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Collective Identities, the Catholic Temperance Movement, and Father Mathew: The Social History of a Teacup

Stephen A. Brighton

People use material culture and its associated symbolism to express collective identities. The aim of this paper is to illuminate class and religious conflict and negotiation between Irish Catholic immigrants, the American Roman Catholic Church, mainstream native-born Americans, and various Protestant cohorts in New York City between 1850 and 1870. To do this I explore the social meaning and significance embedded within a refined white earthenware teacup decorated with the image of Father Theobald Mathew. The cup was discovered during excavation of a mid- to late-19th-century, predominantly Irish immigrant section of New York City known as the Five Points.

La culture matérielle, mais aussi le symbolisme qui y est associé, est utilisée pour exprimer les identités collectives. Cet article a pour but de faire la lumière sur les classes, les conflits religieux et les négociations entre les immigrants Irlandais catholiques, les Américains appartenant à l'église catholique romaine, les Américains de souche ainsi qu'une variété de cohortes protestantes dans la ville de New York entre 1850 et 1870. Pour ce faire, nous explorerons la signification sociale et symbolique dont est empreinte une tasse à thé en terre cuite fine blanche à l'effigie du père Theobald Mathew. Cette tasse a été mise au jour lors de la fouille de Five Points, un secteur de la ville de New York occupé principalement par des immigrants irlandais pendant de la deuxième moitié du XIX^e siècle.

Introduction

Symbols found on various objects signify and express group identity. They reflect the larger history or collective social relations and experiences of a particular group. Archeological study linking objects, decorative types, and symbols is especially significant in socio-historical contexts that involve the exile and migration of people from their homeland and their subsequent alienation in the new place of settlement. The structure of group formation consists of the people's memory (real or imaginary) of their homeland, their worldview, and their current experiences of injustice. The symbolism conveys the meaning of injustice and hope.

The 19th century was a dynamic and contentious period in Irish immigrant history in the United States. The large numbers of Irish Catholics arriving daily to the United States caused fear and mistrust among the non-Irish, American-born Protestants. In this manuscript, I address the materialization of 19th-century class and religious conflict and the negotiation between the Irish immigrant community and mainstream native-born Americans in New York City by exploring the meaning embedded within a refined white earthenware teacup

decorated with the image of Father Theobald Mathew.

The cup was discovered during the excavation of a mid- to late-19th-century, predominantly Irish immigrant section of New York City known as the Five Points (FIG. 1). The cup was recovered from a privy deposit dating between 1850-1870. The privy is associated with a tenement housing Irish immigrant families and boarders at 472 Pearl Street. The image of Father Mathew and the accompanying symbols provide a unique insight into the social history of and relations between Irish Catholic immigrants and mainstream Americans. To the Irish immigrant community, this image reflects social relations within the Catholic community, perceptions of temperance, and various paths towards acceptance in American society.

The Five Points

The Five Points emerged as a distinct ethnic neighborhood within New York City's Sixth Ward during the first decade of the 19th century (Anbinder 2001) (FIG. 2). The area's name derived from the intersection of Baxter, Park, and Worth Streets, and by mid-century the area was home to the city's poorest, largely Irish Catholic, immigrant population. Irish

Figure 1. The location of the Five Points archaeological site shown on a USGS map of New York City.

Catholics had been arriving in small numbers since the 18th century, but the numbers began to increase dramatically by the 1830s (McCaffrey 1997: 65; Miller, K. 1985: 196-198). This escalation was due in part to the adverse effect that England's industrial revolution had on Ireland's industrial and agricultural economy. During the first decades of the 19th century Irish agricultural practices changed from a traditional, subsistence-based pursuit to a large-scale, profit-oriented, capitalist venture (O'Neill 1984). Land ownership was consolidated in the hands of the wealthy minority,

leaving most of the population as landless tenants and migrant workers. These tenant farmers and migrant workers often lived in poverty and were increasingly dependent on the potato for subsistence and supplemental income. (Cullen 1969: 96; Miller 1985: 206).

