James E. McGee's *The Men of '48*, celebrating the 1848 rebellion against British rule, lined Boyce's bookshelf.[163] The author of the book, like so many Irish nationalists, found refuge in America after the failure of the abortive rebellion he supported. His and the other Irish nationalist writers' work resonated in Ireland and the US. John Devoy, for example, after release from English imprisonment, spent sixty years in the US castigating Britain and agitating for independence in the homeland.[164] Other nationalist writing often repeated Mitchel's accusations about Ireland producing twice as much food as needed to feed the population, only to see it exported by the British government, while they also praised Mitchel's writings.[165]

Complementing the Mitchelite view, priestly writing glossed a Catholic patina to the Great Famine where martyrs to the faith were created by English Protestants, which ensured the Famine dead supported a Catholic and nationalist agenda.[166] In the post-Famine period the Catholic Church had a stake in sustaining the image of persecuted Irish

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[161] Clark, *Irish Blood*, 5.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," box 4, folder 5.
[164] Clark, *Irish Blood*, 5.
[165] John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* (1929, Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1969), 3, 10, 298.
[166] Kevin Whelan, "The Revisionist Debate in Ireland," in *Boundary 2*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 198.

Catholics to avoid conflict over its newly acquired wealth and power in Ireland.[167] The

Catholic Church in Ireland eventually became the dominant force in education, happy to

propagate a nationalist version of history, which historian Kevin Whelan alleges allowed

it to use "anti-Britishness" as a cover for "anti-Protestantism" in a sectarian vendetta.[168]

With native born Irish and Irish-American generations dominating the American Church,

an institution some historians see as the most influential in Irish-American communities,

this version of events became mainstream in Irish America. Just as in Ireland, the Church

controlled Catholic parochial education in the US, where it helped create and keep alive a

Catholic Irish identity conflating Irish independence, Irish nationalism, and Catholicism

into a persecuted ethnic identity.[169] In all, the Famine and post-Famine Irish diaspora in

the US learned that they had been the victims of a genocidal sectarian Britain, who still

dominated Ireland, which lessened their sense of selfhood and self-respect in their new

home. They also envisioned the elite in the US as descendants of English immigrants,

allowing England again to be blamed for the pervasive discrimination they encountered

in the US.[170]

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[167] S.J. Connolly, "Colony or Ancien Regime," in *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy,* ed. D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (New York: Routledge, 1996), 17-8.

[168] Whelan, "The Revisionist Debate in Ireland," 183.

[169] Donald Harmon Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, (Ontario, Canada: P.D. Meany Company, 1993), 273.

[170] However, Reginald Byron in *Irish America* challenges this "pervasive myth" that all the Catholic Irish were the victims of nativist "Anglo-Yankee discrimination." Much of this narrative, or as Byron would have it myth, is now accepted as "normative" for Irish-Americans who assume an Anglophobic mindset is the only proper disposition for those who are connected to their heritage. Overall, he sees the Irish in the US as a successful immigrant group, who benefited immensely from speaking English and being familiar with a modicum of Anglo-Saxon ways, the benefits of colonialism one might say, who thrived in the US. Any sense of grievance towards England is misplaced, a creation wholly of those who had a nationalist political agenda and those who found it a convenient vote exploitation device (54-9). While his critique has some validity, immigration does cut across time and spatial boundaries and insisting upon a monolithic experience for an entire group is ahistorical, his rosy picture of Famine immigrant experience in the US is not supported by the majority of reputable historians.

Irish immigrants in the mid and late 1800s saw themselves as exiles, forced abroad, inculcating an attitude of deepened affiliation to the lost land.[171] Often, refugees and immigrants alike form an intensely idealized and romantic picture of the homeland that they contrast with the inhospitable environs of their new home deepening the sense of exile and banishment.[172] Exile is a central topic in the writings of Mitchel, who hammered it into Irish America that emigration of any sort equaled dispossession by perfidious Albion.[173] These are all themes that abound in Boyce's notebook of prose and poetry.[174] While exile and banishments may be reasonable claims for the Great Famine refugees, it is a much more contentious statement for the majority of earlier or later immigrants. Yet, it persisted in Irish-American communities where the belief that at some period, regardless of departure timeframe, they had a legitimate perception of expulsion and being wronged.[175] Boyce's notebook is testament to this. For a hundred years after the Great Famine, Irish nationalists created a "grievance culture," where the Famine as genocide expressed the highest grievance.[176] Great Famine refugees were "hyper-historicized" becoming the example of all Irish-American's experience rather than a specific subset.[177] This narrative of exile existed on both sides of the Atlantic, predating the Famine in many rural traditional Catholic Irish homes, and found renewed emphasis

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[171] Kenny, *Diaspora*, 42.
[172] Andrew J. Wilson, *Irish America and the Ulster Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 5.
[173] Kenny, *Diaspora*, 31.
[174] See text that note 12 addresses above.
[175] Kenny, *Diaspora*, 32.
[176] George D. Boyce, *Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Savage, MD: Barnes and Nobel Books, 1991), 294.
[177] Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 285.

and legitimation in the post-Famine era, persisting long after those who had experienced the Great Famine had passed away.

Irish nationalists used exile, in an instrumentalist interpretation of the Famine, to enforce a solidarity born of communal pain in order to galvanize Irish-Americans around the most emotive event possible.[178] This inspired an intense nationalism, passed from immigrant to American born child and inflamed the hearts of many generations decades after the Famine.[179] Irish influence in the American labor movement emerged preeminently in the years after the Great Famine. It commingled an earlier strand of retributive justice, with a likening of colonial English oppression to capitalism and tinged with a nationalist hue, which invigorated unionization in the US and in the West in particular.

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[178] Eugene Kamenka, ed. *Nationalism: Nature and Influence of an Idea* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 12.

[179] Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 19, 21.

CHAPTER FOUR: WESTERN MINING UNIONS' IRISH ROOTS

Labor unions in the US arose in the 1820s and 1830s to address the changing

workplace and authority therein.[180] This shift from artisanal practices to the factory with

its hierarchies of control reflected changes in society where wealth and power

differentials increased. Labor advocates declared that "wage slavery" stole the value of

labor, robbed the worker of dignity, made him a dependent, and foreshadowed the

coming of European proletarianism to America.[181] As mentioned previously, Irish

immigration in the 1830s transitioned to a majority Catholic affair with the greatest part

being non-skilled. They found jobs at the lowest level, mainly manual labor for men and

domestic service for women.[182] Though constantly opposed by business owners, unions

emerged by the 1840s as legally acceptable entities, able to withstand court challenges to

their existence.[183] Unions increased capability to represent workingmen's grievances

enabled those Irish involved in retributive justice to trade violence for strikes, and secret

societies for organized workers' groups.[184] Running through Irish immigrants, broadly

speaking, were two strands of opposition to socioeconomic discrimination that moved on

either end of a continuum. Sometimes far apart, yet often drawn to each other, they are

embodied in "Molly Maguireism" and union organization. Molly Maguire activities

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[180] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 58.
[181] Ibid., 56, 60.
[182] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 149.
[183] Philip Taft, *Organized Labor in American History* (NY: Harper and Row, 1964), 10-11.
[184] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 66.

manifested themselves, in a legal system viewed as a tool of oppression, through violent acts outside the law. In contrast union organizing represented a channeling of dissent, in a society transforming from traditional to modern, through a method evolving toward socially accepted resistance to exploitation. As commercialization and industrialization demanded wage laborers to power a capital intensive economy, workers responded by unionizing. Epitomizing this spirit, the Workingmen's Benevolent Association, a union founded in 1868 in the Pennsylvania coalfields, home of the much maligned Molly Maguires, united miners of various ethnicities and religions into an efficient union that channeled retributive violence toward strikes or discussion with management.[185] The union denounced Mollies and all violent methods sincerely believing it damaged the union's cause. While the union existed, it routed worker protest, won concessions and gave a sense of empowerment to laborers. But when the union collapsed in 1875, due to monopolist pressure, Molly violence resurfaced. This indicated the extent to which it represented an effort for retributive justice and the union's for negotiated resistance to capitalism's excess.[186] In *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, historian Kevin Kenny finds a the majority of Irishmen involved in the Mollies in the Pennsylvania coalfield hailed from Donegal, the same region in Ireland Boyce came from, indicating again the notion of resistance through organization as something with roots in the colonized Irish quest for social justice.[187]

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[185] Kenny, *Molly Maguires*, 111, 113. The leader of the WBA was Irish-born, most Irish workers belonged to the WBA and half its officers had Irish names in 1872.
[186] Ibid., 117, 126.
[187] Ibid., 26.

Be it the miners in the coal region of Pennsylvania, textile workers in Lowell,

laborers in New York City, the Knights of Labor (KOL), or shoemakers in Milwaukee,

these ranks gave the labor movement in the East its strength and leadership.[188] Immigrant

Irish women also organized, in garment worker unions, as volunteers for the KOL, started

a public teachers' union and later agitated for the American Federation of Labor.

Typically, this is the story told of Irish influence in the labor movement overlooking the

West, a region where the Irish, after 1850 were the third largest ethnic group and became

the largest European group working in the hard-rock mines.[189] Their prevalence in the

mines and predominance in union leadership ensured Irish nationalism's impact on

organized labor in the Mountain West.

Up to the mid-1850s, placer mining dominated the West, where individuals or

small groups used water to wash away dirt and expose ore. Essentially, it entailed a low

investment, manpower light, individualistic activity. However, with the discovery of

gold-bearing ore along the California-Nevada border, mining gradually shifted to a high

investment, labor intensive industry necessitating large sums of capital to remove the ore

from the ground, to refine it and transport it.[190] Originally, the most skilled miner in the

West was Mexican, generally receiving discriminatory wages, but by the 1860s Mexicans

had been pushed to the margins by European immigrants, principally Cornish and Irish

laborers. These latter two groups made up a third each approximately in Great Basin

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[188] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 112. Terence Powderly, the KOL leader was the son of Irish immigrants and the organization had a very Catholic and Irish following.

[189] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 216.

[190] Richard E. Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners: A History of the Mining Labor Movement in the American West, 1863-1893* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 3.

mines.[191] In the Rockies, Eastern and Southern Europeans also found work, particularly in the late nineteenth century. Skilled Cornish miners received preference for work over the initially unskilled Irish. This caused tension between the groups, exacerbated by Irish-English animosities that traveled across the Atlantic to America.[192] Unlike in England though, where the Cornish were not energetic in unionizing efforts, in the West they were at the forefront with the Irish. The Irish miners came with a more developed political sense than most, indicating a level of politicization prior to arrival in the US.[193] In their homeland they learned how to resist some forms of oppression and they transposed these skills to American conditions.[194] This awareness reflected part of the Famine's legacy, which made the Irish the most politically conscious group of Europeans in the second half of the nineteenth century.[195] It also manifested itself in labor organizations where the Irish preeminently contributed to the growth of mining unionization in the latter half of the nineteenth century throughout the West."[196] Because of the inveterate racism of the time, European immigrants and Americans discriminated against African-American, Chinese and Mexican workers, ensuring hard-rock mining as a Euro-American enterprise. Ironically, Irishmen often took the lead in barring others, an unfortunate example of their ability to assimilate certain societal norms in a waged economy. This is exemplified by the Irish led workers' associations in San Francisco being the primary factor behind enactment of the 1882 Chinese-Exclusion Act.[197]

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[191] Ibid., 7.
[192] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 6.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 39, 40.
[195] Ibid., 38.
[196] Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic*, 46.
[197] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 157.

San Francisco, or more accurately the California Gold Rush, drew Irish

immigrants to the West in mid-century. But many then moved to the Comstock Lode

bonanza, in a pattern of movement typical of miners going from one mining region to

another in search of better offerings. When Boyce arrived in the US, he too followed a

peripatetic course from mining camp to camp. In the Nevada Comstock Lode, amongst

the heightened danger in deep mines, the Western hard-rock mining union model arose in

the early 1860s.[198] The dangers inherent in underground mining, led miners to demand

greater wages than those who worked above ground, a principal moving force in mining

union creation. Much of the danger below ground came from mismanagement, inexpert

superintendents and absentee owners with little to no knowledge of mining, intensifying

the intrinsic environmental danger.[199] Mining hazards multiplied because so many

workers initially had no personal relationship to fellow laborers, in contrast to placer

mining, conducted by small tightly-knit groups. In 1863 miners in Virginia City, Nevada,

formed a Miners' Protective Association to protect wages, but it soon dissolved for a lack

of interest. However, in 1864, a collapse in ore prices precipitated a cut in wages,

resulting in the first miners' strike in the West, at Gold Hill on the Comstock.[200] This set

the outline and shape for how strikes in the West would unfold in the years to come.

Miners closed the mines and mills, rallied en-masse, marched in parade to the mine

office, restricted mines officials' movement, and demanded wages be restored. They

emerged victorious, which led to the establishment of a new union, The Miners' League

[198] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 31.
[199] Ibid., 27.
[200] Ibid., 34.

of Storey County with William Woodburn, an Irish immigrant as president.[201] It aimed to keep wages at $4 a day to be paid in gold or silver coins, and to avoid script and greenbacks that only paid 40% of their worth. Members also had to report anyone working for less than $4 and inaugurated a charitable fund to aid distressed miners. Following their example, miners and millworkers in outlying areas started to unionize too.

However, in a pattern that became typical in the West, owners retaliated by surreptitiously firing union members and secretly hiring workers, to work for less than $4 a day. They also extracted a promise from the newly hired not to join the union. Additionally, the owners formed a Citizens' Protective Association to resist unionization in an attempt to destroy the nascent labor movement.[202] They labeled the workers' as 'lawless,' a slur that would be repeated by owners and managers throughout the history of mining.[203] Moreover, mine owners solicited and won backing from the governor, mayor and sheriff, another tactic that became common in mining conflict, one that evolved into appeals for martial law to restore law and order.[204] Here too the technique evolved in the West of blacklisting union members and finding excuses to fire them. In this instance at Gold Hill, the employers defeated the union by employing many of these tactics, and because the union split over the demand for a closed shop. The demand that all miners must join the union in order to work turned the public against the union and precipitated its demise. The community, indeed many miners themselves, found the idea

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[201] Ibid., 37.
[202] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 41.
[203] Ibid.
[204] David R. Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West, 1890-1920: Socialists, Populists, Miners, and Wobblies* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2011), 19.

of forcing men to join unions or disallowing non-union men from working as too radical.[205]

Community support, critical to unionizing efforts and successful strikes, did not guarantee victory but without it action was unlikely to succeed. The attitude of the press played an influential role too. The press often broke down along political lines with Democratic organs generally supporting the miners while Whig/Republican papers usually supported the owners. Pushing the community or press one way or the other often were perceived outrages, sometimes real, sometimes manufactured by either miner or owner, but most often by the latter. Typically a community would support striking miners, but as strikes dragged on and deprivation increased the pressure for survival, it forced capitulation. Likewise, merchants frantic for business pressured both sides to compromise, often aligning themselves with owners in a desperate attempt to restart trade.

