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## The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John

IN MARCH 1839, THE ST. PATRICK'S, St. George's and St. Andrew's societies held a joint meeting in Saint John, New Brunswick. Delegates noted and condemned the Protestant-Catholic confrontations that appeared to be endemic in Boston and other unfortunate American cities. In a spirit of congeniality, they applauded themselves on the good fortune of living in a British colony free of such acrimonious religious strife. Generous toasts were proposed to young Queen Victoria, Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Harvey and, most effusively, to each other.<sup>1</sup> A short eight years later, after Saint John and neighbouring Portland had experienced a series of bloody riots involving Protestant Orangemen and Irish Catholics, those sentiments would be recalled with bitter irony. Sarcastic comparisons would then be drawn between Saint John and New Orleans, a tumultuous city with a reputation for collective violence.<sup>2</sup>

What happened to shatter the calm, and why would the toasts of 1839 turn out to be so farcical in the light of events during the 1840s? Why would Saint John and Portland, relatively stable communities that escaped major incidents of social violence prior to the 1840s, become ethno-religious battlegrounds involving natives and immigrants?<sup>3</sup> The growth of Irish Catholic immigration to Saint John and Portland before mid-century was accompanied by the expansion of the Orange Order as an institutionalized nativist response to those unwelcome settlers. Confrontations between the two groups began with relatively mild clashes in the late 1830s and culminated in the great riots of 1847 and 1849. The Ireland-based Orange Order, fueled originally by British garrison troops and Irish Protestant immigrants, attracted significant numbers of native New Brunswickers and non-Irish immigrants because of its anti-Catholic and racist appeal. By mid-century it functioned as a nativist organization whose purpose was to defend Protestantism and British institutions against Irish Catholic encroachment. The clashes in Saint John and Portland were not primarily the result of transplanted rivalries between Protestant and Catholic Irish immigrants, as was commonly believed by contemporaries and historians.<sup>4</sup>

1 *Weekly Chronicle* (Saint John), 22 March 1839.

2 *Morning News* (Saint John), 24 September 1847.

3 For this study, social violence is defined as "assault upon an individual or his property solely or primarily because of his membership in a social category". See Allen D. Grimshaw, "Interpreting Collective Violence: An Argument for the Importance of Social Structure", in James F. Short, Jr. and Marvin E. Wolfgang, eds., *Collective Violence* (Chicago, 1972), pp. 12, 18-20.

4 Sir Edmund Head to Lord Grey, 15 July 1849, Colonial Office Series [CO] 188, Public Record Office [PRO], London; *Royal Gazette* (Fredericton), 19 September 1849; D.R. Jack, *Centennial Prize Essay on the History of the City and County of St. John* (Saint John, 1883), pp.

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Rather they represented both a vehement rejection of certain immigrants because of cultural and religious differences, as well as a symbolic struggle to protect Protestant jobs against competitive Irish Catholic famine victims during a decade of severe economic hardship. Thus as Irish Catholic immigration burgeoned, so did the nativist Orange Order.

Saint John was New Brunswick's most populous city in the 19th century.<sup>5</sup> Settled by Loyalists in 1783 and incorporated two years later, it rapidly developed into the province's primary port for the export of staple timber goods and the import of manufactured products and foodstuffs. Lying in its northern shadow was the shipbuilding and mill town of Portland, now annexed into greater Saint John. The localities were connected by several roads, the busiest thoroughfare being a dilapidated bridge spanning an inlet on the harbour's northern extremity.<sup>6</sup> Both communities bustled in mid-century; along the narrow streets and wharves sailors rubbed shoulders with tradesmen, merchants, lawyers, mill workers and itinerant labourers. Moreover, both gained their economic focus almost entirely from New Brunswick's timber staple. Sawn lumber and deals were shipped to the British Isles from their wharves, while numerous sawmills and shipyards dotted their skylines. In turn, the two communities received the bulk of New Brunswick's imports, including immigrants.<sup>7</sup>

Despite their industriousness, Saint John and Portland had fallen on hard times in the 1840s. Indeed all of New Brunswick suffered from the worst sustained downturn since the colony's inception.<sup>8</sup> Several factors accounted for this. First, the colony had enjoyed decades of timber trading privileges with Great Britain due to a combination of preference subsidies and high tariffs for foreign imports. But starting in 1842, England began to shift toward a policy of free trade in an attempt to curtail its soaring deficits. Subsequently it lowered or dropped its foreign tariffs and increased colonial duties. News of England's policy change created chaos in New Brunswick. Fears of the ramifications of

136-7; Reverend J.W. Millidge, "Reminiscences of St. John from 1849 to 1860", *New Brunswick Historical Society Collections*, Vol. IV (1919), pp. 8, 127.

5 Its mid-century population stood at 23,000, making one in every 8.5 New Brunswickers a Saint John resident. Portland, with 8,500 inhabitants, was roughly one-third the size of Saint John. See New Brunswick Census, 1851, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick [PANB].

6 Presentment of the Saint John Grand Jury, 27 October 1847, Minutes, Saint John General Sessions, PANB.

7 *Morning News*, 8, 11 September 1843; Abraham Gesner, *New Brunswick: with Notes for Emigrants* (London, 1847), pp. 122-4; Reverend W.C. Atkinson, *A Historical and Statistical Account of New Brunswick, B.N.A. with Advice to Emigrants* (Edinburgh, 1844), pp. 28-9, 36-7.

8 The 1840s was a particularly depressed decade, but as Graeme Wynn eloquently pointed out, the colony was already a veteran of the 19th century boom and bust "bandalore"; in 1819, 1825 and 1837, New Brunswick suffered trade depressions due to financial downturns and the erosion of speculation capital in Great Britain: *Timber Colony: A Historical Geography of Early Nineteenth Century New Brunswick* (Toronto, 1981), pp. 3-33, 43-53. See also P.D. McClelland, "The New Brunswick Economy in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of Economic History*, XXV (December 1965), pp. 686-90.

such a move led to a decade of lost confidence among investors and merchants. Although New Brunswick would experience a slight recovery in 1844, due primarily to speculation that Great Britain's railroad fever would stimulate timber trade, the decade would be marked by high unemployment, rising commodity prices, commercial bankruptcies and legislative indebtedness.<sup>9</sup> Second, a worldwide glut of lumber and the overexploitation of New Brunswick's forests caused a severe export slump.<sup>10</sup> Later in the decade, moreover, hundreds of workers were displaced as the province's sawmills abandoned labour-intensive operations in favor of steam-driven machinery.<sup>11</sup> These factors combined to create a decade of commercial distress that crippled Saint John and Portland, especially in the years 1842-3 and 1845-9.

During this decade of financial hardship, these communities experienced dramatic changes in immigrant patterns. Prior to the 1840s, both were relatively homogeneous. Indeed New Brunswick in general consisted primarily of the descendants of Loyalists and pre-Revolutionary War New England settlers, plus a moderate number of immigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland. The only significant non-Protestants were the Acadians, who populated the northern and eastern shores and the north-western interior. Moreover, the immigrant flow throughout the 1830s was strikingly consistent; for example, 1832 and 1841 differed in raw totals by only twelve.<sup>12</sup> This fairly uniform influx brought an increasingly large proportion of Irish, a trend that would continue to mid-century.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the 1840s the majority of these Irishmen came from the Protestant northern counties. Most were of Scots or English ancestry, reflecting the British colonization of Ireland. They were artisans and tenant farmers with modest savings who sought a better life within the British colonial system. Most importantly, they shared cultural and ideological views with the native New Brunswickers and other British emigrants they encountered. They adhered to Protestantism and supported the English constitutional and political domination of Ireland.

- 9 W.S. MacNutt, *New Brunswick, a History, 1784-1867* (Toronto, 1963), pp. 283-4, 296; MacNutt, "New Brunswick's Age of Harmony: The Administration of Sir John Harvey", *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXII (June 1951), pp. 123-4; D.G.G. Kerr, *Sir Edmund Head: The Scholarly Governor* (Toronto, 1954), pp. 39-54; Wynn, *Timber Colony*, pp. 43-4, 51-3.
- 10 *Colonial Advocate* (Saint John), 14 July 1845; MacNutt, *New Brunswick*, p. 285; Wynn, *Timber Colony*, pp. 51-3.
- 11 *New Brunswick Reporter* (Fredericton), 13 October 1848, 24 August 1849; *Morning News*, 28 May 1849; Wynn, *Timber Colony*, pp. 150-5; MacNutt, *New Brunswick*, p. 320.
- 12 Immigration Returns, New Brunswick Blue Books, 1832-50, Public Archives of Canada [PAC]; "Report on Trade and Navigation", *Journal of the House of Assembly of New Brunswick*, 1866.
- 13 Only in 1853, after the famine abated in Ireland, would English immigrants once again become the largest group. See New Brunswick Census, 1851; "Report on Trade and Navigation", *Journal of the House of Assembly of New Brunswick*, 1866; William F. Ganong, *A Monograph of the Origins of Settlements in the Province of New Brunswick* (Ottawa, 1904), pp. 90-120.

