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Boxing in the Union Blue: A Social History of American Boxing in the Union States During the Late Antebellum and Civil War Years

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Kinesiology

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BOXING IN THE UNION BLUE: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF AMERICAN BOXING
IN THE UNION STATES DURING THE LATE ANTEBELLUM AND CIVIL WAR
YEARS

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Greggory Ross

Graduate Program in Kinesiology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS

This study explores the social history of boxing in the Civil War era Union States in both the martial and civilian contexts, focusing on issues of masculinity, ethnicity, race, and class. This dissertation is divided into four sections, each emphasizing a different boxing scene. First, boxing in is explained in the context of the Union Army, drawing upon accounts of military life from diaries, letters, official army correspondence, and newspapers to examine how soldiers used: gloved sparring for physical and mental exercise and camaraderie; bare-knuckle prizefighting for dispute resolution, entertainment, and gambling; and both forms of boxing to exhibit masculine prowess. This section also discusses the various roles of prize fighters in the Union Army. The dissertation then focuses on Civil War era civilian boxing, beginning with an analysis of pugilism in New York State, illustrating the importance of sparring and prizefighting for Irish, English, and white native-born American working-class masculinity in Brooklyn and Manhattan; the marginalization of black boxers throughout the State; sparring as a component of middle-class 'rational recreation' routines and wartime distraction; and, the suppression of boxing in those portions of New York most impacted by the Second Great Awakening. Section three follows a similar line of inquiry to section two, but uses a broader geographical scope to assess the social significance of boxing in the broader northeastern region, examining the similarities and differences evident between boxing scenes in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts; and, rural New Jersey. Lastly, boxing practices in the Midwestern and Western regions of the Union States are discussed, including analyses of boxing in Midwestern boomtowns; Border States; predominantly German-American settings; western Mexican-American contexts; and the western mining frontier. After examining boxing in such varied contexts, this dissertation argues against a 'national' understanding of boxing in favor of more culturally sensitive regional and local explanations of pugilistic activities, consistent with the existing historiography of the Northeastern, Midwestern, and Western United States.

KEYWORDS: Boxing History; Civil War History; Civil War Soldiers and Sport; Sports on the Union Home Front; American History; Boxing in Local and Regional Contexts; Masculinity and Boxing; Race and Boxing; Ethnicity and Boxing.

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GLOSSARY

Rules of the London Prize Ring – First used in 1838. Based on Jack Broughton's 1743 rules. Some of the regulations stipulated in the "The Rules of the London Prize Ring" included: all bouts must be fought on turf; No biting, kicking, blows below the belt, or gouging; a round ends when a combatant is knocked from his feet; each fighter shall have a second and bottle holder; the seconds or backers of each fighter each select an umpire; the umpires select a referee. Wrestling tactics, as well as punching, were permitted.

Round – A round, according to the Rules of the London Prize Ring, ended when one or both of the fighters were knocked off their feet.

Scratch – A mark in the centre of the ring. To continue fighting, a pugilist had to reach the scratch of his own volition to begin each round. Failure to "toe the scratch" at the beginning of a round resulted in defeat.

Second – Nineteenth century parlance for a cornerman. A second typically tended to a fighter's wounds with a sponge and provided advice between rounds. He could also "throw up the sponge" to stop the contest.

Turf – Most prizefights were contested outdoors in rural fields. Thus, when someone scored a knockdown, the recipient hit the turf.

1

Entering the Ring

On April 17, 1860, in Farnborough, England, John C. Heenan and Tom Sayers stood facing each other in a field. The men were surrounded by a throng of excited, bustling onlookers. Dressed in a heavy grey suit, Heenan approached Sayers, offered a congenial hand and asked in an American accent: “How do you do Tom – how do you find yourself this morning?” Sayers, an Englishman, unmistakable in his plaid suit, returned the pleasantry: “very well, thank you, how do you find yourself?” The two seemed like old friends, reunited. “I feel very well, indeed. We have got a fine morning for it,” responded the American. Sayers agreed, “Yes, if a man can’t fight [on] such a day as this, he can’t at all.” It was a beautiful, sunny day; excellent weather for a prizefight. Considered the first contest for the championship of the world, the impending Heenan-Sayers bout sparked unprecedented interest on both sides of the Atlantic. After an orderly start to the affair, the Heenan-Sayers bout plunged into chaos, with men struggling to cut the ropes, pull down the posts, and trip the American. Before matters could be settled with finality, Sayers was whisked from the ring, leaving Heenan to fend off a predominantly English crowd. Despite the unfortunate erosion of order at ringside, the *New York Clipper* sang the fight’s praises: “A bolder, more determined, or more artistic battle, the records of the Prize Ring throughout the world cannot produce.”¹

John C. Heenan, also known as “The Benicia Boy,” received hero’s welcome upon his return to America. Capitalizing on his immense popularity, Heenan travelled the country, performing in sparring exhibitions at jam-packed halls and saloons throughout

the nation – while it lasted. By 1860, sectional tensions between North and South appeared irreparable. On April 12, 1861, the nation violently fractured when Confederate forces opened fire on Federal troops stationed at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. The fort fell to the Confederacy on April 13, throwing the country into Civil War. Eager to squelch the Southern insurrection, President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to serve in his Union Army. Northern men of all walks of life enthusiastically answered Lincoln's call, quickly filling the ranks of the Union Army, carrying their respective life experiences into their military service. Upon hearing news of the conflict, boxer John C. Heenan hurried back to the North from New Orleans, abandoning a saloon venture to avoid service in the Confederate Army, ultimately relocating to England.² While the experiences of Heenan are well documented by scholars, the experiences of his contemporary, Civil War era, American boxers remain in the historiographic shadows. While Heenan pursued fights in England, boxers in America adapted to the various wartime realities facing their respective communities. This dissertation aims to explain the relationship between boxing – both bareknuckle prizefighting and gloved sparring – and the American Civil War, in both martial and civilian contexts, by exploring the social implications of the sport for those fighting for the Union Army and living in the Union States.

My Hat in the Contest: Purpose and Chapter Outline

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide an extensive, thoroughly-researched social history of boxing during the American Civil War, encompassing the pugilistic experiences of both soldiers and civilians. In broad terms, the purpose of this

study is to examine the Civil War's impact on boxing in America. Due to the social and cultural complexities of both the Confederate and Union States, my analysis focuses on only the latter, exploring gloved sparring and bareknuckle prizefighting in the context of soldier life in the Union Army and civilian social realities in the Northeastern, Midwestern, and Western regions of the Union States. For the purposes of this study, the Northeastern region encompasses states from New Jersey and Pennsylvania in the South, to Maine, Vermont, and New York in the North, extending westward to the border of Pennsylvania and Ohio. The Midwest includes Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri, Minnesota, and Iowa. Lastly, the western region consists of California, Kansas, and Oregon, and the territories of Washington, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, and Utah. To illustrate the nuances evident in Civil War era boxing, this will place the histories of sparring and prizefighting in each region within the broader social histories of the Northeast, Midwest, and West, highlighting the similarities and differences evident between various fight scenes.

In chapter two, I focus on sparring and prizefighting in the context of the Union Army. This portion of the dissertation has two main objectives. First of all, I explore the role of gloved sparring in the day-to-day lives of Union soldiers, examining the sport's various meanings in the Army, highlighting the importance of sparring for settling scores; spectator sport; individual displays of prowess; and personal health. The uses and abuses of bareknuckle prizefighting, a less common form of boxing in the Union Army, are then laid out to explain the presence and absence of the bare-fisted sport in a number of Army settings, focusing on the sport's value for defusing camp-based

disputes; facilitating gambling; and, distracting war-weary soldiers. Secondly, this chapter examines the role of antebellum prizefighters – particularly Billy Wilson, Harry Lazarus, Michael Trainor, and Denis Horrigan – in the Union military, using newspaper reports and government documents to assess their abilities as soldiers and leaders. Although a small number of pugilists did indeed serve in the Union Army, most prizefighters avoided military service in a number of ways, including substitution and commutation, as well as medical-disability and alien-status claims.

In chapter three, I shift my attention away from Union soldiers, towards the civilian experiences of boxers in wartime New York State. Boasting more boxers than any other Union State, the history of sparring and prizefighting in New York is treated separately from the rest of the Northeastern region (discussed in chapter three), allowing for a thorough discussion of boxing across the State's culturally diverse landscape. The chapter begins in antebellum New York City and Buffalo, placing the roots of Civil War era New York State prizefighting and sparring in the context of interrelated social issues including: nativist politics; electioneering; temperance; Irish and German immigration; inter- and intra-class tensions; working-class spectator sport; and middle-class rational recreation. After establishing the antebellum roots of Manhattan's Civil War era boxing scene, chapter three shifts focus to wartime New York City, exploring the war's impact on local sparring and prizefighting. With reports of Union defeats rolling off the press and mounting casualties weighing heavily on civilian minds, I argue prizefighting and sparring became important components of wartime life, providing much needed distraction from the lingering conflict. Sparring benefits and

exhibitions, largely confined to dodgy saloons and dilapidated halls during the earliest days of the war, became mainstream fare later in the Civil War, with middle- and working-class urbanites mingling at sparring shows staged at the upscale City Assembly Rooms and Stuyvesant Institute. Although prizefighting in the environs of New York City remained taboo, mobilization consumed the time and manpower of the Metropolitan Police, making New York City and its environs increasingly ambivalent towards prizefighting infractions. As the war progressed, I argue, the mentally exhausted Manhattan populace proved particularly receptive to prizefighting, producing and supporting a new heavyweight champion named Joe Coburn. Comparatively unrepresented in the historiography of heavyweight champions, Coburn proved as attractive a champion as his more famous predecessor John C. Heenan, despite a string of highly public run-ins with the law. Although New York City was the Camelot of Civil War era boxing, boasting more 'Knights of Fist' than any other city in the Union, other Empire State communities also boasted boxers. To illustrate the diversity of boxing experiences in wartime New York State, chapter three closes with discussions of pugilism in Brooklyn – a boxing scene intimately tied to, and socially similar, to Manhattan – and Rochester – an hotbed of evangelical Christianity, in the throes of its own nativist unrest following an influx of Irish and German immigrants.

In chapter four, I move beyond the confines of New York State, focusing on prizefighting and sparring in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. The chapter begins with an analysis of prizefighting and sparring in New Jersey, highlighting the State's value as a fighting grounds for pugilists from New York State, seeking isolated

wilderness following the implementation of the Metropolitan Police force in New York City, Brooklyn, Westchester County, and Staten Island. Facing increased opposition in New Jersey, prizefighters later turned their attention to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A city with a rich antebellum boxing history, authorities in Civil War era Philadelphia proved remarkably tolerant of prizefighting, permitting fighters and followers to organize bouts in the city, before boarding trains or steamboats for more rural fighting grounds on the city's periphery. The Civil War, I argue, facilitated this lackadaisical approach to prosecuting prizefighters, drawing the attention of police and politicians towards issues of mobilization and protest, and away to less pressing concerns like prizefighting. In Worcester and Boston, Massachusetts, a very different state of affairs prevailed. Continuing a tradition of suppression and imprisonment initiated in the antebellum years, the Massachusetts authorities eliminated all but the most covert of prizefights during the Civil War era. The fervent suppression of prizefighting, I argue, can be attributed, in part, to the spread and popularization of nativism during the 1850s, including the election of nativist politicians, producing social policies meant to curtail Irish culture, including sporting pursuits like prizefighting. Although prizefighting was rare in both Boston and Worcester, both cities boasted bustling sparring scenes. Unlike in New York, African Americans played a prominent role in Massachusetts sparring circles, benefiting from greater racial tolerance rooted in a long-standing abolitionist tradition, fueled by men like Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison.

The fifth chapter of this study focuses on boxing in the Midwestern and Western regions of the Union, illustrating the enormous diversity of Civil War era boxing

experiences from coast to coast. The busiest antebellum fight scene west of Pennsylvania was St. Louis, Missouri. Unlike its Northeastern counterparts, Missouri was a Border State, neither seceding from the Union, nor abolishing slavery, producing very different obstacles to prizefighting and sparring. The most significant of these wartime obstacles, I argue, was martial law. With large populations of both pro- and anti-Confederate citizens, St. Louis proved a particularly tumultuous city during the Civil War. Although neither prizefighting nor sparring were considered particularly objectionable activities in Missouri, large gatherings and heavy public drinking were targeted by martial law, preventing both forms of boxing from flourishing during wartime. From St. Louis, I turn my attention to Chicago and Cleveland, illustrating the practical and ideological obstacles hindering boxing in each city. Further west, in California and the Colorado, Nevada, and Montana Territories, prizefighting occurred with considerably less opposition from police. Constrained by the restrictive policies of their own local officials, many northeastern pugilists travelled west during the Civil War, attracted by reports of successful prizefights in local newspapers. More often than not, however, the freedom to prizefight came at the cost of law and order, resulting in brutal brawls and gruesome, sometimes fatal, shootings. After witnessing the dangers of the west first hand, I argue many northeastern prizefighters promptly returned from whence they came, preferring the cold jail cells of the northeast to the unpredictable affrays of the west.

Sources and Methods

The main sources for this study are electronic newspaper databases, including *Chronicling America*, *America's Historical Newspapers*, *African American Newspapers*, *American Popular Entertainment*, and *Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers*. Sport-centric publications, including the *New York Clipper*, *National Police Gazette*, and *Spirit of the Times*, were particularly useful for this study, covering sparring and prizefighting with far greater detail than their mainstream counterparts. In the mainstream press, the *New York Herald*, *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, and *Daily Rocky Mountain News* were particularly helpful publications, providing detailed, local coverage of contests. When searching the digital newspaper databases noted above, the following terms were used: boxing, boxer, prizefight, prizefighting, prizefighter, glove fight, manly art, and sparring. The names of boxers returned in these initial searches were also entered into the databases' search engines, producing additional information. The results of these searches were then entered into an excel spreadsheet and organized. The occupation, sex, ethnicity, weight, age, and residence of the fighters were recorded (when possible), as were the date and location of fights, purses (if applicable), venues and rules/styles. This allowed for easy sorting of information, ultimately permitting educated generalizations regarding the popularity of prizefighting in different locales (i.e. rural versus urban); social background of fighters; preferred rules; ethnicity of fighters in general and by region; sex of fighters and responses to female boxers; and age of participants. Descriptions of spectators found via these newspaper searches permitted conclusions regarding the social composition of boxing crowds, in terms of race, gender,

and class. Articles published by critics of the prize ring were also recorded, providing insight into the moral objections issued by various groups, eager to direct their fellow citizens away from pugilism.