Recognizing the need for a group to represent the workers in light of the owners' strength, and because of an improving economy with increased demand for miners, in December 1866 the laborers revived the union and fought again for the $4 a day wage. The Miners Union of Gold Hill excluded surface workers, but three-quarters of all mine employees labored belowground and were included. In this sense, it was an industrial trade union and not a craft union, a principle that became a founding tenet of Western mining unionism, which the Western Federation of Miners also adopted.[206] The Gold Hill Union constitution, probably based on an eastern coal miners' union, became the

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[205] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 40.
[206] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 44-5.

template for other mining unions in the West, and in later locals of the WFM.[207] The union's Irish predominance is testified by its members' inability to march with their union brethren in the 1867 St. Patrick's Day parade because so many were already committed to parade for their Irish fraternal organizations.[208]

Following the example of the Gold Hill mines, Virginia City miners organized their workers into unions in 1867. Wages were always the first priority, followed by aiding sick and injured miners and providing for funeral arrangements. Virginia City and Gold Hill unions received widespread recognition in the larger community and from miners themselves, becoming so powerful mine owners felt unable to resist their influence for decades.[209] Foreshadowing events throughout the West, mine owners attempted to restrain unions through legislative action, which induced unions to participate in politics to block anti-strike/anti-union legislation.[210] From this starting point many union officials canvassed for election to state legislatures to directly represent labor issues, exemplified by Gold Hill and Virginia City officials gaining seats to the state assembly in 1870.[211] This is something Boyce replicated in the 1890s, in the Coeur d'Alenes, representing Shoshone County as a senator in the state legislature. At the local level, union men ran for office to counterbalance owners' ability to call on state militias. Union influence over local law enforcement may have restrained many owners from

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[207] Ibid., 46.
[208] Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic*, 45-6.
[209] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 51.
[210] Ibid., 54.
[211] Ibid., 55.

initiating policies inimical to workers' welfare, but unintentionally may have encouraged mine owners' appeals for state and national help during unrest.[212]

In all, the Comstock miners provided the blueprint for the rest of the hard-rock mining West, comprising Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, South Dakota and Utah. In Idaho's Silver City miners organized a union in 1867, at the behest of miners who had migrated from the Comstock, after they went unpaid as the result of suspect management practices.[213] Two Irish immigrants, Tom O'Brien and Joseph Poynton who worked in the Comstock together, later took on prominent roles in the Coeur d'Alenes' unions, the former as president of the Miners' Union in 1892 where he would have known Boyce.[214] Later in central and northern Idaho the Comstock's influence, largely exerted by the then dominant Butte Miners' Union (BMU), colored the tenor and tone of union organization in the Wood Valley and Coeur d'Alenes.[215] In these attempts to unionize, Irish names predominated at all levels of union organization and participation in the West.[216] Historian David Emmons posits that Irish and Irish-Americans had a "unique perspective on all exploiters, capitalists included," something learned from their English colonial masters, which often conflated the "rights of Ireland and the rights of all workers."[217] Drawing on the work of E.P. Thompson and Eric

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[212] Ibid., 57.

[213] Merle W. Wells, *Gold Camps and Silver Cities: Nineteenth Century Mining in Central and Southern Idaho* (1964; repr., Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1983), 51.

[214] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 221. O'Brien's background is outlined by Smith in the *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 36; Poynton's nationality is deduced from an advertisement in a September 16th, 1909 advertisement in the WFM's *Miner's Magazine*, requesting information on Poynton's whereabouts in regards to his mother of County Tipperary, Ireland passing away.

[215] Robert Wayne Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892: A Case Study of an Industrial Dispute* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State College, 1961), 14.

[216] Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic*, 46.

[217] Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 8.

Hobsbawm, he illustrates how the Irish working-class in Britain during this time brought a radical perspective to labor matters not because of their working-class status, but because they were Irish and had experienced political, economic and social discrimination.[218] This engendered distrust for authority, a communal tradition of resistance, and a hatred for the English. Emmons further postulates that many Irish conflated Englishness with capitalism, conjoining the two as devastators and despoilers of all things Irish.[219] For Irish and Irish-American workers this provided an inspiration to fight back through organized labor as exemplified by Boyce's union career in the Mountain West.

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[218] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 292-3.
[219] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 294.

CHAPTER FIVE: AMERICA EMBRACES THE IRISH LAND LEAGUE

The urge to unionize and organize labor, fed by increasing industrialization particularly after the Civil War, gave impetus to the miners in the West who desperately realized they needed to join together to survive in the face of modern industrial practices.[220] Likewise, by the end of Reconstruction most Americans identified the oppositional qualities inherent in labor and capital. They realized that the dream of a short intermediary phase as a wage laborer, before progressing to property owning and independence, remained unattainable for the majority.[221] The depression of the 1870s intensified this conflict, manifesting itself in labor and social turmoil. Out of this unrest, Irish nationalist revolutionaries on both sides of the Atlantic began to see the possibilities inherent in supporting political and social reform movements previously anathema to them.[222] Working-people's critique during the depression of wage slavery, as analogous to Southern chattel slavery, inspired the Knights of Labor, the National Labor Union, and bolstered the Irish-American Land League.[223]

The Irish Land League, campaigning in Ireland in the late 1870s and early 1880s, spawned the American Land League, which garnered Irish-American financial and moral support for land reform, tax amelioration and the rights of the rural poor in Ireland, yet it

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[220] Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic*, 150.
[221] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 127.
[222] Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 87.
[223] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 76.

became a *cause celebre* in the US. In 1880, Charles Stewart Parnell, the Land League and

Irish Home Rule Party leader toured 62 US cities, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars

and addressed a joint session of Congress.[224] Parnell, who had previously visited the US,

understood his audience and deftly played to Irish-American sympathies, using the

Famine to arouse Irish-American support for Irish land and political issues.[225] His

speeches often veered toward embracing violence to free Ireland, delivered the red meat

physical-force nationalists fed upon while stopping just short of outright sanction,

providing plausible deniability to those who eschewed violence. His use of the Famine,

reopening an old wound, demonstrated a truism of nationalist philosophy that ancient

suffering mobilizes people more than victories and demands a communal response from

the abused group.[226] By reminding audiences of the English 'attempts to starve and

exterminate our people,' Parnell salted the wound for Irish America where the Famine

memory seared the social fabric of Irish communities.[227] By fall 1881, there were 1,500

Land League branches in the US and by mid-1882 they had collected more than half a

million dollars.[228]

 Contrary to contemporary popular perception that sees Irish influence only in the

East, the Land League enjoyed a large following in the West where hard-rock miners and

railroad workers lent it eager support. Here the Land League's popularity encouraged an

interest in Irish nationalism even among those who were not Irish.[229] In this instance the

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[224] Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 103.
[225] Janis, *A Greater Ireland*, 35.
[226] Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), 12.
[227] Janis, *A Greater Ireland*, 35.
[228] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 156.
[229] David Thomas Brundage, *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism: Denver's Organized Workers, 1878-1905* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 41, 26.

Land League both informed labor activism and infused it with Hibernian flavored ideals of liberty. In the West, the center of labor activism in the US in this era, unions used the Irish Land League technique of boycotting and its "No Rent Manifesto" of 1881 inspired railroad strikes in 1886, agitation for an eight hour day and even the 1894 Pullman Strike.[230] This illustrates how the Land League brought current ideas of workers' rights and societal reform to Irish America and the broader community, allowing for a larger questioning of Gilded Age America.[231] It also highlights the overlap of ethnicity, class, and militancy, factors that transformed how the working-class approached the industrialization of the country.[232] For historian David Brundage the "Land League and Irish nationalism generally," lay the groundwork for radical labor groups such as the Knights of Labor to espouse anti-monopoly ideals, to acknowledge workers' contribution to the production of wealth, while also inducing labor solidarity and a willingness to resist capital's power.[233]

Much of this ideology found its way to Irish America through Patrick Ford's highly influential *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*, which Emmons states was "read wherever the Irish were to be found in the United States," and linked economic reform in Ireland with similar reform in the US.[234] Ford's paper, first published in the 1870s, exerted a sizeable influence on the labor movement. With a weekly circulation of 35,000 it gave voice to Irish-American nationalism and working-class sentiments.[235] It

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[230] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 290, 297, 299.
[231] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 151.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Brundage, *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism*, 52.
[234] Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 51.
[235] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 157.

equated landless Irish peasants to the wage slave in the US, both victims of an exploitive economic system.[236] At the paper's New York office, Irish nationalists and labor leaders commingled and its pages show a nexus between worker agitation in the Jacksonian era and Chartism, which link the 1870s efforts for labor and land reform.[237] The ubiquitous *Irish World* complemented an Irish tendency to resist oppression combined with social protest to instill a sense of working-class rights and a willingness to defend them amongst Western miners.[238] In mining towns of the West, the *Irish World's* radical program of societal reform and Irish nationalism joined with the Land League, to point workers' groups in a more radical direction. [239] It is also a testament to the power of Irish nationalism in the West. Highlighting the transnational nature of Irish America, Ford claimed the *Irish World* had a circulation of 60,000 in Ireland, mainly paid for in the US, eliciting a British government ban in light of its revolutionary nationalistic and socioeconomic message.[240] When the *Irish World* panned Prime Minister Gladstone's 1881 conciliatory Land Reform Act, it forced Parnell to delay his response, an indication of the *Irish World's* power and radicalism.[241] Indeed, Ford and his paper were instrumental in the Land League's high profile, fund-raising prowess and efficacy, in both Ireland and the US, despite conservative unease with such a leftward leaning organ.[242] Its long-term relevance is evidenced in Boyce's personal papers where a 1912

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[236] Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 108.
[237] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 158. In *Modern Ireland*, Foster highlights the debt Chartism owes to the "Irish radical tradition," and its Irish leaders, 365.
[238] Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 54.
[239] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 170.
[240] Janis, *A Greater Ireland*, 122.
[241] Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 115.
[242] Janis, *A Greater Ireland*, 123.

receipt for a yearly subscription exists.[243] Clearly, Irish nationalism continued to animate

those of Irish heritage even as world events inclined toward overshadowing their

concerns on the eve of World War One.

Within Irish-American communities, the Land League exposed the divide

between the mainly working-class supporters of radical reform and the conservative

bourgeois allied with the Catholic Church. The latter groups felt threatened by those who

claimed ordinary people in the US suffered under a monopolistic system of

landownership just as the Irish did.[244] Though the Irish had made advances since the

Famine generation, with their American born children rising in society, Irish America

remained predominantly working class in the 1870s. When depression struck in that

decade, many who had risen were dragged down, revealing stark class distinctions that

fueled pointed criticism of the Gilded Age's staggering inequalities.[245] The lack of

sympathy for unions and labor radicalism, seen as disreputable by many well-to-do Irish-

Americans, led to the charge that they were hypocrites for being anti-union, yet

seemingly desperately concerned about Ireland's abused people.[246] This incongruity, as

explained by Brown, existed because all Irish radical thought disguised an inherently

conservative nature striving for middle-class respectability.[247] He avers that the espousal

of extreme nationalism or socialism really camouflaged a quest for acceptance, upward

mobility and access to higher status in the US.[248] He sees the instrumental nature of

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[243] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," box 4, folder 33.
[244] Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 57.
[245] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 153.
[246] Brundage, *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism*, 49.
[247] Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 46.
[248] Ibid.

nationalism, and though sincerely felt, believes that for most Irish-Americans Irish

nationalism existed as secondary to their day-to-day struggle to survive. Thus, the

traditional story of Irish-American radicalism, after the mid-1880s, is one where access to

middle-class life, the Democratic Party's labor reform proposals, and the Church's

growing power, blunted militancy.

However, other historians dispute this interpretation, denying that working-class

status is the first step in a continuum toward middle-class life and so on.[249] Their

argument is that a top down interpretation ignores the genuine radical working-class

element in the labor movement.[250] Furthermore, the middle-class assimilation some see

Irish-Americans gaining from nationalism, was countered by the Irish working-class

assimilating radical oppositional values, deeply critical of capitalistic exploitation in the

Gilded Age.[251] This working-class discontent, channeled through the Land League and

labor organizations such as the Knights of Labor, challenged the power of the Democratic

Party, the Church and the middle-class.[252] The 1886 New York mayoral race presented a

practical example of the continuing influence of the Land League, where the working-

class Irish rebelled against Tammany Hall, to support the radical social reformer Henry

George.[253] George reported from Ireland for the *Irish World* at the height of Land League

agitation. Though Tammany Hall had sympathy for working people, it closely allied itself

with the Church and wealthy Irish-American businessmen. It betrayed its status quo

nature by blaming the woes of the downtrodden on Republican policies, not unbridled

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[249] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 195.
[250] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 172.
[251] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 195.
[252] Ibid., 191.
[253] Janis, *A Greater Ireland*, 201-3.

capitalism, as it should have according to the *Irish World*.[254] And even if most Irish-American and Irish mine workers in the West were more interested in "safe and steady" employment rather than deep societal change, their sense of Irish nationalism remained powerful and a large part of their identity. It also contributed to their resistance of exploitative employment practices.[255] Even when very wealthy and though drifting away from labor issues, Boyce remained deeply committed to Ireland's cause for freedom.[256]

The Land League also highlights the tensions in Irish and Irish-American nationalism, riven by internal differences between those who advocated complete independence by any means necessary, constitutionalism, and champions of socioeconomic reform. Significantly, it was the first nationalist movement that united all Irish-Americans for a time, and importantly it had Church support.[257] Nationalism often brought the Irish of all classes together. In the Land League moderates, extremists and the clergy coalesced in the last quarter of the 1800s, even though most wealthy Irish-Americans and the Church hierarchy eschewed revolutionary social ideals and the violent overthrow of British rule in Ireland.[258] Nevertheless, in 1878 Clan na Gael, the leading Irish-American physical force group, threw its support behind the Irish Home Rule Party, synonymous with the Land League by 1879. This united physical force nationalists with constitutionalists in Ireland. An American newspaper called it the "New Departure," the

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[254] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 165.

[255] Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 301.