From the beginning of the 19th century to the eve of the Great Hunger (*An Ghorta Mor* also known as the Potato Famine) in 1845, more than 1.5 million Irish (predominantly the Catholic, rural poor) left Ireland. The Great Hunger is well documented, but what is not so widely known is that several potato failures occurred throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries (Adams 1967: 102-127; McTernan 1992: 2-3; Miller 1985: 194-195; Mokyr and Ó Gráda 1984: 482; Ó Gráda 1995: 7). The most dramatic failure of the potato crop happened between 1831 and 1842 and prompted

one of the greatest pre-Famine dispersals of rural Irish. The period of the Great Hunger (1845-1850) marked not only the watershed for Irish Catholic emigration to the United States but also marked a dynamic time when the Five Points neighborhood was gaining its infamous reputation as one of America's first slums. Upon arriving to various sections of American cities such as the Five Points, Irish immigrants found themselves at the lowest rungs of the social and economic ladder. They made up 87% of America's urban unskilled work force and to survive the harsh urban social and

economic landscape, in-coming Irish were advised by their established compatriots to "do everything that they [i.e., native and other immigrant workers] do, no matter how degrading, and do it for less than they can afford to do it" (Mooney 1850: 69). Employment varied for Irish men, whether single or married, and was particular to the region of the United States. Common employment included laborer, porter, huckster, paver, stevedore, and unskilled and semi-skilled factory operative in textile mills and steel and iron factories (Dublin 1979; Mitchell 1986; Vinyard 1976). Women comprised more than half of the total Irish immigrant population.

Similar to their male counterparts, employment for women was low paying and highly competitive. Married women rarely worked outside the home; after marriage their primary role was to care for the family and to manage the household finances. As such, married women, as well as single women, took jobs they could perform in the home, including laundress, boardinghouse keeper, or pieceworker for the garment industry (Anbinder 2001: 129; Diner 1983: 78; Kraut 1982: 85; Stott 1990: 115). This industrial practice became known as the "sweated trades" and was a common means of survival for Irish women and their families in the Five Points neighborhood.

Figure 2. The streets that make up the Five Points (black box) and the study area of 472 Pearl Street (black arrow) shown on the 1857 Perris insurance map of New York City.

The Irish Catholic immigrants in the Five Points lived in substandard, unsanitary tenements. Charles Dickens (1985: 88-90, 125) described the landscape, the tenements, and the people as a "nest of vipers," and a "plague spot" whose immoral inhabitants were nothing more than thieves, prostitutes, and drunkards. The photographs of Jacob Riis (1971) later pictorialized Dickens' words. Riis' pictures exposed the daily living conditions of the city's poor, mostly immigrant, community and created a public housing scandal that sparked major reforms in tenement construction and maintenance.

The buildings were generally four to five stories tall and were intended to house eight to ten families, although many of them sheltered as many as 22 families (Ingle et al. 1990: 60). By the 1860s, as the population of the Five Points exploded, the large brick tenements were filled to capacity. Absentee landlords, seeking to increase their profits, constructed additions in the rear courtyards (Fitts 2000: 69). The rear courtyards were crowded with large privies, wells, and cesspools. Privy vaults were the sole means of sanitation. Because they could not be drained, the vaults commonly overflowed into the rear courtyards and basement apartments (Warring 1889: 586). As a result, many courtyards were "a serious and potent source of contagion and a means of spreading disease" (De Forest and Veiller 1970: xvii-xviii). Sewer systems were introduced to lower Manhattan in 1842, but individual landlords had to pay for their properties to be connected. Many absentee landlords did not wish to incur this cost (Moehring 1981: 46). The Five Points tenements remained unconnected to the sewer system until well after 1880.

In 1991, archaeologists excavated a city block that formed part of the Five Points Neighborhood. The 14 rear courtyards investigated were associated with structures inhabited by American-born artisans as early as the late 18th century and with mid- to late-19th-century tenements occupied mostly by Irish and German immigrants (Yamin 2000). The excavators focused their attention on the infamous rear courtyard privies, cesspools, wells, and cisterns. The archaeological investigations recovered thousands of everyday items including toothbrushes, spittoons, medicinal bottles, and tea sets belonging to immigrant

individuals and families living at the Five Points throughout the 19th century. The material culture included domestic as well as industrial objects. The ceramic vessel presented in this study was chosen because of its specific Irish Catholic imagery and symbolism in relation to larger Catholic and Protestant temperance movements and it served as a symbol of the strife between Irish Catholics and nativist American Protestants. The teacup was found inside a stone-lined privy associated with an Irish tenement at 472 Pearl Street.