Portions of this dissertation focused on the camp life of Union soldiers, published personal recollections were particularly important when explaining the place of sparring and prizefighting within the military sporting culture. Such documents proved numerous, with the Weldon library containing no fewer than 467 examples of Civil War soldiers' diaries and letters. Many of these sources made no specific reference to boxing, but the small portion that did discuss the frequency and purpose of pugilism in Union camp life proved invaluable resources for this study. Michael Eagan's reflections in *The Flying, Gray-haired Yank: or, The Adventures of a Volunteer; A True Narrative of the Civil War*, for example, portray sparring with gloves as a source of company pride, physical exercise, and masculine competition, all wrapped up in one.³ To learn more about various soldiers and boxers, ancestry.com's databases, including the United States Federal Censuses, Civil War soldier enlistment and draft lists, and various local directories, provided helpful supplemental information. Lastly, the official collected Union Army correspondence in *The War of the Rebellion* provided important information for my analysis of prizefighters serving in the Union Army, providing details about their movements and behavior.⁴

I approach Civil War era boxing from the perspective of social history, as described by Alice Kessler-Harris. "The best social history," explains Kessler-Harris, "attempts to integrate new research in institutional structures with consciousness and

ideology in a way that creates understanding of broader political process and of the tensions that ultimately yield changes.”⁵ For the purposes of this dissertation, the socially constructed concepts of class, masculinity, and race, and the tensions surrounding each, guide my interpretation of boxing in the Civil War era North. Throughout this study, terms like ‘middle class’ and ‘working class’ are used often enough to warrant a discussion of what ‘class’ means in this analysis. This study will employ ‘class’ as defined by historian E.P. Thompson. According to Thompson, class is a “historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness.” Like Thompson, I do not consider class as a concrete ‘thing,’ but rather “something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened), in human relationships.”⁶ The relationships that constitute class are constantly in flux, being negotiated and renegotiated, between all levels of the social hierarchy. In nineteenth century America, other socially constructed concepts – like race, gender, and ethnicity – were interpreted within these class relationships, producing multiple, often divergent, understandings of society at different positions in the class relationship. According to Raymond Williams, these class-forming relationships influence cultural production, including the production of play, leisure and sporting practices.⁷ This dissertation is interested in several broad class-related questions. How did middle- and working-class men and women view boxing during the Civil War? Did middle-class Americans ever venture into working-class sporting subcultures? What class did spectators at sparring and prizefighting events hail from? Who funded major boxing events?

In this study 'race' refers to the socially constructed categories of humanity, placing individuals into groups based on appearance, particularly skin color. The most glaring example of this in American history is 'black' and 'white' racial classifications, used to distinguish between individuals of African ancestry and 'white' Americans. In the American context, the 'white' construction of negative, racial stereotypes towards their 'black' counterparts served to maintain their socially and culturally dominant position in society over citizens they perceived as inferior. Although the socially constructed division between 'black' and 'white' Americans receives arguably the most prominent attention in both scholarly and popular treatments of nineteenth century history, other divisions were also evident. Large influxes of immigrants from Europe – particular Ireland and Germany – led to the social classification of Americans as 'natives' (born in America) and 'immigrants' (born elsewhere) by native-born Americans. How these racial and ethnic tensions were strained or alleviated by boxing and how race factored into issues of class and gender within the boxing fraternity, is of particular interest for this study.

For the purposes of this study, 'masculinity' simply refers to the socially constructed norms of behaving like a man. This study will be informed by the work of Anthony Rotundo, Kevin Wamsley and Robert Kossuth, R.W. Connell, and Michael Messner, but no specific theoretical framework – like 'hegemonic masculinity' – will be employed.⁸ This study will focus on how men and women perceived their gender, in relation to race, ethnicity, and class, and how these perceptions influenced their relationship with boxing. For example, the upper class generally found bareknuckle

prizefighting revolting, but sparring in gymnasiums was deemed acceptable. Working-class Americans participated in both prizefighting and sparring, while middle-class individuals typically only partook in the latter. Why did boxing practices vary throughout the social hierarchy, and to what extent were these practices rooted in socially constructed understandings of gender, race, and class.

The layout of this dissertation, organizing chapters based on geographical regions rather than chronological sequence or overarching topics, is intended to illustrate the plurality of boxing experiences across the Union States and Territories, in very different social and cultural environs. In the northeast, for example, a growing abolitionist movement struggled against the injustices of slavery, exhibiting considerably more tolerance towards African Americans than their counterparts in Missouri, where slavery remained legal until 1865. The forces of industrialization were also not felt equally across the nation. Although some mechanization was occurring in major Northeastern cities and industrial townships, industry had a far less dramatic impact on work in the west, where mining was king. In short, to understand mid-nineteenth century America, one must understand the social and cultural disparities evident between regions and, to a lesser extent, between various cities, towns, and villages. There was no single 'American' experience, but rather a broad network of interconnected local and regional identities, connected through mid-century improvements in communication and transportation, constituting a diverse array of Union experiences.

The Long Road to Civil War: Sectionalism, Slavery, and the Collapse of a Nation

Although many histories of the American Civil War (1861-1865) are currently in circulation, this dissertation relies primarily on five broad surveys of the era. First and foremost, James M. McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* – arguably the best single volume history of the conflict – provides much of the social, political, and cultural foundation for this study.⁹ For the purposes of this dissertation, McPherson's work is complemented by William L. Barney's much shorter *Battleground for the Union: The Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction, 1848-1877* and Alan Nevins's mammoth, eight volume *tour de force* entitled *Ordeal of the Union*.¹⁰ Although McPherson and Nevins provide ample discussions of military matters, the work of celebrated popular historians Bruce Catton and Shelby Foote proved invaluable for their descriptions and interpretations of martial matters.¹¹ Although the broad survey-style histories of McPherson, Barney, Nevins, Foote, and Catton represent the scholarly infrastructure of this study, more specific, thematic works concerning slavery, western expansion ("Manifest Destiny"), sectionalism, home-front experiences, and the lives of soldiers are also critical components of this study. Following the box office success of Steven Spielberg's 2012 film *Lincoln*, in which Daniel Day-Lewis plays the role of the ill-fated American president, the American Civil War is now, perhaps more than ever, tied to the coming of the Lincoln administration. The roots of the Civil War, however, stretch back

to early nineteenth century debates over slavery, state constitutions, and territorial rights.

Following the American annexation of Texas, California, Utah, and New Mexico during the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), debates over the status of slavery in the former Mexican territories proved a point of sectional contention. From the outset, the Mexican-American War was about the acquisition of territory, beginning with military confrontations between the American and Mexican armies over the Republic of Texas. As Michael A. Morrison demonstrates in his *Slavery and the American West*, President James J. Polk – like many of his contemporaries – believed the conquest of western territory was the American peoples’ “Manifest Destiny.”¹² For Polk, the annexation of Texas, and subsequent war with Mexico, was merely part one of a broader scheme of westward expansion and colonization. What began as a conflict over Texas, quickly spiraled into a war for California and New Mexico.¹³ Polk, however, wished to obtain Mexican territory with as little bloodshed as possible. After a little more than two months of war, Polk requested two million dollars from Congress via the Army Appropriations Bill to finance negotiations with Mexico regarding the end of the war and American annexation of Texas, California, and New Mexico. What followed was, to quote historian Roger L. Ransom, “the great issue of the next fifteen years: was slavery to be allowed to extend to *new* regions as they became part of the United States?”¹⁴ Indeed, many Northerners considered the Mexican-American War a thinly-veiled means of extending slavery to new lands, leading Pennsylvania Congressman David Wilmot to officially seek a ban on slavery in former-Mexican territories via his Wilmot Proviso to

the Army Appropriation Bill.¹⁵ As David M. Potter explains in *The Impending Crisis*, the Wilmot Proviso sparked an ominous reaction in the House of Representatives, with congressmen abandoning party loyalties to vote along sectional lines. Ultimately, northern congressmen defeated their southern counterparts 85-80, sending the Army Appropriation Bill, along with the Proviso, to the Senate for approval.¹⁶ Although Congress adjourned before Senate could vote for or against the Proviso, Preston King of New York reintroduced the matter in 1847, successfully sending the Proviso for Senate approval for a second time, with a clause to prevent slavery in all territories acquired by America in the future. Controlled by Southerners, the Senate shot down the Proviso, sending the Army Appropriations Bill back to the House, where enough Northern Democrats were convinced to vote along party lines to secure the bill's approval, minus the Proviso.¹⁷

The Wilmot Proviso, although eventually defeated, laid bare the schisms in American society, foreshadowing future sectional conflicts and ultimately Civil War. In 1848 a group of anti-slavery men from both the Whig and Democratic parties joined together forming the Free Soil Party. Led largely by Salmon P. Chase, the Free Soil Party made the "constitutional-historical argument that the founders had intended to make slavery a local institution, and that the federal government was barred by the Fifth Amendment from creating the condition of bondage anywhere in its jurisdiction."¹⁸ According to Free-Soilers, federal jurisdiction over the territories meant slavery could not be legally implemented in those lands.¹⁹ Although, on the surface, free soilers appeared to be protecting African-American rights in the territories, they were

motivated more by white economic concerns, than by racial equality. “Few free-soilers believed in racial equality; many believed in the Negro’s inferiority,” argued James A. Rawley in his book *Race and Politics*, and “keeping the territories free for white men was the only antislavery stand northern voters might be expected to support.”²⁰ By preventing slavery in the territories, free soilers hoped that free-white wages could be protected from slave-based competition, opening new opportunities for white laborers in the west.²¹

By the close of the 1840s, the legality of slavery in the new western territories remained unresolved. At the dawn of the following decade, however, Whig Senator Henry Clay attempted to placate all involved – north and south – via omnibus legislation dubbed the Compromise of 1850. Orchestrated primarily by Clay and Democratic Senator Stephen Douglas, the Compromise of 1850 admitted California as a Free State and entered the Utah and New Mexico Territories into the nation via “popular sovereignty,” permitting a vote on slavery following the attainment of Statehood.²² Whatever small victory the North could take from a free California and popular sovereignty in Utah and New Mexico was undermined by the Compromise’s bolstered version of the Fugitive Slave Act. Although northern politicians tried mightily to secure trial by jury, *habeas corpus*, and the right to testify for African Americans detained as fugitive slaves, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 provided little recourse for those caught in its net.²³ As McPherson concludes, “the fugitive slave law of 1850 put the burden of proof on captured blacks but gave them no legal power to prove their freedom.”²⁴ Rather than trial by jury, all cases involving suspected run-away slaves were heard by a

Federal commissioner who received twice as much pay for finding a man or women guilty as a fugitive, as for finding them innocent.²⁵

The Compromise of 1850 temporarily postponed Southern secession, but could not extinguish sectionalism entirely. Despite the revised Fugitive Slave Act, for example, many Southern slave-holders believed Northerners intentionally permitted run-away slaves to escape – which was largely true – making the 1850 law an “empty victory.”²⁶ Most northern resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act was non-violent, with a few high profile exceptions.²⁷ On September 11, 1851, in Christiana, Pennsylvania, a crowd of African Americans protected two fugitive slaves from recapture by a slave-owner, resulting in the death of the latter.²⁸ A similar, but non-fatal, event occurred the following month in Syracuse, New York, after William “Jerry” Henry was detained as a suspected fugitive slave. Henry’s arrest coincided with a meeting of the antislavery Liberty Party in Syracuse, a large number of whom broke into the city jail, freeing Henry from imprisonment. Affectionately dubbed the “Jerry Rescue” by participants, only one of the many abolitionists involved in freeing William Henry was prosecuted via the Fugitive Slave Act.²⁹ Although many Southerners already doubted the effectiveness of the Fugitive Slave Act, events like the Christiana Riot and “Jerry Rescue” reinforced Southern skepticism, further straining sectional tensions.

American sectionalism reached its boiling point during the mid-1850s, very nearly spilling over into outright Civil War. In 1854, the status of slavery in the territories sparked fierce political debate regarding the remaining unorganized segments of the Louisiana Purchase.³⁰ Stephen Douglas was once again in the thick of the political

process, eagerly seeking a railway from Chicago (where he owned substantial real estate), through the Louisiana Purchase, to the Pacific Coast. In order to complete such a project, however, territories needed to be organized.³¹ The Missouri Compromise of 1820 – restricting slavery to lands below 36°30' – limited Douglas' ability to enlist Southern supporters, ultimately preventing the senator from drumming up the votes necessary to organize a Nebraska Territory.³² In order to win Southern support for the formation of a new territory, Douglas used the notion of "popular sovereignty" outlined in the Compromise of 1850 to trump the Missouri Compromise, successfully arguing that the former expunged the latter as the nation's policy towards slavery in the territories, forming a conclusive accord between Free- and Slave-holding States.³³ In the end, two territories were created via Douglas' efforts in 1854: Kansas and Nebraska.

Conflict between antislavery and proslavery factions of Kansas society grimly foreshadowed the Civil War. During Kansas Territory's early existence, settlers arrived from both the proslavery and antislavery camps, vying for an advantage in the contest of popular sovereignty.³⁴ Proslavery settlers, however, enjoyed a noticeable advantage due to Kansas' close proximity to the slave state of Missouri. Indeed, when Kansas' first Territorial Governor, Andrew Reeder, organized an election to select a delegate to Congress, Missouri Senator David R. Atchison ensured several thousand men from his State were on hand to intimidate their antislavery counterparts, register fraudulent votes, and secure the election of a proslavery delegate.³⁵ A similar scene tainted the election of the territorial legislature in 1855, resulting in a thoroughly proslavery government in Kansas. Swept into power via a despicable act of electioneering,

proslavery Kansans set up shop in Lecompton, passing a series of laws protecting slavery within the territory.³⁶ Outraged by the rigged election, Kansas' northern, Free State residents formed their own government in Topeka later in 1855, setting off sporadic fighting between the two governments.³⁷ The violence between the pro- and anti-slavery factions of Kansas Territory quickly escalated. On May 22, Congressman Preston Brooks used his metal-handled cane to beat Senator Charles Sumner unconscious in the Senate Chambers, punishing the latter for speaking out against the prospect of slavery in Kansas.³⁸ Things took a far more gruesome turn two days later when abolitionist John Brown and his followers killed five men in Potawatomie. "The murders were ghastly," explains historian William L. Barney, "the victims were dragged from their beds in the middle of the night, and their heads were split open by broadswords."³⁹

Factional violence continued in Kansas for much of 1850s as anti- and pro-slavery settlers vied for supremacy. In 1857, antislavery groups were handed a crushing defeat when Dred Scott, an African-American slave, lost his battle for freedom with the Supreme Court. Although Scott was taken into the 'free' lands of Illinois and Wisconsin Territory by his master, above the boundaries of slavery stipulated by the Missouri Compromise, the Supreme Court ruled against Scott, denying him his freedom. Eager to settle the status of slavery in the territories once and for all, President-elect James Buchanan interfered with the Court's decision, convincing northern judge Robert Grier to side with his southern counterparts against Scott, to "avoid the charge of sectional bias."⁴⁰ In the end, the Supreme Court declared the Missouri Compromise void, concluding that Congress could not prevent slavery in the territories, reinforcing the

dictum of popular sovereignty.⁴¹ Furthermore, the Court ruled that Scott, as an African American, “was not a citizen of the United States and hence had no legal right to bring his suit [to the courts] in the first place.”⁴² Rather than settling the territorial slavery issue, the Dred Scott case merely emboldened the antislavery elements of the North. With Southern Democrats dominating his party and free soil Kansans generating momentum, Buchanan – now President – hurriedly made arrangements for Kansas to be admitted into the Union as a Slave State.⁴³ Buchanan’s efforts, however, were thwarted by a number of Northern Democrats, prompting another vote on slavery in Kansas, which eventually entered the Union as a Free State in 1861.⁴⁴

While James Buchanan focused on Kansas Territory, John Brown turned his attention to Virginia. Intending to incite a slave revolt, Brown led a raid on Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, on October 16, 1859, momentarily seizing the well-stocked federal armory located in the town. According to Brown’s biographer Robert E. McGlone, “Brown hoped to achieve notoriety by capturing a vital federal facility, attracting restive slaves, rounding-up prominent hostages, and lecturing those gentlemen on the evils of slavery before releasing them to bear witness to his purpose.”⁴⁵ Brown’s efforts, however, ended in vain when he and his men were defeated by Colonel Robert E. Lee, resulting in his death by hanging on December 2. “Brown’s raid at Harper’s Ferry,” explains McPherson, “was an ominous beginning to the fateful twelve months that culminated in the presidential election of 1860.”⁴⁶

Founded in 1854, the Republican Party won the 1860 federal election by dominating the Northern polls, successfully installing Abraham Lincoln as the sixteenth

President of the United States of America. Well known for opposing the spread of slavery to the American territories in his famed debates with Democrat Stephen Douglas, Lincoln offended many slave owners to their core, leaving ten Southern states without a Republican candidate.⁴⁷ With the Democrats failing to field a united front, essentially running John C. Breckenridge in the South and Stephen Douglas in the North, and John Bell throwing his hat in the presidential ring for the Constitutional Union Party, the Republicans faced a fragmented foe, winning the 1860 election.⁴⁸ Shortly thereafter, on December 20, 1860, South Carolina became the first State to secede from the Union, followed by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas by February 1861. After Lincoln's inauguration in March, 1861, four more Southern States seceded, including Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Tennessee. After much posturing, North and South came to blows on April 12, 1861, with open warfare commencing following the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina.