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Thus they made a relatively smooth transition to their new lives in New Brunswick.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1830s, however, emigrant patterns within Ireland shifted and thereby profoundly altered the demographic face of New Brunswick. The more skilled, financially-solvent Protestant Irishmen from northern counties began to be replaced by more destitute Catholics from Ireland's poorer southern and western regions. The percentage of Irish Catholics who emigrated to New Brunswick before 1840 was small, yet ever-increasing. The trickle became a flood as a tragic potato famine decimated Ireland's staple crop from 1845 to 1848.<sup>15</sup> New Brunswick's immigration rate would increase yearly by at least 150 per cent from 1843 until 1847, when the Irish famine tide finally crested. For the mid-1840s, the province would receive virtually all of its immigrants from the Catholic districts of Ireland. For example, of the 9,765 immigrants arriving in 1846, 99.4 per cent were from Ireland. Of these, 87 per cent landed in Saint John, clearly underscoring the city's role as the province's chief immigration port. The overwhelming majority were poor Catholic agricultural laborers.<sup>16</sup> New Brunswick in the 1840s, and particularly Saint John, was bombarded with thousands of non-Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

The influx of Irish Catholics dramatically altered the ethno-religious faces of Saint John and Portland. Although perhaps half of the incoming Irish used the ports as temporary shelters, earning enough at manual labour along the docks for the fare on a coastal vessel heading for the United States, thousands of the poor agrarian peasants remained.<sup>17</sup> By mid-century, more than one-third of the residents of Saint John and Portland were born in Ireland. More profoundly, Catholicism mushroomed. Roman Catholics were as large as any Protestant sect in Saint John by the mid-1840s; when the 1861 census appeared, the first to include religious data, both localities had populations almost 40 per cent

14 Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-9* (London, 1962), pp. 206-9; Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America* (Bloomington, Ind., 1976), pp. 59-62; William Forbes Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration to the New World* (New York, 1932); Donald Akenson, ed., *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol. III (Gananoque, Ont., 1981), pp. 219-21.

15 Woodham-Smith, *Great Hunger*, pp. 29, 206-13; John I. Cooper, "Irish Immigration and the Canadian Church Before the Middle of the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, II (May 1955), pp. 13-4; Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration*; McCaffrey, *Irish Diaspora*, pp. 59-62; Oliver MacDonagh, "Irish Emigration to the United States of America and the British Colonies During the Famine", in R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, eds., *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History 1845-52* (Dublin, 1956), pp. 332-9.

16 Immigration Returns, New Brunswick Blue Books, PAC; M.H. Perley's Report on 1846 Emigration, in William Colebrooke to Grey, 29 December 1846, CO 188.

17 *Ibid.*; *Royal Gazette*, 17 March, 7 July 1847; *Saint John Herald*, 12 November 1845; James Hannay, *History of New Brunswick* (Saint John, 1909), Vol. II, p. 70; MacDonagh, "Irish Emigration", pp. 368-73; Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration*, p. 234; Woodham-Smith, *Great Hunger*, pp. 209-10.

Catholic. Since the Acadians, who were New Brunswick's only other substantial Catholic population, were practically nonexistent in the Saint John region during mid-century, Irishmen accounted almost entirely for the high Catholic population.<sup>18</sup>

The Irish Catholics settled primarily in two sections of Saint John and Portland. They clustered in overcrowded squalour in York Point, a district of north-western Saint John bounded roughly by Union Street to the south, George's Street to the east, Portland Parish to the north and the bay to the west.<sup>19</sup> In Portland, they huddled in the busy wharf area on the harbour's northern shore. The two districts, connected by the "Portland Bridge", grew into twin ethno-religious ghettos during the 1840s.<sup>20</sup> They were so strongly identified with Irish Catholics that they would play host to virtually all of the major episodes of social violence between Orangemen and Irishmen during the decade.

The influx of thousands of Celtic Catholics into the Protestant Anglo-Saxon bastions of Saint John and Portland triggered a nativist response among the more entrenched residents. A useful paradigm for interpreting nativism was pioneered by John Higham, and while his model concerned American movements, it applies equally well for any nativist response. Higham's nativism was the "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign . . . connections", or a "defensive type of nationalism". Though Higham cautioned that the word "nativism", of 19th-century derivation, has become pejorative, his definition provides a valuable intellectual foundation for analyzing people's reaction to immigrants.<sup>21</sup> In the context of the British colonial experience, nativists tended less to focus on place of birth than to draw inspiration from the virtues of Protestantism and British institutions.<sup>22</sup> From this perspective, the local response to incoming Irish Catholics may clearly be considered as a

18 New Brunswick Census, 1851, 1861; *Morning News*, 8, 11 September 1843; Alexander Monro, *New Brunswick; with a Brief Outline of Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island* (Halifax, 1855), p. 125; James S. Buckingham, *Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Other British Provinces in North America* (London, 1843), pp. 409-10.

19 Kings Ward, which included all of York Point and was roughly equal in size to the other Saint John wards, had twice the population of any ward in the 1851 New Brunswick Census. For descriptions of York Point, see Grand Jury Reports, 16 December 1848, Minutes, Saint John General Sessions, PANB, and D.H. Waterbury, "Retrospective Ramble Over Historic St. John", *New Brunswick Historical Society Collections*, Vol. IV (1919), pp. 86-8.

20 Colebrooke to Grey, 28 January 1848, CO 188; Gesner, *New Brunswick*, p. 124.

21 John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1955), pp. 3-4; Higham, "Another Look at Nativism", *Catholic Historical Review*, XLIV (July 1958), pp. 148-50.

22 For examples of Canadian nativist studies, see Howard Palmer, *Land of the Second Chance: A History of Ethnic Groups in Southern Alberta* (Lethbridge, 1972); Palmer, "Nativism and Ethnic Tolerance in Alberta: 1920-1972", Ph.D. thesis, York University, 1974; Simon Evans, "Spatial Bias in the Incidence of Nativism: Opposition to Hutterite Expansion in Alberta", *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. VI, Nos. 1-2 (1974), pp. 1-16.

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nativist response. Protestants who wanted to discourage Catholic settlement and block further immigration began to channel their energies into an institutionalized counter-offensive during the 1840s. As Saint John's *Loyalist and Conservative Advocate* explained:

The necessity. . .for Protestant organization in this Province, arose not more from the many murderous attacks committed upon quiet and unoffending Protestants, by Catholic ruffians, than from the dreary prospect which the future presented. The facts were these: several thousands of immigrants were annually landing upon our shores; they were nearly all Catholics, nearly all ignorant and bigotted, nearly all paupers, many of them depraved. . .What have we to expect but murder, rapine, and anarchy? Let us ask, then, should not Protestants unite? Should they not organize?<sup>23</sup>

The call to battle was dutifully answered by an organization with a history of responding to similar entreaties in Ireland and England — the Loyal Orange Order.

The Orange Order became the vanguard of nativism in mid-19th century New Brunswick, yet the organization was neither new nor unique to the province. After a violent birth in Loughgall, Ireland in 1795, Orangeism quickly spread throughout Northern Ireland and England. As a fraternal body tracing its roots to a feuding tradition between Protestant and Catholic weavers and farmers, the Orange Order paid ideological homage to the British Crown and Protestantism. Group cohesion was provided by a system of secret rituals, an internal hierarchy of five "degrees" and the public celebration of symbolic holidays such as July 12, the anniversary of the victory of the Prince of Orange (King William III) over Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. In the early 19th century the Orange Order was firmly entrenched in the British Isles, where its members fervently combated the growth of Jacobinism and Roman Catholicism.<sup>24</sup>

Given the ideological foundations of the Orange Order, it transferred well within the British Empire. British garrison troops who joined the organization while stationed in Ireland carried warrants for new lodges when they transferred to new posts. Irish Protestant immigrants who settled in England and British North America also brought Orange warrants as part of their "cultural baggage". By the early 19th century, British regulars in Halifax and Montreal were

23 *Loyalist and Conservative Advocate* (Saint John), 13 August 1847. See also issues from 20, 27 August 1847.

24 For histories of the Orange Order, see Hereward Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain 1765-1836* (London, 1966), especially pp. 4-21, 194-206; Senior, "The Early Orange Order 1795-1870", in T. Desmond Williams, ed., *Secret Societies in Ireland* (Dublin, 1973); Peter Gibbon, "The Origins of the Orange Order and the United Irishmen", *Economy and Society*, 1 (1972), pp. 134-63.