The residence at 472 Pearl Street was a large, five-story brick tenement constructed in 1854. At mid-century, there were 20 households comprising 107 people. All of the tenement dwellers were Irish with the exception of the Finck family, a German-born husband and wife. The Irish families, like the Currys, Callahans, Cronins, and McLoughlins, had been in America for no more than five years. Many families, for example the Sears, Barry, Papard, and Killoran families, had been in America less than three years (Yamin 2000: Appendix L). On average the Irish tenants at 472 Pearl Street had three children. Living with most of the families were at least two boarders, making seven the average number of people who lived in the small apartments. By the 1860 Federal Census, there were 14 households with a total of 74 people. As before with the exception of the Finck family, the tenement housed only Irish families and boarders (Yamin 2000: Appendix L). What is striking about the 1860 census data is the high proportion of widows living in the tenement. Widows headed five out of the 14 households; they maintained their incomes by keeping boarders. The Father Mathew teacup was recovered from the bottom of a large courtyard privy. The deposit dates to the early 1860s.

The exterior design of the teacup shows Father Theobald Mathew preaching to a flock of devoted followers as part of the larger ritual of taking the pledge (FIG. 3). Father Mathew's pledge was a simple declaration promising to abstain from all intoxicating drinks with the exception of medical necessity (Mathew 1890: 35). In 1838, Father Theobald Mathew, an Irish priest of the Capuchin order, accepted the presidency of the Cork Total Abstinence Movement in Ireland. His main objectives were to eliminate intemperance from poor and

Figure 3. The transfer-printed exterior of the teacup showing Father Mathew preaching to his followers.

working class communities and to help the people to better themselves spiritually, emotionally, and physically (Meagher 2001: 162). Father Mathew became known as a healer because those who took the pledge, once sick with alcohol poisoning, looked healthier when they stopped drinking (Maguire 1864: 113). Mathew's message of abstinence implored people to think of their personal health and the health of their families and to "free themselves from the bondage of a degrading and deadly habit" (Maguire 1864: 111). Through his influence, many in Ireland took the pledge and within a year of his tenure 230,000 people had pledged sobriety (Quinn 1996: 625).

A beehive appears inside the cup along the upper edge. Busy worker bees fly above the hive and a shovel, hoe, and rake rest on the ground. The words "Temperance and Industry" appear above the hive, and "Industry Pays Debts" below it (FIG. 4). The

symbols on this teacup draw from the philosophies and actions of Ireland's Father Mathew and reflect a large campaign of the American Catholic Church to combat not only the evils of alcohol but also the associated socially and economically debilitating negative stereotypes of the Irish flourishing in mainstream American society.

Temperance Movement in America, Irish immigrants, and Father Mathew

Throughout the 19th century many believed that diseases like cholera were caused and spread by intemperance, excess, poverty, and immorality (Gallman 2000: 86-87; Kraut 1996: 156). Many American politicians, religious leaders, and physicians argued that those who escaped disease and epidemics were "the temperate, the moral, [and] the well conditioned" while those who fell ill were the "imprudent,

Figure 4. The transfer-printed interior of the teacup showing the various symbols of Christian piety, communalism, and the modern work ethic of hard work and individualism

[and] the vicious..." (Boston City Document 66 1925: 593). American-Protestant politicians and the media perpetuated the idea that the Irish (largely Catholic) population was a social plague, a "cultural tumor eating away at America's heart and soul," and an invasion of the "American" way of life because of its connection with alcohol (McCaffery 1997: 93). Most Irish lacked the necessary skills for urban life, and found themselves in a state of abject poverty upon arriving to the United States (Gallman 2000: 13; McCaffery 1997: 93; "One of Them" [1855] 1925: 792; Putnam's Monthly [May 1855] 1925: 796; Thernstrom 1964: 58; Vinyard 1976: 205). American idealism centered on the notions that not all individuals inherently possessed the ability to prosper and succeed in life and that failure resulted from an individual's inadequacy, immorality, and intemperance (Herzog 1998: 36; Weber 1976). Americans viewed virtue and intelligence as unequally distributed, and the outward sign of one's virtue and intelligence was wealth (Weber 1976). Irish Catholics were racialized as a group and deemed to be naturally inferior because of their overall ill health, the social and economic deprivations they had suffered in Ireland, and their poverty-stricken existence

in the United States – a fact that many related to intemperance.