[256] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," contains scores of artifacts attesting to his lifelong attachment to Irish nationalism from his notebook of Irish poetry and prose, Irish history books, newspaper clippings, subscriptions to Irish causes, letters, telegrams, receipts, pamphlets, and newsletters. In contrast, after he resigned from the presidency of the WFM in 1902 his interest in labor matters waned.

[257] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 156.

[258] Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, 178, 170.

term this fusion is known as in Irish history.[259] Thus, land reform, constitutionalism and

Irish-American violent nationalism were wedded to the same cause, though the Irish

Home Rule Party always denied it accepted anything but lawful, non-violent support. In

the Land League, middle and upper-class Irish-Americans eventually found a respectable

outlet for their Irish nationalism, one divorced from the violent tendencies of the Fenians

and Clann na Gael, violence being antithetical to the genteel lifestyle they aspired to

attain.[260] However, by 1900 the struggle between physical force, constitutional and social

reform nationalists ended in victory for the conservative forces who preached

constitutionalism and restrained social reform.[261] The Catholic Church, the Democratic

Party and the middle-class wanted no part in revolutionary change. But, particularly in

the working-class, labor issues and Irish nationalism remained entwined, mixing social

reform radicalism with Irish nationalism even after the Land League's decline in 1883.[262]

Yet, it was not just those of Irish ancestry who found inspiration in the Land

League's message but people of all stripes. Foner asserts that Western miners,

predominantly Irish but many others too, discovered a "symbiotic relationship between

class-conscious unionism and Irish national consciousness" inspiring miners to give

generously to the Land League.[263] The rapid economic and social changes replacing

frontier individualism with corporatism, controlled by absentee owners, imbued

radicalism in miners. In Denver the Land League had a major philosophical impact,

introducing women's participation, non-sectarianism and coolness to the Catholic

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[259] Ibid., 92.
[260] Brundage, *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism*, 46.
[261] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 178.
[262] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 198.
[263] Ibid., 176.

hierarchy, all factors shaping the Knights of Labor with its heavily Catholic Irish membership.[264] And in the Pennsylvania anthracite region, Land League support united, not just the skilled and unskilled, but all ethnic workers.[265] Moreover, it brought Irish America towards a rapprochement with Protestant reformers such as Wendell Philips who compared the Land League to the Free Soil party of the US, while James Redpath drew analogies between Southern slavery and the Irish condition.[266] Another example from Denver shows the *Labor Enquirer*, edited by an Anglo-American Protestant closely following events in Ireland and sympathizing with the dispossessed's cause, similar to many labor advocates without Irish heritage throughout the US.[267]

The Land League illustrates the influence of Irish nationalism in American life, particularly Irish-American communities but also in the broader society. Not only did it rouse support for Ireland's issues but it allowed Americans to question the deepening gulf between the rich and poor in the Gilded Age. It also highlights the transnational nature of Irish and Irish-American life, epitomized by the *Irish World*'s influence in Ireland, and the constant appeals from Irish politicians to America for support. For a time it managed to unite all strands of Irish nationalism, be they violent, constitutional or social reform minded, and the Catholic Church. However, it eventually came apart at the seams, when conservative and radical issues rended it asunder. However, part of its legacy fused Irish nationalism and working-class resistance to the abuses of the ages, in workers'

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[264] Brundage, *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism*, 47, 48.
[265] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 173.
[266] Foner, *Politics and Ideology*, 181-2. Emmons in *Beyond the American Pale* disputes this believing Foner overstates the case for rapprochement.
[267] Brundage, *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism*, 48.

organizations such as the Knights of Labor that had 750,000 members in the 1880s.[268] Its

leader Terence Powderly, an ardent Irish nationalist, promoted KOL locals as Land

League recruiting offices.[269] While dominated by those with an Irish heritage, the Land

League incorporated many people and bridged ethnic differences specifically amongst the

working-class. It also brought, nationwide, women into the political movement,

something new to Irish-American communities.[270] For those of Irish heritage it also

represented a manifestation of their Irish nationalism, whether they be conservative,

radical, constitutionalist or physical force proponents. In the West, this expression of

Irish nationalism, as seen by support for the Land League, manifest itself most strongly in

mining communities.

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[268] Kenny, *The American Irish*, 112.
[269] Janis, *A Greater Ireland*, 133.
[270] Brundage, *The Making of Western Labor Radicalism*, 47.

CHAPTER SIX: IDAHO'S IRISH SILVER VALLEY

1882, the acme of the Land League's success also saw Ed Boyce, later a union leader in Idaho and president of the Western Federation of Miners, leave his native Ireland for the US. His is the quintessential story of Irish nationalism transplanted from his native land to the American West and its impact on the American labor movement. Boyce, from a part of Ireland known for its spirit of resistance, grew up in a time where a forming Irish national identity coalesced around Catholicism, Anglophobia and Irish independence. These characteristics informed his personality and in the word of Emmons "it is likely that his Irish nationalism gave rise to his worker militancy, not the other way round."[271] Like so many Irish immigrants and Irish-Americans, his background led him toward unionization to combat exploitation just as Irish nationalists' resisted British rule. In a fourth of July speech to Cripple Creek miners in 1900 he compared "the fight of organized labor to the American Revolution. He equated labor with the Patriots and capital with the British and Tories."[272] The *Miner's Magazine*, the official organ of the WFM, which he edited for some time, frequently ran articles denouncing the excesses of capital together with stories of abusive British imperialism. In the year Boyce departed from Ireland, according to historian John Fahey, his home region suffered violence in the

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[271] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 301.
[272] Robert William Henry, "Ed Boyce: The Curious Evolution of an American Radical," (master's thesis, University of Montana, 1993), 22. http:/scholarworks.umt.edu/etd (accessed April10, 2017).

cause of Land League militants agitating for land reform.[273] It is unlikely that Boyce

interpreted events in this light, seeing that he wrote a letter to the editor of an Irish

newspaper, the *Derry Journal*, in 1938 praising the paper's "policy so in accord with its

position in those stirring days of the Land League, when it so vigorously supported

Parnell … who carried on the unequal fight against the most powerful empire in the

world."[274] Likewise, though born a decade after the end of the Great Famine, his parents

would have lived through it. Its legacy in the living, the landscape and the departed

would have been all around him. In popular memory, expressed as folklore, for some the

Famine represented a supernatural intervention creating scarcity because of profligate

food habits prior to the catastrophe.[275] However, in Boyce's Donegal, not long after the

Famine, people began to blame the British government for the devastation wreaked on

Irish Catholic communities.[276]

Additionally, during the Famine itself urban crowds rioted for cheaper prices and

rural people seized food to prevent its export, acknowledging human action in denying

them sustenance. Rural accounts of food theft emphasized the moral nature of an action

that would not normally be celebrated.[277] People remembered these kind of events and

passed them on orally.[278] Scholarship in the late twentieth century reveals, hitherto

unremarked upon, powerful memories of the Famine in popular literature, folklore and

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[273] John Fahey, "Ed Boyce and the Western Federation of Miners," in *Idaho Yesterdays* 25, no.3 (Fall 1981): 20.

[274] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," letter to the *Derry Journal* August 18, 1936, box 4, folder 33.

[275] Niall O'Ciosain. "Famine Memory and the Remembrance of Scarcity," in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 104.

[276] MacSuibhne, 'Bastard Ribbonism,' 198.

[277] Ibid.

[278] O'Ciosain, "Famine Memory and the Remembrance of Scarcity," 105.

political activity in Ireland and amongst the diaspora.[279] Boyce went to the Catholic

National School, he later had a photograph of it framed in Wallace, a school where he

undoubtedly learned a nationalist interpretation of the Famine as genocide, deliberate

starvation and forced depopulation.[280]

When Boyce arrived in the US he alighted in Boston and moved westward across

the US, working on railroads until he found himself in Leadville, Colorado in 1883.[281]

Here he joined the Knights of Labor, a social and labor movement that helped many Irish

members envision unionization and conflict between labor and capital as analogous to

Ireland exploited by Britain.[282] Leadville's Miners' Union owed its organization to Irish

immigrants and Irish-Americans who lost a bitter strike in 1880.[283] Boyce's notebook is

replete with transcriptions of Irish poetry and ballads, which Emmons describes as

"bathetic," all with a nationalist bent bewailing the lot of the exile at the hand of the

Saxon oppressor, some signed "Leadville, 1886."[284] Bathetic perhaps, but indicative of an

unrelenting attachment to Irish freedom, a cause he pursued throughout his life, despite

his inattention to labor issues later on.[285] It also illustrates how the usual feelings of loss

and suffering, the absence of the familiar, the cultural shock of emigrating becomes

conflated with Irish nationalism. In Leadville Boyce became ill from arsenic fumes in a

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[279] Emily Mark-FitzGerald, *Commemorating the Irish Famine: Memory and the Monument* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 57.

[280] Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 210; Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," box 6, folder 22.

[281] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 300.

[282] Arnesen, *Encyclopedia of US Labor and Working-Class History*, 471.

[283] James Patrick Walsh, "Michael Mooney and the Leadville Miners' Strike of 1880" in *Irish Migrants in New Communities: Seeking the Fair Land?* ed. Mícheál Ó hAodha and Máirtín Ó Catháin (Lanham, MD: Lexington Publishing, 2014), 118.

[284] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 305; Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," box 6, folder 4.

[285] See note 237 above.

smelter and also when working belowground in the mines, contributing to his understanding of the dangers in mining work. Like so many of the time, peripatetic in search of something better, he made his way to Wardner, Idaho, in 1877 working on the railroad, but he moved on to a mining job in the Anaconda Mine in Butte, Montana.[286] He worked in Butte for about a year before moving back to Wardner, and though he denies Butte miners established unions in the Coeur d'Alenes,[287] Butte's overwhelming unionization, its willingness to proselytize and its Irishness necessarily reverberated in the Silver Valley.

In 1878, four years before Boyce came to the US, the Butte Miners' Union (BMU) formed to counter a cut in wages, and after a successful strike, it established $3.50 a day as the standard for all underground workers in the mines. By the early 1890s the BMU emerged as the most influential workers' group in the West, a mantle previously worn by the Comstock Miners' Union.[288] Using the Comstock model, it became the stalwart of hard-rock mining unionism. It is difficult to overstate the level of unionization throughout Butte in this period, but Emmons states it was aptly called the "Gibraltar of Unionism" with "closed shops in every major industrial and commercial trade," and the BMU dominated them all.[289] To Butte, the Irish came from copper mines in Michigan, the coalfields of Pennsylvania, and mining towns in California, Utah, Colorado, and Nevada because Irish mine owners, superintendents and foremen favored

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[286] James H. Hawley, "Collected Papers," Idaho State Historical Society Archives (Boise, ID), "Haywood Trial Transcript," 2465.

[287] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Robert Wayne Smith' letter, August 18, 1936, box 5, folder 16.

[288] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 14.

[289] Emmons, *The Butte Irish,* 221.

hiring Irish workers. [290] This also encouraged chain migration from Ireland directly to

Butte. In this environment, they replicated social structures that reflected an Irish,

Catholic, communitarian ethos that differed from the predominant American culture.

Here the Catholic Church, the Democratic Party, fraternal groups and unions, all played a

role in shaping and reinforcing an ethnic environment with a deep sense of concern for

Ireland's freedom.[291] Reveling in this Irish community, Boyce joined the aforementioned

Robert Emmet Literary Association, a fraternal group dedicated to violent Irish

nationalism.[292] Furthermore, in Butte Irish immigrants and the sons and daughters of such

people, because of the Irish experience under colonialism, could better comprehend

labors' rhetoric of protest.[293] This provided another link to Boyce and the Coeur d'Alenes

when unrest erupted.

By the late 1880s the Irish, after battling with Cornishmen, dominated the BMU

representing 80% of its officials and were its largest contingent of members.[294] From

Butte, they spread the mantra of unionization and inspired the establishment of miners'

unions in the Northwest including the Coeur d'Alenes and Wood River Valley of

Idaho.[295] Though unions in Wardner (1887) and Burke (1888) sprung up as independent

reactions to pay cuts, it is hard to doubt the influence of the BMU in presenting a mode to

resist the growing power of the mining industry.[296] Unions also defended the dignity of

the miner, his masculinity and his social standing, not just pay scales, as many miners

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[290] Emmons, *The Butte Irish,* 16, 191.
[291] Ibid., 293.
[292] Ibid., 298.
[293] Ibid., 297.
[294] Ibid., 87.
[295] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 14.
[296] Stanley S. Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table: The struggle of Coeur D'Alenes Miners, 1887-1942* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), 11.

became relegated to unskilled work in the face of new technology such as the compressed air drill.[297] Whether Butte union officials were directly involved, or perhaps men recently arrived from Butte in search of work inspired unionization, given the BMU's evangelic nature it would be hard to discount Butte's influence in Idaho. Boyce allows that up to 1887 all men in the Silver Valley were paid the "schedule of wages paid miners in Butte."[298] Given Butte's predominant Irish character at the time, it is reasonable to assume contact and relationships extended along ethnic lines into the Silver Valley. During the strike of 1892, the BMU provided extensive financial support and personnel to assist the unions in responding to the crisis. However, the BMU's reputation allowed mine owners to accuse interlopers of stirring up trouble where before none existed, and instigating radical unionism.[299] Like many privileged people, before and after them, the wealthy claimed no discontent existed in their backyard until outside agitators provoked it.