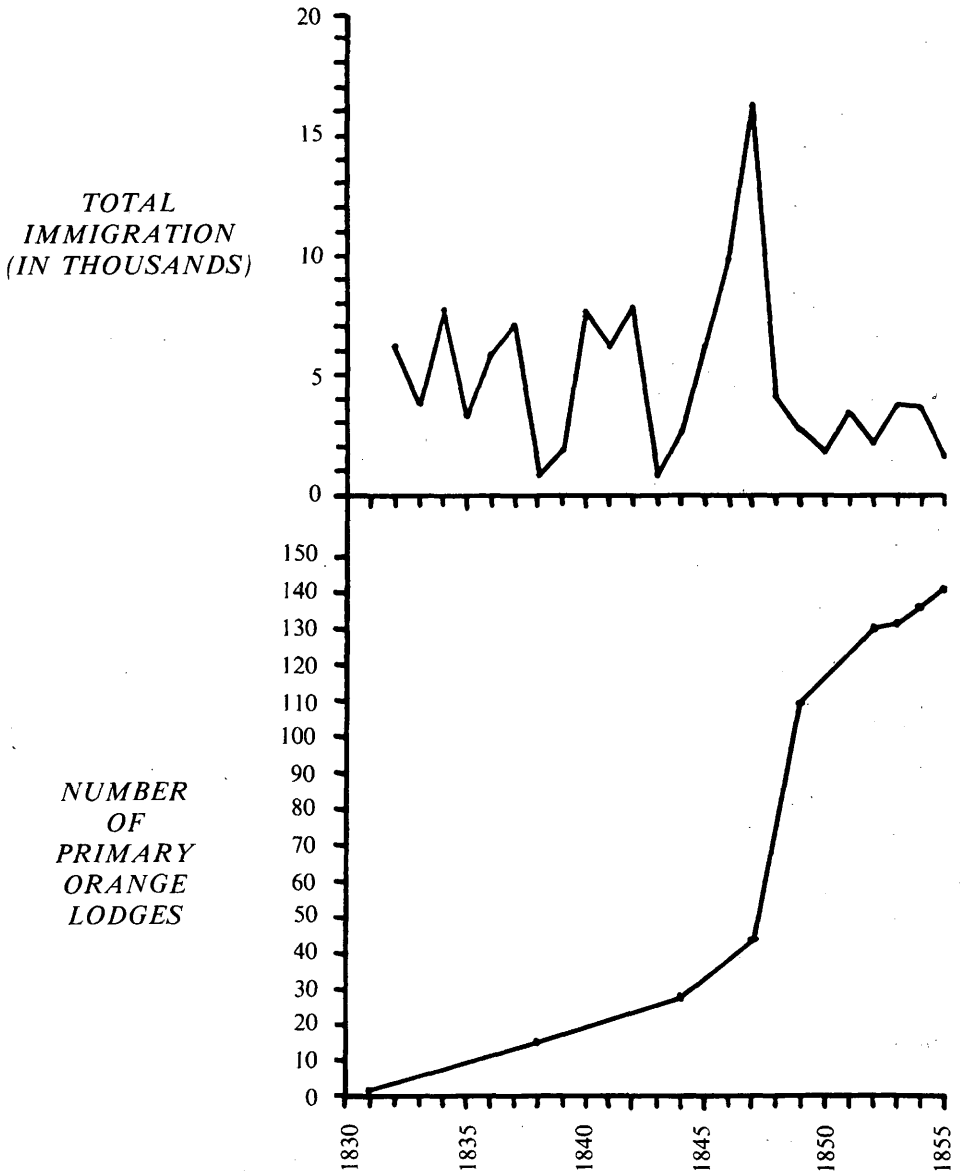


Figure 1: *Top*: Total Immigration to New Brunswick, 1832-1855 (in thousands of people); Source: Immigration Returns, New Brunswick Blue Books, 1832-55, Public Archives of Canada; "Report on Trade and Navigation", *Journal of the New Brunswick House of Assembly*, 1866. *Bottom*: Primary Orange Lodges in New Brunswick, 1832-1855; Source: *Minutes of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick*, 1846-55; Steele, *History of the Orange Lodges of New Brunswick*.

holding formal Orange meetings. Lodges mushroomed as they found support among Loyalists and the swelling ranks of Irish Protestant immigrants. In 1830 a Grand Orange Lodge, headquartered in Upper Canada, obtained permission from Ireland to issue lodge warrants for all of British North America except New Brunswick.<sup>25</sup>

New Brunswick's organized lodges, dating from the turn of the century, clearly reflected a similar pattern of garrison troop and Irish immigrant conveyance. The earliest known lodge, formed among soldiers of the 74th Regiment in Saint John, met regularly by 1818. Six years later they obtained an official Irish warrant.<sup>26</sup> After several abortive efforts to establish civilian lodges in the mid-1820s, Orangeism became rooted among Saint John's Irish Protestants in 1831. Initial growth was sluggish. Fifteen local, or "primary" lodges existed by 1838, representing ten in Saint John and Portland. Membership tended to be small, with some lodges having only a handful of regular participants. Even the establishment of a provincial Grand Orange Lodge in 1837-8, under the mastership of James McNichol, failed to generate widespread growth and attract significant numbers. With the advent of the 1840s New Brunswick's Orange Lodges, particularly in Saint John and Portland, were staffed primarily by small numbers of recent Irish Protestant immigrants and British troops.<sup>27</sup>

A catalyst appeared in the 1840s to spur growth in the fledgling organization. The rising tide of famine immigration brought concerned Protestants to the organization's doorstep, seeking action and viable solutions to the Irish Catholic "menace". By the close of 1844, when the transition from Protestant to Catholic emigrant was well underway in Ireland, New Brunswick had 27 lodges. Of these, ten were less than a year old. As Irish Catholics arrived and filtered throughout the province, Orange Lodges burgeoned to lead the counter-offensive. Buttressed by a network of primary, county, district and provincial lodges, Orangeism swept up the St. John River Valley hard on the heels of the Catholic immigrants. Mid-century found 123 primary lodges across the province, representing a five year growth of 455 per cent.<sup>28</sup> Together with its smaller Nova Scotia affiliates, New Brunswick's Orange Order boasted an

25 Canadian Orange Order histories include Cecil Houston and W.J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto, 1980); Hereward Senior, *Orangeism: The Canadian Phase* (Toronto, 1972); Senior, "The Genesis of Canadian Orangeism", *Ontario History*, LX (June 1968), pp. 13-29.

26 James McNichol's report, *Loyal Orange Association Report, 1886*; (Toronto, 1886), *Sentinel*, 3 July 1930; J. Edward Steele, comp., *History and Directory of the Provincial Grand Orange Lodge and Primary Lodges of New Brunswick* (Saint John, 1934), p. 11.

27 Miscellaneous Orange documents, courtesy of Professor Peter Toner, University of New Brunswick at Saint John; James McNichol's report, *Loyal Orange Association Report, 1886*; Steele, *History of the Orange Lodges of New Brunswick*, pp. 11, 17-21; Houston and Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore*, pp. 69-70.

28 Lodge returns, in *Minutes of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick* [various publishers, 1846-53]; *Annual Reports of the Grand Orange Lodge of the Loyal Orange Association of*



estimated 10,000 members. Yet despite its impressive expansion, the Orange Order's seat of power and membership base remained firmly rooted in Saint John and Portland.<sup>29</sup>

The traditional membership pools did not account for the explosive growth of Orangeism. Irish Protestant immigration dropped dramatically during the 1840s, becoming negligible by mid-century. Moreover, Britain reduced its garrison troops because of budgetary constraints. What, then, explained the Orange Order's meteoric rise? How did the organization broaden its attraction to ensure its survival? The answers were to be found in the Order's ideological appeal to native New Brunswickers and non-Irish Protestant immigrants.

Evidence of Orange membership in the 1840s clearly proved that initiates came from various cultural groups and classes. While the organization may have been rooted among British garrison troops and Irish Protestant settlers, it succeeded only because it found a willing supply of Loyalist and New England descendants and non-Irish immigrants who shared its philosophical tenets. In other words, to tell the story of Orangeism in mid-19th century New Brunswick is to trace the growth of an indigenous social movement. At least half of all identified Orangemen in mid-century were born in New Brunswick. They came from all walks of life, including legislators, barristers, magistrates, doctors, ministers, farmers, artisans and unskilled labourers. Motivated primarily by locally-defined problems and prejudices, many New Brunswick natives and immigrants found the Orange Order both philosophically and socially attractive.<sup>30</sup>

In the Saint John region, some natives participated in Orange activities when lodges first appeared in the early 19th century. Indeed, several of the nascent city lodges drew their membership exclusively from transplanted New Englanders and Loyalists from America's mid-Atlantic and southern regions.<sup>31</sup> When the provincial Grand Orange Lodge organized in 1844, prestigious native Saint John residents were there. They included W.H. Needham, a justice of the peace, H. Boyd Kinnear, a lawyer, and Thomas W. Peters, Jr., a city official. Each would assume an Orange leadership role at some point in his career.<sup>32</sup> Dur-

*B.N.A.* [various publishers, 1846-50]; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 10 May 1850; *Loyalist*, 8 June 1848; *Carleton Sentinel* (Woodstock), 15 July 1854; *Sentinel*, 3 July 1930; Steele, *History of the Orange Lodges of New Brunswick*, pp. 11-3, 37-9, 53-5, 59.

29 Because Nova Scotia's lodges, who received their warrants directly from New Brunswick, were only two years old in mid-century, the vast majority of the 10,000 members resided in New Brunswick. See "Minutes of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia", in *Weekly Chronicle*, 6 July 1849; Orange Order documents, Peter Toner; *Minutes of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick*, 1846-50; *Sentinel*, 3 July 1930.

