

interests, some of them not overtly connected to family ties, such as nature conservation. Moreover, some fraternal orders were far bigger than these genealogical groups appear to have been. To know more about the individual organizations' practices, size, and composition would help to assess the importance of genealogy as a mass phenomenon, something that is not clear from the sheer diversity of "alphabetic" societies.

Nevertheless, Weil shows that the genealogists of the early twentieth century—with their racist and Anglo-Saxon agenda—were sufficiently influential on a cultural level to induce other groups, including African American, to take steps to cherish and research their own family

heritage long before the civil rights era. This process actually started after the Civil War not as genealogical status seeking, but as a search for lost kin in the wake of slavery's demise. Weil believes that the quest for family roots made Reconstruction "a profoundly genealogical moment" (p. 170)—an idea worthy of reflection and study, as is this entire book.

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The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City

By James R. Barrett

(New York: Penguin Press, 2012. Pp. xvi, 384. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95.)

To a remarkable degree, early twentieth-century American city life was an Irish American creation. That much becomes clear upon reading James R. Barrett's *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City*. But this engaging book does more than simply narrate the experiences of one ethnic group. It also advances an important argument about Americanization between 1880 and 1930. For the immigrants who followed the Irish into urban America, Barrett contends, adapting to the new country was more

often a process of emulating, battling, and collaborating with the Irish than it was dealing with snobbish and hostile Americans who traced their lineage back to the Mayflower.

Eschewing narrative, Barrett presents Irish American experience "from the bottom up" by dividing it into six "spaces," a term he uses in both its geographic and metaphorical senses. "The Street" encompasses everything from gangs to language, while "The Stage" includes not only vaudeville but the writings of Finley Peter

Dunne and Studs Lonigan. He also examines the parish, the workplace, and the political machine in wide-ranging fashion. The final chapter examines "The Nation," tracing Irish American nationalism's intersections with debates about imperialism, World War I, labor activism, and even the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.

Each of these chapters presents a similar narrative arc. As the first immigrant group, the Irish formed dense, defensive communities that viewed outsiders with hostility. This animosity flowed towards newcomers, including other immigrants and African Americans, as well as toward the established WASP elite. Irish isolation was always more institutional and cultural than it was geographic—there were few truly exclusive Irish enclaves in the city. In time, contact dissolved some of these boundaries, a process accelerated by intensifying nativism. By the 1920s, Barrett argues, the Irish emerged at the head of a multiethnic urban society that manifested itself in street gangs, popular culture, parish life, labor organizations, and political coalitions.

Barrett is quick to note the negative impact of Irish influence. The virulent racism and anti-Semitism of some Irish Americans receives a full airing, as does the prejudicial treatment of non-Irish Catholics at the hands of a mostly Hibernian church hierarchy and the stingy party machines. Irish leaders could often be found on the more conservative, business-union side of the labor

movement, generally unwilling to unite with unskilled newcomers in a broader labor movement. But Barrett also embraces the more progressive and inclusive work of the Irish, pointing to social justice campaigns, labor insurgencies, and urban reform efforts as examples of more liberal attitudes and action. In the end, he concludes, "it is difficult to conjure up any net effect" (p. 292) of Irish influence, though his sympathies plainly lie with the liberals who formed common cause across group lines.

In any book ranging so widely, there is room to question what is left out. Barrett leans heavily on evidence from New York and Chicago, with doses of material from Philadelphia and Boston and cameos for smaller places such as Worcester, Massachusetts, and Butte, Montana. It would be useful to weigh the Irish role in cities such as Cleveland or Milwaukee, where they were less dominant. A bit more on the attitudes and responses of other groups to the Irish would also be welcome, given the book's principal claim.

But on the terms Barrett sets for the book—as an exploration of the Irish role in Americanizing other immigrants—it succeeds. More important, it makes a strong case for complicating our understanding of early twentieth-century Americanization as much more than a binary, native-versus-foreigner clash.

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