The first union in the Coeur d'Alene district organized in secret at Wardner in 1887, because the Bunker Hill and Sullivan mine operators fired known union men.[300] According to Boyce it elected "Tom Butler, Dan Condon, Dan Kennedy and Patrick O'Rourke" to fill the leadership roles, again indicating a heavy Irish presence.[301] He too joined the Wardner union. By 1890 all of the underground workers had signed on in the Silver Valley to one of the four unions at Burke, Gem, Mullan and Wardner. The avowed

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[297] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 11-12.
[298] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Angelina Burns letter, July 20, 1936, box 4, folder 2.
[299] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 10-11.
[300] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 17.
[301] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Robert Wayne Smith letter, August 18, 1936, box 5, folder 16.

purpose of the miners' unions in the Coeur d'Alenes, following the example of the Butte

miners, endeavored to maintain wages, create a sick and death benefit and improve safety

in the mines.[302] By 1891 they had formed a central executive committee, named the

Coeur d'Alene Miners' Union with two delegates from each union on the board.[303] Five

of its members were of Irish extraction. In the Coeur d'Alenes, men of Irish heritage

overwhelmingly joined and led unions leading mine owners to blame the Irish element in

engaging in radicalized, unlawful and often violent behavior.[304] The Irish objected, seeing

their actions as a legitimate response to capital's abuses. Those of Irish ancestry were

primed, in the words of historian Eric Arnesen, by their familiarity with "land reform and

anti-colonial ideologies" to organize against exploitation.[305] Yet, the impetus to unionize

in the Silver Valley came from the immense power corporations amassed in the Gilded

Age. In the mining West their near monopoly as employer, with its stranglehold over

workers' lives encouraged abuse.[306] The mining industry, because of the large

investments needed, attracted outside capital from large corporate entities with most

headquartered on the coasts.[307] Here, Eastern and European money in particular fueled

development in the 1890s, in an economy based on a colonial paradigm complete with

absentee owners who had little relationship, other than extraction, with the people.[308]

Boyce would have seen the parallels with the Ireland he grew up in. Not only were the

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[302] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 19.
[303] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 199. Of the eight delegates on the committee five have obvious Irish names as listed by Smith in *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 19: P.C. Sullivan, Daniel Crowley, W.N. Dunn, J.J. Tobin and William Powers.
[304] Aiken, *Bunker Hill*, 11.
[305] Arnesen, *Encyclopedia of US Labor*, 471.
[306] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 14.
[307] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 8.
[308] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West,* 19.

mining companies the largest employers, but in one-industry towns and camps such as the Silver Valley epitomized, mining needs generated most other economic activity, giving corporations great influence over local officials, merchants, and professionals, not just their direct employees.

In some towns the company owned the only store, the infamous "pluck me" shops, forced single miners to bunk at company boarding houses or ran saloons, to the disadvantage of miners and their families. Workers regularly complained about food and conditions in boarding houses and were forced to sneak off to other towns to buy goods in the dead of night, because company owned stores so inflated prices.[309] Boyce lost his job, at Wardner's Last Chance Mine in 1887 for refusing to lodge in the company bunkhouse.[310] It is noteworthy that the mine owner, Charles Sweeny, was the son of a man who fled Ireland during the Famine.[311] This illustrates that ethnicity sometimes could be discounted by class, however Sweeny's Irish background made him suspect in the eyes of other mine owners.[312] In contrast, another Irish immigrant, Patsy Clark, owned a mine in the Silver Valley and was in the owners' association like Sweeny, yet he had good relations with his employees and seemed to be always willing to meet miners halfway.[313] But Clark had been in the BMU, Sweeny had not, and Clark worked and lived amidst his employees.[314] In Congressional testimony Boyce later criticized mandatory

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[309] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 17.
[310] Hawley, "Haywood Trial Transcript," 2472.
[311] John Fahey, *Ballyhoo Bonanza: Charles Sweeny and the Idaho Mines* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1971), 4.
[312] Aiken, *Bunker Hill*, 15.
[313] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 33.
[314] Richard G. Magnuson, *Coeur d'Alene Diary: The First Ten Years of Hardrock Mining in North Idaho,* (Portland, OR: Metropolitan Press, 1968), 205.

bunk rooms, boarding houses and the pluck-me stores.[315] Furthermore, companies'

relentless pursuit of profit induced many mine managers to skimp on good practices such

as proper ventilation, adequate support timbering work, appropriate water removal

techniques and particularly important to the men, competent medical care.[316] May

Arkwright Hutton, in her partisan and colorful book tells a story of Boyce saving a man's

life who had been injured by the company's failure to timber the mine properly, and who

then received poor medical care.[317] Additionally, the quickest most effective way to save

money induced management to cut wages, an action frequently practiced.

Though Boyce gained fame, or infamy according to some, because of his later

presidency of the Western Federation of Miners, he was only one of many Irish and Irish-

Americans in the Silver Valley mining communities. The 1890 voting rosters at Wallace,

show no native Idahoans, the Irish as the largest foreign born group,[318] and though the

vast majority were American, undoubtedly many of these claimed an Irish heritage.

Additionally, the Spokane Irish-American Association's 1892 Fourth of July picnic, held

in Coeur d'Alene City, had at least 1,900 participants with the main speaker full of

American and Irish patriotic bravado.[319] In 1891 the Burke Miner's Union had 130

members, all its elected officials were Irish and the entire region celebrated Saint

Patrick's Day.[320] A jury in Wardner empaneled to investigate the cause of death in three

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[315] Coeur d'Alene Mining Troubles, 56th Cong., 1st sess., 1899, S. Doc. 25, 1-2.
[316] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 15.
[317] May Arkwright Hutton, *The Coeur d'Alenes; or, A Tale of the Modern Inquisition in Idaho* (Denver, CO: A.P.P. Engraving and Printing, 1900), 56.
[318] Magnuson, *Coeur d'Alene Diary*, 106.
[319] *Coeur d'Alene Press* (Kootenai County, Idaho), "Irish-American Picnic" and "The Fourth in Coeur d'Alene," July 9, 1892.
[320] Magnuson, *Coeur d'Alene Diary*, 86, 110, 126.

fatalities in 1894 lists Irish names most commonly.[321] The widow of one of the dead,

Patrick Curran, returned to Ireland but his brother still worked at the Bunker Hill Mine.[322]

Throughout author Richard Magnuson's, *Coeur d'Alene Diary: The First Ten Years of*

Hardrock Mining in North Idaho, Irish names abound generally in society, but

specifically in mining and unions. Many people are identified as Irish, particularly when

a colorful story unfolds, mimicking the style of the times where the Irish generally

received good treatment in their everyday lives albeit it with a touch of caricature.[323]

However, at the same time those whose sympathies lay with corporations and mine

owners often attributed unionization and so-called radicalism to the Irish. The

mainstream press commonly branded labor organizers of any stripe, from relatively

moderate unions to advocates of socialism, as anarchists and proponents of a violent

disorder endeavoring to undermine the foundations of society.[324] With Emmons assertion

that the Silver Valley unions were "overwhelmingly Irish-led"[325] it is easy to see how

many in the middle and upper-classes came to associate the Irish and unions with

radicalism, violence and Molly Maguirism. During the 1892 unrest the *Statesman* opined

that some "Mollies" must have escaped Pennsylvania and settled in northern Idaho.[326]

Further attesting to a large Irish presence and the prevailing social attitudes is

William Stoll's *Silver Strike: The True Story of Silver Mining in the Coeur d'Alenes*.

Here he presents a colorful, self-serving account of the Silver Valley from 1883 to the

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[321] Aiken, *Bunker Hill*, 19. Surnames: Devlin, Harris, McCormick, Murphy, Powers, Reardon and Robinson.
[322] Ibid., 20.
[323] Magnuson, *Coeur d'Alene* Diary, 104.
[324] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West*, 30.
[325] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 315.
[326] *Idaho Daily Statesman*, "The Idaho Mollies," July 16, 1892.

end of 1892. However, the gold to be mined in Stoll's firsthand account of the period is the number of Irish, or their descendants, to be found in his narrative. Secondly, his work betrays the class and ethnic outlines of society where owners and professionals were overwhelmingly seen as Americans of English ancestry and unruly miners were immigrants of other stock, often, in this case Irish. Stoll, a lawyer who represented mining interests, hailed the "Englishman" in history as just, equitable and a civilizing force, obviously counting himself to be of such stock.[327] Sometimes he writes affectionately, but most frequently offensively, of the Irish in the Coeur d'Alenes. Often, Stoll's sons of Erin are to be found "swearing round Irish oaths," drinking and inciting lawlessness with their propensity for violence and labor agitation. In the arena of labor organizing and militancy the Irish, often described as "foreigners," became the demons of disorder and strife: "Foreign agitators deeply concerned for their own personal ends, many of them Irish, shouted platitudes on human oppression, hinting of Utopia, swaying masses, particularly the lower and more populous order of mining labor."[328] At times paternalistic, a Mike Sweeney was "temperamental as the Irishman at his best," other times he hints of clannishness, "a native-born Irishman" charged with murder enjoyed strong backing by his "countrymen" who were "deeply, militantly in sympathy with him."[329] He goes on to describe an Irish union leader as "Paddy Burke surrounded by a sociable company of dynamiters."[330] Another Irish union leader, Thomas O'Brien, is described as "slipperiness of true Erinian hue and color," while John Murphy, with "blue

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[327] William Stoll, *Silver Strike: The True Story of Silver Mining in the Coeur d'Alenes* (1932; repr., Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1991), 40.
[328] Ibid., 165.
[329] Ibid., 157, 165.
[330] Ibid., 193.

Irish eyes" is one more "radical unionist."[331] A further reference to union men "reared in the old 'Molly Maguire' school of Pennsylvania coal-field fame," is a not so coded allusion to supposed Irish lawlessness and violence.[332]

Similarly, Alfred Esler, mine manager and owners' association member, referred to the union's demands in 1892 as a 'restoration of the Molly Maguires,' a statement seen as defaming the 'Irish Race' by a BMU official in the Coeur d'Alenes helping the local unions.[333] According to the editor of the *Wallace Press*, Esler acted as the 'hounder of the Irish race' evidence of a certain level of ethnic animosity.[334] Pinkerton spy, Charles Siringo, relates how workers forced him to take an "iron-clad 'Molly Maguire' oath" when swearing allegiance to the union.[335] He further remarked, concerning those he helped convict, that "the peculiar twist in the names of all these convicted men would indicate that they were not Swedes, Chinamen or Scandinavians."[336] After the unrest a union miner complained that the miners in the Silver Valley had been "branded as murders, midnight assassins and Mollie Maguires" illustrating what the popular conception of being a Molly Maguire entailed.[337] And despite its anti-union stance, the 1894 Bunker Hill and Sullivan employee roll had 90 American, 83 Irish, and 14 other nationalities out of 332 workers.[338] Here, the superintendent, F.W. Bradley saw the union as mainly "Irish and therefore untrustworthy" and his intense "anti-Irish bias permeated

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[331] Ibid., 189, 200.
[332] Ibid., 184.
[333] *Idaho Daily Statesman* (Boise, Idaho), "Pinkham at Wallace," May 12, 1892.
[334] Magnuson, *Coeur d'Alene Diary,* 214.
[335] Charles A. Siringo, *A Cowboy Detective: A True Story of Twenty-Two Years with a World Famous Detective Agency* (Chicago, IL: W.B. Conkey Company, 1912), 140.
[336] Ibid., 187.
[337] *Wood River Times* (Hailey Idaho), "A Refugee Speaks," Oct. 4, 1892.
[338] Aiken, *Bunker Hill*, 24.

his union dealings" according to historian Katherine Aiken.[339] She goes on to say that he endeavored to remove "intractable Irish miners" who were "the root of all labor difficulty."[340] Many of the Irish miners must have been fired or moved on, depleting the rolls of Irishmen after 1892's events, implying an even greater number of them working the mines prior to this date. Bradley also complained about the Poorman Mine, owned by previously mentioned Patsy Clark, that "the whole crew from the manager down is an Irish Catholic and the union has anything and everything it asks for."[341]

The American Protective Association (APA), through its presence in the Idaho Republican Party exerted some influence in the area as evidenced by an Irish immigrant complaining that the APA harassed Catholics in northern Idaho in the 1890s.[342] The Bunker Hill and Sullivan Mine supported the founding of APA chapters intentionally to resist Irish influence in labor organization.[343] The irony that half the mine's name came from Cornelius Sullivan, a man of Irish ancestry, more than likely Catholic, is unremarked upon in the literature. In 1894 the Miners' Union requested the removal of a man they considered to be an APA member.[344] In neighboring Butte, the APA had 2,000 members in 1893,[345] and one of Boyce's newspaper clippings concerns "A.P. AISM" in Montana.[346] The *Salt Lake Herald*, in 1892 announced the Cheyenne, Wyoming APA chapter claimed to have 300 members.[347] In all, there is a clear indication that the Rocky

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[339] Ibid., 21, 23.
[340] Aiken, *Bunker Hill*, 23.
[341] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale*, 317.
[342] Fahey, *Ballyhoo Bonanza*, 71.
[343] Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale,* 316.
[344] Fahey, *Ballyhoo Bonanza*, 84.
[345] Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 115.
[346] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," newspaper clipping from the *Helena Independent* (Helena, Montana), undated, box 6, folder 3.
[347] *Salt Lake Herald* (Salt Lake City, Utah), "Catholics Aroused," May 1, 1892.

Mountain West supported a certain level of anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiment. Furthermore, miners in the Silver Valley region, states Fahey, were "predominantly Populist" something the APA happily conflated with "papist" in their disdain for both.[348] The Knights of Labor, often associated with Irish Catholics, peaked in Idaho in the 1890s just as they declined nationally, and were accused of controlling the Wardner union.[349] There were five branches of the KOL in the region in 1892, representing aboveground workers whereas those below ground belonged to the Miners' Union, though there seems to have been much mutuality.[350] Boyce joined both.[351] Playing into the nativist narrative, Colonel Carlin, commander of federal troops during the 1892 disturbance, stated in his official report a "majority of the persons arrested for participation in the recent riots in this region are foreign born, chiefly from Ireland, Canada and Germany, and a considerable number are unnaturalized."[352] The subtext here is clear: foreigners behaving badly, with their un-American ways caused all the trouble not inequality or oppression. Being such a large percentage of the immigrant population and union leadership, the Irish absorbed much of the tarring of this broad stroke. Boyce, twice damned as Irish immigrant and union leader, played his part in earning the opprobrium of the authorities.

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[348] Fahey, *Ballyhoo Bonanza*, 87.
[349] Ibid., 71.
[350] Magnuson, *Coeur d'Alene Diary*, 206.
[351] Hawley, "Haywood Trial Transcript," 2467.
[352] *The Executive Documents of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Fifty Second Congress, 1892-'93*, vol. 12 (Washington: General Printing Office, 1893), 112.