30 Correspondence from John Earle in *Annual Report of the Grand Orange Lodge of the Loyal Orange Association of B.N.A.*, 1851; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 26 April 1850; Head to Grey, 7 September 1847, CO 188; *New Brunswick Courier* (Saint John), 25 July 1840; Steele, *History of the Orange Lodge of New Brunswick*, p. 11.

31 Houston and Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore*, pp. 70-2; Steele, *History of the Orange Lodges of New Brunswick*, pp. 115-8.

32 "Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick, 1844",

ing the period of intensified social violence, from 1845-9, Saint John and Portland residents embraced the Orange Order because of its campaign to protect Protestantism and British hegemony against the bewildering and oftentimes frightening effects of Irish Catholic immigration.<sup>33</sup> For example, Portland's Wellington Lodge welcomed its largest initiate group since its inception in the meeting following the great Orange-Catholic riot of 12 July 1849.<sup>34</sup>

Membership lists also illuminated the Orange Order's effective appeal to native-born in Saint John and Portland. Data gleaned from official lodge returns, trial transcripts, Orange histories and newspapers yielded the names of 84 active Orange members in the late 1840s. When matched against the available 1851 manuscript census returns from Saint John County, they showed significant native involvement in Orangeism: 56 per cent were not Irish-born, including 43 per cent native and 13 per cent other Protestant immigrants.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the entrenchment of Irish Protestants in the Orange Order was evident because 80 per cent of them had emigrated to New Brunswick prior to 1840. The occupational range already noted for provincial Orangemen was corroborated by the Saint John evidence, though a higher proportion of members could be classified as skilled or unskilled labourers. Finally, the portrait of Saint John Orangemen revealed a youthful organization: almost three-quarters of those traced were less than 40 years old in 1851.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, the Orange Order in Saint John and Portland in mid-century represented a mixture of native-born and Protestant immigrants.

The essential ideological glue of the Orange Order was unquestioning loyalty to the Crown and an emphatic rejection of Roman Catholicism. With these concepts codified in the initiation oaths, Orangeism guaranteed itself a philosophical continuum that transcended the divergent social appeals and emphases of individual primary lodges.<sup>37</sup> In New Brunswick, lodges exercised a great deal of

in Steele, *History of the Orange Lodges of New Brunswick*, p. 11; New Brunswick Census, 1851.

33 James Brown letters to *New Brunswick Reporter*, 28 April, 5, 12 May 1848; *Morning News*, 18 July 1849; John Earle's correspondence, in *Annual Report of the Grand Orange Lodge of the Loyal Orange Association of B.N.A.*, 1851.

34 Minute book, Wellington Orange Lodge, Portland, New Brunswick Museum [NBM], Saint John.

35 1851 manuscript census returns from Saint John County are incomplete. Returns from only four of the city's wards are extant: Kings, Dukes, Sydney and Queens. Records from Portland Parish and Carleton are missing.

36 Returns for Saint John County, New Brunswick Manuscript Census, 1851, PANB; Orange documents, including dispensations and lodge returns, Peter Toner; *Minutes of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick*, 1846-55; Evidence, Saint John Riot Trials, Documents, New Brunswick Executive Council Records, PANB; New Brunswick Supreme Court Documents, PANB. The newspapers consulted were the *Loyalist*, *Weekly Chronicle* and *Morning News* for the 1840s, as well as the *Daily Sun* (Saint John), 13 July 1897, and Steele, *History of the Orange Lodges of New Brunswick*.

37 *Laws and Ordinances of the Orange Association of British North America* (Toronto, 1840), p. 11; *The Orange Question Treated by Sir Francis Hincks and the London 'Times'* (Montreal, 1877).

independence. Several accepted only temperate men; others attracted members by offering burial insurance plans; still more touted their commitment to charitable endeavours.<sup>38</sup> New Brunswick's Orange Lodges had disparate social and functional appeals, and many men gathered under the symbolic Orange banner. Except in the rate case where evidence exists, individual motives for joining the organization are a matter for speculation. Nevertheless, the philosophies and goals of Orangemen may be justifiably construed from organizational rhetoric and collective behavior.

Orange rhetoric in the 1840s strikingly resembled the propaganda campaigns carried out by American and British nativists during the same period. New Brunswick Orangemen charted an elaborate counter-offensive to combat Irish Catholic immigration and permanent settlement. The organization's views were stated succinctly in two documents from the late 1840s. In a welcoming address to Lieutenant-Governor Edmund Head, Orangemen explained:

Our chief objects are the union of Protestants of the several denominations, to counteract the encroachments of all men, sects or parties, who may at any time attempt the subversion of the Constitution, or the severance of these Colonies from the British Empire; to bind Protestants to the strict observance of the Laws, and to strengthen the bonds of the local authorities, by the knowledge that there is ever a band of loyal men ready in case of emergency, to obey their commands, and assist them in the maintenance of order.<sup>39</sup>

Thomas Hill, the zealous Orange editor of the *Loyalist and Conservative Advocate*, was more direct in his appraisal of the fraternity:

Orangeism had its origins in the *necessity* of the case; it has spread in this Province, also from *necessity*, for had not the country been infested with gangs of lawless ruffians, whose numerous riots, and murderous deeds compelled Protestants to organize for mutual defence, Orangeism would have been scarcely known. And whenever the *Cause* shall disappear, Orangeism may retrograde.<sup>40</sup>

Underscored in the above quotations was the unique philosophical framework which Orangemen operated within: unquestioning loyalty, exclusive Protestan-

38 For example, Portland's Wellington Lodge attempted to combat negative publicity after a decade of social violence by declaring itself a "benefit" organization in 1851. See Minute Book, Wellington Orange Lodge, NBM. See also *Rules and Regulations of the Orange Institution of British North America* (Toronto, 1838), p. 5; Steele, *History of the Orange Lodges of New Brunswick*.

39 *Morning News*, 24 January 1849; *Headquarters* (Fredericton), 24 January 1849.

40 *Loyalist*, 1 October 1847.

tism and the threat to carry out their policies with vigilante force.

New Brunswick's Orangemen, in an effort to check the Irish Catholic invasion, fought a rhetorical battle on several fronts. The overarching goal was to maintain the colony as a Protestant and British bulwark against Catholicism. The Orange Order directly appealed to all Protestants who feared that the ethno-religious supremacy enjoyed by Anglo-Saxons would be permanently undermined or destroyed by the swelling numbers of Celtic Irishmen. Orangemen even advocated the repeal of legislation giving Catholics the franchise and the right to serve in the legislature.<sup>41</sup>

Anti-Catholic diatribes grew in part from a Papal conspiracy myth that enjoyed a North American vogue in the mid-19th century.<sup>42</sup> New Brunswick's Orangemen claimed the famine immigration was but a skirmish in a global battle, masterminded in the Vatican, to expunge Protestantism from the earth. A Saint John editor who supported Orangeism warned that "A great, perhaps a final, conflict is at hand between Protestant Truth and Popery leagued with Infidelity".<sup>43</sup> Orangemen embarked on a propaganda campaign to educate Protestants about the Pope's despotic control over Catholics — in church, the home, the workplace and on the hustings. Only by removing the insidious network of priests, Orangemen argued, could papal control over the "uncivilized minds" of the Irish Catholics in New Brunswick be broken.<sup>44</sup>

Another vital weapon in the Orangemen's arsenal rested upon the assumption that the Celtic Irish were inherently an unruly and violent race. The stereotype had a measure of truth. As a subjugated people under English rule, Irish Catholics often resorted to disruptive tactics to achieve their goals.<sup>45</sup> As poor Irish Catholics crowded into squalid quarters in York Point and Portland,

41 *Minutes of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick*, 1852; Rev. Gilbert Spurr's address to Orangemen, in *Loyalist*, 15 October 1847; Head to Grey, 26 July 1848, CO 188; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 26 October 1849; *Carleton Sentinel*, 2 July 1850; *Weekly Chronicle*, 15 July 1842, 4 February 1848; *Christian Visitor* (Saint John), 8 March 1848; Steele, *History of the Orange Lodges of New Brunswick*, pp. 13-5, 21.

42 For discussions of the papal conspiracy theory in North America, see S.M. Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason* (New York, 1970), pp. 47-59, David B. Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature", *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVII (September 1960), pp. 205-7, Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, pp. 5-6.

43 *Church Witness* (Saint John), 21 September 1853.

44 *Minutes of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick*, 1846-55, particularly S.H. Gilbert's sermon in 1854; Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick's address to Queen Victoria, in Head to Grey, 28 April 1851, CO 188; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 9 April 1850; *Carleton Sentinel*, 16 July 1850; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 1 October 1847; *Weekly Chronicle*, 31 August 1849, 18 July 1851; *Loyalist*, 24 September 1847; *Church Witness*, 16 July, 13 August 1851, 6 July 1853.

45 Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration*, pp. 363-4; Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge, La., 1956), pp. 46-7; Kenneth Duncan, "Irish Famine Immigration and the Social Structure of Canada West", *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, II (February 1965), pp. 33, 39.