The Historiography of Sport During the Antebellum and Civil War Years

The roots of Civil War era sporting activities, whether civilian and martial, are inextricably linked to social tensions evident during the antebellum years. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, immigration, inter- and intra-class conflict, racial and ethnic discrimination, industrialization, and urbanization, amongst other factors, shaped the ways in which Americans played. Although numerous studies traverse these topics, a selection of prominent books and articles primarily inform this study. Betty Spears and Richard A. Swanson's 1978 book *History of Sport and Physical Activity in the United States*, teases out the relationships between sport and social changes like ethnicity,

gender, race, industrialization, and urbanization in antebellum American, providing an important foundation for future social histories of sport.⁴⁹ Originally published in 1983, Benjamin G. Rader's *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sport* – routinely updated through 1980s and 1990s – is one of the better surveys of American sport history, providing a thorough discussion of antebellum sport. The most recent survey-style history used in this dissertation is Elliott Gorn and Warren Goldstein's 1993 book *A Brief History of American Sports*. Firmly rooted in the existing literature on race, class, and gender, Gorn and Goldstein's book walks the reader through the social history of antebellum sport with unrivaled clarity, providing much of the background for this study.

Several important studies of individual American cities also provide excellent discussions of antebellum sport. Melvin Adelman's *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-1870* explains the development of horseracing, baseball, boxing, rowing, and other antebellum sports via modernization theory. Although I put less stock in modernization as a driving force behind the proliferation of urban sports than does Adelman, his study is nonetheless an insightful, robust treatment of sport in America's largest antebellum city, making *A Sporting Time* indispensable to this dissertation.⁵⁰ I consider my own work more compatible with Stephen Hardy's *How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation, And Community, 1865-1915*. To explain the increased prevalence of sport in Bostonian lives, Hardy constructs an analysis based on changing social trends, tying sports to the historiographies of religion, class, and urbanization.⁵¹ Gerald Gems' work in *Windy City Wars: Labor, Leisure, and the*

Making of Chicago approaches sport history in a manner similar to Hardy, providing the foundation for this study's treatment of sport in the American Midwest.⁵² Although a monograph regarding the history of sports in the antebellum American west has yet to be written, several essays proved helpful for this dissertation, particularly studies by Roberta J. Park and Gary F. Kurutz, respectively, on Californian sport history.⁵³ Last but not least, Dale A. Somers' *The Rise of Sports in New Orleans, 1850-1900* provides an important analysis of antebellum sport in Louisiana, illustrating the Mississippi River's value for transporting athletes and sporting traditions between New Orleans and the North.⁵⁴

Treatments of specific sports, particularly baseball, also proved valuable resources for this dissertation. By the close of the 1850s, native-born American men were increasingly turning to baseball in their spare time. Although the game of cricket, imported from England, remained popular in the decade prior to Civil War, baseball was already being hailed as America's game of choice. As George B. Kirsch explains in his book *The Creation of American Team Sports: Baseball and Cricket, 1838-1872*, "by 1860 the players and promoters of Philadelphia townball and the Massachusetts and New York varieties of baseball had succeeded in spreading the gospel of their games across most of the United States. All of the New York City sporting weeklies regularly proclaimed baseball to be the 'national game of ball.'"⁵⁵ Benjamin G. Rader largely concurs with Kirsch in his book *Baseball: A History of America's Game*, explaining that "the baseball fraternity was able to make a convincing argument by the end of the Civil War that its game should be labeled as the national game."⁵⁶ Both Kirsch and Rader

note the presence of workers and ethnic minorities in pre-Civil War baseball. According to Rader, following the spread of baseball throughout the social hierarchy, “matches sometimes reflected fundamental ethnic and class rivalries.” Playing for far more than entertainment or physical activity, baseball teams of based on ethnicity and/or occupation played for the honour of their respective social groups, competing for bragging rights with local rivals on the diamond.⁵⁷ Not all workers, however, had the time necessary to play baseball. Indeed, as Warren Goldstein acknowledges in his *Playing for Keeps: A History of Early Baseball*, “there were so few unskilled workers” playing baseball during the 1850s and 1860s “that their significance lay mainly in their scarcity.”⁵⁸ Most players, historians agree, came from the ranks of clerks, artisans, and small shop owners.⁵⁹ For the typical, unskilled worker, sport was something watched, not played, hosted in a local tavern or hall, rather than a far flung field.

Antebellum working-class sport, based predominantly in local taverns, is addressed by all the survey-style histories used by this dissertation. As Gorn and Goldstein explain, “boxing, cockfighting, and billiards found a home in plebian neighborhoods; tavern keepers staged dogfights, ratting contests, and running meets.”⁶⁰ Nancy L. Struna’s book *People of Prowess: Sport, Leisure, and Labor in Early Anglo-America* provides an excellent overview of tavern-based recreation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, explaining the socio-cultural roots of many spectator sports popular in the 1850s and 1860s.⁶¹ Several British studies are also instructive, especially Robert W. Malcolmson’s book *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* and Douglas A. Reid’s essay “Beasts and Brutes: Popular Blood

Sports c. 1780-1860.”⁶² More specific studies, focused solely on nineteenth century working-class spectator sports and masculinity, are few and far between. Michael Kaplan’s study of nineteenth century New York City tavern violence, published in the *Journal of the Early Republic* in 1995, discusses fist-fighting as a component of “proud working-class male camaraderie” and a means of contesting “interethnic conflicts between native-born and immigrant youths.” Kaplan also shows that white workers “gained a sense of power and democratic brotherhood among themselves by excluding and persecuting African Americans.”⁶³ Kevin B. Wamsley and Robert S. Kossuth draw similar conclusions in their study of violent, tavern-based challenges in nineteenth century Ontario, Canada, illustrating how “personal honour was often challenged in the taverns of Upper Canada and Canada West through arguments or tests of strength, but most often by fist fights and violent brawls.”⁶⁴ Although studies specific to sport and masculinity in the American west are lacking, essays by Christopher Herbert and Susan Lee Johnson, respectively, discuss the interconnectedness of work, leisure, race, and masculinity during the California gold rush, while Gunther Peck provides a similar analysis for Virginia City, Nevada Territory.⁶⁵

Studies of sport during the Civil War era are relatively rare. Unlike the antebellum era, which receives considerable attention in survey-style histories of American sport and sport-specific histories of baseball and boxing, the Civil War era is almost universally dealt with by a single sentence or paragraph. Gorn and Goldstein, for example, write that “the Civil War introduced thousands of men to new sporting ideas and practices,” but dedicate little more than a single paragraph to sporting culture

during the conflict itself.⁶⁶ Yet, following the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, thousands of men enlisted in the Union and Confederate Armies, carrying their sporting preferences into their military service.⁶⁷ The sole academic monograph detailing the development of a sport throughout Civil War, specifically, is George A. Kirsch's *Baseball in Blue and Gray: The National Pastime During the Civil War*.⁶⁸ According to Kirsch, "the game [baseball] became a feature of military life and it took on new meanings in the context of war."⁶⁹ It was widely believed that baseball kept the soldiers mentally sharp and physically fit between battles, directly linking participation in the sport to preparation for war.⁷⁰ William J. Ryczek, whose study focuses primarily on the Civil War's impact on Reconstruction Era baseball, draws a similar conclusion. In his *When Johnny Came Sliding Home*, Ryczek argues that baseball "found great popularity in the army, where the typical soldier's life consisted of massive amounts of boredom interspersed with occasional moments of sheer terror."⁷¹

Despite the undeniable popularity of baseball amongst Union soldiers, the essays of Lawrence W. Fielding show that numerous other sports – boxing included – were also practiced by soldiers. According to Fielding, "wrestling matches, boxing bouts, rough and tumble fights, foot races, jumping contests and horse races provided opportunity for the display of individual physical capacities."⁷² Fielding also found evidence of bowling, shooting contests, and snowball fights, all of which provided opportunities to "prove individual prowess."⁷³ Broader studies, explaining the day-to-day activities of the Civil War soldier also mention sport in military encampments. Bell Irvin Wiley's *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* and *The Life of Johnny*

Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy are the classic examples of this genre of Civil War literature. In his study of Union camps, Wiley found evidence of numerous sporting activities, including boating, boxing, wrestling, leap-frog, cricket, jumping, fishing, hunting, football, swimming, fighting, tug of war, and snowballing. Baseball, however, “appears to have been the most popular of all competitive sports.”⁷⁴ The Confederate soldier enjoyed many of the same sports as his Union counterpart. According to Wiley, snowballing and skating were popular in the winter, while baseball was common in the warmer months.⁷⁵ Wiley’s work on the ‘common’ soldier was continued by his pupil James I. Robertson, Jr. who, in 1988, drew upon the ever-growing body of Civil War diaries and letters to revise the history of the ‘common soldier.’ Robertson’s *Soldiers Blue and Gray* illustrates the broad spectrum of sporting pursuits prevalent on both sides of the Civil War, including boxing, jumping, wrestling, running, hurdling, wheelbarrow racing, free-for-all scuffles, animal chasing, snowballing, bare-knuckle fights, checkers, and chess. As in Wiley’s work, Baseball is again identified as the soldiers’ favourite pastime.⁷⁶ More recently, David Madden dedicated an entire section of his *Beyond the Battlefield: The Ordinary Life and Extraordinary Time of the Civil War Soldier* to sport in Civil War encampments, discussing baseball and football at length, as well as boxing, leap frog, swimming, horse racing, throwing, hurdling, various forms of foot-racing, snowballing, gander-pulling, and bowling.⁷⁷

While volunteers flooded the ranks of the Union and Confederate Armies, civilians continued to play sports on the home front. The only scholar to dedicate significant attention to civilian sport during the Civil War, however, is John Rickard Betts.

In a study in *Research Quarterly* published in 1971, Betts explained that “in the midst of radical reorganization of government and massive military response, social life continued to function in traditional ways, much of the public interest proceeding along the lines of the previous decade.”⁷⁸ In addition to Betts, scholars of sport history in specific American cities also describe civilian sporting activities during the Civil War. In his *The Rise of Sports in New Orleans, 1850-1900*, Somers notes the continuation of horse racing (both trotting and pacing), racket sports, and boxing in New Orleans throughout 1861.⁷⁹ As New Orleans became increasingly embroiled in war, however, “recreation...all but deserted the beleaguered city of pleasure.”⁸⁰ When New Orleans was captured by Union forces in 1862, recreation began to re-emerge under Northern rule and protection. The leisure time of New Orleans’ population, however, was reshaped to align with Northern religious sensibilities. According to Somers, Union forces introduced the protestant Sabbath norms of New England in the largely Roman Catholic city, eliminating common Sunday sporting pursuits and recreations.⁸¹ During the other six days of the week, however, sports such as baseball, cricket, shooting, dog fights, cock fights, boxing, fencing, and horse races, all enjoyed followings. Like many revisionist historians before him, Somers argues “the traditional portrayal of civilian hardship in occupied New Orleans is misleading.”⁸² This may have been the case in other Confederate communities, but few studies exist detailing the civilian sports and recreations of the wartime south. The histories of Northern cities, like Boston, Chicago, and New York provide only cursory discussions of Civil War sport, when they discuss the conflict at all. Stephen Hardy, for example, occasionally refers to the Civil War in his *How*

Boston Played: Sport, Recreation and Community, 1865-1915, but focuses primarily on sport after the cessation of hostilities. Hardy introduces readers to sport in Boston via a discussion of Antebellum rowing and yachting, but promptly shifts his analysis to late 1860s and 1870s, largely bypassing sport during the Civil War.⁸³ Randy Roberts' edited collection of essays - including studies by prominent sport historians Ron Smith, Elliott Gorn, Stephen Hardy, and Roberts himself - does not discuss sport and leisure activities in wartime Boston in any significant way.⁸⁴ In his *A Sporting Time*, Adelman occasionally refers to Civil War era sport in New York City, but rarely discusses it in the context of the conflict.⁸⁵

Down for the Count: The Social History of Boxing

Writing in 1977, historian Randy Roberts lamented the abysmal state of the historiography of boxing: "for some inexplicable reason, the history of boxing has eluded the grasp of serious and conscientious historians."⁸⁶ In 2014, the field remains largely unchanged. With the exception of a few major works - some of them masterpieces of the historian's craft - boxing remains marginalized as a topic of historical inquiry. While the superstars, crooks, and playboys of the twentieth century are lavished with popular histories, providing fight-by-fight career analyses of a select few, the broader history of the sport remains in historiographical doldrums. Putting his own advice to work, Roberts produced two important biographies in the early 1980s, publishing *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* in 1983 and *Jack Dempsey: The Manassa Mauler* in 1984, injecting the histories of both men with a much needed dose of social context.⁸⁷ In 1986, Elliott Gorn took the social history of pugilism

one step further in his book *The Manly Art: Bare-knuckle Prizefighting in America*, rooting his analysis of boxing history in the histories of race, labour, gender, and ethnicity, from the eighteenth century through to the early twentieth, placing boxing within the broader historical rhythms of the nation.