The real agenda, or fear, rested not completely with immorality and alcohol per se, but in the paranoia of a good portion of the American-born Protestant public who believed that being Catholic meant owing an allegiance to the Pope. Irish Catholics were believed to be part of a priest-controlled machine that operated contrary to the national interests of the United States (Lord 1925: 807; United States Twenty-Fifth Congress 1925: 738). Journalists writing in *The Protestant*, *The American Protestant Vindicator*, *The Defender of Civil and Religious Liberty Against the Inroads of Popery*, and other 19th-century newspapers warned of a possible papal plot to overthrow all non-Catholic governments in Europe and America. America's prejudice towards Irish Catholics was a common theme in the 19th century. In 1806, the first Catholic Church in New York, St. Peter's, was built, but it was burned down by a group of working-class Protestant-Americans soon after its completion. At the same time, similar violence occurred against Catholics in Philadelphia and Boston (Gallman 2000; Ignatiev 1995). In 1834, an American mob set fire to a convent in Charlestown,

Massachusetts (O'Connor 1995: 46-47). By mid-century, American-born workers revived the late 18th-century "Pope's Day Festivities," commonly known as "Paddy Processions," in which people paraded through Irish neighborhoods with straw effigies of the Pope and St. Patrick (Burrows and Wallace 1999: 401). As a result of this anti-Irish sentiment, many Irish immigrants faced difficulties in obtaining vocations and accumulating material and financial wealth and were forced into poverty.

In mainstream American society, to be poor and living in unsanitary conditions was thought to be the fault of the individual. The state of poverty was believed to be linked to levels of depravity and a "self-inflicted moral failing" (Ward 1989: 43, 55, 63). Members of the American upper and middle classes argued that poverty was the fault of the individual because as "citizens of a free and happy land, [there] are no insuperable barriers to the highest moral and social elevation of each and all" (Ladies of the Mission 1854: 292). There were, however, certain exceptions. Those deemed to be "deserving poor" included the elderly, invalids, and widows with children. The "undeserving poor," consisted of able-bodied men and women, many of them immigrants, considered defective because they were intemperate, idle, delinquent, and a burden on others (Gallman 2000: 49). The distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" poor was based solely upon moral and value judgments of social differences (Gans 1995: 1). In the minds of most Victorian Americans, disease equaled low status and ignorance related a chosen lifestyle – mainly as a result of intemperance.

As early as the 1820's, Protestant members of the middle and upper classes formed temperance organizations to combat what was considered the moral decay of the country. Although the organizations comprised different Protestant factions, the philosophy was similar in that they all agreed on the prohibition of alcohol to achieve and reinforce their sense of morality, piety, and respectability (Boyer 1978; Goodman 1994; Gusfield 1986; Quinn 1996). The latter objective was in direct response to the perceived threat to American culture posed by the thousands of Catholic immigrants landing daily in the United States. These organizations were mostly anti-immigrant

and anti-Catholic. Aside from ridding immigrant and working poor communities of alcohol, these organizations sought to rid themselves of the Catholic presence through conversion. These organizations heightened tensions between Irish Catholic immigrants and native-born, nationalist Americans as they presented a social and economic obstacle for many of the immigrant poor. To combat this prejudicial social movement, the American Roman Catholics organized the Catholic immigrant parishioners into their own temperance benevolent organizations.

Irish Temperance in America

By 1840, Catholic temperance organizations were formed to counter the highly publicized link between alcohol and the immoral lifestyle of Irish Catholics. The American Catholic Church deemed this course of action necessary to break down the social and economic barriers created by the racialized stereotypes of the "drunken paddy" (Quinn 1996: 624). The interests of the Church rested with the theory that the Church's position, power, and influence in American society would be strengthened through the social acceptance of its parishioners in mainstream American society.