Orangemen bandied stereotypes of the Celtic propensity for strong drink and villainy. After all, they argued, “no one can deny that the lower orders of the Roman Catholic Irish are a quarrelsome, headstrong, turbulent, fierce, vindictive people”.<sup>46</sup> Petty crime did increase dramatically as Saint John and Portland absorbed thousands of the famine immigrants, but it is more plausible to suggest that factors such as overcrowding, poverty and hunger were more responsible for creating a crucible for crime than were cultural idiosyncrasies.<sup>47</sup> Tragically, Orangemen painted all Catholics with the same nativist brush. Though even the most scurrilous propagandists recognized that not all immigrants participated in this orgy of crime, they nevertheless called for Orange vigilantism in York Point and Portland. Moreover, they suggested dispersing the immigrants among loyal Protestants. The theory was that such a dilution would facilitate social control and the assimilation of those immigrants who chose to remain. For the Orangemen of mid-19th century Saint John, every Celtic Irishman was a potential criminal.<sup>48</sup>

New Brunswick’s Orange rhetoric was also laced with racism, mirroring the contemporary British philosophy of Anglo-Saxon superiority.<sup>49</sup> Ethnicity was mingled with class as Orangemen railed against the “ignorant Mickie” hordes who formed a substandard “class of people”. The destitution of famine immigrants as they disembarked in Saint John, and the squalour of their ghettos in York Point and Portland, appeared to corroborate Orange assertions of Celtic inferiority. Here was positive proof that the Protestant Anglo-Saxon must remain firmly in legislative and judicial control in order to assure the colony’s peaceful survival.<sup>50</sup> The more zealous Orange propagandists, believing that assimilation was a bankrupt concept, called for the deportation of all Celtic Catholics. One might as well, they argued, “attempt to change the colour of the Leopard’s spots, or to ‘wash the Ethiope white’, as to attempt to tame and civilize the wild, turbulent, irritable, savage, treacherous and hardened natives of the Cities and Mountains of Connaught and Munster”.<sup>51</sup> The editors of the *Loyalist and Conservative Advocate*, the *Weekly Chronicle* and the

46 *Loyalist*, 6 April 1848.

47 Alexander McHarg Diary, NBM; *Morning News*, 8 January, 8 December 1841, 6 January, 14 June 1843, 5 January 1848; *Weekly Chronicle*, 5 January, 28 June 1844, 26 November 1847; Queen vs. David Nice, New Brunswick Supreme Court Documents, PANB.

48 *Loyalist*, 30 March 1848; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 20 April 1850; *New Brunswick Assembly Debates*, 8 March 1850, PANB; *Morning News*, 24 January 1849; *Loyalist*, 16 July, 15, 28 October, 4 November 1847; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 19 November 1847, 15 March 1850; *Morning News*, 11 August 1847.

49 For excellent studies of racism in the British Isles, see L.P. Curtis, Jr., *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (Bridgeport, Conn., 1968), pp. 8-9, 24-6, and *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Devon, England, 1971), passim.

50 *Weekly Chronicle*, 31 August, 28 September 1849; *Loyalist*, 24 September 1847.

51 *Loyalist*, 1 October, 11 November 1847.

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*Christian Visitor*, all either Orange members or openly sympathetic to the organization's policies, regularly exposed their readers to racist editorials, Irish jokes, and vignettes pointing out the sub-human proclivities of the Celtic immigrant. Through their efforts, the argument of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority fell convincingly upon the ears of native Protestants who feared the demise of peace, order and good government in New Brunswick.<sup>52</sup>

Yet another focal point for Orange propagandists was the tangible threat that the poor Irish Catholic immigrants represented a formidable and willing pool of cheap laborers.<sup>53</sup> The famine victims, thrust into the severely depressed economy of the 1840s, were greeted as pariahs by Saint John's working classes. The destitute Irish Catholics eagerly accepted the most demanding and lowest paying jobs, which in a healthy economic environment would be vacant. But during the "hungry forties", unemployed native laborers were forced to compete with the immigrants for these undesirable jobs.<sup>54</sup> In an attempt to combat the debilitating effects of immigrant competition, such as a general lowering of wage scales, Orangemen sounded the call for economic segregation. They suggested that Protestant merchants and employers should hire and do business only with coreligionists. By ostracizing Roman Catholic laborers, Orangemen hoped to persuade entrenched immigrants to leave and to discourage incoming Catholics from settling in the community.<sup>55</sup>

While Saint John's Orangemen fought a rigorous rhetorical battle, perhaps their most effective campaigns involved physical engagements with Irish Catholics. Indeed, collective social violence grew in direct proportion to the rising levels of famine immigration and Orange membership during the 1840s. In the aftermath of each confrontation, Orangemen enjoyed even greater Protestant support from natives and immigrants alike. The number of local lodges and engorged memberships at mid-century were tributes to the Orange Order's successful appeal. The persuasive rhetorical campaigns may have won converts, but the bloody riots gave concerned Protestants tangible "proof" of the Irish Catholics' uncivilized behaviour.

The first clearly identifiable incident of collective violence between Orangemen and Catholics in Saint John occurred on 12 July 1837. Small Catholic crowds forced entry into two merchants' stores and attempted to burn

52 *New Brunswick Reporter*, 10 May 1850; *Loyalist*, 16 July, 17 September, 15 October 1847; *Weekly Chronicle*, 29 July 1842.

53 The theme of competition between immigrant labourers and nativists in North America is explored in Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), pp. 180-7, Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, p. 57, Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration*, p. 353.

54 M.H. Perley's Report on 1846 Emigration, in Colebrooke to Grey, 29 December 1846, CO 188; *Royal Gazette*, 17 March, 7 July 1847; Wynn, *Timber Colony*, pp. 155-6; Kathryn Johnston, "The History of St. John, 1837-1867: Civic and Economic", Honours thesis, Mount Allison University, 1953, pp. 24-8.

55 *Loyalist*, 24 March 1845, 17 September, 28 October, 4 November, 9, 23 December 1847; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 10 September 1847; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 19 November 1847.

them.<sup>56</sup> In later years such incendiaryism was eclipsed by more traditional rioting. The spring of 1841 found Irish Catholics clashing with Orangemen in the streets of Saint John. At issue was an Orange commemorative arch erected to celebrate the visit of a dignitary.<sup>57</sup> Catholics reacted similarly the following year on 12 July, when a crowd of several hundred gathered outside a Saint John home flying the Union Jack festooned with orange ribbons. Their jeers and taunts brought Orange reinforcements from across the city; by evening a general riot prompted Mayor William Black to swear in 150 special constables. The all-Protestant volunteer squad arrested several Irish Catholics, most of whom were ultimately found guilty of rioting.<sup>58</sup> Although these early disturbances paled when compared to subsequent riots, they established important patterns that would be repeated throughout the decade. While Irish Catholics would be deservedly or incorrectly labelled the aggressors, the Orangemen would invariably be perceived as the defenders of Saint John's Protestant and Loyalist traditions. Moreover, an exclusively Protestant constabulary and judiciary would consistently arrest and convict only Irish Catholics for disturbing the peace.

The next three years, coinciding with the first substantial waves of Irish Catholic immigrants and the attendant surge of Orangeism, brought several important episodes of social violence. The Twelfth of July in 1843 witnessed clashes between religious crowds in Saint John and Portland, though an official Orange procession was not held.<sup>59</sup> A more serious incident occurred in March of the following year. Squire Manks, Worshipful Master of the recently established Wellington Orange Lodge, shot and mortally wounded a Catholic Irishman during a dispute at York Point. Angry residents poured into the streets and demanded revenge. Rather than being arrested, however, Manks was placed into protective custody and expeditiously exonerated by an examining board of city magistrates. The verdict was self-defence.<sup>60</sup> The year closed with sporadic riots from Christmas until after New Year's. Crowds of up to 300 Irish Catholics roamed throughout York Point and Portland's wharf district, attacking Orangemen and their property. The Orangemen enthusiastically reciprocated. Two companies of British regulars finally succeeded in quashing the disturbances, but not before one Catholic had died and dozens more from both sides had received serious injuries. Although uninvolved residents bemoaned the

56 Joseph Brown to R.F. Hazen, 11 July 1837, R.F. Hazen Papers, NBM; *Weekly Chronicle*, 14 July 1837.

57 *New Brunswick Reporter*, 26 April, 10 May 1850.

58 *Morning News*, 13 July, 5 August 1842; *Weekly Chronicle*, 15 July, 12 August 1842; *New Brunswick Courier*, 16 July, 13, 27 August 1842; Minutes, Saint John General Sessions, 9, 10, 17 December 1842, 25 March 1843, PANB; *Sentinel*, 29 October 1891.

59 *New Brunswick Reporter*, 26 April 1850.