The work of Roberts and Gorn could have (in my opinion, *should* have) been a turning point for the historical study of boxing in American culture. Yet, few historians have followed the historiographic course charted by these authors. Michael T. Isenberg is a noteworthy exception, producing one of the lone social histories of Gilded Age boxing. Isenberg's 1988 book *John L. Sullivan and His America* ranks alongside Roberts and Gorn for clarity and precision, picking up where the latter left off in *The Manly Art*. Unlike Gorn and Isenberg, the vast majority of boxing historians focus on the twentieth century.⁸⁸ Jeffrey T. Sammons' *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society*, published in 1990, remains the gold standard for the social history of twentieth century boxing. Sammons work, however, is first and foremost a study of the heavyweight division.⁸⁹ Unfortunately, historians rarely follow Sammons' lead into divisional histories, leaving the lighter weight classes virtually untouched by critical, historical inquiry. Following the publication of *Beyond the Ring*, there has been a barrage of biographical studies of heavyweight boxers, including some particularly fine scholarship on Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali. The latter group of studies includes, but is not limited to, Randy Roberts *Joe Louis: Hard Times Man* published in 2010 and Elliott Gorn's 1998 edited collection *Muhammad Ali: The People's Champ*.⁹⁰ In her 2013 article in the *Journal of Sport History*, Cathy van Ingen has essentially initiated the historical study of

female boxers, exploring the careers of some of the earliest African American athletes in women's boxing.⁹¹

Outside academia, popular historians are particularly infatuated with the 'big men' in the heavyweight division. Consider, for example, the work of Adam J. Pollack. Pollack is one of the most prolific boxing historians, producing six books since 2006. Each of Pollack's histories focuses on a different heavyweight champion, including John L. Sullivan, James J. Corbett, Bob Fitzsimmons, Jim Jeffries, Marvin Hart, and Tommy Burns.⁹² Pollack's publishing career virtually mirrors the larger body of popular historical writing on boxing in America, with heavyweight champions receiving a disproportionate share of the popular press, transforming the boxing historiography into the story of a handful of highly-successful individuals. Of the heavyweight champions, Muhammad Ali receives more attention from popular historians than any other boxer.⁹³ Almost all of the heavyweight champions from Bob Fitzsimmons in 1899 to Ali in 1964, however, have been the subject of at least one biographical study.⁹⁴ Exceptions to this trend are limited to four boxers – Jack Sharkey, Lee Savold, Ingemar Johansson, and Ezzard Charles. It is helpful to consider the historiography in terms of percentages. Of the heavyweight champions active between 1900 and 1965, sixteen have been the feature of a biographical study, constituting 76% of this group of boxers. In the lightweight division, however, only three of twenty-eight world champion boxers have been the focus of a biographical study, representing 10.7% of the boxers in this group. The heavyweight division is clearly, and overwhelmingly, the emphasis of boxing's historiography.

Studies of boxers that did not win a world title are also exceedingly rare in the historiography of American boxing. Charley Burley, a 1940s Pittsburgh welterweight and middleweight who never won the title, is the focus of two books.⁹⁵ Sam Langford, a Canadian heavyweight famous for being avoided by Jack Johnson and Jack Dempsey, is the focus of a book and an academic article.⁹⁶ Peter Jackson, a black Australian heavyweight who tried in vain to secure a title contest with John L. Sullivan, is the focus of a book and two academic articles.⁹⁷ Burley, Langford, and Jackson, fall in the genre “uncrowned champions” – phenomenal boxers that, despite never winning a title, are hailed as heroes because the champions of their day ‘ducked’ them continually. Such fighters – like the champions they pursued – do not speak to typical boxing experiences. The typical boxer – the fighter who never comes near a world championship – is rarely found in the historiography.

For the purposes of this study, Elliott Gorn’s *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* is the single most important volume on American boxing history. Tracing the history of boxing in the United States from its roots in the British Isles to the meteoric rise of Bostonian heavyweight champion John L. Sullivan, Gorn masterfully weaves bareknuckle boxing into existing historiographies of labor, ethnicity, race, gender, and sport, producing a nuanced examination of boxing’s significance to fighters, fans, and authorities, shedding new light on the most ancient of sports. Gorn’s treatment of antebellum prizefighting, placing the careers of heavyweights Tom Hyer, James Sullivan, John Morrissey, and John C. Heenan, in the evolving, interconnected ethnic and political rivalries of 1850s New York City, was stylistically instructive when

writing this dissertation, providing a blueprint for my research on the Civil War era.⁹⁸ In addition to Gorn, Louis Moore's essays on black boxers and sparring instructors active throughout the pre-Civil War era illustrated the diversity of African-American boxing experiences, while Peter Gammie's work on heavyweight champion Tom Hyer provides important insight into the nativist political alliances of some New York prizefighters.⁹⁹

Gorn and Gammie, respectively, illustrate Manhattan's position as America's leading antebellum boxing city. During the 1850s, all major prizefighting champions called New York City home, including heavyweights Tom Hyer, John Morrissey, and John C. Heenan. In 1860, the popularity of American prizefighting hit an all-time high when John C. Heenan, "The Bencia Boy," travelled to England to face Tom Sayers for the championship of the world, drawing "more public attention than any other athletic event during the fifty years straddling mid-century."¹⁰⁰ The American-British rivalry, it seems, sanctioned Heenan-Sayers as a "genuine test of national supremacy."¹⁰¹ In the lead up to the Heenan-Sayers bout, the prize ring attracted new followers at an unprecedented pace, with pugilism momentarily dropping "the distinctive garb of working-class street gangs," donning "the stars and stripes," marching "boldly up Main Street."¹⁰² When the Heenan-Sayers fight ended in a draw – a most unsatisfactory denouement – prizefighting reverted to its primarily working-class status.

Back in antebellum Manhattan, prizefighting had its own lingering problems. Numerous violent crimes associated with the sport – most notably the murder of Bill "the Butcher" Poole – led the Metropolitan Police (with jurisdiction over Manhattan, Brooklyn, Westchester County, and Staten Island) to engage persistent, preventive

assaults on prizefighting after 1857. Desperate for a landscape tolerant of prizefighting, Manhattan's fistic fraternity shifted its matches north to British North America, using Buffalo, New York, as home base for organizing bouts. The Horrigan-Lazarus, Bradley-Rankin, and Morrisey-Hyer contests of the late 1850s, for example, were all successfully held in Canada West.¹⁰³ According to Gilles Janson, Canada East proved less receptive to American prize-fighters. The construction of a railway between Portland, Maine, and Longueuil, Canada East, became a "*favorise la venue de boxeurs Américains.*" Despite having efficient transport to Canada East, pugilists struggled to stage their fights in the colony. According to Janson, local officials regularly intervened. For example, Janson states, "*deux pugilistes de New York, accompagnes de leurs nombreux supporters et amis, descendant du train a Stanstead pres le frontier canado-americaine, dans le but d'organiser un combat.*"¹⁰⁴ The Sheriff of Sherbrooke, however, prevented the contest with the aid of a constable.

Although the antebellum years are modestly traversed by historians of boxing, the Civil War Era remains largely untouched, leaving questions about change and continuity within the wartime sport largely unanswered. The lone exception to this trend is a fifteen-page passage in Gorn's *The Manly Art*. In the martial context, Gorn comments briefly on the enlistment of boxers Harry Lazarus, Denis Horrigan, and Michael Trainor in the Sixth New York Volunteers, describing a prizefight organized by the men during their Union service. In addition to the Sixth New York, Gorn provides examples of prizefighting in other Union Army units, including the Army of the Potomac's Sixth Corps and the Fifth New York Volunteers.¹⁰⁵ Gorn also provides a

paragraph on sparring with gloves, noting the sport's value as a source of entertainment in camp and a method of staying warm on cold days.¹⁰⁶ In the civilian context, Gorn explains that "boxing's centre of gravity began shifting west" during the Civil War years, attracted by the "all-male work culture" and "relatively free moral atmosphere." The relative ambivalence of western authorities towards prizefighting, however, also facilitated other forms of violence between fighters and spectators. At a prizefight between Johnny Lazarus and Peter Daley near Virginia City, Nevada Territory, in 1863, for example, five men were shot following a dispute over a foul. One man, Epitacis Muldando, died of his injuries.¹⁰⁷ Back in the northeast, a new heavyweight sensation named Joseph Coburn was generating enormous attention. Few historians, however, explore Coburn's significance to boxing or America beyond his victory over Missouri's Mike McCoole for the championship in 1863. The following chapters build on the groundwork laid by Gorn, examining the history of boxing during the Civil War with an emphasis on the social significance of sparring and prizefighting in different regional contexts.

Endnotes

¹ *New York Clipper*, May 5, 1860.

² For Heenan's return from Louisiana see, *New York Clipper*, May 25, 1861; For Heenan's departure for England see, *New York Clipper*, May 29, 1862.

³ Michael Eagan, *The Flying, Gray-haired Yank: or, The Adventures of a Volunteer; A True Narrative of the Civil War* (Edgewood Publishing Company, 1888), 136-139.

⁴ United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, 53 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printer, 1880-1898).

⁵ Alice Kessler-Harris, "Social History," *The New American History*, ed. by Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 250.

⁶ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 8.

⁷ Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 38.

⁸ Of particular value to this study are the following: Rotundo, *American Manhood*; Kevin B. Wamsley and Robert S. Kossuth, "Fighting it Out in Nineteenth Century Upper Canada/Canada West: Masculinities and Physical Challenges in the Tavern," *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 3 (2000), 405-430 ; Michael Messner, "When Bodies are Weapons: Masculinity and Violence in Sport," *International Review of the Sociology of Sport* 25, no. 3 (1990), 203-220; R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

⁹ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry for Freedom: The Civil War Era [BCF]* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988)

¹⁰ William L. Barney, *Battle Ground for the Union: The Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction, 1848-1877 [BGU]* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990); Alan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union [OTU]*, 8 vols. (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1947).

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¹³ Morrison, *Slavery and the American West*, 67;

¹⁴ Roger L. Ransom, *Conflict and Compromise: The Political Economy of Slavery, Emancipation, and the American Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 97.

¹⁵ *BCF*, 51-54; The best overall study of the Wilmot Proviso is: Chaplain W. Morrison, *Democratic Politics and Sectionalism: The Wilmot Proviso Controversy* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1967). See also, Morrison, *Slavery and the American West*, 41; David M. Potter, *The*

Impending Crisis: 1848-1861, ed. and completed by Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 18-23 and 41.

¹⁶ Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 22.

¹⁷ Morrison, *Democratic Politics and Sectionalism*, 32-34; BCF, 54;

¹⁸ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 83.

¹⁹ Foner, *Free Soil*, 83; Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 54; Terry L. Jones, *Historical Dictionary of the Civil War*, Vol. 1 (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 531.

²⁰ James A. Rawley, *Race and Politics: "Bleeding Kansas" and the Coming of the Civil War* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 12.

²¹ This point is made most clearly by Potter, *The Impending Crisis*, 36-37. See also, Jones, *Historical Dictionary*, Vol 1., 531.

²² BCF, 75; William L. Richter, *Historical Dictionary of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 501; Holman Hamilton, *Prologue to Conflict: The Crisis and Compromise of 1850* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1964), particularly 53-62 and 131-150.

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²⁴ BCF, 80. See also, Hamilton, *Prologue to Conflict*, 168.

²⁵ BCF, 80. See also, Richter, *Historical Dictionary*, 272; Hamilton, *Prologue to Conflict*, 169; Nye, *Fettered Freedoms*, 204; Shearer Davis Bowman, *At the Precipice: Americans North and South During the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 53.

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²⁷ For a thorough analysis of Fugitive Slave Act enforcement see, Stanley W. Campbell, *The Slave Catchers: Enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, 1850-1860* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: North Carolina University Press, 1970).

²⁸ BCF, 85; Campbell, *Slave Catchers*, 151-152; Thomas P. Slaughter, *Bloody Dawn: The Christiana Riot and Racial Violence in the Antebellum North* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 59-75. Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1996 [1961]), 113.

²⁹ Campbell, *Slave Catchers*, 154-157.

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- ³⁰ Nichole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 9;
- ³¹ Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 151-152.
- ³² *BCF*, 121; Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 151-152.
- ³³ *BCF*, 124-125; *OTU*, 94-96; *BGU*, 65-69.
- ³⁴ Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 29.
- ³⁵ *BCF*, 146; *OTU*, 313; Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 53-54; Rawley, *Race and Politics*, 86-87.
- ³⁶ These new laws required an oath of allegiance to slavery in order to hold office, made assisting a fugitive slave and circulating abolitionist literature capital offenses, and transformed public, antislavery opinion into a felony. *BGU*, 78. See also, *OTU*, 384-385.
- ³⁷ *BGU*, 78.
- ³⁸ *OTU*, 444; *BGU*, 79-80.
- ³⁹ *BGU*, 81. See also, *OTU*, 474-475; Robert E. McGlone, *John Brown's War Against Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 73-80. Stephen B. Oates, *To Purge This Land With Blood: A Biography of John Brown* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 132-137.
- ⁴⁰ *BGU*, 85.
- ⁴¹ *BGU*, 86.
- ⁴² *BGU*, 85.
- ⁴³ *BGU*, 88.
- ⁴⁴ *BGU*, 89.
- ⁴⁵ McGlone, *John Brown's War*, 249. See also, Oates, *Purge This Land*, 290-301; *BGU*, 97-99.
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- ⁴⁷ *BCF*, 223.
- ⁴⁸ James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26; Mark E. Neeley Jr., *The Last Best Hope on Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 58.
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- ⁵⁰ Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Risen of Modern Athletics, 1820-1870* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

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- ⁵⁴ Dale A. Somers, *The Rise of Sports in New Orleans, 1850-1900* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1972).
- ⁵⁵ George B. Kirsch, *The Creation of American Team Sports* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 68.
- ⁵⁶ Benjamin G. Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 18.
- ⁵⁷ Rader, *Baseball*, 22. See also, Kirsch, *Team Sports*, 123-125. Gerlach has shown that Germans were also present in pre-Civil War baseball. See, Larry Gerlach, "German Americans in Major League Baseball: Sport and Acculturation," in *The American Game: Baseball and Ethnicity*, edited by Lawrence Baldassarro and Richard A. Johnson (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 28.
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- ⁶⁰ Gorn and Goldstein, *American Sports*, 71.
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- ⁶³ Michael Kaplan, "New York City Tavern Violence and the Creation of a Working-Class Male Identity," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15, no. 4 (1995), 602-603.
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- ⁶⁵ Christopher Herbert, "Life's Prizes Are by Labor Got": Risk, Reward, and White Manliness in the California Gold Rush," *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 3 (2011), 339-368; Susan Lee Johnson, "Bulls, Bears, and Dancing Boys: Race, Gender, and Leisure in the California Gold Rush," in *Across the Great*

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⁶⁷ *BCF*, 274-275; *BGU*, 151.