The various temperance movements were inspired by Father Mathew's movement in Ireland. In 1840, Irish-born bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick established the first U.S.-Irish Catholic temperance society in Philadelphia (Quinn 1996: 625). He initiated the work by sending letters to all parishes demanding that each parish establish their own temperance society similar to that created by Father Mathew. Initial temperance meetings in the Philadelphia area attracted 5,000 pledges (Quinn 1996: 625). Catholic temperance societies quickly emerged in other urban areas such as Washington D.C., Baltimore, Boston, and New York City.

The primary agenda behind the Catholic temperance movement was to secure a footing for Catholicism in the United States. The Catholic Church thought it vital to present the religion, which was a reflection of its parishioners, as part of mainstream American society. Leaders of the Church argued that Catholicism was not different in its philosophy or goals from the Protestant faith and that, based on the

tenets of the Constitution and the ideas of religious freedom, it should be considered an American institution (Abell 1952: 291). By bringing their faith on par with that of American Protestantism, Catholics argued that all Catholics should have the same rights of citizenship with the added notion that Catholic immigrant parishioners needed to undergo a process of "Americanization" (Diner 1996: 103).

To succeed in its quest for equality, the Catholic Church had to socially and culturally reconfigure its flock so that the parishioners might be viewed as productive and respectable American citizens. To successfully achieve this goal the Catholic Church demanded a shift away from Irish traditional notions of communal bonds and encouraged the values of individualism, independence, and the concepts of individual land ownership, private property, and success through individualism, temperance, and hard-work (Miller 1985: 332-333). In New York City, Archbishop John Hughes actively discouraged what he considered traditional Irish behaviors by the newly arrived to assuage nativist feelings (Diner 1996: 103; Meagher 2001: 152). The Catholic Church believed that Americans' negative perception of Irish immigrants would change if these new arrivals were seen as sober and healthy parishioners.

At the behest of Bishop Kenrick, Father Mathew came to the United States in 1849. Kenrick's hope was that Father Mathew's presence would inspire Irish-Catholic immigrants to adopt a new identity blending traditional Catholic piety with a love for modern views of American morality (Diner 1996: 103). Father Mathew's visit did have an impact on numerous Irish Catholic communities. The movement, however, did not instill American sentiments but instead blended Catholic piety with Irish nationalist fervor. Charles Dickens (1985: 207-208) noted that he attended a Father Mathew rally in Cincinnati during his tour of the United States. He commented that the crowd was "largely Irish immigrants...a distinct society among themselves, and mustered very strong with their green scarves; their national Harp and their Portrait of Father Mathew." Upon his departure in 1851, Father Mathew claimed to have administered the pledge to 600,000 individuals (Quinn 1996: 627).

One of the stops on Father Mathew's tour was New York City. At the Five Points, Father Felix Varela created a temperance league at the Transfiguration Church, located a few blocks northeast of 427 Pearl Street. Father Varela was known as the "Vicar-General of the Irish," and his temperance association grew to include 1,000 men, most of whom were Irish Catholics from the Five Points. Father Varela felt compelled to create the league when he witnessed the "health of his flock diminished due to the ravages of alcohol" (Transfiguration Church 1977: 8). Father Varela invited Father Mathew to visit the Five Points and speak to the parishioners of the Transfiguration Church. He hoped the visit would refresh the people's "personal worth and dignity" (Transfiguration Church 1977: 8). Although Father Mathew was invited, historians do not know if Father Mathew actually visited the parish. He is recorded to have lectured to a large crowd at City Hall within blocks of the Irish immigrant neighborhood (Maguire 1864: 462).

At least nine parishioners of the Transfiguration Church lived at 472 Pearl Street during the peak of the temperance movement at the Church and Father Mathew's visit to New York City. It is possible that one of these nine parishioners owned the cup. It is not known when the cup was acquired, and, given the date of the maker's mark (William Adams, ca.1820-1840), it is quite possible that someone, perhaps other than those listed as parishioners of the Transfiguration Church, may have purchased it in Ireland, perhaps after taking the pledge, and carried it to the United States. Any definitive statement on its ownership is impossible. In any case, its presence suggests at least one household's or individual's attempt to communicate the ideology of self-worth through temperance and industry. More importantly, the Irish symbolism and images on the cup strongly suggest that the owner did so through Irish Catholic ethnic and national sentiments.