60 Mayor Lauchlan Donaldson to Alfred Reade, 8 March 1844, New Brunswick Supreme Court Documents, PANB; McHarg Diary; *Morning News*, 5 April 1844.

apparent state of anarchy, the rioting was neither indiscriminate nor uncontrolled. Catholics and Orangemen carefully picked fights only with "certain . . . obnoxious individuals".<sup>61</sup>

The tensions of the winter of 1844-5 culminated in a St. Patrick's Day riot that eclipsed all earlier Orange-Catholic conflicts in its violence. On 17 March 1845, Portland Orangemen fired without provocation upon a group of Catholic revellers. The incident touched off a wave of reprisals. By nightfall general rioting between Orangemen and Irish Catholics had spread throughout the wharf district and York Point. The fighting was most intense at the foot of Fort Howe Hill in Portland.<sup>62</sup> The rioters dispersed when British troops positioned an artillery piece near Portland's wharves. The ploy was at best symbolic, for the concentrated fighting abated in the evening when the well-armed Orangemen gained a measure of control over the streets. The riot killed at least one Catholic, although several bodies were probably secreted away for private burials. The tally of wounded was correspondingly high, with dozens of combatants being hurt seriously enough to warrant medical attention.<sup>63</sup> The examinations and trials in the riot's aftermath followed the patterns established in 1842. Although authorities arrested several Orangemen, including two suspected of murder, Saint John's all-Protestant Grand Jury preemptively threw out their bills before the cases could be brought to trial. Instead the jury returned bills for several Irish Catholic rioters, two of whom were ultimately found guilty and sentenced. The swift vindication of Orangemen by the Grand Jury, despite an abundance of damaging testimony, illustrated the reluctance of Protestant authorities to condemn Orange violence and their continuing propensity to convict only Irish Catholics.<sup>64</sup>

Saint John and Portland escaped collective social violence for the next two years, but the hiatus did nothing to diminish enmity or foster peaceful linkages between Orangemen and Irish Catholics. The latter abstained from public displays on the St. Patrick's Days of 1846 and 1847. Orangemen quietly observed July 12 in their lodges in 1845; the following year they took a steamer to Gagetown for a procession with their brethren from Queens, Kings and York

61 *Weekly Chronicle*, 3 January 1845; *Morning News*, 3 January 1845; *Headquarters*, 8 January 1845; McHarg Diary.

62 Donaldson to Reade, 29 March 1845, Saint John Grand Jury to Colebrooke, 27 March 1845, "Riots and Disasters", New Brunswick Executive Council Records [Executive Council Records], PANB; *Loyalist*, 24 March 1845; *Weekly Chronicle*, 21 March 1845.

63 Minutes, New Brunswick Executive Council, 7 April 1845, PANB; Report of Doctors Robert and William Bayard, 17 March 1845, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; McHarg Diary; *Weekly Chronicle*, 21 March 1845; *Morning News*, 19 March 1845; *Observer* (Saint John), 18 March 1845; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 21 March 1845; *New Brunswick Courier*, 22 March 1845; *Loyalist*, 24 March 1845.

64 Minutes, Saint John General Sessions, 20, 22, 26 March, 14 June 1845; Donaldson to Reade, 22 March 1845, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; *New Brunswick Courier*, 5 July 1845; *Saint John Herald*, 2 July 1845.



Counties.<sup>65</sup> For 1847's Twelfth of July, when famine immigration was reaching its zenith, city Orangemen invited neighbouring brethren and staged the largest procession since the organization's inception. On 14 July a Saint John newspaper trumpeted the now familiar requiem for the Orange holiday: "Dreadful Riot! The Disaffected District [York Point] Again in Arms — Shots Fired — Several Persons Dreadfully Wounded — the Military Called Out."<sup>66</sup> The two-year truce had yielded only larger numbers of Catholic immigrants and nativist Orangemen, and a more sophisticated network for the combatants in both groups to utilize in battle.

July 12 started quietly enough in 1847, but as Saint John's and Portland's Orangemen began to make their way to their lodges, crowds of wary Irish Catholics spilled into the streets. One of the larger Portland lodges, probably Wellington, entertained the amateur band from the local Mechanic's Institute. All of the band members were Orangemen. In the early evening, the group led a procession of Orangemen and onlookers through the streets of Portland, across the bridge, and into the heart of the Roman Catholic ghetto at York Point.<sup>67</sup> The tunes they played, like most Orange favourites, were clearly offensive to Irish Catholics.<sup>68</sup> At the foot of Dock Street, the crowd attacked the procession with sticks and bricks, smashing many of the band's instruments and forcing the revellers to flee back across the Portland Bridge. Gathering reinforcements and firearms from their lodges and homes, the undaunted Orangemen quickly returned to their enemy's stronghold.<sup>69</sup>

The Irish Catholic crowd, which by now had grown to several hundred, also made use of the respite and collected weapons in the event of a reappearance of the humiliated band members and Orangemen. The buttressed Orange legions did attempt to revive the procession and music when they reached York Point. A battle was inevitable. Volleys of shots from both parties shattered the summer air, leaving scores of wounded lying in the streets along the procession route.

65 *Minutes of the Grand Orange Lodge of New Brunswick*, 1847; *Weekly Chronicle*, 17 July 1846.

66 *Morning News*, 14 July 1847.

67 Orange supporters tried to disassociate the Orange Order, the Mechanic's Institute Band and the crowd that followed the procession. *The Loyalist*, 16 July 1847, claimed that the band had nothing to do with the Orange procession, while Clarence Ward made the dubious assertion that the Orange entourage consisted of "children". See "Old Times in St. John — 1847", *Saint John Globe*, 1 April 1911, p. 8. Yet an article in the *Orange Sentinel*, 29 October 1891, proudly revealed that all the band members were Orangemen.

68 For examples of these songs, see *The Sentinel Orange and Patriotic Song Book* (Toronto, 1930?) and R. McBride, ed., *The Canadian Orange Minstrel for 1860, Contains Nine New and Original Songs, Mostly All of Them Showing Some Wrong that Affects the Order or the True Course of Protestant Loyalty to the British Crown* (London, 1860). Note particularly "Croppies Lie Down", a 19th century favourite of Orangemen in Europe and North America.

69 *New Brunswick Courier*, 17 July 1847; *Morning News*, 14 July 1847; *Loyalist*, 16 July 1847; *Sentinel*, 29 October 1891; McHarg Diary.

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The melee continued throughout the evening, with most of the bloodshed occurring along Dock and Mill Streets and the bridge. At midnight detachments of the 33rd Regiment, dispatched at the mayor's request, converged upon York Point only to find the streets deserted. Rather than chance an engagement with the military, both sides ceased hostilities.<sup>70</sup> Aided by the darkness, the Irish Catholics escaped capture and returned to their homes. The constabulary failed to make any arrests after the riot, and the grand jury issued no warrants.<sup>71</sup>

Assessment of the riot's severity is hampered due to the secretive removal of the dead and wounded by both parties, particularly the Irish Catholics. Official tallies included only one Catholic killed and several seriously wounded, but everyone involved knew that many had died during the encounter.<sup>72</sup> The significance of the conflict, however, emerged unclouded in the following months. Both sides were organized, well-stocked with weapons and clearly prepared to kill for their beliefs. Catholics had gathered hours before the Orange procession had entered York Point; they were motivated by a desire to "defend" their "territory". Orangemen consciously provoked the enemy by twice marching in procession and playing obnoxious songs through the most Catholic district of Saint John. An undeniable linkage also emerged between the Orange Order and the Mechanic's Institute, which was symbolic of the nativist attraction that Orangeism had to the economically beleaguered Protestant workers facing stiff competition from famine immigrants. Finally, the riot underscored the Orange belief in vigilante justice. The procession's return to York Point represented a "heroic" action to remove a dangerous Catholic "mob" from Saint John's thoroughfares. According to Orange sympathizers, the anaemic state of the city's constabulary justified the vigilantism.<sup>73</sup> In retrospect, the riot of 1847 illuminated the entrenchment of social violence as a perennial method of interaction between Orangemen and Catholics.<sup>74</sup>

A year of bloody skirmishes was the riot's true legacy, for neither side had emerged with a clearcut victory on the Twelfth. A wave of assaults and murders swept Saint John and Portland during the weeks that followed; Orange and Catholic vengeance was the motive for all of them.<sup>75</sup> A sensational series of witness examinations after the murder of a suspected Orangeman in September brought religious antipathy to a fever pitch. Dozens of testimonials exposed paramilitary networks operated by militant Orangemen and Catholics. Per-

70 *Morning News*, 14 July 1847; Colebrooke to Grey, 30 July 1847, Documents, Executive Council Records, PANB; McHarg Diary *New Brunswick Courier*, 17 July 1847; *Loyalist*, 16 July 1847; Ward, "Old Times in St. John — 1847".

71 *New Brunswick Courier*, 7 August 1847.

72 Colebrooke to Grey, 30 July 1847, CO 188; *Morning News*, 14 July 1847.

73 *Loyalist*, 16 July 1847; Ward, "Old Times in St. John — 1847".

74 One newspaper referred to it as a "civil war": *Morning News*, 14 July 1847.

75 *New Brunswick Courier*, 24 July 1847; *Morning News*, 14, 21, 23, 28 July 1847; *Loyalist*, 23 July 1847; *Weekly Chronicle*, 30 July 1847.

sonal revenge on a small scale appeared to be the favourite tactic of the weaker and outnumbered Catholics. Orangemen, enjoying the support of a Protestant majority, preferred a collective vigilantism whereby they dispensed extralegal justice while acting as an unofficial watchdog of the Irish lower orders.<sup>76</sup> By the year's end, it was apparent that the Orange-Catholic struggle had not diminished. Both sides habitually armed themselves if they ventured into unfriendly districts; each tried desperately to identify its most virulent enemies, and in many cases, both were prepared to kill for their causes.