CHAPTER SEVEN: "LAWLESS" IRISH MINERS RIOT AND DYNAMITE

In 1892, the year of lockouts, strikes and violence, Boyce carried out duties as the

Wardner Union secretary. Known as a sober man with a serious bent, he read about social

and political issues while his companions caroused or diced.[353] History records a frugal

man, careful with money, with one anecdote telling of his refusal to pay for a wedding

certificate at his marriage, forcing his bride to write it out, because he believed the priest

overcharged for it.[354] Later in life, a millionaire, he queried a radiologist's bill balance of

$5 necessitating an admittance of error and an apology from the offending clinic.[355] Thrift

remained a powerful force in the lives of many immigrants. And issues of money

underlay the cause of the 1892 unrest whose proximate seeds were sown in 1891 when

the Miners' Union lobbied for an across the board belowground wage of $3.50 a day and

competent medical care. Traditionally, mine owners deducted a dollar a month for

medical care that miners emphatically denounced as inadequate. The union proposed the

dollar go to a hospital fund managed by the union, but Bunker Hill management denied

this request resulting in a strike in mid-1891.[356] With strong community support, the

miners also demanded $3.50 a day before they would return to work and in the face of a

complete stoppage of all work, the owners, some grudgingly, acquiesced to both

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[353] John Fahey, *The Days of the Hercules* (Moscow, ID: University Press Idaho, 1978), 118.
[354] Ibid., 120.
[355] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Portland Radiologist letter, Nov. 3rd, 1939, box 4, folder 55.
[356] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 25.

proposals. In response to labor's overt demonstration of its strength, mine owners organized the Mine Owners Protective Association, commonly called the MOA, representing the larger mining concerns in the valley and set about infiltrating the unions with spies.[357] The MOA wasted no time in furthering its principal objective of countering the unions, by hiring the previously mentioned Pinkerton spy, Charles Siringo. He joined the Gem Union, eventually becoming the union secretary, privy to all union business.[358] Unions were routinely infiltrated by operatives from so-called detective agencies, whose reports were frequently unreliable and self-interested, and their often hyperbolic assertions of what they allegedly observed sometimes induced owners and politicians to react precipitously.[359] On the other hand mine owners may have used the spies as agent provocateurs. The Wardner Union, according to Boyce, had a spy in it as well.[360] Siringo's autobiography expresses his belief that most miners in the Coeur d'Alenes were manipulated by "their heartless Irish leaders," and he claims that while in Boise testifying for the prosecution, the union miner's had requested the "Irish 'Clan-na-Gael,'" a secret Irish nationalist group, to kill him.[361] Whatever the veracity of this allegation, it is clear that the contents of his reports to mine owners would have been insalubrious towards unions and Irish people. Boyce suffered the unwanted attention of company spies long after he left the labor movement.[362]

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[357] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 199.
[358] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 30.
[359] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West*, 36.
[360] Hawley, "Haywood Trial Transcript," 2507.
[361] Siringo, *A Cowboy Detective,* 164, 186.
[362] Fahey, *The Days of the Hercules*, 120.

The MOA's chance to assail the unions arose when railroad companies upped the charge on ore leaving the valley in late 1891. In response to the increased railroad rates, the MOA closed the mines in January 1892, idling approximately 2,000 men. But when the railroads agreed to reduce rates to prior levels, the owners stated that only miners, not the other underground workers, would be paid $3.50 a day.[363] A suspicion existed within the unions that the closure over shipping rates provided a convenient guise to assault laborers' pay, confirmed by the owners' subsequent actions.[364] The central executive of the Miners' Union, whose president and secretary, Thomas O'Brien and Joseph. F. Poynton were Irish immigrants, met and informed the owners they would not return unless the owners restored the wage rate.[365] The mine owners replied arrogantly through the press, which showed them in a bad light building sympathy for the miners who struck. The owners' reacted by making further stipulations, such as non-membership in unions as a prerequisite to return to work.[366] Typical in the mining West, when mines closed or work slowed, many single miners moved on which depleted the union's base. However, the 800 remaining of the 2,000 or so miners were largely married men with roots in the community and they were resolute, buoyed by strong community support.[367] In Portland, Spokane and particularly Butte, labor organizations rallied to the Silver Valley miners' cause. The Butte Miners' Union leveled a $5 a month premium on all its members, encouraging other unions to follow suit, entailing 6,000 miners to contribute

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[363] Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 9.
[364] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 33, 37.
[365] Ibid., 35. Five others on the committee have probable Irish names: Terrence Purcell, Patrick H. Heney, Thomas Eaton, John W. Sweeney, and Quin Sullivan. That totals seven of the eight person committee to apparently have Irish heritage.
[366] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 202.
[367] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 38.

$30,000 a month to support their Idaho brethren and it made an immediate $5,000 loan to the Idaho miners.[368] The BMU also sent a team to evaluate the situation, led by BMU secretary Gabe Dallas, who Siringo called "a one-eyed, two legged, Irish hyena from the Butte City."[369] In Spokane two of the three relief organizers had obvious Irish names, John Roche and T.H. Burns[370] suggesting an ethnic solidarity, not just class support for the miners. Later, Peter Breen, a BMU official and Irish immigrant also came from Butte to assist.[371] This outside support enabled a logistical network to receive and distribute relief, under union auspices, to miners' families valued at $400 a day.[372] A newspaper reported outside union support for the miners specifically mentioning the BMU indicating the influence of this most Irish town.[373] Meanwhile, the owners had not been idle.

Toward the end of April union men forced four non-union men from mines in Burke and ejected two from the town and state. On May seventh, the two evictees swore in Boise's federal court, at the behest of the owners' lawyer, future Idaho senator W.B. Heyburn, to their treatment. Judge Beatty granted the owners a temporary restraining order, enjoining the unions and 120 individuals from interfering with mining operations, trespass or intimidating non-union workers.[374] The actions of Judge Beatty, who had gained his position through mine owners' intervention assailed the miners' and others' constitutional rights to free speech and peaceful assembly.[375] Boyce claimed Beatty to be

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[368] Ibid., 39.
[369] Siringo, *A Cowboy Detective,* 164, 144.
[370] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 54.
[371] Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 191.
[372] *Caldwell Tribune* (Caldwell, Idaho), "Origin of the Big Strike," July 23, 1892.
[373] Ibid.
[374] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 42.
[375] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 10-11.

"bitterly opposed to organized labor" and to be "a mediocre lawyer."[376] Also enjoined,

because of their union sympathies, were county Sheriff Cunningham and newspaper

editor Adam Aulbach, indicating the broadness of the judge's reach. The union hired

Frank Ganahl, a lawyer who once gave a two hour oration at a Fenian benefit in Boise in

1867, to represent them.[377] On the heels of the injunctions came a trainload of

strikebreakers with fifty guards to Burke. The introduction of the guards, "an armed

force" violated Idaho law, precipitating their attempted arrest by the County Sheriff.[378]

However, the sheriff only arrested their leader, but the mine owners immediately bailed

him out. The pattern of bringing in non-union miners by rail continued through May and

June, but they always had to run the gauntlet of unfriendly miners at the towns and mines.

Many of the non-union men deserted to the union side and were given union benefits,

however, by July the owners estimated they had 800 men at work, though guarding them

and the mines meant they incurred greater expense.[379]

In late May Governor Willey toured the area in response to rising tensions but

found the region peaceful and returned to Boise. However, he spent most of his time with

the owners, persons nearer to him in class and status, reiterating their position in

opposition to the miners. The owners' inveighed upon the governor to declare martial law

to forestall impending death, destruction and devastation at the hands of the union, a

common tactic in mining disputes in the West.[380] The cost of guarding mines and the

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[376] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Robert Wayne Smith letter, August 18, 1936, box 5, folder 16.

[377] Arthur A. Hart, *Basin of Gold: Life in Boise Basin*, 1862-1890 (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 1986), 50.

[378] Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 32.

[379] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 46.

[380] Ibid., 50.

inefficient non-union labor ate into profits, and though under injunction the union still managed to operate effectively. Martial law would relieve them of these burdens, but Governor Willey demurred. However, by July the miners had been locked out or on strike for more than six months and many union members expressed frustration and anger with the union's tactics and its repeated admonitions for non-violence and restraint.[381] These feelings came to the fore when strikers in Homestead, Pennsylvania, captured two boatloads of Pinkerton hired guards, seemingly a successful use of force by the union men. As this story permeated through the mining towns, the news that Charles Siringo the Gem Union's secretary, unveiled by someone who recognized him as a Pinkerton spy, infuriated miners who started to gather in Gem.[382]

In the early hours of July eleventh, violence erupted between striking miners and mine company guards who exchanged heavy gunfire at the Gem Mine. Who fired the first shot is unknown, but in the violence that ensued miners dynamited the Frisco mill, union men took over mines, and promptly ejected the non-union labor and guards from the area. At least three union men and three non-union men were killed.[383] In Wardner, miners marched through the streets brandishing firearms.[384] They also occupied the ore concentrator and reportedly, threatened to destroy it unless the owners expelled non-union labor. Contradicting this account Boyce, who was one of the men who met with the mine manager during the takeover, says there were no threats or violence just a demand

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[381] Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners*, 206.

[382] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 63-4.

[383] Ibid., 66. Two of the union men have probable Irish names, James Hennessey and Charles Cummings.

[384] George E. French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892: The Story of a Great Strike," in *The Overland Monthly*, vol. 26, no. 151 (July 1895): 36. http://darrow.law.umn.edu/documents/Coeur d'Alene 1892_The_Overland_Monthly_ 1895.pdf   (accessed January 23, 2017).

that "Pinkertons leave the country."[385] Regardless, in light of the violence and the

inability of local officials to maintain control, and under a constant barrage for action

from owners, the governor activated the National Guard and requested federal troops.

On July twelfth, Idaho National Guard (ING) companies assembled and boarded

trains for northern Idaho in good spirits, according to the *Statesman*, with the "boys" of

Company A eating "crackers, cheese and lunch tongue" washed down with lots of coffee,

while they entertained themselves by singing popular ballads.[386] Five other ING

companies joined them by the time they got to the Silver Valley. However, Company A,

Second Regiment of Infantry, centered in Wallace, almost the eye of the storm,

discovered most of its weapons gone and only a few men reported for duty when called to

arms.[387] The company commander departed the area and remained unavailable for duty,

apparently because his sympathies lay with the miners. Likewise, most of his men would

undoubtedly have had friends or relatives who worked in the mining industry, or may

indeed have been miners themselves, understandably unwilling to fight kith and kin. This

had been the situation in 1880 in Leadville, when two of the local militia units, the Wolfe

Tone Guards and the Tabor Highland Guards, one made up of Catholic Irish and one of

Scots and Scots Irish refused to act against the union.[388] Social ostracism would have

been the least of their worries, even if they were willing to act against the miners, some

of whom had already shown a propensity for violence. In any case, the Wallace National

Guard unit failed to muster more than a handful of men and Colonel Curtis, ING on scene

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[385] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Robert Wayne Smith letter, August 18, 1936, box 5, folder 16.
[386] *Idaho Daily Statesman*, "On the Road," July 14, 1892.
[387] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 36.
[388] Walsh, "Michael Mooney and the Leadville Miners' Strike of 1880,"120.

commander, advised Governor Willey to disband it because of its absolute uselessness and incapability of action.[389]

The other six companies made their way to Cataldo and rendezvoused with federal troops there. The soldiers were aware they were entering a demonstrably hostile situation where the Miners' Union had much of the community's, and local officials' sympathies.[390] Local and national papers widely reported the trouble leading to a reasonable assumption that all the soldiers were aware of the killings and dynamiting in the region. Miners were also known as tough men, unafraid to uphold their rights if they believed themselves or their independence to be threatened.[391] Additionally, the miners had overpowered scores of hired guards, disarmed them, expelled them from the area and commandeered their weapons and ammunition.[392] In his official report Colonel Carlin, in command of federal troops sent to the area, related that Colonel Curtis of the ING, already in the region, believed the strikers were prepared to fight and he also said he heard the miners intended to target the railroad lines with explosives in order to kill travelling soldiers.[393] In the meantime union men at Mullan blew up or burned a bridge interdicting federal troops from Montana and others cut telegraph wires in the region.[394]

By the time federal and state troops met at Cataldo, about twelve miles from the eye of the storm, they decided to wait another day there for further reinforcements, fearing the potential violence of the striking miners. Based on the above, it is reasonable

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[389] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 36.
[390] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 35.
[391] Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 9.
[392] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 63-4.
[393] *The Executive Documents of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Fifty Second Congress, 1892-'93*, 110.
[394] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 36.

to assume that both state and federal soldiers would have been apprehensive about their safety and the upcoming movement into the area. Moreover, rumor and wild stories of outrage ran rife with the press reporting a massacre of unarmed non-union men at Cataldo. Some of these men were supposedly disemboweled and had their entrails replaced with rocks so the evidence could be destroyed by submerging the corpses in the lake.[395] However, when soldiers were later dispatched to investigate, they discovered no bodies or indication of slaughter.[396] Boyce later lamented that "reporters usually trumped up sensation after sensation to hold their jobs" and many papers existed as biased and anti-union organs.[397] Illustrating the danger felt by the troops, on the fourteenth when they headed west on the railroad, they stopped at every bridge and trestle so soldiers could check them for explosives.[398] Yet, by the time the troops took control of the entire region on the afternoon of the fourteenth, they found it peaceable with no violence or overt efforts to destroy property or resistance to their presence.[399] By the fifteenth, 1,300 federal soldiers and 192 Guardsmen occupied the region for a total of approximately 1,500 troops.[400]

Two days before they arrived in the towns the governor declared martial law, which involved all the troops in the region in policing activities. They protected public infrastructure and mining property, provided escorts for non-union labor, patrolled towns,

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[395] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 72.

[396] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 38.

[397] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Robert Wayne Smith letter, August 18, 1936, box 5, folder 16.

[398] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 79.

[399] Ronald H. Cole and Clayton D. Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1877-1945* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1977), 162.

[400] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 79.

arrested hundreds of persons and guarded the arrestee holding pens.[401] They had orders to

shoot on sight any person found attempting to blow up any public or private structures

and were empowered with policing the civilian community.[402] Soldiers received

instructions to arrest union men and union sympathizers, including some elected officials,

resulting in hundreds being incarcerated.[403] Initially, saloons in the area were ordered

closed and soldiers dominated the streets and public places.[404] Railroad companies were

ordered to only sell tickets to holders of a military issued pass, which troops inspected by

boarding trains and removing those without a pass.[405] Soldiers escorted non-union men

back to mines in the area and guarded them against the union men gathered around the

railroad stations. In Wallace and Wardner stockades added to warehouses became the

infamous "bull pens" of the Coeur d'Alenes, holding incarcerated union leaders, as many

union members as could be found and people sympathetic to the union.[406] Serving only

ten days in the bull pen, before being moved to Boise, Boyce missed the worst part of the

experience.

At first the miners in the pens were buoyant, but as the weeks dragged on they

became disgruntled and restive in the barebones unsanitary stockades.[407] Because of

complaints over conditions in the bull pens, the Department of Justice sent a special agent

to inspect the situation, but he found them to be similar in condition to about half the jails

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[401] Ibid., 82.
[402] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 40.
[403] David L. Hall, "The New Idaho Militia," in *The History of the Idaho National Guard* ed. Orlan J. Svingen, (Boise, ID: Idaho Military Division, 1975), 30.
[404] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 40.
[405] Ibid., 41.
[406] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 86.
[407] Ibid., 83.

in the nation.[408] Similarly, Colonel Curtis convened a board of officers to report on

conditions at the Wallace jail run by Sheriff Sims. Sheriff Cunningham had been replaced

by military fiat because mine owners believed him too sympathetic to the miners' cause.