Within a decade of Father Mathew's American tour, Irish participation in Catholic temperance societies steadily declined and ceased altogether by 1860. The main reason was that the American Catholic Church lacked the necessary material and economic resources to fulfill the expectations of acceptance and social mobility for its Irish constituents (Abell 1952: 299). At the onset of the Civil War, Irish

Catholic communities, abstaining from alcohol or not, were not faring much better socially or economically through participation in temperance organizations. It was not until the last decades of the 19th century that the American Catholic Church matured and established a firm socio-economic foothold through which to provide the education, training, and employment opportunities necessary to create an Irish or Irish-American middle class (Doyle 2006; Whelan 2006).

Meaning and Significance of the Father Mathew Teacup

Material culture forms an important part of social relations in the construction of the everyday world. It is embedded in specific cultural and historical contexts (Glassie 1999; Little and Shackel 1992; McCracken 1988; Miller 1983, 1987; Prown 1988; Tilley 1990). Material culture is not automatically replete with meaning. People give objects multiple meanings that at times are contested. According to Fredrick Barth (2000: 31) material culture and its associated symbolism reflect a multiplicity of operations and social processes as a group categorizes and is categorized based on difference. Archaeologists and material culture specialists recognize that physical things are not static byproducts of human life. On the contrary, material objects constitute a central feature of the social relations that men and women construct in the course of their everyday world (i.e., Douglas and Isherwood 1979; McCracken 1988; Miller 1983, 1987; Prown 1988). The objects themselves do not give meaning to identities, but, in fact, are given relevance by the group as they reflect the social processes of constructing social identity and social position through contact and conflict with different groups.

Social identity and its creation and transformation are both cultural and social phenomena. This identity is acted out in social interaction but is based on the dynamics of culture, which has the capability to produce and reproduce meaning for social action (Barth 1994: 21-22; Jenkins 1997: 40). Culture is based on continuity and change and structures the shifting meanings of material culture; its symbolism must be overtly and publicly acknowledged within the group for it to have social relevance.

Identity gives meaning to interactions between two cultural groups and operates within a common social context creating abstract social distance or boundaries between groups through material and symbolic differences (Jenkins 1997: 168-170). This dialectical process takes into account the formation and expression of identity, and, important to archaeologists, identity is manifested through material development. Although a culture's content is in flux, identity is not lost but is reproduced and modified with the introduction of new cultural elements (Roosens 1989: 157). During social interactions, ethnic groups often experience radical shifts in orientation thereby creating new patterns of social adaptation that compel the group to reassess the resiliency of the cultural basis of their ethnic identity (Roosens 1989: 157). Therefore, social interaction stimulates social change that may also generate new cultural practices which are instilled with new meanings. In short, culture is not lost but reformed and reflects a new identity.

Material and symbolic differences shape group identities and mark the diversity that can spark communal conflict. Strife, mistrust, and alienation occur at the "arena of convergence" where two groups have competing interests. The groups express their social positions through strict adherence to the cultural differences that distinguish them from others. In the material culture of identity, identity formation is a reflection of social action. Richard Jenkins (1997: 168-169) posits that identity is based on similarity and difference and scholars focusing on the social construction of differentiation and similarity should acknowledge a group's cultural, and therefore material, content.

Teacups, plates, tumblers, platters, and smoking pipes are a few lines of physical evidence of social relationships and the social processes at the "area of convergence" between Irish immigrants, Irish-Americans, and Americans. These goods form and dictate the relationships between daily practice and the broader social, historical, economic, and political social forces (Brighton 2005). Identity represents the materialization of the daily experiences of inequality, dominance, subordination, conflict, desire, and the gradual process of heritage creation (Brumfiel 2004: 225; DeMarrais 2004: 1-2; Rowlands 2004: 199). The

timing of incorporation for any group is directly related to the degree of alienation from the host society. What is more, each discourse is tempered by the dual consciousness of the incoming group. A transnational discourse is fostered by the group's in-between status of immigrant and citizen. This discourse involves conceptions of cultural retention amidst social and cultural transformation.