⁶⁸ George A. Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray: The National Pastime During the Civil War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁶⁹ George A. Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray*, 28. To his credit, Benjamin A. Rader does provide one sentence regarding the importance of the Civil War in the history of baseball. According to Rader, "The Civil War, far from impeding the growth of the sport, encouraged the introduction of baseball by veterans (especially the Union ones) to hamlets across the nation." Rader, *American Sports*, 54.

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⁸⁰ Somers, *Sports in New Orleans*, 75.

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⁸³ Hardy, *How Boston Played*, 3-20.

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⁸⁶ Randy Roberts, "Eighteenth Century Boxing," *JSH* 4, No. 3 (1977), 246.

⁸⁷ Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* (New York: Free Press, 1983); Randy Roberts, *Jack Dempsey: The Manassa Mauler* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

⁸⁸ Michael T. Isenberg, *John L. Sullivan and His America* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

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⁹² Adam J. Pollack, *In the Ring with John L. Sullivan* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland Publishing, 2006); Adam J. Pollack, *In the Ring with James J. Corbett* (Iowa City: Win by KO Publications, 2012); Adam J. Pollack, *In the Ring with James J. Jeffries* (Iowa City: Win by KO Publications, 2009); Adam J. Pollack, *In the Ring with Bob Fitzsimmons* (Iowa City: Win by KO Publications, 2007); Adam J. Pollack, *In the Ring with Marvin Hart* (Iowa City: Win by KO Publications, 2010); Adam J. Pollack, *In the Ring with Tommy Burns* (Iowa City: Win by KO Publications, 2011); Adam J. Pollack, *In the Ring with Jack Johnson: Part 1, The Rise* (Iowa City: Win by KO Publications, 2013).

⁹³ For example, see, David Remnick, *King of the World: Muhammad Ali and the Rise of an American Hero* (New York: Random House, 1999); Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1992).

⁹⁴ Champions arranged in order of reign. Notable exceptions to this trend are Jack Sharkey, Ingemar Johansson, "Jersey" Joe Walcott and Ezzard Charles. For Max Schmeling see: Patrick Myler, *Ring of Hate: Joe Louis versus Max Schmeling; the Fight of the Century* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2005); Lewis A. Erenberg, *The Greatest Fight of Our Generation: Louis versus Schmeling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); David Margolick, *Beyond Glory: Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling and a World on the Brink* (New York: Random House, 2006); For Joe Louis see: Chris Mead, *Champion: Joe Louis, Black Hero in White America* (New York: Scribner, 1985); Gerald Astor, *...And a Credit to His Race: The Hard Life and Times of Joseph Louis Barrow, aka Joe Louis* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1974); For Joe Walcott see, James Curl, *Jersey Joe Walcott: A Boxing Biography* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland Publishing, 2012); For Rocky Marciano see: Russell Sullivan, *Rocky Marciano: The Rock and His Times* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Everett M. Skehan, *Rocky Marciano* (Miami, Florida: Parkwest Publications, 2003); For Primo Carnera see: Joseph S. Page, *Primo Carnera: The Life and Career of the Heavyweight Boxing Champion* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland Publishing, 2007); For Max Baer see: Nat Fleischer, *Max Baer: The Glamour Boy of the Ring* (New York: The Ring Book Shop, 1941); For Jim Braddock see: Jeremy Schaap, *Cinderella Man: James J. Braddock, Max Baer and the Greatest Upset in Boxing History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006); Michael C. Delisa, *Cinderella Man: The James J. Braddock Story* (Preston, England: Milo Books, 2005). For Floyd Patterson see: Alan Howard Levy, *Floyd Patterson: A Boxer and a Gentleman* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland Publishing, 2008). For Sonny Liston see: Rob Steen, *Sonny Liston: His Life, Strife and the Phantom Punch* (London: J.R. Books, 2008); Nick Tosches, *The Devil and Sonny Liston* (London: Little Brown and Company, 2001).

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⁹⁹ Louis Moore, "Fine Specimens of Manhood: The Black Boxer's Body and the Avenue to Equality, Racial Advancement, and Manhood in the Nineteenth Century," *MELUS* 35, no. 4 (2010), 59-84; Louis Moore, "Fit For Citizenship: Black Sparring Masters, Gymnasium Owners, and the White Body, 1825-1886," *Journal of African American History* 96, no. 4 (2011), 448-473; Peter Gammie, "Pugilists and Politicians in Antebellum New York: The Life and Times of Tom Hyer," *New York History* 75, no. 3 (1994), 265-296.

¹⁰⁰ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 149.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁰³ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 104.

¹⁰⁴ Gilles Janson, “*la boxe au Quebec (1822-1922): de l’illegalite a la legitimite,*” *Bulletin d’histoire politique* 11, no. 2 (2003), 88.

¹⁰⁵ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 162-163.

¹⁰⁶ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 161.

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2

***“Shy Your Castors into the Ring and Approach the Scratch Bravely”: Boxers and Boxing
in the Union Army***

Prior to the American Civil War, boxing was a socially fragmented sport. Urbanization and industrialization nourished a growing middle class, opening white-collar opportunities in management, while simplifying the production process, alienating skilled workers of the artisanal trades, and creating large pools of low-paying unskilled or semi-skilled positions. Immigrant Irish workers, fleeing their famine-worn country, gladly settled in coastal cities like Boston and New York, filling the capitalist demand for cheap, unskilled labour, but further alienating a native-born population of Americans raised and trained in the artisanal apprentice system.¹

Rivalries between American and Irish working-class men typically played out in urban taverns, where fighting, drinking, lifting, and wrestling, along with animal-based blood sports like cockfighting, dog fighting, and rat baiting formed the locus of working-class sporting subcultures. As the American working class transformed into a bloated, unskilled simulacrum of its previous skilled, artisanal existence, the American middle class grew alongside it, fulfilling the demand for lawyers, doctors, and managers in the bustling cities. With little in common but the cities they lived in, the antebellum American middle class and working class respectively derived divergent values and virtues from remarkably similar practices, not the least of which was boxing. To middle-class proponents of boxing, the sport's most useful form was sparring, conducted in

private with an instructor at a gymnasium, compensating for the physically stagnant nature of the workplace.

For the working class, sparring was more entertainment driven. Largely a spectator sport for the working class, sparring benefits and exhibitions occurred regularly in the taverns and halls of Northeastern and Midwestern cities, attracting large audiences to watch a handful of men display their expertise in the sport. Sparring was, at its essence, a communal endeavour for the working class. While highly supportive of sparring as a boon to health, middle-class men denounced the practice of prizefighting, ridiculing the sport and its followers for concomitant gambling, rowdyism, and intoxication. For working-class men, however, prizefighting was the pinnacle of antebellum masculine expression, allowing Irish and American, skilled and unskilled workers, to contest the meanings of labour and manhood in the ring, with nothing but the 'tools' with which one was born. When the American Civil War commenced on April 13, 1861, working-class and middle-class Americans, as Lawrence W. Fielding suggests, carried their respective, class-based understandings of boxing into the Union Army.²

This chapter examines the presence of sparring and prizefighting in the Union Army, exploring the social continuities and discontinuities evident in boxing in terms of class, race, ethnicity, and gender. Sparring was transformed into a sport of the masses, with competitive contests and friendly bouts appealing to both working- and middle-class soldiers, upholding the communal roots of the sport for workers, while providing a war-time outlet for middle-class Americans pursuing the 'self-made man' ideal. For

middle-class men, sparring in the Union Army was part of a broader transition from the ideology of the ideal of the self-made man, encouraging self-restraint alongside self-improvement, towards more aggressive, combative, masculine norms.³ Prizefighting, on the other hand, remained a thoroughly working-class endeavour in the Union Army, but was introduced to a more ethnically-diverse group of workers, beyond the typical English, Irish, and Native-born American patrons of the sport. Men with German roots, for example, experimented with prizefighting during the Civil War, leading at least one such soldier to pursue the sport outside the confines of the military.⁴ Although many prizefights were contests for money, replicating the practices of the antebellum working-class sporting subcultures, they were also used as an important means of dispute resolution for soldiers, occasionally supported by officers to prevent more dangerous forms of combat. Secondly, this chapter will discuss the enlistment of prizefighters in the Union Army, using case studies of the 11th New York Volunteers and 6th New York Volunteers to illustrate the benefits and drawbacks of pugilists' involvement in the war effort. As the war progressed, and a quick victory for the North proved elusive, the Lincoln administration implemented America's first national military draft via the Enrollment Act of 1863. Prizefighters responded to the draft in various ways, including substitution and commutation. When former American heavyweight champion John Morrissey was drafted, for example, he paid for commutation, paying two hundred dollars to avoid service.⁵

The Practicality of Sparring in the Union Army

In the spring and summer of 1861, thousands of relatively untrained Union volunteers set out for the American wilds, setting up sprawling tented communities, living in close quarters with their brothers in arms. The leisure activities of Union soldiers reflected the realities of their living conditions. Games and pastimes requiring little space, time, or organization, like poker, faro, dice, singing, reading, and writing occupied most of a Union soldier's leisure time. The sport of sparring with boxing gloves, a particularly practical sport requiring limited space, equipment, and participants, also fit neatly into the Union Army's new camp-based societies. Without disrupting the day-to-day activities of camp, sparring allowed men to display the violent masculinities expected in wartime in a highly public manner. Furthermore, in sparring, unlike prizefighting, gloves protected a soldier's fists and face, preventing serious injuries. Sparring was also a remarkably mobile sport, the transportation of boxing gloves from camp to camp creating little hardship. Unlike cricket, baseball, football, and horseracing, sparring required minimal space.⁶ Thus, sparring could be practiced virtually anywhere, from the swamps of Mississippi, to the forests of Virginia, on the islands of Florida, or urban streets of Washington, D.C., providing a source of masculine prowess and competition for Union soldiers. The simplicity and versatility of sparring as a military pastime is vividly illustrated in the diaries and letters of Union soldiers and columns of the *New York Clipper*.

Frederick Tomlinson Peet of the 7th New York Volunteers, made his affection for boxing explicit in his letters home. At Camp Cameron in Washington, D.C., Peet wrote his father: "Don't forget to send my boxing gloves."⁷ When his gloves had not arrived by November 4, Peet anxiously wrote to his mother: "bundle not yet arrived, need it very much especially the boxing gloves [*sic*]."⁸ For soldiers lacking Peet's foresight, boxing gloves were not particularly difficult to attain. An Illinois volunteer encamped at Arcadia, Missouri, for example, wrote to a merchant in St. Louis for a pair of boxing gloves in late 1861, receiving them by mail.⁹ On January 24, 1862, a Michigan volunteer wrote of "getting a set of boxing gloves." After less than two weeks, the same Michigan volunteer was gloved up and sparring with others in his regiment.¹⁰ A large number of volunteers also placed orders for boxing gloves through the *New York Clipper* which, by the December of 1863, reported daily orders from the "bold soldier boys."¹¹

Once a regiment secured boxing gloves, all that was required for a sparring match was two men and a small amount of space. While confined on a transport ship, for example, the 8th Massachusetts Volunteers passed a portion of their time at sea engaging in friendly sparring matches. "A pair of boxing gloves were procured," wrote John P. Reynolds of the 8th Massachusetts in his diary, "and several of the men on board amused themselves and the crowd, in sparring." The amusement the 8th Massachusetts Volunteers enjoyed watching sparring was at least partially occasioned by clumsy boxing performances by soldiers previously unfamiliar with the sport. The journey of the Eight Massachusetts, however, was not entirely devoid of quality

sparring. “Two little fellows among the midshipmen,” notes Reynolds, children no older than twelve years of age, laced up the gloves for the soldiers, showing the 8th Massachusetts what polished sparring consisted of. “The manner in which they handled the gloves was surprising” and “the skillful licks which each at times dealt his opponent, elicited frequent applause from the bye-standers [*sic*].”¹² On land, soldiers who favored sparring faced few obstacles to their sport. Mason Whiting Tyler, of the 37th Massachusetts Volunteers, for example, used sparring to generate warmth, while guarding a train during the Virginia winter of 1862. In his *Recollections of the Civil War*, Tyler routinely lamented the frigid weather. One brisk Virginian day, in November of 1862, Tyler was sent to guard an ammunition train outside of camp. “The weather was still threatening and raw,” wrote Tyler, but he “got warm by boxing with Joe Taylor.”¹³ Sparring, unlike other sports, could literally be organized on the spot.



Above: Sparring in camp as portrayed in: Augustus C. Buell, *The Cannoneer: Reflections of Service in the Army of the Potomac* (Washington, DC: National Tribune Publisher, 1890), 54.

The simplicity of sparring aligned the sport well to the realities of Union Civil War encampments, providing a portable, compact sport for soldiers enduring the monotony of camp life. As such, sparring was an ideal means of masculine expression within the military, for both the middle and working classes. For working-class soldiers, sparring took on new significance in the context of the Union Army. While displays of sparring by other men permitted the communal spectatorship working-class soldiers enjoyed during the antebellum era, freedom from the time constraints of the workforce allowed unskilled laborers to learn and engage in sparring as participants like never before.¹⁴ For middle-class soldiers, sparring in the Union Army often served as an early experiment in aggressive, competitive masculinity, discouraged during the antebellum period in favor of self-restraint.¹⁵ Even with the widespread support of working- and middle-class soldiers, sparring could not thrive without the blessings of commissioned officers. Eager to promote activities that complimented the communal nature of Union encampments, while at the same time cognizant of the need for physical release, military officials embraced and encouraged sparring in the Union Army.

For “Pugilists and Onlookers:” Sparring as a Component of Communal and Individual Masculinities in the Union Army

In the mid-nineteenth century, the maturation of the market economy fundamentally changed the relationship between man, workplace, and community. The social significance of community, previously the most important aspect of American masculine identity, was surpassed by individualistic ambitions, as middle-class men

pursued financial advancement within the burgeoning market economy. In the mid-nineteenth century, middle-class men pursued “self-made manhood,” employing self-reliance and self-improvement, while exercising a degree of self-restraint over their more violent, passionate desires.¹⁶ A particularly important aspect of “self-made manhood,” argued proponents, was the cultivation of a healthy body, prompting widespread middle-class interest in physical activity. Within the middle class, a trend of sparring in private under the tutelage of a skilled instructor emerged in Maine and Massachusetts in the 1830s, spreading throughout the Northeast and Midwest during the 1850s. While upward social mobility was within reach for some middle-class men, working-class Americans experienced little of the market economy’s benefits. Indeed, the sun was setting on the era of independent artisans and the apprenticeship system, as mechanization, semi-skilled piece-work, and unskilled workers replaced skilled, artisanal labour in many occupations. Unable to derive satisfying physically-based identities from the increasingly simplified work process, the urban working class often turned to tavern-based sporting subcultures. Within these working-class sporting subcultures, public sparring performances served egalitarian purposes, allowing *both* athletes *and* spectators to generate self-worth from sparring, embracing aspects of older, communal understandings of masculinity. At the outbreak of Civil War in 1861, middle- and working-class men entered the Union ranks, carrying contrasting understandings of sparring and masculinity into their military service.