The religious conflict of the 1840s peaked two years later in Saint John's worst riot of the 19th century. The city was quiet in 1848, much as it had been in 1846, because local Orangemen travelled to Fredericton to participate in a massive demonstration.<sup>77</sup> But as the Twelfth approached in 1849, Saint John's Orangemen advertised for the first time their plans for hosting provincial brethren and sponsoring an elaborate procession.<sup>78</sup> Motivated by vivid memories of the inconclusive 1847 conflict, Orangemen and Irish Catholics grimly prepared themselves for battle. On the eve of the holiday, Mayor Robert D. Wilmot met with local Orange officials and asked them to voluntarily abandon their plans to march. But the Orangemen, well-versed on their rights, rejected the suggestion because no provincial statute gave civilian officials the authority to ban public processions.<sup>79</sup> The march, they insisted, would proceed as planned.

With a measure of fatalism, Saint John prepared for the occasion. While Orangemen from Carleton, York, Kings and Queens Counties were boarding steamers and carriages for Saint John, Irish Catholics were buying arms and ammunition. Shopkeepers along Prince William Street, King Street and Market Square boarded their windows and decided to declare the day a business holiday.<sup>80</sup> Early on the morning of the Twelfth, hundreds of Orangemen from Saint John and Portland collected at Nethery's Hotel on Church Street and marched to a nearby wharf to greet the Carleton ferry. Among the disembarking brethren was Joseph Corum, the Senior Deputy Grand Master of the New Brunswick Grand Lodge. As the procession leader, Corum would have the

76 Queen vs. Dennis McGovern, 7-17 September 1847, New Brunswick Supreme Court Documents, PANB. Note especially the testimonies of Thomas Clark, James Clark, Ezekiel Downey and Edward McDermott. See also *Morning News*, 24 January 1848, *Weekly Chronicle*, 10 September 1847, *New Brunswick Courier*, 11 September 1847; *Loyalist*, 10 September 1847; *Morning News*, 8 September 1847.

77 *Weekly Chronicle*, 14 July 1848. Fredericton's Orangemen invited provincial brethren to celebrate the anniversary of their successful 1847 battle with Irish Catholics: *New Brunswick Reporter*, 10 May 1850.

78 *Weekly Chronicle*, 6 July 1849.

79 Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188. The question of the legality of public processions, especially armed ones, would become a hotly debated topic in the House of Assembly after the riot, yet no restrictive legislation would emerge from the debate.

80 Testimonies of Thomas Paddock and Francis Jones, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 13 July 1849; Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188.

honour of representing King William by riding a white horse. The Orangemen came heavily armed with pistols, muskets and sabres. After assuming a military file, they began the march to the Portland suburb of Indiantown where they would meet the steamer bringing reinforcements from the northern counties. Their planned route would take them through both Irish Catholic bastions — York Point and Portland's wharf district.<sup>81</sup>

Upon reaching York Point they encountered a large pine arch, symbolically green, which spanned the foot of Mill Street. Several hundred jeering Irish Catholics clustered near the arch's supporting poles; they implored the Orangemen to continue. Outnumbered for the moment, the Orangemen accepted the humiliation and dipped their banners as they passed under the arch. While a few stones were hurled at the Orangemen, and they responded with warning shots, no fighting broke out.<sup>82</sup> Without further incident, the procession reached Indiantown where it gratefully welcomed scores of reinforcements. Among the newcomers was another pivotal Orange leader. George Anderson, a Presbyterian grocer and primary lodge master, was a veteran of several disturbances in his home town of Fredericton. Anderson, bedecked with a sword that indicated his rank, assumed a position next to Corum at the column's head. The procession now numbered approximately 600 people. The men were heavily armed, the majority carrying muskets on shoulder straps. A few clutched axes that would be used to destroy the green bough when they returned to York Point. Finally, a wagon filled with weapons and supplies took up a station at the rear of the procession. As the Orangemen made their way back to York Point, Portland inhabitants observed that the procession resembled a confident army about to engage in battle.<sup>83</sup>

In the meantime, authorities attempted to alleviate the growing tensions with three separate plans, all of which would ultimately fail to prevent a conflict. Mayor Wilmot's first scheme was to defuse the powder keg by removing the pine arch and dispersing the Catholic crowd in York Point. Wilmot, accompanied by a magistrate and a constable, was physically rebuffed in this endeavour by a cohesive, territorially-minded crowd that chanted "Stay off our ground!" He then dispatched Jacob Allan, the Portland police magistrate, to intercept the Orangemen before they reached York Point.<sup>84</sup> Allan asked Corum

81 *Morning News*, 13 July 1849; *New-Brunswicker* (Saint John), 14 July 1849; *New Brunswick Courier*, 14 July 1849; Testimonies of Francis Jones, George Noble, Jacob Allan, Charles Boyd, Squire Manks and George McKelvey, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188.

82 Testimonies of Josiah Wetmore, Jeremiah McCarthy, George Nobel and Jacob Allan, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188; *Sentinel*, 3 July 1930.

83 Testimonies of Jacob Allan, George Mason, Samuel Dalton, Samuel Gordon and Francis Jones, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188; *Weekly Chronicle*, 13 July 1849; *New Brunswicker*, 14 July 1849; *Sentinel*, 3 July 1930.

84 Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188; Testimonies of James Gilbert, Henry Gilbert, John Nixon.

and Anderson to bypass the Catholic district by using the longer Valley Road on their approach to Saint John. After conferring with their followers, the leaders rejected Allan's suggestion. Their men had suffered humiliation during the morning's passage under the Catholic arch; now they insisted on "Death or Victory".<sup>85</sup> Wilmot borrowed the third and final plan from Saint John's history of dealing with riots. At his request, 60 British soldiers stationed themselves in Market Square to prevent general rioting. While the choice of location would do nothing to prevent a conflict, for Market Square lay to the south of York Point and the Orangemen would enter from the north over the Portland Bridge, it would serve to contain the battle to the Catholic ghetto. The detachment's failure to position itself between the advancing Orangemen and the offensive arch, when it had ample time to do so, raised questions about the sincerity of the authorities' attempts to prevent bloodshed.<sup>86</sup>

General rioting broke out along Mill Street before the procession arrived at the bough. The Catholic crowd now numbered approximately 500, and like the Orangemen, many had armed themselves with muskets. Reports of who fired the first shots varied, but roofers working on a Mill Street building agreed that Orangemen opened fire after being met with a volley of stones and brickbats.<sup>87</sup> Several Catholics lay wounded or dying after the barrage, and then their guns answered the Orangemen's. A heated battle ensued. Men and women along Mill Street threw anything they could at the better-armed Orange contingent. Some engaged in fistfights with individuals that they were able to pull from the Orange ranks. Corum struggled to free himself after a handful of Irishmen grabbed his horse's tether. A dozen Catholics captured the wagon filled with arms and gave its driver a sound thrashing. Hundreds of shots were fired, and at least 12 combatants lost their lives. The Irish Catholics suffered most of the casualties. After several minutes of furious fighting, the Orangemen emerged from York Point. As they headed for the safety of the troops, their procession was still intact.<sup>88</sup>

The British garrison, after remaining stationary in Market Square throughout the heat of the battle, went into action as soon as the Orangemen left the Irish

John Fitzpatrick, Joseph Wetmore and James Clark, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records.

85 Testimonies of Jacob Allan, Francis Jones and Squire Manks, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188; *Sentinel*, 29 October 1891, 3 July 1930.

86 Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188; Jacob Allan testimony, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; *Morning News*, 13 July 1849; *Temperance Telegraph* (Saint John), 19 July 1849.

87 Testimonies of James McKenzie, William Smith, Francis Wilson and Francis Jones, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; *Temperance Telegraph*, 19 July 1849; *Weekly Chronicle*, 13 July 1849; *Morning News*, 13 July 1849.

88 Testimonies of Squire Manks, James McKenzie, William Smith, Francis Wilson and Jeremiah Smith, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; *Morning News*, 13 July 1849; *Christian Visitor*, 14 July 1849; *Weekly Chronicle*, 13 July 1849.