The board concluded its investigation finding no abuse or favoritism in the treatment of

prisoners.[409] It is not unreasonable to question the impartiality of junior officers

investigating the man their commander appointed to office. Despite the complaints from

prisoners families about conditions, relations between the region's populace and the

soldiers in the Coeur d'Alenes generally appear to have been cordial.[410] This is attested to

by a "Card of Thanks" the "enlisted men of Company A" published in the *Statesman* to

the town of Osburn and other towns in the Silver Valley area for "many kind attentions"

during their tour of duty.[411]

However, bull pen incarceree Boyce, wrote later of that time that it was the

National Guard that union men despised, "especially the officers," not federal troops, for

they saw Guardsmen as their neighbors who treacherously oppressed them in the name of

big business.[412] And the ING did come in for some light ridicule from the imprisoned

who drilled in the pens, marching, parading and holding mock inspections to pass the

time. Apparently, an Irishman, John Tobin had been in the British Army so he put his

fellow incarcerees through their paces, loudly denouncing those whose performance

lacked drill manual precision, as being no better than the Idaho Guard much to onlookers'

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[408] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 45-6.

[409] Ibid., 46.

[410] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 90.

[411] *Idaho Daily Statesman*, "Card of Thanks," Aug. 21, 1892.

[412] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Angelina Burns letter, July 20, 1936, box 4, folder 2.

amusement.[413] Governor Willey, oblivious of the slight to his personnel, found the

holding pens expensive, the state having no funds set aside for troops' pay, never mind

prisoners victuals.[414] So in an effort to reduce the number held as guests of the Gem

State, the Judge Advocate General performed duties investigating individual prisoner's

roles in the disturbance.[415] Where evidence of guilt lacked the men were offered parole,

but union men refused to sign the parole document believing it barred them from all

union activity.[416] In light of this, the governor eventually had the prisoners remanded to

the custody of the federal government to relieve the state of their upkeep.[417]

The coercive power of the government now brought union men to trial. When two

companies of the National Guard withdrew at the end of July, Company A escorted 25

union prisoners to Boise where they faced charges of contempt of court for violating the

May injunction. Siringo, who had spent the previous months pointing out union men for

arrest, testified in court, and despite Stoll's assertion that the Irish had stirred up all the

trouble and then left, Irish names predominated.[418] Twelve miners had charges dismissed

with thirteen receiving prison terms of less than a year at the Ada County Jail.[419] Boyce

received six months in Ada County Jail. In contrast to how conditions in the bull pens

evolved, his stay as a guest of Ada County he said was "all that could be expected" and

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[413] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 47.
[414] Hall, "The New Idaho Militia," 30. Troops had to wait until the 1893 legislature appropriated funds for them.
[415] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 43.
[416] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 87.
[417] French, "The Coeur d'Alene Riots, 1892," 43.
[418] Stoll, *Silver Strike*, 247. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, 26 July, 1892, "On the Way to Boise," lists Boyce, Brockman, Cosgrove, Dean, Doyle, FitzGerald, Gaugher, Harrington, Heaney, Kennedy, Maugerson, McFadden, D. McGee, T. McGhee, Nelson, O'Brien, Peterson, Poynton, Robinson, Smith, Nicholson, Sullivan and Whalen. Smith, in *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 99, also has Eaton, and H. McGee listed.
[419] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 99.

he praised the sheriffs as "high grade" men.[420] It is unlikely that he had his notebook in

jail with him, the one full of poetry lamenting the exiled Irish who sang "Sad is my fate!

said the heart-broken stranger / The wild deer and wolf to a covert can flee; / But I have

no refuge from famine and danger / A home and a country remain not to me."[421] But "in

the proper mood, Boyce recited Irish poetry at length" so perhaps he did not need his

notebook to remind him of the similarities between his situation and Irishmen in English

prisons.[422] Those who were Irish or of Irish heritage must have compared themselves to

Irish nationalists who had been unjustly imprisoned by British governments. Amongst

Boyce's papers is a copy of Robert Emmet's "Speech from the Dock," whose last lines

are beloved of Irish nationalists: "When my country takes her place among the nations of

the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written. I have done."[423] Emmet, as

Miller says "achieved martyrdom on the scaffold" for his part in an 1803 rebellion

against the British.[424] Being jailed unjustly for a cause believed righteous is a theme that

would have resonated with the Irish union men. Yet, they were not idle, but busied

themselves discussing strategy and tactics, the pros and cons of certain actions taken and

not taken in the conflict, and how best to recover.

Back in the Coeur d'Alenes mine owners and their sympathizers lobbied the

government for a continuous military presence in the region, but President Harrison

declined to establish a fort directly in the area. Notwithstanding this rebuff, mine owners

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[420] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Robert Wayne Smith letter, August 18, 1936, box 5, folder 16.
[421] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," box 6, folder 4.
[422] Fahey, *The Days of the Hercules*, 118.
[423] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," box 6, folder 24.
[424] Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 186.

endowed $5,000 to reactivate the Wallace National Guard unit ensuring its men and leadership reflected their interests.[425] To bolster their position in the community, those with anti-union bias established Law and Order Leagues, populated by mine owners, other employers, businessmen and professionals, reputedly 800 strong.[426] Apparently the governor worried that they were but "vigilance committees" and viewed them with suspicion.[427] And any time the governor or federal military authorities broached the issue of lifting martial law mine owners vociferously objected, perpetuating martial law long after any objective observer could justify it.[428] Yet mine owners did start to hire union men again, when October production returned to pre-lockout rates, and they made conciliatory gestures such as removing the requirement to shop or reside in company establishments.[429] In November martial law ended and the last troops left the district and though the union had been bloodied it had not been broken.[430]

The 1892 shutdown and lock out in the Silver Valley mines illustrates the tactics used by mine owners to leverage capital and class to their ends and the disadvantage of labor. As seen earlier in the West, management enlisted private armies, spies and the endurance of wealth to resist unions. Unions are not a natural corollary of capital, but a reaction to its abuses, its escalation of deliberate injustice and its power to marshal the moral and coercive forces of the state. It appeared to the miners that all the organs of government clearly sided with the owners, ignoring their extralegal activity while trying

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[425] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 92.
[426] Ibid., 94.
[427] Ibid., 95.
[428] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 84.
[429] Ibid., 93.
[430] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 21.

to prosecute union members for such alleged activity.[431] The Coeur d'Alene trouble also highlighted violations of the *Posse Comitatus* Act. In 1878, Congress passed the *Posse Comitatus* Act, to restrict the executive use of the Army as a policing tool without the expressed permission of the President, consistent with Congressional law and the Constitution.[432] Violations of the Act occurred in the Silver Valley during the 1892 dispute.[433] Martial law, declared by the governor, endowed Colonel Curtis with "broad powers … to protect life and property and to meet force with force in protecting the mines, railroads and telegraph lines," say historians Ronald Cole and Clayton Laurie. [434] However, the legally mandated presidential proclamation, in accordance with Revised Statute 5300, ordering those resisting the law to disperse only emanated from Washington on July seventeenth several days after it should have been announced.[435] Also, the arrest of civilians by federal soldiers without civil authorities present went beyond their mandate.[436] Additionally, federal troops in pursuit of union men were ordered by their commander, with full knowledge and cognizance aforethought, to cross the state line into Montana without that state's governor's approval.[437] Thus, federal troops violated the *Posse Comitatus* Act by their arrest, imprisonment and guarding of civilian prisoners, initially without expressed permission from the President, permission that had to be requested by federal civil authorities and this permission came only on August second.[438] Martial law became a standard request from corporations involved in

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[431] Ibid., 20.
[432] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 58.
[433] Ibid., 163.
[434] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 159.
[435] Ibid.
[436] Ibid.
[437] Ibid., 160.
[438] Ibid., 160, 159.

labor disputes, leveraging government power to directly aid owners in removing union officials and in employing anyone other than union members.[439] Moreover, the introduction of martial law relieved the owners of the expense of hiring so many guards and undermined representative government by removing elected officials from office.[440]

The abuse of the law, the ability of owners to harness the government's coercive power and the resilience of capital were noted by the union leaders jailed in Boise. Boyce, O'Brien, Poynton and the other ten, with Irish names predominant, planted the seeds for a larger union to counter the vast array of weapons owners had at their command. Ironically, union lawyer James Hawley is said to have advised federating.[441] Hawley later denounced the Western Federation of Miners and prosecuted union members in the 1899 unrest. And as they reflected on their situation, the BMU in 1893 reviewed the previous year's events, which had stressed its resources, despite the 1892 amalgamation of all Montana mining unions under a single head.[442] Tom O'Brien, Joe Poynton and Tom Heney went directly to Butte upon release from jail, where they discussed strategy with the BMU, who subsequently requested all mining unions in the West to send delegates to a scheduled Montana mine unions' meeting. Thus, the Western Federation of Miners, initially with representation from Colorado, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota and Utah, came into being. The WFM, profoundly affected by events in the Coeur d'Alenes, proposed a resolution to disband all state militias, and bar the use of

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[439] Ibid., 154-5.
[440] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 82.
[441] William J. Gaboury, *Dissension in the Rockies: A History of Idaho Populism* (New York: Garland, 1988), 88.
[442] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892*, 111.

spies, detectives and private armies by corporations.[443] Boyce, when released from jail in

February 1893, went to Montana for some time but by 1894 was back in the Coeur

d'Alenes and active in the Wardner Union again. In the same year he served as a delegate

to the WFM's national convention where he was elected to its executive council. In

November he won election as a Populist senator for Shoshone County. Populism in the

West, linked the emerging industrial labor movement, specifically fueled by mining

regions, to a broad critique of the status quo. The "most reform minded, if not radical"

areas of the labor movement existed in mining camps and towns who saw the Populists as

the first "anti-corporate" party states historian David Berman.[444] Farmers also provided a

base of support for the movement, disgruntled by low prices for their crops, high railroad

costs and bank foreclosures. The party's sweeping platform advocated nationalization of

infrastructure, free coinage of silver, raised farm prices, progressive income tax,

unionization, an eight-hour workday, more paper money, a secret ballot, the initiative and

referendum, and popular elections of senators.[445] In the early 1890s they captured the

state house in Colorado and had success in Idaho's north where mining areas turned out

for them. But Boyce disliked the bureaucracy and legislative procedure so after a

frustrating term in Boise where he saw Populist initiatives blocked by Republicans and

Democrats he moved on.[446] He returned full-time to mining and to union activities in

Wardner until he became president of the WFM in 1896.

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[443] Ibid., 113.
[444] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West,* 20, 27.
[445] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West*, 40.
[446] Fahey, *The Days of the Hercules*, 118; Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West,* 30.

CHAPTER EIGHT: MINERS AND THE PEOPLE'S PARTY CRUSHED BY THE
STATE'S COERCIVE POWER

In the Coeur d'Alenes mining unions steadily regained their strength after the

events of 1892, affiliating themselves with the WFM and pressing their concerns through

the final decade of the century.[447] In 1894, during the Pullman Railroad strike, some

union men were bold enough to brazenly murder John Kneebone who had been a chief

witness against miners in the 1892 trials. Immediately, Governor McConnell and mine

owners lobbied the federal government for military forces under the guise of restoring

law and order.[448] In contravention of the law the governor made no effort to use local law

enforcement and did not activate the National Guard.[449] However, the state had no way to

pay for the National Guard since the 1893 Idaho Senate failed to approve funding for it.

This resulted directly from Populist and Democratic pressure in the aftermath of the

previous year's use of the Guard in the strike.[450] When President McKinley sent federal

troops to the area in mid-July, they found it peaceful. The union men purposely avoided

inciting any local or federal authorities, remained law abiding and were mindful that any

outrage might lead to wholesale arrests, as in 1892, and could sap public sympathy for

their cause.[451] However, Governor McConnell claimed the Miners' Union was in the grip

[447] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 101.
[448] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 163.
[449] Ibid., 164.
[450] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 109.
[451] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 165.

of the Molly Maguires, which necessitated a permanent garrison and martial law.[452]
Additionally, the mine owners petitioned their congressmen for a permanent force in the
area, clearly believing it would cow unions. Their pressure kept troops in the area longer
than the Army wanted. It soon realized its mission covered as a guise for intimidating
union men, but the Army did not establish a permanent post and returned to its
garrisons.[453] It is evident that there was neither disorder to dispel, nor insurrection to
suppress, but a pretext to use the military to destroy the unions and to permanently station
troops in the area to ensure unions could not survive.[454] In this instance, the patent abuse
of the nation's coercive power, obvious to those on the scene, clearly violated the *Posse
Comitatus* Act and the Constitution.

In the same year that Governor McConnell called for troops to the Silver Valley,
miners in the region overwhelmingly threw their lot in with the Populist Party creating a
broad overlap of membership between them and the unions.[455] In November of 1894 they
won the vast majority of elected offices in Shoshone County with Boyce being elected
state senator.[456] In the 1895 state legislature Populists helped remove restrictions on
Mormons' voting rights, supported direct election of US senators and pushed for a state
constitutional amendment for women's right to vote.[457] Senator Boyce aided in quashing
legislation designed to restrict juries to taxpayers only, a situation he declared that would
allow jury rigging to the point where "a jury that would hang even Jesus Christ" could be

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[452] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 164.
[453] Ibid., 165.
[454] Ibid., 163.
[455] Gaboury, *Dissension in the Rockies*, 90.
[456] Ibid., 128.
[457] Ibid., 131-2.

arranged.[458] Sounding somewhat Christlike himself, he denounced "detested bankers and moneylenders" in an effort to give foreclosed property owners more time to redeem their land.[459] Continuing his efforts for the working-class, he railed against blacklisting, declaiming in the Senate that 'the laboring men of Idaho have asked you for bread and you gave them a stone; we ask you for justice and you treat us with scorn.'[460] In the Coeur d'Alenes in 1894 and 1895 he spoke at the Miners' Memorial Day, an event established in 1893 to commemorate the 1892 unrest and the three miners who died in the fighting.[461] Part of the occasion involved a march to the miners' graves and pro-union speeches in their memory. As mentioned previously, two of those who died had Irish names and it is hard not to compare this graveside oration to the Irish experience eulogizing martyrs to Irish freedom. It is easy to imagine the poetry loving Boyce reciting or reading lines from his notebook to the crowd at the martyred miners resting place: "She sang Erin's woes and her Emmet no more / Oh Erin, my country your glory's departed / For tyrants and traitors have stabbed thy heart's core."[462] As Emmet's case demonstrates, often a corpse has greater political worth than the living body. And despite becoming president of the WFM in 1896, Boyce continued his active participation in Populist politics in Idaho to the end of the century.[463]

After Boyce's election to the presidentship of the WFM, he elevated another Irish immigrant, James Maher, to secretary, injecting a new sense of vigor and mission into

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[458] Ibid., 133.
[459] Gaboury, *Dissension in the Rockies*, 135.
[460] Ibid., 138.
[461] *Idaho Daily Statesman*, "Wallace Celebration," July 13, 1894; Gaboury, *Dissension in the Rockies*, 148.
[462] Edward Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," box 6, folder 4.
[463] Gaboury, *Dissension in the Rockies*, 304.

what had become a moribund organization.[464] Tellingly, Boyce's copy of Emmet's

"Speech from the Dock" is epigraphed, "typed and gifted by James Maher," illustrative

of the constant interest in Irish nationalism among Irish immigrants and labor

organizers.[465] But Boyce soon found himself back in jail for his presence at the WFM led

strike in Leadville and the *Statesman* labeled him an "anarchist."[466] At Leadville, in

accordance with the, by now, well-practiced script the miners struck over pay cuts, the

owners locked them out and brought in strikebreakers. The ensuing violence between

miners and strikebreakers gave owners the excuse to call on the authorities for the militia,

eventually forcing the workers to return under the owner's' terms.[467] The WFM affiliated

with the American Federation of Labor under Boyce, but disassociated itself in light of its

leader's general conservatism and lackluster support during the Leadville strike.