Upon enlisting in the Union Army, many middle-class men struggled with identity issues. Accustomed to constructing “self-made” masculinities via individual accomplishments in the market economy, many middle-class volunteers resented the military’s communal expectations of camp life. In a letter to his sister, William Christie of the 1st Minnesota Light Artillery observed the hesitance of some men to submit to the communal norms of the Union Army: “A great many of our men – and the Americans especially – cannot leave off those habits of Independence [*sic*], which are so meritorious in the civilian, but so pernicious in the Soldier [*sic*].”¹⁷ However, as Rotundo suggests, “manhood is not a social edict determined on high and enforced by law.”¹⁸ Although by no means obliterated from the social tapestry, the notions of ‘self-made manhood’ prevailing amongst members of the middle class were adapted to military realities, intertwining with the communal realities of Union encampments.¹⁹ Most Union officers tolerated ‘self-made’ or individualistic expressions of manhood that did not impede upon the well-being of the group. In this context, competitive sparring was praised as an appropriate and effective outlet for individualistic ambitions, providing successful combatants with increased “acceptance by the soldier society” through a public, individual display of masculine prowess, while providing entertainment for the broader camp community.²⁰

According to Fielding, in the Union Army: “the cult of physical heroism, the kind of mental set that applauded men who died with their face to the enemy, demanded that skill and courage be displayed.”²¹ One such test of “skill and courage” was

competitive sparring. By participating in public sparring contests, middle-class men threw off the shackles of private physical activity, transferring the competitive aspects of bourgeois life from the workplace to sport. Competitive sparring, however, encouraged middle-class Americans to exercise their aggressive, combative sides, promoting actions well beyond notions of “respectable” self-restraint. For working-class soldiers, competitive sport was nothing new. Indeed, many antebellum workers frequented the taverns and halls of their respective sporting subculture prior to the war. For many working-class men, however, the time and opportunities to participate in competitive sparring, rather than watching, was a welcomed aspect of camp life. Many Union soldiers recorded competitive sparring competitions in their letters and diaries. During Christmas celebrations at Camp Barry in Washington, D.C., for example, some of the larger men engaged in competitive sparring, with bouts often ending with a pair of bloody noses.²² The 29th Ohio Volunteers also indulged in competitive sparring, “taking turns knocking each other down” while encamped at ‘little’ Washington, Virginia.²³ In March 1863, sparring was the most popular camp activity amongst a regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers, providing entertainment for “pugilists and onlookers” alike.²⁴ New York regiments stationed on the Florida coast engaged in sparring competitions to establish inter-regimental dominance.²⁵ Sparring competitions were also reported at the far flung Union outpost at Camp Douglas, near Salt Lake City, Utah. At Camp Douglas, a soldier dubbed the “white-headed boy” evidently excelled his counterparts. Although ‘winning’ or ‘having the best of it’ was ultimately the goal in sparring competitions, less successful boxers were also accorded the admiration of their peers for simply engaging

in the sport. Less commonly, talented boxers received awards for victorious performances. In 1863, for example, a regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers conducted a sparring tournament to celebrate their one year anniversary. According to John W. Chase of the 1st Massachusetts Light Artillery, a member of his unit “took the prize for being the best boxer.”²⁶ For Chase and his regiment, the boxer’s award reinforced the communal masculinity of the regiment, while at the same time distinguishing the pugilist from his peers, according him a level of masculine prowess beyond his fellow soldiers.

Although many middle- and working-class soldiers competed in competitive sparring bouts, earning the praise and admiration of onlookers, few men inspired Civil War soldiers more than athletic officers, willing to defend his unit’s honour in the realm of sport. Captain Michael Eagan of the 15th West Virginia Volunteers did just that. As Captain of Company B, Eagan sparred for the honour of his men on at least one occasion. According to Eagan, a rivalry existed between the companies of the 15th West Virginia Volunteers, with Eagan’s Company B defeating several other units in sparring competitions. Eager for redemption, the other companies of the 15th West Virginia selected an officer they believed “would easily get away with anything that Company B might bring up.” This challenge was quickly answered by Company B, which selected Eagan as their contestant for honours. Once both captains were convinced that the contest was necessary, they stripped to their “shirt sleeves” and commenced sparring. Much to the dissatisfaction of his men, Eagan suggested the contest stop after a few

exchanges. "Company B were greatly crestfallen...at my seeming unwillingness to test the question to a conclusion," explained Eagan. Much to the delight of Eagan's men, however, his opponent insisted that the bout continue. "The sparring after this was sharp and effective," wrote Eagan, "terminating rather suddenly when the glove on my right hand came into too forcible contact with my opponent's nose, staggering him badly and causing the claret to flow freely." His opponent left bloody and defeated, Eagan effectively emerged as the 'better' man in the eyes of all involved, while attaining important bragging rights for his company.²⁷

For Union soldiers, sparring served as a means of reinforcing both personal masculinities, providing an opportunity, albeit unfamiliar, for middle- and working-class men to display aggressive, combative individual masculinities, while at the same time encouraging the communal understandings of masculinity crucial to a cohesive camp. While some employed sparring primarily as entertainment and competition, other Union soldiers used the sport as a boon to improved mental and physical health. In his monumental synthesis of the American Civil War era entitled *Battle Cry for Freedom*, James M. McPherson explains the struggles faced by the Union Army while conducting a war "at the end of the medical Middle Ages." The use of unsterilized instruments killed untold numbers of wounded men. Limited knowledge of afflictions like malaria and typhoid led to widespread disease. Antibiotics were a thing of the future, forcing surgeons to perform regular amputations to prevent the spread of infection.²⁸ During the mid-nineteenth century, however, Americans sought other methods of maintaining

and improving their health. Indeed, both the middle-class rational recreation movement and working-class sporting subcultures advocated regular physical activity to maintain one's health. Within the Union Army, sparring was part of a broader movement away from the dominant, medical practices focused on opiates, quinine, and mercury, towards physical activity to improve soldier health.

Sparring as "Healthy Exercise:" Boxing as a Remedy for Mental and Physical Afflictions

During the Civil War, Union soldiers regularly experimented with physical activity to improve and maintain their health.²⁹ The letters and diaries of Union soldiers are replete with descriptions of medical strife and potential remedies. Diarrhea and dysentery, however, turn up in soldiers' accounts more often than any other affliction.³⁰ The intermingling of urban and rural men in camp often led to the spread of measles to the latter group, who were relatively unaccustomed to the affliction.³¹ Fevers brought on by bouts of typhoid and malaria also occurred with great regularity. Quinine, the typical medicine for fever during the Civil War, produced its own undesirable effects, often causing temporary hearing impairment. One Massachusetts volunteer, for example, "felt feverish, and next morning dosed strongly with quinine, which put Niagara Falls into each ear."³² Doctors prescribed blue mass, a cocktail of "mercury, liquorice root, rose-water, honey and sugar, and confection of dead rose petals" to soldiers to relieve constipation and melancholy (depression).³³ In general, doctors underestimated the impact of mercury on the human body, prescribing blue mass for virtually all ailments, inflicting soldiers with various degrees of heavy metal poisoning.

The opiates morphine and laudanum were regularly used to treat a laundry list of conditions, frequently resulting in opiate addictions for soldiers.³⁴ Unsurprisingly, soldiers grew disenchanted with military medicine, hamstrung as it was by a lack of supplies and expertise. To many soldiers, the natural solution to many wartime ailments was increased physical activity, not more medicine. Wooed by the sport's practicality and ability to enhance masculine prowess, soldiers also embraced sparring to maintain good health in camp.

"It makes no difference how many diseases are presented to him," Union surgeon James Langstaff Dunn wrote of his colleagues, "he will use but two kinds of medicine, known by the soldiers as quinine [*sic*] and blue pills."³⁵ Struggling with the side effects of quinine and blue pills (mercury), soldiers from all walks of life offered alternatives for the maintenance and improvement of health.³⁶ "The shurest [*sic*] way to preserve health here," wrote an Irish, Massachusetts carpenter turned Union soldier, "is to keep busy at something [*sic*] plenty of exercise is the best medicine in the army."³⁷ Middle-class men turned to the emerging body of rational recreation literature to buoy their hopes. "Each half hour puts a new pound in my knapsack," explained a worn out Unitarian minister turned Massachusetts volunteer, "yet I feel like little Tom Brown when he goes to Rugby for the first time on the stage, riding at night, his legs dangling (too short to reach the support) and tingling in the cold. It hurts; but Tom finds a pleasure in enduring. It hurts me; but I find a kind of pleasure."³⁸ Indeed, just as sport emboldened and strengthened the fictitious student-athlete Tom Brown, sparring and

other sports maintained a soldier's mental and physical well-being, keeping him in 'fighting trim.' Lucien A. Voorhees, of the 15th New Jersey Volunteers, recalled his colonel's introduction of "foot balls" to camp in 1864, confiding in a letter that physical activity likely did "more towards restoring the health in the regiment than all the blue pills in the medical department."³⁹ Albert O. Marshall of the 33rd Illinois Volunteers, also described sparring as a source of "healthy exercise," writing that boxing matches contested by members of his regiment at Arcadia, Missouri, benefited those who participated.⁴⁰

Union regiments also used sparring to maintain and improve their mental health. Effectively coping with the monotony of inaction was intrinsic to a soldier's success. As real an enemy as the Confederacy, rumination tore away at the mental wellbeing of Union soldiers. Persistent thoughts of fallen comrades, personal acts of killing, and the overwhelming reality of one's own mortality seized the minds of inactive Union soldiers. When combined with poor accommodations, widespread disease, insufficient provisions, and festering wounds, the burden of serving the Union could become too much to bear.⁴¹ Downtime was a prime occasion for various psychological afflictions to seep into Union encampments.⁴² Typically, if a soldier illustrated persistent depression, or melancholy, he received a mercury-laden 'blue pill' and returned to service. At least a portion of the Union Army, however, sought out alternative methods of maintaining and improving mental health, employing a range of sports, including sparring.

“Boredom,” wrote Fielding, “was as much a reality of soldier life during the Civil War as were the battles, the gunshots, and the march of armies.”⁴³ The letters and diaries of Union soldiers often recorded the excruciating monotony of camp life. “We do nothing but cook and eat,” wrote an Ohio Volunteer at Columbus’ Camp Chase.⁴⁴ “It is very dull laying around camp,” explained a Minnesotan soldier, “and the boys are in for anything that will afford a change.”⁴⁵ Some officers, like Corporal Charles Godfroy of the Second Michigan Volunteers, organized boxing for their men.⁴⁶ Most officers, however, did not provide sport for their units. Thus, if the typical volunteer wished to spar to relieve the monotony of his situation, he was usually forced to make arrangements himself. The good cheer that prevailed within the 4th Connecticut Volunteers in 1861 can be attributed to the sparring and other recreations performed by the soldiers. Stationed at Fort Abercrombie, Maryland, the 4th Connecticut was tasked with protecting Federal possessions in Hagerstown and Williamsport, languishing in camp while battles raged in Virginia. Although proud to be serving the Union in any capacity, many soldiers in the 4th Connecticut wished “to join the brigade and take a more active part in supressing the rebellion.” In order to pass the time and occupy their minds, the 4th Connecticut read, sang, and wrote, played quoits, constructed gymnastic equipment, and participated in and/or watched sparring.⁴⁷ In April, 1862, the *Knickerbocker* magazine published a letter detailing boxing matches held the day after Christmas, 1861, at Camp Barry, Washington, D.C. According to an anonymous correspondent, the soldiers at Camp Barry languished under the heavy weight of inaction, preferring “even carnage to vary the dull monotony.” Eager for excitement, the

soldiers at Camp Barry decided to celebrate the Christmas season with a series of boxing matches.⁴⁸ Likewise, the 149th Pennsylvania Volunteers, ailing from homesickness and licking wounds incurred at the Battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, turned to sparring to lift their spirits and provide some timely distraction.⁴⁹

The physical and mental benefits of sparring were real. Whether soldiers knew it or not, the physical activity produced by sparring released endorphins in their tattered bodies, improving mood and relieving stress.⁵⁰ Although sparring could not cure malaria or return a comrade from the dead, it did provide sensible and constructive distraction from the chaos of war and monotony of camp. It was a sport officers could support amongst their men, and even participate in, without fearing reprisal from above. Sparring, however, was not the only form of pugilism patronized by Union soldiers. Reports of bareknuckle prizefighting in the Union Army also surfaced. By promoting gambling, risking serious injury, and encouraging disorder, soldier-prizefighters often drew the scorn of their commanding officers. In rare instances, however, officers used prizefighting as a tool, providing their men with a structured 'code' of combat for resolving their disputes. While the meanings of sparring were contested by individuals of divergent social backgrounds, the activity's existence as an appropriate military pastime was rarely questioned. The very existence of prizefighting, on the other hand, was contested within the Union Army, with different regiments reaching very different conclusions.

“Soldier Boys on the Muscle:” The Meanings of Prizefighting in the Union Army

In the Union Army, prizefights occurred between soldiers from all regions of the North, serving multiple purposes for those who watched and participated. In most cases, soldiers conducted prizefights according to agreed-upon rules, typically resembling the Rules of the London Prize Ring, in remote locations on the outskirts of Union encampments. Prizefights represented an extension of the antebellum working-class sporting subcultures that matured in cities like New York, Brooklyn, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis, during the 1850s. Through prizefighting, soldiers could temporarily throw off the communal obligations of camp life, expressing aggressive, competitive masculinities learned in the pre-war sporting subcultures. In some cases, prizefights strictly displayed prowess in defence of one's honour. For the most part, however, soldiers recreated prizefighting as it existed in the working-class sporting subcultures of antebellum America, conducting contests for 'stakes' or a 'purse,' raised by the fighters themselves or a crowd of interested brothers in arms. Prizefights were not universally accepted as a permissible activity in the Union Army. In regiments that explicitly permitted prizefights, such contests served as a means of dispute resolution. In other regiments, however, middle-class officers vehemently opposed the prize ring, forcing the sport into remote areas outside of camp. Despite the best efforts of fighters and spectators, officers often managed to break up, and sometimes arrest those participating in, prizefights before a winner was declared.