Catholic ghetto. Without firing a shot, the soldiers marched past the procession and positioned themselves on Dock Street to seal off the Catholic district. This manoeuvre effectively doused what remained of the conflict.<sup>89</sup> It also gave the Orangemen the opportunity to continue their procession unmolested, for any Catholics wishing to leave York Point in pursuit would have to contend first with the soldiers. The Orangemen, heady with their successful assault on the enemy's territory, proceeded through Market and King Squares and made a circle through the city's center. Only when they entered Market Square again, with the intention of parading through York Point for the third time, were the troops commanded to impede their progress. Being satisfied with their efforts, the Orangemen agreed to disband. With the Orange threat finally removed, the Irish Catholics waiting in York Point also dispersed. The great Saint John riot of 1849 was over.<sup>90</sup>

The riot's judicial aftermath followed patterns well-established by 1849, although there was one notable exception. At Lieutenant-Governor Edmund Head's insistence, the Saint John Grand Jury served warrants on Orange participants as well as the Catholics. This attempt at impartiality was severely undermined, however, by a prejudiced investigative team that included the prominent Orangeman W.H. Needham.<sup>91</sup> Ultimately, all but five of the bills against Orangemen, including those for Corum, Anderson and 18 others, were dropped before the defendants reached trial. The five Orangemen who actually stood in the dock were swiftly declared innocent by a jury that remained seated. Much to the prosecution's dismay, the jury ignored recent provincial legislation that clearly outlawed armed public processions.<sup>92</sup> For the Irish Catholics, on the other hand, the judicial pattern of the 1840s remained intact. Of the 24 implicated, six were tried on assault charges, one for attempted murder and four for unlawful assembly. Two were eventually found guilty, including the alleged "ringleader" who led the defence of the green arch. John Haggerty, immigrant laborer and father of three, would spend his sixty-third birthday in the provincial penitentiary while serving his one-year sentence for assault.<sup>93</sup>

89 Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188; Charles Boyd testimony, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; *Morning News*, 13 July 1849; *New-Brunswicker*, 14 July 1849; *Weekly Chronicle*, 13 July 1849.

90 Testimonies of Charles Boyd and Jacob Allan, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; *Morning News*, 13 July 1849; Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188.

91 Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188; *Morning News*, 23 July 1849; *New Brunswick Courier*, 21 July 1849.

92 William B. Kinnear to Head, extract, 6 September 1849, in Head to Grey, 7 September 1849, CO 188; Recognizances, July-September 1849, "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records; Documents, Saint John Justice Court, 1849, PANB; Inquests, 1849, New Brunswick Supreme Court Documents, PANB; 12 Victoria, c. 29, 1849, *New Brunswick Statutes*, 1849; *Morning News*, 30 July 1849; *New Brunswick Courier*, 21, 28 July 1849; *Temperance Telegraph*, 23 August 1849.

93 Documents, Saint John Justice Court, 1849; Kinnear to Head, extract, 6 September 1849, in

The 1849 riot signalled an end to collective social conflict between Orangemen and Catholics, although small skirmishes would continue for years.<sup>94</sup> Various factors brought about this extended truce, the most important being the hegemony established by Orangemen in Saint John and Portland. In a sense, Orangemen had won the battle of the 1840s. The Irish Catholics' attempts to check the growth of Orangeism with counter-demonstrations had failed. They undeniably suffered the most casualties in the course of the riots. Moreover, a fusion between all levels of authority and the Orange Order had taken place. Orangemen, constables and British soldiers had combined to contain every major disturbance within the Irish Catholic ghettos of York Point and Portland. The Orange Order became an acceptable accomplice for the maintenance of social control. A double standard had clearly emerged: authorities found Orange vigilantism preferable to "mob rule" by the Irish Catholic "lower orders".<sup>95</sup> During the 1840s Orangemen served as constables, magistrates and legislative representatives. Excepting one active magistrate in Saint John, the Irish Catholics were excluded from power. This inequity profoundly shaped law enforcement during the riots and trials. No Catholic would be allowed to sit on juries; moreover, only Irish Catholics would be found guilty of rioting offences. Even when Orangemen stood in the dock, such as after the York Point riot of 1849, they were expeditiously exonerated.<sup>96</sup> Ethnicity and religion targeted the Irish Catholics for suppression during the 1840s; meanwhile Orangeism developed into an unofficial arm of social control to protect the Protestant majority.

New Brunswick's improved economic environment after mid-century contributed to the demise of collective conflict by alleviating some of the fierce competition between immigrants and natives. The "Hungry Forties" had indeed been more than a historical cliché to many colonists. A sustained depression had brought scarcities of goods, food and services. Natives had competed with Irish Catholic immigrants for limited jobs, a factor that had contributed to the rapid growth of Orangeism. Economic variables alone did not cause the Orange-Green riots, but they certainly helped to account for a foundation of social tension.<sup>97</sup> As the province successfully weathered the English transition to free

Head to Grey, 7 September 1849, CO 188; John Haggerty petition to Head, September 1849, in Judicial Documents, Executive Council Records; *Weekly Chronicle*, 24 August 1849; *New Brunswick Courier*, 18, 25 August 1849.

94 *New Brunswick Courier*, 19 July 1851, 16, 23, 30 July, 6, 13 August 1853; *Weekly Chronicle*, 18 July 1851; *Morning News*, 15, 20 July 1853; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 15, 22 July 1853; *Freeman* (Saint John), 14 July 1855; McHarg Diary.

95 *Loyalist*, 30 March 1848; *New Brunswick Reporter*, 20 April 1850. Irish immigrants in the United States experienced a similar double standard: see Theodore M. Hammett, "Two Mobs of Jacksonian Boston: Ideology and Interest", *Journal of American History*, LXII (March 1976), pp. 866-7.

96 Documents, Saint John Justice Court, 1849; "Riots and Disasters", Executive Council Records.

97 W.W. Rostow explored the linkages between social unrest and economic downturns in *British*

trade in the 1850s, investment capital increased and jobs became more available.<sup>98</sup> Thus Orangemen found one of the key elements of their rhetorical campaign against Irish Catholics undermined. Ultimately, fuller employment fostered better relations between Protestant and Catholic workers.

Another factor in the disappearance of perennial disturbances between Protestants and Catholics was the Orange Order's discontinuance of July 12 processions while it fought for provincial incorporation. Saint John and Portland Orangemen wisely decided not to risk any negative publicity that might accompany collective violence with Irish Catholics while the bill was being debated in the New Brunswick legislature. The process lasted 25 years, but eventually the trade-off of abstention for legitimacy proved fruitful.<sup>99</sup> Not until after the bill finally passed in 1875, in the midst of the emotional separate schools issue, would Orangemen again take to Saint John's streets to display their fervent brand of loyalty and Protestantism.<sup>100</sup>

Finally, a drastic reduction in the number of Irish Catholic immigrants after 1848 helped to subdue the nativist impulse. The tide of famine immigrants had dropped as precipitously as it had risen. Improving conditions in Ireland accounted for a general reduction in emigrants, especially from the poorer Catholic counties. In addition a discriminatory immigration policy, instituted at the behest of Lieutenant-Governors Sir William Colebrooke and Sir Edmund Head, curtailed Catholic immigration while it increased the number of more desirable Protestant settlers from the British Isles.<sup>101</sup> The results were striking: between 1851 and 1861 the percentages of Irish compared to the total immigrant population dropped dramatically in both Saint John and Portland. This decrease also reflected the continuing out-migration of transient Catholics to the "Boston States" and to other British North American provinces.<sup>102</sup> Finally, it indicated the beginnings of a process of acculturation; the sons and daughters of Catholic and Protestant immigrants would be listed as New Brunswickers in the 1861 census. The "soldiers" of the 1840s — both Orange and Green — would be supplanted by generations to whom the violent experiences of the "Hungry Forties" would be historical anecdotes.

*Economy of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1948), pp. 123-5.

98 Wynn, *Timber Colony*, pp. 84-6, 166-7; MacNutt, *New Brunswick*, p. 329; James R. Rice, "A History of Organized Labour in Saint John, New Brunswick, 1813-1890", M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1968, pp. 33-4.

99 *Journal of the House of Assembly of New Brunswick*, 1850-1, 1853-4, 1857-60, 1867, 1872-5: 38 Victoria, c. 54, 1875, *Statutes of New Brunswick*, 1875.

100 Saint John's Orangemen sponsored a massive procession on the first Twelfth of July following the bill's assent. See *Freeman*, 13, 15, 18 July 1876; *Morning News*, 14, 17 July 1876.

101 Colebrooke to Grey, 30 July 1847, Head to Grey, 15 July 1849, CO 188; Colebrooke Correspondence, 1847, Head Correspondence, 1849, PANB.

102 New Brunswick Census, 1851, 1861; Immigration Returns, New Brunswick Blue Books, 1850-5, PAC; "Report on Trade and Navigation", in *Journal of the House of Assembly of New Brunswick*, 1866.



The Orange Order was New Brunswick's institutionalized nativist response to Irish Catholic immigration during the 1840s. Prior to this decade, the organization was a small and mostly invisible fraternal order dominated by Irish Protestant immigrants and British garrison troops. As Irish Catholic famine victims poured into Saint John and Portland during the 1840s, however, Protestant natives and non-Irish-born immigrants joined the Orange Order. Orangemen spearheaded a rhetorical campaign to combat the famine immigration, using anti-Catholic and racist propaganda to discourage the Irish from settling permanently in the city. Additionally, the Orange Order increasingly acted as a paramilitary vigilante group that freely engaged in riots with bellicose Irish Catholics. The combination of nativist rhetoric and a mutual willingness to engage in armed conflict provided a decade of collective social violence that culminated in the tragic riot of 12 July 1849. Thus Saint John and Portland, like several eastern seaboard cities in the United States, experienced a strong nativist impulse and several destructive episodes of social violence.