Transnationalism represents the impetus for incorporation as it expresses first and foremost loyalties to the adopted country, but, at times, transnationalism fosters alienation whereby the group retains a notion of its former cultural self. Incorporation, alienation, and transnationalism are interdependent discourses that ebb and flow in relation to external pressures from the dominant society. In this case study, Irish Catholic imagery and symbolism provide the structure with which to illustrate the material culture of identity creation and transformation in the negotiation and struggle to become Irish-American citizens. This process at the Five Points is exemplified through the formation of the Irish Catholic temperance movement and by the image of Father Mathew and by its accompanying symbolic message. The importance of transfer-printed patterns lies in the specific meaning of the images to those who acquire them. In fact, the symbolic meaning may be the sole reason for obtaining the item(s).

The Father Mathew Teacup

The exterior design is of Father Theobald Mathew preaching or administering the pledge to a flock of devoted Irish Catholic followers (FIG. 3). Charles Orser (2007: 122-123) suggests that the imagery and landscape on the cup's exterior would have been familiar to and attracted the attention of Irish immigrants. The mountainous landscape behind Father Mathew administering the pledge most likely would have been familiar to the Irish immigrants at the Five Points. Most of those quitting Ireland mid-century were rural and hailed from the mountainous regions of the West of Ireland. The landscape on the cup would have provided them with an instant and collective memory of home.

The interior design of the cup is comprised of vignettes of symbols of rural Ireland and

provides a direct message for Irish immigrants in the United States. The interior symbolism is also familiar to Irish immigrants and includes agricultural implements that represent hard work and success through individual efforts (FIG. 4). The mottoes "Temperance and Industry," and "Industry Pays Debts," reinforce the symbolic message for those taking the path of Catholic temperance towards succeeding in the United States and escaping the social and economic confines of poverty in urban slums.

The exact meaning of the beehive, however, is somewhat more complex. William Adams and his factory produced other, non-temperance-related, transfer-printed patterns with the same image. In other patterns, the beehive is a central element in an idyllic rural landscape rather than being surrounded by agricultural implements (Coysch and Henrywood 1982: 37). In the case of the rural landscape, it seems that the beehive is one of Adams' trademark designs and represents nothing more than an aesthetically pleasing element. In the context of Father Mathew and other elements such as the agricultural tools, the image may have other implications. Throughout history, the beehive image has been used as a symbol for industry. The agricultural tools lying beside the beehive serve to reinforce the ideals of hard work. The underlying ideology of the beehive symbol rests with the idea of many bees assigned different tasks and coming together for the good of the collective. This notion is at the core of the ideology espoused by the American Catholic Church. In short, the members of the movement were meant to join together for the common cause of upholding and maintaining the philosophical and ideological foundations of the American Catholic Church and, as such, uplift themselves in mainstream America.

The symbolism on this teacup reflects a reaction to being alienated from much of mainstream American society but also points towards sustaining the transnational consciousness of Irish immigrants. To establish themselves in America, the Irish had to unite as a group to struggle against the social stigma of being the foreign "other." American newspapers labeled the Famine Irish as "culturally conservative," with a strong need to "clan together content to live together in filth and disorder" (Miller, K. 1985: 326). Kerby Miller (1985: 134) has argued that the Irish in the

mid-19th century were in "a transition between traditional and modern patterns of thinking and behaving," and they were dependent on communal support and the bond of family; these behaviors conflicted with the American social norms of individualism and competition. The formation of a somewhat-cohesive, collective Irish identity in the United States was a complex process bringing together thousands of people connected by a persistent sense of similitude. This identity was structured around commonalities of ethnicity, religion, and nationalism that were given social relevance through selected symbols. The Irish were not looking back to a historical memory but were building on existing hard-won benefits in their new place of settlement and looking forward to the possibility of future social advancement. The Irish created this new identity on their own terms through the contradiction of blending traditional ways of community with the new industrial ideology of individualism.

Irish communities in the United States developed a unifying heritage through the shared experience of colonialism and exile. At the same time, they sought to combat the prejudice and enforced racialization they encountered as they were marginalized and categorized as inferior to "white" Protestant America (Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 1991). Irish Americans thus created a unified Irish-American identity through the careful use of symbols that served as badges of ethnicity. They used such metaphoric devices to express a civilized and rational heritage that countered demeaning American stereotypes (Ní Bhroiméil 2003: 31).