During monotonous stretches of camp life, Union soldiers occasionally organized prizefights as a source of distraction and entertainment, reminiscent of the working-class sporting subcultures of antebellum America. Most prizefights in the Union Army involved American or immigrant men with Anglo or Celtic surnames, such as Hastings, Fitzgerald, Welch, and McCabe, to name a few. By the 1860s, most men comprehended the fundamentals of prizefighting, learning about rounds, rules, seconds, referees, and the sport's other nuances from the detailed newspaper coverage of major fights like Morrissey-Heenan and Heenan-Sayers.⁵¹ As heroes of the working class, successful Irish heavyweights like John Morrissey and James Sullivan, and their American counterparts Tom Hyer and John C. Heenan, inspired numerous soldiers to test their skills in the ring. Lacking the financial means for a large purse, most military prizefights were for small sums of money, usually not exceeding fifty dollars, staked by the fighters personally or raised by fellow members of a regiment. One of the more lucrative prizefights in the Union Army, for the victor at least, occurred on January 23, 1864, in an encampment at Culpepper, Virginia, between E.F. French and J.P. Nichols for fifty dollars a side. Unfortunately, the *New York Clipper* does not list the State or regiment of origin for French or Nichols. Regardless, as a bout contested within the confines of a camp, the Nichols-French contest represents a relative rarity in the history of prizefighting in the Union Army. Without having to hide their intentions, French and Nichols contested the one hundred dollar purse in plain view, providing entertainment for privates and officers alike over forty gruelling rounds. Nichols ultimately prevailed, scoring a decisive victory over French to claim the stakes.⁵²

Although prizefighting in the Union Army closely resembled its pre-war counterpart, a more diverse group of men participated in the sport while serving the North than was common in peacetime. For example, German Americans, typically associated with gymnastics and baseball at mid-century, tested the waters of prizefighting while serving in the Union Army. On June 13, 1863, the *New York Clipper* previewed an upcoming bout between two Brooklyn men serving in the 139th New York Volunteers named Wilhelm Pohlman and Samuel Owens for a purse of fifty dollars.⁵³ Pohlman was a working-class German immigrant, ultimately becoming a butcher in Virginia after the war, while Owens was a native-born American employed as a glass blower.⁵⁴ Whether or not Pohlman won his contest with Owens is not reported in subsequent issues of the *Clipper*. Another German, known only as “Young Franks” of the 41st New York Volunteers – also known as the De Kalb Regiment or 2nd Yager Regiment – won twenty-five dollars in a prizefight against Bill Roberts of the 73rd Pennsylvania Volunteers on January 18, 1862, near Hunters Chapel, Virginia. Franks enjoyed his experience in the ring, moving to California in 1863 to become a printer and pursue prizefighting more seriously. On September 19, 1863, the *New York Clipper* published a letter from Franks challenging Tom Welch of Placerville for one thousand dollars a side, but no agreement was reached.⁵⁵

As Elliott Gorn explains in *The Manly Art*, “the close-knit life of the camp and the dependence of men in war on one another required that disputes be resolved expeditiously and with finality. Individuals released their rancors in the ring and left the magic circle with social equilibrium restored.”⁵⁶ Indeed, examples of quarrelsome

soldiers lashing out at their fellow volunteers were frequently recorded in the letters and diaries of Union soldiers. When, for example, William and Thomas Christie of the 1st Battery Minnesota Light Artillery arrived near Vicksburg, Mississippi, in early 1863, they expected to engage in a short battle with the Confederates to “take Vicksburg by storm.” Before the battle with the rebels got underway, however, there was plenty of “storm” between Union soldiers, with volunteers from Minnesota and Kansas engaging in drunken “quarrelling and fighting.”⁵⁷ On February 16, William wrote to his brother Alexander explaining the widespread drunkenness in his unit, regular fisticuffs, and “common” black eyes.⁵⁸ Charles B. Haydon, in his candid journal of life with the Second Michigan Volunteers, also recalls a rather desperate fight in camp, resulting in two “noses skinned and bloodied.”⁵⁹ Although fist fights were considered disruptive acts of disobedience by Union officers, ‘rough and tumble’ fights between volunteers were particularly disconcerting. Although largely associated with the backcountry frontiersmen of the American South, ‘rough and tumble,’ or ‘gouging,’ was not unheard of in the cities and towns of antebellum America.⁶⁰ For residents of antebellum New York City, for example, rough and tumble contests unfolded in the streets of the metropolis, with brawlers like Paudeen McLaughlin and Bill Poole earning distinction in eye plucking and nose biting.⁶¹ Like prizefighting, rough and tumble entered the Union Army in the cultural baggage of volunteers. At Camp Yates, near Springfield, Illinois, for example, cavalrymen Dan Finigan and Sam Davis resorted to a rough and tumble – or “hog fight” to quote the *New York Clipper* – after becoming “jealous of each other.” Finigan and Davis fought for twelve minutes, including much wrestling on the ground,

when Finigan landed a firm punch to Davis' jugular, forcing the latter to surrender.⁶² To avoid such gruesome, potentially crippling contests, the officers of the 5th New York Volunteers – also known as Duryee's Zouaves – issued passes to their men to leave camp to conduct prizefights. According to historian Alfred Davenport, for example, members of the 5th New York Volunteers regularly engaged in prizefighting while encamped in Baltimore, Maryland, using a spot near the Patapsco River for many “a tough mill in the ring, fought according to the rules of the code, in a fair stand-up fight, to settle some rivalry or grudge that had been engendered in camp.”⁶³ By approving prizefights on the outskirts of camp, officers allowed soldiers to blow off steam in a controlled manner, lessening the chances of an impromptu fistfight or rough and tumble occurring in camp. For Duryee's Zouaves, structured prizefighting, conducted according to some variation of the Rules of the London Prize Ring, permitted soldiers to defend their honour in a public setting, closely resembling the practices of the working-class sporting subculture.

The officers at Martindale Barracks, in Washington, D.C., were also lenient when it came to prizefighting as dispute resolution. On January 20, 1864, at Martindale Barracks in Washington, D.C., Peter Dyer and John Heath, both of the 19th Calvary, staged a prizefight for the love a woman. Although the *New York Clipper* did not state the winner of the Dyer-Heath contest, it did note that Dyer scored first blood and first knockdown in the initial round of fighting.⁶⁴ Located within sight of the White House, Martindale Barracks was named for General John H. Martindale, serving primarily as a

hospital. The fact that a prizefight could occur within earshot of the President is indicative of broader changes in the nation's capital. Dyer's fistic success in pursuit of love proved a gateway to further prize fighting, ultimately leading him to test his skills again the following month. At the Martindale Barracks in early February, Dyer fought twenty rounds with J.D. Potter, winning in sixty minutes. What Dyer and Potter were fighting for – money, prizes, a love interest, or simple relief from boredom – is not specified by the *New York Clipper*.⁶⁵

In some instances, Union soldiers settled disputes with prizefights despite the disapproval of their respective officers, sneaking to a remote location outside of camp to stage such contests. Zeno Cliff and Patrick Fitzgerald of the 12th Illinois Volunteers, for example, travelled to a spot outside their camp at Pocahontas, Tennessee, to contest a prizefight for honour's sake in October, 1863.⁶⁶ According to the *New York Clipper*, a "little miff," or disagreement, occurred between Cliff and Fitzgerald on October 9. Both Cliff and Fitzgerald were almost "locked up in the guard house" before their friends intervened "swearing it was all in fun." When matters at camp settled down, Fitzgerald sent Cliff a *defi*, challenging his comrade to a prizefight. Cliff agreed to Fitzgerald's proposition, leading the men and a large group of onlookers to strike out for a secluded spot in the woods, away from the prying gaze of the camp's guards and officers. Once situated, Cliff and Fitzgerald fought eight rounds in 49 minutes before being located by military police, preventing the men from decisively concluding their dispute.⁶⁷

“Men of muscle, who can hit straight from the shoulder:” Prizefighters in the Union Blue

As Elliott Gorn eloquently suggests in *The Manly Art*, “a tenuous logic connects boxing and warfare. On the simplest level, the good boxer, like the good soldier, is a violent man, doling out more punishment than he received.”⁶⁸ The *New York Clipper*, arguably the premier sporting periodical of the antebellum period, subscribed to this “tenuous logic,” conflating success as a pugilist with potential as a soldier. After Federal forces surrendered Fort Sumter to the Confederacy on April 13, 1861, for example, the *Clipper* and its devotees were confident that Manhattan’s boxers could form an “efficient” regiment within the Union Army. As early as April 27, a Manhattanite named John R. Ford wrote the *Clipper* offering one thousand dollars to organize a regiment “composed of men of muscle, who can hit straight from the shoulder.” The ability to hit “straight from the shoulder,” rather than swing a fist wildly, was the mark of a skilled mid-nineteenth century boxer. The *Clipper* supported Ford’s plan, encouraging “prize fighters” to “turn out and fight for the most valuable prize that could be offered – Liberty – and preserve the flag of our Union untarnished, even if the secession mob has cut the ropes. Shy your castors into the ring, and approach the scratch bravely.”⁶⁹

Some Northeastern pugilists answered the *Clipper’s* call to arms, emerging from the urban hotels and saloons to take up arms against the Confederacy. In Manhattan, the nationally renowned prizefighting brothers Johnny and Harry Lazarus and their friend and fellow prizefighter Mike Trainor, all enlisted with the 11th New York

Volunteers. Lightweight prizefighter and Manhattan politician Billy Wilson served as colonel of the 6th New York Volunteers. Gotham's Mike "Crow" Norton, a sparring aficionado of the highest calibre, enlisted with the 25th New York Volunteers, along with well-known sparrers Mike Brady, also of Manhattan, and Young Derby, alias Shorty, of Albany.⁷⁰ Mileage Cornell and Jerry Conklin, two other talented Manhattan sparring men, both enlisted with the 8th New York Volunteers.⁷¹ In New England, the response was comparable to that in New York, with Boston-based prizefighter Henry Tye, of English citizenship, reportedly enlisting with the 1st Massachusetts Volunteers, under the pseudonym Harry Smith, and Hartford-based prizefighters Harry Finegass and Jack Nelson serving in a regiment from Connecticut.⁷² The value of prizefighters in the 11th New York Regiment will be discussed in the context of both camp life and combat, comparing the expectations laid out by the *Clipper* with reports from eyewitnesses following the 11th's deployment to Virginia.⁷³ This section will also discuss the Civil War career of prizefighter turned Colonel William "Billy" Wilson of the 6th New York Volunteers. Like many Manhattan pugilists, Wilson was a fervent Democrat, opposing Abraham Lincoln, abolition, the containment of slavery, and the Republican Party. Wilson's pre-war positions on race, class, and gender, shaped his service as a colonel, producing a unique, if not always effective, Union regiment, shaped by the working-class traditions of Manhattan.

Fire Laddies and Prizefighters: Elmer E. Ellsworth and the 11th New York Volunteers

Shortly after the fall of Fort Sumter in April, 1861, an Illinois-based law student named Elmer E. Ellsworth travelled to New York City to assemble a Union regiment composed of volunteer firefighters, or ‘fire laddies,’ and their comrades. Ellsworth’s regiment became the 11th New York Volunteers, more commonly known as the 1st New York Fire Zouaves. In his 1952 novel *East of Eden*, American John Steinbeck wrote, “people like you to be something, preferably what they are.”⁷⁴ Steinbeck’s insightful observation regarding social expectations was particularly true of Union Army officers dealing with hordes of enthusiastic but inexperienced volunteers – Elmer Ellsworth was no different. A firm proponent of Victorian notions of sobriety and order, Ellsworth endeavoured to transform his working-class volunteers into versions of himself. The social and cultural norms of the working-class sporting subculture, particularly heavy drinking and fighting, proved difficult for Ellsworth to stifle. For many working-class Americans, drinking and fighting were intrinsic components of manhood, supporting a broader correlation between masculinity and competitive aggression. Gathered predominantly from the volunteer fire departments of New York City, Ellsworth’s Zouaves carried the working class’ code of masculine conduct into the Union Army. The spread of working-class masculine norms through Ellsworth’s regiment was also facilitated by a number of prizefighter enlistees, including Harry Lazarus, Johnny Lazarus, Michael Trainor, and Dennis Horrigan. Within the working-class sporting subculture, prizefighters represented ideal embodiments of masculinity, serving as heroes for many urban workers. Aside from the violence expected of both pugilists and

soldiers, the lifestyles of antebellum prizefighters and fire laddies were utterly incompatible with military service. As their officers soon realized, many members of the 11th lacked the respect for authority and discipline demanded of Union soldiers. On numerous occasions during the war, the masculine code of the working-class sporting subculture interfered with efficient martial operations. Within the Zouaves, aggression and competitiveness placed the regiment in troublesome situations, putting privates at odds with officers, disrupting camp life, and provoking the ire of the military establishment and civil society, alike.

Elmer E. Ellsworth's expectations for the 11th New York Volunteers were rooted in his own middle-class social experiences in New York and Illinois. The son of a tailor, Ellsworth embraced prevailing middle-class notions of the 'self-made man,' displaying remarkable foresight and determination to attain opportunities for social advancement, eventually studying law under J.E. Cone in Chicago. Ellsworth was utterly infatuated with the military, devouring texts written by military drill experts like Winfield Scott and William Joseph Hardee in his spare time.⁷⁵ A firm believer in the virtues of physical activity, Ellsworth frequented a gymnasium in Chicago, learning to fence from French Crimean war veteran Charles A. Devilliers. In addition to teaching Ellsworth the fine points of swordsmanship, Devilliers taught Ellsworth about the drilling and military tactics of French Zouave units, popularized during the French conquest of Algeria. Enthralled by Devilliers' descriptions of the Zouaves, Ellsworth studied the units in depth, determined to replicate the Zouaves in America. Before long, Ellsworth's knowledge of military tactics earned him invitations to drill not only the Chicago militia,

but the militias of other communities, including Rockford, Elgin, and Freeport, Illinois, and Madison, Wisconsin.⁷⁶ In 1859, Ellsworth was able to implement his Zouave tactics more permanently, organizing the United States Zouave Cadets in Chicago, enforcing middle-class notions of respectability in his regiment of “lawyers, merchants, and clerks,” forbidding drinking, smoking, and other “sorts of immorality.”⁷⁷ The discipline and precision of the Zouave Cadets’ drilling, combined with the unit’s extravagant uniforms – usually consisting of bright colors, baggy pants, and fez hats – made the Cadets a hit with audiences across the North. Throughout 1860, the Zouave Cadets performed in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Albany, Philadelphia, and elsewhere.⁷⁸ Most importantly, however, the Zouaves performed in Washington, D.C., attracting the attention of President Abraham Lincoln, who stated: “I have never seen anything like it in any part of the world.”⁷⁹

Following the Zouave Cadets’ drill display in Washington, Abraham Lincoln was particularly impressed with Ellsworth as the regiment’s leader, ultimately befriending the young law student. Supporting the ambitious Ellsworth, Lincoln appealed to Simon Cameron, then Secretary of War, on March 5, 1861, to appoint Ellsworth as Chief Clerk of the War Office.⁸⁰ The following month, Lincoln tried to find Ellsworth a more prestigious post in the Army. “I have been, and still am anxious for you to have the best position in the military which can be given you,” explained Lincoln in an April letter to Ellsworth, “consistently with justice and proper courtesy towards the older officers of the army.”⁸¹ The matter of Ellsworth’s reappointment was expedited by the attack and occupation of Fort Sumter by South Carolinian rebels on April 13. When Lincoln called

upon the North to raise 75,000 men to quash the Confederate uprising in South Carolina, Ellsworth keenly obliged, travelling back to Manhattan to raise a working-class regiment, recruited predominantly from the city' volunteer fire departments.