Undaunted, in 1897 Boyce gave his fiery speech exhorting all unions to have rifle clubs

and continued to push for greater working-class solidarity. Then in 1899 he returned to

the Silver Valley to consult with Idaho miners about the Bunker Hill and Sullivan's low

wages and union hostility.[468]

In the Coeur d'Alenes, by 1897, union pressure induced mine owners to return the

standard rate of pay to $3.50 a day for below ground workers with the exception of the

Bunker Hill and Sullivan Mine.[469] It had remained a bulwark of anti-unionism through

the 1890s, and just as in 1892 it paid a lower wage than all the other mines in the area and

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[464] Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 57; Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 187.
[465] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," box 6, folder 24.
[466] *Idaho Daily Statesman*, "Shot Him in the Leg," Sep. 24, 1896.
[467] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West,* 126.
[468] Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 57; Hutton, *The Coeur d'Alenes*, 182.
[469] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 24.

refused to recognize the union. It also regimented its employees in militia units and received arms and ammunition from the state, from whom it had a promise of martial law in the event of trouble.[470] This in effect endowed a private army to the Bunker Hill concern, to which it added blacklisting, spies and guards to resist unionization.[471] These hirelings, according to Aiken, found "the prominence of Irish surnames among the union miners … suspicious" and were wary of the miners' relations with Butte because of its strong Irish community.[472] Yet in April 1899, the Wardner union felt strong enough to order all non-union miners to join the union, demanded a wage of $3.50 a day for all belowground workers and insisted on union recognition by the company.[473] The Bunker Hill responded by hiring armed guards and refusing to negotiate despite an Idaho arbitration law requiring it.[474] The miners then struck and management offered a fifty cent a day raise for all, something historian Stanley Phipps sees as an effort to sow dissension among those on strike, but the company refused to recognize the union.[475] In response, union miners, perhaps two or three hundred of the thousand were masked, started to congregate at Wardner. They commandeered a train later called the "Dynamite Express" in the papers and loaded it with Mr. Nobel's explosive invention. When they arrived in Wardner the miners blew up the Bunker Hill's ore concentrator.[476] In the fracas a union man and a non-union man were killed. Governor Steunenberg, a Democrat who many believed cared for organized labor's cause, declared martial law and requested

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[470] Gaboury, "From Statehouse to Bull Pen," 17.
[471] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 166.
[472] Aiken, *Bunker Hill*, 33.
[473] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 24-5.
[474] Gaboury, *Dissension in the Rockies*, 304.
[475] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 24-5.
[476] Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 78.

federal troops.[477] Just as in 1892, mass incarceration of union men and sympathizers

followed the arrival of troops, all federal as the Idaho Guard had been activated for duty

in the Philippines, and numerous Populist elect officials landed in the bull pen.[478] Back in

business, the bull pen soon filled up, but conditions were much harsher this time with

three men dying in confinement.[479] In September, Boyce complained to President

McKinley about conditions being so bad in the bull pen that some men were suicidal.[480]

Yet, just as in 1892, a federal inspection of the facilities and treatment of the prisoners

found conditions to be reasonable given the standards of the day.

According to some reports, the African American contingent of soldiers sent to

the region were purposely deployed to avoid white troops sympathizing with the strikers,

as had happened in other strikes.[481] Among Boyce's newspaper clippings is a piece from

the *Atlanta Journal* describing events around the situation in 1899. It is notable for its

tone seemingly more outraged by white men "prodded with Negroes' bayonets" than

anything else.[482] Berman writes that the local press who supported the miners, printed

stories of atrocities committed by black soldiers purportedly "sexually assaulting white

women" whose men were incarcerated.[483] The treatment of the miners engendered

outrage nationally among those sympathetic to workers, some of whom highlighted the

affront to decency of having whites at the points of black bayonets. It is interesting to

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[477] Ibid., 77; Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 25.
[478] Gaboury, "From Statehouse to Bull Pen," 20.
[479] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 26.
[480] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 175.
[481] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West,* 127.
[482] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," newspaper clipping from the *Atlanta Journal* (Atlanta Georgia), "The Wardner, Idaho, Military Outrages Brought to Light," Mar. 16, 1900, box 6, folder 8.
[483] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West,* 127.

ponder why the events of 1892, where African American troops took part, did not engender such a backlash. Certainly, there is anecdotal evidence from that event of Irish references to 'naager throops,' but there is no sense of hostility in the papers of the day compared to 1899.[484] Perhaps the African American troops in 1899 had a more active role in rounding up and guarding prisoners, engendering greater hostility than in 1892. They definitely made up a much greater percentage of the troops in 1899 compared to 1892, lending credence to such a notion.[485] Or perhaps a growing tendency among corporations to use African American labor as strikebreakers allowed the white labor movement to conflate African American troops and "scabs," in order to mobilize racial animosity to their cause. J. Anthony Lukas, author of *Big Trouble* believes the African American troops, the true heroes of San Juan and Kettle Hill in the Spanish-American War, may have expressed their anger at their continued Jim Crow status.[486] After risking life and limb for their country, the troops increasingly chaffed under the inhumanity and indignity of a racist society. In strike duty in the Silver Valley they vented their frustration and anger on a "legitimate" white target, so-called union dynamiters and anarchists. Regardless, they industriously went about the business of rounding up union men and their sympathizers.

Similar to 1892, but different in scale, troops arrested numerous elected officials. The sheriff, deputy sheriff, a constable, a justice of the peace, two county commissioners and a former state legislator, all of whom were Populists, lost their liberty indicating the

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[484] Stoll, *Silver Strike*, 245.
[485] Hall, "The New Idaho Militia," 32.
[486] J. Anthony Lukas, *Big Trouble: A Murder in a Small Western Town Sets Off a Struggle for the Soul of America* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1997), 135, 139.

military's use in a political cleansing action.[487] Yet, no evidence existed of Populist or

union leaders endorsing the dynamiting of the concentrator or condoning violence. In

fact, Boyce labeled the destruction of the facility at Bunker Hill an "inexcusable

ignorance" that union leaders railed against, knowing such action would "alienate the

friendship of all thoughtful people from the miners' cause."[488] But, as the *Wood River*

Times opined when miners blew up the Frisco Mill in 1892, even though it be a

spontaneous act, unsanctioned by the union, the result is "the same as if the Unions had

formally ordered and done the deed."[489]

Boyce, who had departed the region before the violence, with other Populists

called on President McKinley and complained "how the army was being used by the

Governor of Idaho at the dictation of the mine owners."[490] At their meeting President

McKinley had agreed that the troops should only remain in the region for as short a

duration as possible. Yet, astoundingly, martial law remained in effect from May 1899, to

April eleventh, 1901, despite the lack of resistance or reemergence of violence since

April 1899.[491] Under the authority of martial law, Governor Steunenberg introduced a

permit system for all miners who wished to work in the district. It denounced the Coeur

d'Alenes Miners' Union, required miners to forswear unions, and to take an oath that

they had not been involved in the destruction of the ore concentrator.[492] Such a permit

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[487] Gaboury, "From Statehouse to Bull Pen," 21.

[488] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Miss Anne Corcoran letter, July 20, 1936, box 5, folder 16.

[489] *Wood River Times*, "A Bad Piece of Business," July 12, 1892.

[490] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," letter to WFM miners, July 16, 1899, box 6, folder 19.

[491] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 176.

[492] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," copy of 1899 "Miners' Permit to work in Shoshone County," box 6, folder 19.

violated Idaho law that forbade "yellow dog" contracts, which disallowed union membership as a prerequisite to employment.[493] General Merriam, the Army commander in the area, received a reprimand from his military superiors for his apparent endorsement of the scheme, entangling the military in apparent union busting.[494] It is evident that the governor, his attorney general, and his special representative in the district, in essence the government of the State of Idaho, decided to break the unions in the Silver Valley.[495] They believed they could once and for all end the cycle of employee-employer confrontation, which they blamed on the unions. Further evidence of this is seen in the prosecution of Paul Corcoran, a union leader, for the death and destruction on April twenty-ninth.[496] Because of his prominence in union circles and perhaps, not uncoincidentally his status as an Irish immigrant, the state chose to prosecute him. According to one witness, Josephine Murphy, he could not have been involved because he had rescued her from an obstreperous goat when the explosion occurred.[497] In response to an inquiry, perhaps a relative of Corcoran, Boyce writes that he absolutely believed that Corcoran "was as all intelligent people were opposed to such absurd tactics by workmen fighting for a principle."[498] He goes on to say that Corcoran resigned from the union in disgust over the violent conduct of some miners who failed to heed his counsel of restraint on the fateful day. James Hawley who had defended the miners in 1892, with the help of future senator Borah, prosecuted Corcoran. Later, Hawley who

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[493] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 28.
[494] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 174.
[495] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 171, 173.
[496] Arkwright Hutton, *The Coeur d'Alenes*, 182.
[497] Phipps, *From Bull Pen to Bargaining Table*, 29-30.
[498] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Miss Anne Corcoran letter, July 20, 1936, box 5, folder 16.

went on to be mayor of Boise and Governor of Idaho, as much as admitted that Corcoran had been prosecuted and convicted to cow the unions and their sympathizers.[499] In an apparent attempt to undo this injustice, Steunenberg's successor, Governor Hunt, as chairman of the board of pardons approved a complete pardon and released Corcoran in 1901.[500]

Again, the surnames of those testifying in Corcoran's defense attest to a strong Irish presence in the area: Dan Connors, Jennie Doyle, Martin Dunn, Pat Haslin, Patrick Keegan, John Kelly, Pat Kennedy, Tom Maloney and Maggie Murphy.[501] Of the other five who testified for the defense to his whereabouts on the day of the crime, four names, Annie Anderson, James Robinson, Lizzie Smith, and Mrs. White indicate a British or Irish identity. The *Statesman* accused the defense of presenting a choreographed show with each witnesses acting as a "parrot,"[502] indicating a tightknit community resisting the intrusions of officialdom, reminiscent of efforts in Ireland and parts of Irish America, to battle injustice. Interestingly, other miners were tried in federal court for interfering with the mail because the state apparently believed it would not be able to convict them. However, unlike in 1892 when those convicted predominantly had Irish names, the other men convicted in 1899 have surnames indicating an equal number with Irish and Italian heritage.[503] Perhaps this is because in 1892 a conscious effort to go after union leaders followed the violence and most of them had been enjoined making it comparatively easy

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[499] James H. Hawley, *History of Idaho: The Gem of the Mountains,* vol. 1. (Chicago, IL: S.J. Clarke Publishing, 1920), 254.

[500] Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 87.

[501] *Idaho Daily Statesman*, "Corcoran Alibi," July 20, 1899.

[502] Ibid.

[503] *Idaho County Free Press* (Grangeville, Idaho), "The Miners' Sentences," Nov. 10, 1899.

to convict them. In 1899 no one suffered under a court injunction and those involved in militancy were masked, leaving prosecutors with a difficult task. It seems that Corcoran served as the sacrificial lamb whilst those convicted in federal court were rank and file members of the union. But it does show a demographic trend signifying greater numbers of Italian immigrants in the area and their increasing participation in the mining business and unions. Corcoran's prosecution not only sent the message that the state would jail troublesome union leaders but also that Irish immigrants needed to quell their alleged violent tendencies.

Unsurprisingly, the euphemism for supposed Irish violence, disdain for the law and general love of mayhem made its appearance in the 1899 unrest just as it had in 1892. In the wake of the violence the *Statesman* declared the region infested with "Molly Maguires" and labeled the union a "mafia" and a "murder society."[504] Mimicking the supposed rites of a terrorist organization, an article Boyce clipped from the San Francisco Examiner, related how he swore men to the "oath of a secret organization known as the Red and White Card of Anarchy."[505] It went on to say that the oath was taken, "on a human skull" the sole remnants of someone who had betrayed the cabal's cause.[506] Similarly, Governor Steunenberg in testimony to Congress declared that Boyce:

> inaugurated or perfected this conspiracy by choosing 20 men from different organizations in that county and swearing them. These 20 men chose one each and swore him, and the 40 each chose a man and swore him, and the 80 each chose a man and swore him. In that way there were at least 160 men in this conspiracy to do this thing, sworn to secrecy.[507]

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[504] *Idaho Daily Statesman*, "Secrecy or Death," July 23, 1899.
[505] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," newspaper clipping from *San Francisco Examiner* (San Francisco, California), April 4, 1900, box 6, folder 8.
[506] Ibid.
[507] *Idaho Daily Statesman*, "Coeur d'Alene Conspiracy," Apr. 3, 1900.

