



## Statistics about Life in the Five Points

Five Pointers were destitute when they arrived and settled in New York's poorest and most run-down neighborhood. On top of this, Irish Five Pointers worked for some of the lowest wages in the most dangerous and unstable jobs in the city. Statistics attest to the dire and exceptional conditions of the neighborhood.

### Injury and Mortality

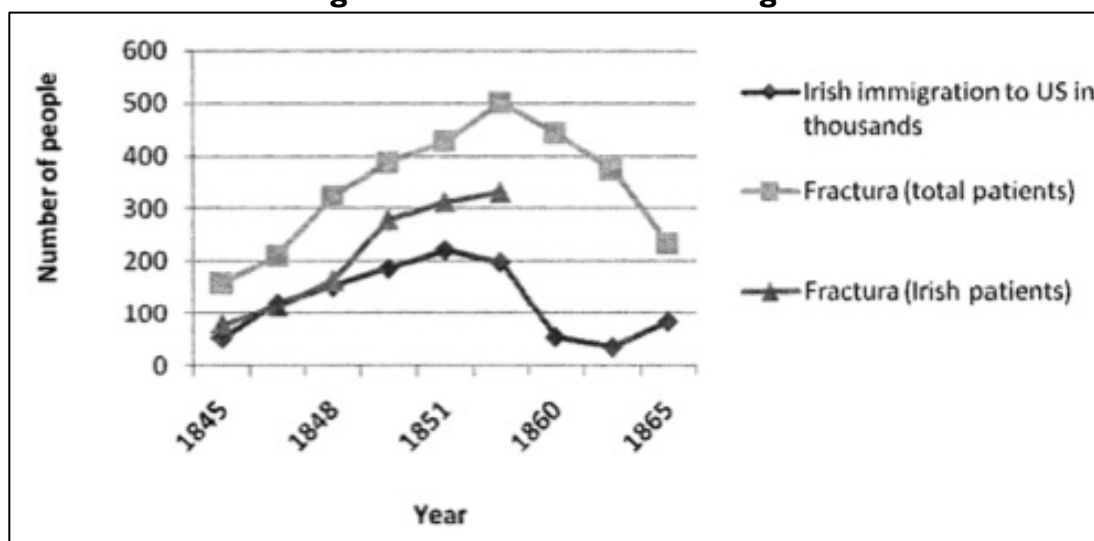
Irish workers, male and female, disproportionately worked in the most dangerous trades. Men worked in especially hazardous occupations such as construction or as day laborers on canal and tunnel-building projects. Doctors' casebooks also record work-related illnesses and injuries such as poisoning from exposure to lead-based paints, amputations from injuries on the job, and rheumatism (a catch-all term for arthritis and other muscle or joint pain).

**Percentage of Patients Admitted to NY Hospital  
Who Were Irish, by Injury Type**

|            | 1845 | 1847 | 1848 | 1850      | 1851      | 1852      |
|------------|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Contusions | 49   | 49   | 55   | 50        | <i>61</i> | <i>60</i> |
| Fractures  | 48   | 54   | 50   | <i>72</i> | <i>73</i> | <i>66</i> |
| Burns      | 44   | N/A  | 59   | <i>62</i> | <i>65</i> | <i>72</i> |

*Italicized numbers indicate unusually high percentages. At the time of these figures, Irish Immigrants made up only 30% of New York City's population.*

**Total Fractures at NY Hospital Compared With Fractures  
During Peak Years of Irish Immigration**



### Infant and Child Mortality Rates in the Sixth Ward

|                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Infants (under 1 year) | Child (under 5 years) |
| 25%                    | 33%                   |



## Occupations and Wages

Most workingmen, whether skilled or unskilled, worked about 200 days a year. In an 1853 article, the New York Times estimated that a workingman's family of four would need about \$600 per year or \$11.50 per week to live comfortably. Some contemporaries felt these estimates were too low. As men aged, they were more likely to enter an unskilled occupation.

Estimating the number of women workers is difficult, because many types of occupations, such as hosting boarders in private homes, were not considered as such by census takers and other records keepers in the 1850s. The chart below looks at three trades in which immigrant Irish women were highly concentrated. In the 1855 census, 44% of women were listed as employed. Irish wives were also more likely to work than other immigrant or native-born wives.

### Sixth Ward Occupations and Wages for Males, 1850s

| Type of Occupation                                                         | Percentage of Men |               | Average Wages                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>Skilled</b> (artisans, building trades)                                 | Irish<br>34%      | German<br>69% | \$4.50 – \$7.50 / week, but varied by trade |
| <b>Unskilled</b> (porters, ditchers, seaman, bill posters, day laborers)   | Irish<br>53%      | German<br>10% | 50¢ – \$1.50 / day, but averaged \$1 a day  |
| <b>Other</b> (Store owners, saloon keepers, peddlers, salesmen and clerks) | Irish<br>14%      | German<br>21% | Varied by business                          |

### Sixth Ward Occupations and Wages for Females, 1850s

|                             | Needle Trades                                         | Domestic Service                      | Laundresses                     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Estimated Number of Workers | 35% of women under 30 years old                       | 45% of women under 30 years old       |                                 |
| Average Wages               | 4¢ – 8¢ per item, seasonally**<br>Average \$91 / year | \$4 – \$8 / month<br>+ room and board | \$6 / month<br>+ room and board |

\*\*Additionally, many employers held back wages “on account” to cover the cost of items that did not meet the manufacturer's standards

## Households

- An unusually high number (18%) of Irish households in Five Points were headed by women. This is at least partially due to the dangerous jobs Irish immigrant men worked, in which they were more likely to be killed.
- 60% of Irish teenagers lived at home, compared to 37% of German-born residents and 33% of native-born residents.

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Source: Carol Groneman Pernicone, *The “Bloody Ould Sixth:” A Social Analysis of a New York City Working-Class Community in the Mid Nineteenth Century*, Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Rochester, 1973; and Linn, M., *From typhus to tuberculosis and fractures in between: A visceral historical archaeology of Irish immigrant life in New York City 1845–1870*, Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2008.