What is particularly relevant here is that continuity of a symbol's meaning may evoke the sense of a shared heritage and, as such, reinforce traditional social behaviors and values (DeMarrais 2004: 17). Producers and users of material culture imbue objects with meanings that are historically, culturally, and situationally significant. Accordingly, an object's multiple meanings can be contested. According to Fredrick Barth "people use multiple images and perform a multiplicity of operations as they grope for an understanding of the world and fit them to the particular context of events and lives reconstructing their models as they harvest the experiences that ensue" (Barth 2000: 31). Social groups may assign identity-rich meanings based on

perceived ideals (McCracken 1988: 106-108). Consumer goods have the potential to encourage people to think nationally. Consumers render the objects meaningful within a particular context. While these goods may hold no pre-existing appeal, manufacturers can capitalize on their appeal after the relevant social meanings have been established (Foster 1999: 265). Therefore the objects become the materialization of a specific sentiment or worldview and are used by manufacturers to commercialize ethnic pride and cultural heritage (Kemper 1993: 393; Sissons 1997: 184).

Heritage formation is a process of constant reevaluation of meaning as immigrants collectively experience the new social relations of their locales of resettlement. The invention and management of an ethnic or national heritage constitutes part of fluid, multifaceted, and subjective social process (Brighton and Orser 2006). Individuals imbue heritage with meaning through the social relations created in reference to shared cultural codes, symbols, and history (Brah 1996: 21, 47; Fortier 1998; Hall 1990: 223; Panagakos 1998; Panossian 1998a, 1998b). The created heritage can be true or false, justified or illegitimate and can be manipulated to make sense of the world and to define and reshape values (Barth 2000: 31; Mohanty 2000: 32, 43). Heritage is thus a form of "self-knowledge" that provides a sense of place and reinforces the emotional significance attached to membership (Ashmore et al. 2001; Bhabha 1994; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Payne 2000: 2; Tajfel 1981; Woodward 1997).

The life history of the Father Mathew cup did not end with its deposition into the privy. The very act of disposal reflects the existing social relations and the cup's presence at the privy's depths may be just as revealing as its symbolic meaning during use. The cup was found in the lowest stratigraphic level, which dated to the 1860s. The location in the privy suggests it may have been discarded earlier than the thousands of vessels resting above it. What is more, almost the entire vessel was recovered indicating that it was most likely thrown away complete as opposed to someone discarding fragments of a broken cup. It may never be known who owned the teacup, for what purposes it was used, or how it came to be at the bottom of a privy; however, the timing

is provocative in that it coincides with the time of, or shortly after, Father Mathew's visit to New York City. Could the disposal be related to his possible avoidance of the Five Points or the turmoil of the movement's failure to bring social and economic advancement to those Irish parishioners adhering to the Catholic ideology? The cup's position within the privy speaks to this possibility. It also may reflect the owner's reaction to the overall failure of the first Irish Catholic temperance movement and the realization of the uphill battle of intolerance and alienation facing Irish immigrants.

The Irish at the Five Points remained at the lowest end of the economic spectrum, as did most Irish Catholics. It was not until the last decades of the 19th century that the Catholic Church reached a level of acceptance, prominence, and power in American society, and with that rise in influence of the Catholic Church came the slow change in the socio-economic status of the Irish and Irish-American communities.

Conclusion

The social archaeology of the Irish immigrant experience in the United States investigates one of the most dynamic periods in American history. Material culture forms an important part of that history providing the physical evidence of the social relations influencing identity construction and the experiences of the everyday world. Continuities may evoke a shared heritage reinforcing traditional social behaviors and values while change reflects the introduction and acceptance of new socio-cultural identities. The material evidence presented here forms the crucial aspect of the analytical discourses of alienation, transnationalism, and the daily experiences of conflict and desire. The types of objects recovered from Irish immigrant and Irish-American sites form an important database illustrating the materialization of an Irish nationality and heritage connecting political and social issues both at home and abroad. Among the thousands of artifacts Irish immigrants may have used to create, promote, and maintain their identity, the Irish symbolism on this single teacup amply illustrates how material culture was employed to express the larger social relations of religious

ideology and identities of an Irish heritage blended with the desire to be accepted, or even tolerated, in the United States.

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