Likewise, the irrepressible Siringo referred to the union men in 1899 as members of the "Noble Order of Dynamiters" and accused the WFM of being the "Western Federation of Dynamiters."[508] And in a nativist interpretation of labor unrest as foreign, the *Idaho County Free Press* referred to Molly Maguires as "the bitter fruit of blossoms blown to us across the seas," perpetuated by men "alien in thought and action" to American ideals.[509] One of these blossoms must have been Boyce, who Idaho Attorney General Hays claimed, in his report to the governor controlled the unions through his "criminal leadership."[510]

Events in the Coeur d'Alenes in 1899 resulted in the removal from office of democratically elected representatives, the suppression of the Miners' Union by a work-permit system that disallowed work to the Miners' Union members, and scattered union miners and Populists far and wide to avoid imprisonment.[511] In what can only be described as a damning account of the military's role in the 1899 strike, the Center for Military History, the official organ for the Army's history, states that the Army "joined state authorities in making mass arrests and in incarcerating hundreds of miners in violation of their constitutional rights."[512] Furthermore, it took part in the state's attempt to destroy unions by accidentally consenting in the work permit scheme.[513] Historian Robert Wayne Smith wrote that in 1892 the "entire machinery of the state power plus the

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[508] Siringo, *A Cowboy Detective*, 493, 494.
[509] *Idaho County Free Press*, "Must Obey the Law," Aug. 4, 1899.
[510] Samuel H. Hays, *Report to the Governor of Idaho on the Insurrection in Shoshone County, Idaho Commencing April 29th, 1899: The Coeur d'Alene District* (Boise: UKN, 1900), 13. http://farrit.lili.org /files/farrit/ Insurrection.pdf (accessed January 24, 2017).
[511] Gaboury, "From Statehouse to Bull Pen," 21.
[512] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 177.
[513] Ibid.

military arm of the federal government" became agents of the owners.[514] 1899 was no different. And just as then many of the labor leaders and union members were Irish, inviting a subtext from those who opposed unions, blaming an atavistic Irish penchant for disorder and violence not socioeconomic inequality and owner's abuse for the unrest.

In response to mine owners and their ability to mobilize governmental coercive forces, the WFM became more radical and demanding.[515] Boyce's view of life had evolved to seeing his union as more than defending miners' wages to an organization designed to fundamentally alter the structure of American society.[516] Over the years the WFM had been met with 50 lockouts and government oppression, and legislative pressure had registered only some modest gains in safety, blacklisting, wages and working hours.[517] As Populist appeal faded in the late 1890s the WFM shifted emphasis from just miners' wages and conditions towards the broader political and socio-economic configuration of society. In response to this, at the 1902 WFM convention Boyce implored delegates to endorse socialism and only support political parties advocating its principles.[518] They complied.

The 1902 WFM adoption of socialism irretrievably damaged the movement. Not wedded to such principles, the rank and file demurred and it energized industrialists to mobilize mainstream institutions to join them in suppressing radical unionism.[519] Additionally, in the West the demand for reform penetrated society only so far and lacked

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[514] Smith, *The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892,* 50.
[515] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West,* 125.
[516] Ibid.
[517] Ibid., 125, 132.
[518] Ibid.
[519] Ibid., 130.

widespread appeal.[520] In turning to socialism, at least at the WFM's leadership level,

corporations, monopolists and capitalists found a standard to rally public opinion around.

They claimed the WFM endangered society with its supposed anarchism, atheism and

anti-Americanism and as Berman claims it engaged the "press, the courts, hired gunmen,

militiamen, and federal troops" in an effort to subdue it.[521] In Irish communities in the US

the forces of conservatism, specifically the Church, the Democratic Party and the desire

to be middle-class, reflected a mainstream anathema to socialism. In mining towns the

slur of socialism allowed mine owners to engage a broader section of American society

against the WFM. Socialists could not understand why working people, explicitly miners,

would not support them en-mass in light of the WFM's avowal. Again Butte, "one of the

most overwhelmingly Irish cities" in America, per Emmons, illustrates the barriers to

socialist ideology: the Catholic Church, Democratic Party and the Butte Miners'

Union.[522] In Butte, a newspaper appealed to the Irish to stem socialist thought claiming it

engaged in anti-church, anti-family, and anti-property rights agitation.[523] In Denver,

where Boyce moved the headquarters of the WFM, the local Catholic Bishop denounced

the WFM for its embrace of socialism.[524] Though his excoriation came long after the fact

it shows the unrelenting hostility of most of the Church's hierarchy to socialism.

Undoubtedly, many other regions of the mining West, strongly influenced by a Catholic

Irish character, rejected socialism in line with the Church's policy. As Emmons

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[520] Ibid., 133.
[521] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West,* 135.
[522] Emmons, 13, 103, 201.
[523] Berman, *Radicalism in the Mountain West,* 108, 204.
[524] *Intermountain and Colorado Catholic* (Salt Lake City, Utah), "Bishop Matz-Socialism," July 4, 1907. Reprinted from the *Denver Catholic*. Prior to the WFM adopting socialism as an official stance the paper had interpreted Boyce's work as being in the spirit of helping the poor.

convincingly shows "safe and steady work" remained the dominant purpose in Irish dominated unions, not structural change in society.[525] Yet, no matter class or political persuasion, those who identified with their Irish heritage, clung tenaciously to their Irish nationalism.

Similarly, Boyce, who declined in 1902 to stand for reelection to head the WFM remained committed to the cause of Irish nationalism long past his involvement in labor matters. Married in 1901, Boyce and his wife Eleanor honeymooned in Ireland, and he became an affluent man through her Hercules Mine holdings in Wallace. Slowly, over the next forty years he evolved into a conservative businessman, a pillar of the respectable community, his former labor radicalism apparently mellowed by wealth's ability to ameliorate the slings and arrows of life. Yet, his interests and concern for Irish nationalism never abated. Money could dull his radical labor edge, but not even Irish independence in 1922 blunted his interest in Irish affairs. Though his brand of nationalism did shift from extreme to a more moderate constitutionalism befitting a man of his position and rank. Nevertheless, a man from Donegal would be keenly aware that two thirds of his province of Ulster remained part of the United Kingdom. But even if all Ireland had gained independence the legacy of colonialism, dispossession, sectarianism, the Great Famine, discrimination in the US and the nationalist framing of these events would have supplied the fuel to keep the nationalist fire burning in his heart.

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[525] Emmons, *The Butte Irish*, 301.

CONCLUSION

As the United States underwent renewed industrialization during the late nineteenth century, conflicts over working conditions and compensation wracked a society defined by increasing economic inequality. It was a time when working people, whether skilled or unskilled, suffered under unabashed capitalists, who seemingly were unaware or uncaring of the growing inequality of the Gilded Age.[526] In the mining West these clashes pitted working-class miners, a plurality of whom claimed an Irish lineage, against mine owners and their backers, those who could marshal capital, political influence and the coercive power of the state. The ability of industrialists to harness governmental police and military powers to their ends enabled them to not only defeat striking workers but to further combat unionization. By commandeering state and national resources, namely the military and the judiciary, it also allowed them to further their private interests.

To many Irish immigrants and their descendants, capital's power reminded them of the Irish experience against British colonial power and oppression. The experience in Ireland engendered nationalism, based on real or imagined persecution, particularly given the Great Famine's legacy. It served to mold a deep antipathy to Britain, and anything identified with it, among the Irish in Ireland and the United States. In America, anti-

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[526] R. Ernest Dupuy, *The National Guard: A Compact History* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1971), 75.

immigrant and anti-Catholic discrimination directed towards the Irish enabled them to classify its roots in Anglo-American Protestantism. They left a colonized land only to find the colonizers ruling in the New World. In the mining West, the Irish often saw themselves as victims of law and order restoration efforts in the wake of so-called outrages that workers allegedly committed. Similarly, in Ireland, the state declared those who opposed colonial rule as criminal and the cause of unrest. Through provocation, and by manipulating striking miners' desperation, mine owners created an environment susceptible to violence, a condition they incubated in order to appeal to governors for state and federal troops. Likewise the elite in Ireland, the Protestant Ascendancy, controlled the political and socioeconomic sinews of society, and they could depend on the coercive power of the Crown to defend their interests. In this milieu, it is unsurprising that many working-class Irish-American communities in the latter half of the nineteenth century envisaged the rapacity of unbridled capitalism in the US as parallel to colonial domination. Through organization, as well as occasional violence, the Irish in Ireland and the United States sought to resist the suffocating power of the state. Nevertheless, as the example from the Coeur d'Alenes demonstrates, when treated with a modicum of decency and fairness, they responded by lawfully, reasonably and peacefully resisting the assault on them by those who elevated property rights above human rights.

The most obvious example of viewing capitalist exploitation through a colonial lens resides in the pronounced success of the Land League in the US. Combining Irish nationalism and social reform it swept the country engendering support from numerous ethnicities and classes. The Land League colored American's perspective of British rule in Ireland with a nationalistic hue. Its social reform message resonated with many in the

US reeling from financial panics and depressions. The Gilded Age's excesses emboldened the working-class and economically insecure, following the lead of the Land League, to question the inequality in American society. It also managed to unite all strands of Irish nationalism in the US for a time, including the Church, a critical element in its success. Naturally, because of its Irish roots, the League's most powerful impact fell in Irish immigrant communities. Its nationalistic spirit and theme of resistance, taken up by many labor organizations also inspired strikes and worker agitation in the US. In mining communities in the West its principal organ of support, the *Irish World*, enjoyed a loyal following.

The last decades of the nineteenth century, comprised a time when working-class agitation and workers' organizations drew the opprobrium of the well-to-do and the institutions of society for their supposed rebellious tendencies.[527] This underlined the public's acceptance of military involvement in labor affairs. Cole and Laurie assert it further illustrates capitalists' ability to marshal the military meant it predominantly "supported the recognized and legal wielders of economic, legal and political power, whether or not they were morally justified."[528] Again the Silver Valley exemplifies this as conspicuous evidence of the military's misuse in breaking strikes, suppressing unions and abrogating Constitutional rights.[529] Here corporations, capitalists and the elite used the coercive power of the state, a public resource, for their private benefit. It is no wonder that men like Boyce, steeped in Irish nationalistic thought, were drawn to the labor movement and identified the abuse of workers by capital in the same light as Ireland

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[527] Cole and Laurie, *The Role of Federal Military Forces*, 116.
[528] Ibid., 83.
[529] Ibid., 153.

abused by Britain. Boyce's withdrawal from union activities, but continued engagement in Irish affairs is testament to Thompson and Hobsbawm's assertion that colonial oppression predisposed the Irish to engage in the labor movement.

Boyce's unionization efforts, his outlaw status, and his political office highlight Irish involvement in the Western labor movement, the long-term influence of Irish nationalism, and the role that Irish immigrants played in the history of Idaho and the West. Over time, the Irish immigrants' story, like that of many others who are not White Anglo-Saxon Protestants entered into the mainstream narrative, thereby obfuscating the trials and tribulations of the generations who toiled in an inhospitable environment. Perhaps if many of those who see themselves today as white, mainstream and "all American" knew more about their immigrant ancestors' background, their struggle to survive, to establish families and to become accepted in this "nation of immigrants" they would see commonalities with today's '… huddled masses yearning to breathe free / The wretched refuse of … teeming shore / …the homeless, tempest-tossed…' who only wish for what white Euro-Americans gained in the New World.[530] The lessons of our forebears, for those of us who are accepted, who are part of the dominant culture now, demands a rejection of contemporary nativism and begs a sense of empathy for today's immigrants, a response we hope our ancestors received when they crossed from one world to another.[531]

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[530] Emma Lazarus, ''The New Colossus,' in *The Poems of Emma Lazarus,* ed. Susan L. Rattiner (New York: Dover, 2015), 201. Tragically, Native Americans suffered violence, exploitation and expropriation at the hands of many immigrants who were fleeing similar conditions in their native lands.
[531] Likewise, in his study of nineteenth century "internal improvements" Dearinger "historicizes, in some ways, the ongoing cultural debate over American progress, labor, immigration, ethnicity and national belonging," Dearinger, *The Filth of Progress*, 10.

Likewise, as Boyce's efforts in the 1890s Idaho legislature demonstrated the 'relentless' nature of unbridled capitalism, results in the persecution of those least able to withstand the pursuit of profit.[532] Today, a time of growing inequality where capital and a financial elite are rampant, abetted by governments in thrall to "free market principles," which in effect encumber the masses while advantaging the super-affluent, the Coeur d'Alene Mining Wars reminds us of the dangers of government by the moneyed elite for the moneyed elite.[533] Unfortunately, the words of the *Caldwell Tribune*, in the aftermath of the 1892 trouble in the Coeur d'Alenes, still rings valid today: "This a great year for strikes and militia. … Evidently something is wrong somewhere in this great land of the brave and the free."[534]

For Ed Boyce the land of the free and home of the brave eventually delivered on its promise through his wife's mine holdings. For some, such as Bill Haywood who apprenticed under Boyce in the Western Federation of Miners, Boyce's growing distance from the movement after 1902 casted doubt on his sincerity during his union years. However, as Emmons attests the "genuineness of his worker radicalism" existed in his early life.[535] Writing in 1940, a year before his passing, Boyce remembered his union days as a time where anti-union forces dispatched "stray lead intended" to send him to an early grave yet he had "few regrets."[536] In the same letter he compliments Eugene Debs

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[532] Gaboury, "From Statehouse to Bull Pen," 16.

[533] Wolfgang Streeck, *How Capitalism Will End?; Essays on a Failing System* (New York: Verso Books, 2016), 55-6.

[534] *Caldwell Tribune* (Caldwell, Idaho), "This a Great Year for Strikes and Militia," Aug. 20, 1892.

[535] Emmons, *Beyond The American Pale*, 305.

[536] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Adolph Germer letter, October 30, 1940, box 5, folder 16.

who he "campaigned" with as "unswerving from the cause."[537] He finished the

correspondence by writing, though "we encountered fierce criticism from the papers,

officials, and other sources … this did not discourage us."[538] Boyce's jail time, Pinkerton

harassment, abuse by government officials, mainstream opprobrium and press

vituperation all attest to his passion, sincerity and earnestness during his years of union

activity. His Irish upbringing with a strong tradition of resistance, and during his youth a

reifying Irish identity in opposition to Britain, an identity that only hardened in America,

inspired Boyce's union activity. Ireland provided an outlook on life that conditioned his

view and response to the exploitation of miners. His retirement from labor matters and

his elevation to the moneyed class only increased his involvement with Irish nationalism

and his homeland's affairs. That Boyce's interest in workers' rights waned, yet his

nationalism never abated demonstrates the power and influence it exerted on Irish

immigrants, something that transferred to following generations. Its profound influence in

Western mining unionization contributed an organizing principle for miners to rally

around in their struggle for fair wages, safe working conditions and respect as human

beings.

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[537] Ibid.

[538] Boyce, "Boyce Collection of Personal Papers," Adolph Germer letter, October 30, 1940, box 5, folder 16.

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