Ellsworth focused primarily on the recruitment of volunteer fire fighters, also known as 'fire laddies,' assuming their displays of youthful exuberance and courage fighting fires could be transferred into their service as soldiers. Regular spectators and participants in New York's working-class sporting subculture, volunteer fire fighters injected their love of play, aggression, and competition into their service as firefighters. As historian Richard B. Stott suggests, "The fire companies reflected the youthful energy of city workers," racing rival companies to fires in hopes of earning the honour of putting it out. "In an era when organized sport was in its infancy," explains Stott, "these runs were welcome exercise to youthful members, and races often ended with brawls between the highly competitive companies." With violent, inter-company confrontations becoming the norm for volunteer fire fighters in the 1850s, many fire companies enlisted prizefighters to add muscle and pugilistic expertise to their respective units. Devoted adherents to the masculine code of the working-class sporting subculture, fire laddies considered prizefighters ideal representations of working-class masculinity. Within the ranks of the fire laddies, few topics carried greater significance and inspired more debate than prizefighting and prizefighters.⁸² Thus, it is not surprising that Ellsworth's strategic recruitment of fire laddies resulted, perhaps inadvertently, in the recruitment of well-known prizefighters Harry Lazarus, Johnny Lazarus, Dennis Horrigan, and Michael Trainor.

Despite all his experience with military scholarship and drilling, little could prepare Ellsworth for the challenges presented by the 11th New York Volunteers. First of all, the 1st Fire Zouaves were demographically dissimilar to Ellsworth's middle-class Zouave Cadets of Chicago. Although earlier volunteer fire companies consisted of middle-class men, seeking to protect their stores and practices, most of New York's antebellum fire laddies were working-class men, with volunteers from skilled trades – butchers, carpenters, smiths, printers – typically holding positions of authority. Ellsworth's well-known insistence upon Victorian notions of temperance and obedience was resisted by the 1st Fire Zouaves, seeking to recreate the working-class sporting subculture of New York via their camp activities. The exotic Zouave outfits and semi-theatrical drilling of the 11th New York Volunteers, however, aligned with the practices of antebellum fire laddies, well known for their 'fancy' dress and public displays of strength and stamina. By the 1850s, the term 'fancy' was a synonym for the denizens of the working-class sporting subculture, referring to the group's tendency to mimic the dress of earlier "English aristocrats who mixed with working-class toughs at illegal sporting events."⁸³ Nonetheless, moulding the fire laddies and their prizefighter heroes into an efficient military unit proved an ongoing struggle for Ellsworth's military.



Above: Elmer Ellsworth, as portrayed in *The Photographic History of the Civil War*, vol. 1 (New York: Review of Reviews Company, 1911), 350.

Writing in the 1880s, J. Frank Kernan, with the benefit of hindsight, still believed Elmer Ellsworth was the only man who could have made soldiers out of the New York fire laddies. “The raw material of the Fire Zouaves was excellent,” recalled Kernan, “but it needed a judge of human nature to work it up into something useful.”⁸⁴ Maintaining even a semblance of order in the 11th New York Volunteers, however, proved exceedingly difficult for Ellsworth. Prior to the Zouaves deployment in late April, for example, the *New York News* reported that Ellsworth’s men openly ignored his orders to keep rank, opting to assist a fellow Zouave in a street fight instead.⁸⁵ Accustomed to middle-class recruits familiar with his Victorian expectations, Ellsworth required more

time to instill a sense of martial decorum and obedience into his working-class Zouaves. Time, however, was in short supply. Despite a clear need for additional training and preparation, the 1st Fire Zouaves left New York City for the nation's capital in Washington on April 29, 1861.⁸⁶ Before their departure, Ellsworth attempted to inspire order among his men with a moving, but ineffective oratory. "You will sustain your own high character," Ellsworth told the Zouaves, "and these banners will ever wave in triumph, even though it be in the midst of ruins."⁸⁷ Other New Yorkers lacked Ellsworth's confidence in the 11th New York Volunteers, questioning the unit's value on the battlefield. "These young fellows march badly," wrote lawyer-diarist George Templeton Strong, "but they will fight hard if judiciously handled. As a regiment of the line, they will be weak..." Nonetheless, Strong believed there was an important role for regiments such as Ellsworth's in the war effort. According to Strong, the 1st Fire Zouaves' penchant for brawling and combat in close quarters made them ideal for handling civilian uprisings in the Border States, where sectional tensions boiled over into fatal riots. Specifically, Strong stated the Ellsworth's men were aptly suited to deal with the Confederate sympathizers in Baltimore, Maryland responsible for a riot on April 19, resulting in the death of four Union soldiers.⁸⁸

Despite Ellsworth's best efforts, the 1st Fire Zouaves carried their pre-war affection for "aggression and combativeness" into Washington.⁸⁹ As the reputation of his regiment suffered, Ellsworth started expelling Zouaves caught acting in a "disreputable manner," but even this failed to provoke a major behavior change in the regiment, prompting further complaints from Washingtonians.⁹⁰ "The Firemen Zouaves

are continuing their pranks,” wrote a Washington correspondent to the *New York Times*, “and expounding to the terrified people of this city their very free and easy ideas about property. Yesterday a squad went to a boot store, cast off their old leathers, selected the best and walked off.”⁹¹ The noted prizefighter Harry Lazarus, highly regarded among the working class for winning and drawing a pair of prizefights with fellow Zouave Dennis Horrigan in 1857 and 1858, also found trouble in Washington.⁹² Lazarus was accused of drawing a sword on a fellow Union soldier named Billy Cogswell who, although not a prizefighter, was considered “some pumpkins” as a pugilist, supposedly handing Lazarus a “sound thrashing.”⁹³ Nonetheless, the 1st Fire Zouaves soon gave Washingtonians reason to forgive their disorder and debauchery. Although their soldiering left much to be desired, the Zouaves used their firefighting skills to win praise in the nation’s capital, extinguishing a threatening inferno at Washington’s Willard Hotel. “All honor to the noble New York Zouaves!” exclaimed Washington’s *National Republican* newspaper.⁹⁴ Remarkably, with one spectacular act of bravery, the 11th New York Volunteers reversed prevailing public opinion, erasing memories of their previous misdeeds, becoming Washington’s selfless heroes. As historian Edward K. Spann observes in *Gotham at War*, however, after Washington no “heroic future lay ahead for the First Fire Zouaves Regiment.”⁹⁵

On April 23, 1861, the State of Virginia seceded from the Union, placing Confederate territory within sight of the White House. After less than a month in Washington, the 1st Fire Zouaves were deployed, on April 24, to occupy the city of Alexandria, Virginia, located less than ten miles from the nation’s capital. Given the

much publicized disorder associated with the 11th New York Volunteers, it was likely Ellsworth's personal relationship with Abraham Lincoln that facilitated this early assignment in the environs of Washington. If Lincoln believed Ellsworth's leadership would galvanize the chaotic ranks of the Zouaves, the President soon found cause for concern. After assisting in the capture of Alexandria, Ellsworth was shot and killed by J.W. Jackson, proprietor of the Marshall House hotel, while lowering a Confederate flag from atop his establishment.⁹⁶ Ellsworth's death was a near fatal blow for the morale and leadership of the Zouaves. Deprived of their lauded leader, the Zouaves continued their service under the the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Noah L. Farnham, more commonly known as "Pony" Farnham, a Manhattan volunteer firefighter from that city's 42 Engine.⁹⁷

Unlike many of his fellow Zouaves, "Pony" Farnham was a thoroughly middle-class individual, receiving an above average education in Connecticut before working the counter for merchants in New York. According to Farnham's *New York Times'* obituary, "He found the confinement of the counter exceedingly irksome, as he possessed a remarkably vigorous constitution, and his tastes impelled him to seek the activity which his occupation did not afford in the ranks of the City Guard, at that time the crack corps of the City."⁹⁸ Farnham also joined Hook and Ladder Company No. 1, enjoying considerable success as a volunteer firefighter, rising to the rank of assistant engineer. It was the military, however, that consumed Farnham's attention. In 1857, Farnham joined the 7th New York Militia. Like many members of the 7th Militia, Farnham enjoyed sparring with gloves. Although many middle-class men engaged in

sparring for exercise and self-defence, Farnham enjoyed boxing for its martial expediency, foreshadowing the allied military's dedication to the sport in World War One. Farnham, much like Ellsworth, threw himself into all things he considered of martial value, ultimately educating himself on military strategy and learning to fence.⁹⁹ Well known by Manhattan's volunteer firefighters, Farnham was well-respected by the 1st Fire Zouaves prior to Ellsworth's death, making him an obvious choice for command. Although Farnham was never officially accorded the title of Colonel of the 11th New York Volunteers, he was made 'acting' colonel shortly after Ellsworth's assassination. In a disastrous turn of events, Farnham fell ill following the occupation of Alexandria, leaving the new commander of the 1st Fire Zouaves bedridden leading up to the First Battle of Bull Run.

After successfully capturing Alexandria and mourning the loss of their colonel, the 11th New York Volunteers sought out the comforts of working-class activities. While on guard duty at Alexandria, Virginia, the Zouaves made their way to the banks of the Potomac River on July 10, 1861, to witness a prizefight between two soldiers named Rooney and Riley, from Massachusetts and Michigan respectively. The fight was conducted less than two miles from Washington's city center, suggesting a degree of leniency towards prizefighting in the capital city. At the Riley-Rooney contest, alongside the Fire Zouaves, the recently paid 69th New York Volunteers demonstrated particularly good cheer, gambling freely on the contest. Riley and Rooney fought a total of eleven rounds in thirty nine minutes for a ten dollar bill. Although "both men were badly punished," Rooney eventually prevailed. Many soldiers in attendance desired a rematch,

but both Riley and Rooney – and indeed the 11th New York Volunteers – were scheduled to march for Virginia in the coming days, making such a contest improbable.¹⁰⁰ The Riley-Rooney prizefight proved the calm before the storm for the 11th New York Volunteers. Any confidence the Zouaves developed in their quality as soldiers was about to be shattered at the First Battle of Bull Run.

In July, 1861, an ailing “Pony” Farnham rose from his bed, marching the 11th New York Volunteers to Manassas, Virginia, for the First Battle of Bull Run, where the Fire Zouaves served in Brigadier General Irvin McDowell’s Army of Northeastern Virginia, with Orlando B. Wilcox’s Second Brigade of the Second Division. McDowell was a West Point educated veteran of the Mexican-American War, but lacked any experience leading an army in the field. The time and resources needed for McDowell to adapt to his new position, ensured adequate training for the heavily volunteer-based Army of Northeastern Virginia, or even secure rations, ammunition, and arms for a battle with the Confederacy, were in short supply.¹⁰¹ McDowell, however, recognized the shortcomings of the Union Army, suggesting he take additional time to prepare the Army of Northeastern Virginia for deployment in Manassas. Lincoln disagreed, suggesting McDowell’s Army and the Confederate forces at Manassas stood on equally inexperienced footing. On July 16, the Army of Northeastern Virginia marched towards Manassas, despite McDowell’s apprehension regarding the readiness of the force. On July 21 at Manassas, the Battle of Bull Run raged in all its phantasmagoric chaos, resulting in a crushing defeat for the Union. In the North, disgruntled citizens blamed

McDowell and his fellow officers for the Union defeat at Manassas. Yet, as John Hennessey recently emphasized, “while the Army’s commanders were surely inexperienced in the management of such large numbers of troops, they were not unthinking buffoons who mindlessly hurled men into battle.”¹⁰² McDowell’s plan of attack at Bull Run was sound, but he lacked the skilled soldiers to implement his strategy successfully.¹⁰³ Indeed, for many soldiers of the Army of Northeastern Virginia, including the 11th New York Volunteers, Bull Run represented their initial foray into a battlefield.

For the 11th New York Volunteers, the First Battle of Bull Run was a martial baptism by fire. Although the prizefighters and fire laddies of the Zouaves were accustomed to violence, experiencing it daily in the working-class sporting subculture, most lacked any experience with combat on a grand scale. The 11th New York Volunteers’ occupation of Alexandria was accomplished against largely civilian resistance, providing little preparation for the cannons, muskets, rifles, and bayonets of a Civil War battlefield. Indeed, while Farnham and a smattering of others boasted a degree of militia training, the martial skills of most Fire Zouaves was limited to marching and drilling.¹⁰⁴ Johnny and Harry Lazarus, for example, spent most of their lives travelling America with their father, Israel Lazarus, performing in boxing shows in the Northeast from a young age, becoming professional prizefighters and gamblers in adulthood. Mike Trainor and Dennis Horrigan, considered exceptionally proficient in a boxing ring, were also green recruits, lacking any military experience.¹⁰⁵ In a letter to the *New York Mercury*, prizefighter Harry Lazarus seemed rather surprised by the intense combat at Bull Run.¹⁰⁶ “I find that fighting is rather warm work,” wrote Lazarus,

“especially when you hear the bullets whistling around you like hail-stones. I had the stock of my musket shot off in my hand; my cartridge-box was fairly riddled with bullets; although, strange to say, I escaped without a wound.”¹⁰⁷ In total, 34 members of the 11th New York Zouaves died at Bull Run, including “Pony” Farnham. While standing firm, returning fire on the Confederates as his regiment abandoned hope and fled, Farnham was shot in the head with a musket. Although “Pony’s” injury was not immediately fatal, his illness prior to Bull Run left him in a weakened state, preventing the gallant commander of the Zouaves from receiving potentially lifesaving surgery.

As expected by General McDowell, many early volunteer regiments fared poorly in battle early in the Civil War. Although the sporting press confidently encouraged the enlistment of boxers, framing prizefighters as ideal soldiers, most pugilists were ill-prepared for war. The 11th New York Volunteers’ performance on the Bull Run battlefield was comparable to that of other regiments of green volunteers. Despite the claims of the *New York Clipper*, the Zouave’s proficiency in boxing and volunteer firefighting was of little value in armed combat against the Confederacy. The overall courage of the 11th New York at Bull Run was also questioned, Colonel Andrew Porter of the Sixteenth U.S. Infantry dubbing it “evanescent” – temporary, fleeting, momentary – disappearing before the enemy at Bull Run. The 11th Volunteers “broke and fled, leaving the batteries open to a charge of the enemy’s cavalry,” explained Porter. “The words, gestures, and threats of our officers were thrown away upon men who had lost all presence of mind...some of our best and noblest officers died trying to rally them.” Although other New York regiments, including the 69th and 38th Volunteers, bravely

returned fire on the Confederates, the 11th panicked, scattered, and hid.¹⁰⁸ Major William F. Barry echoed Porter's description of Ellsworth's Zouaves. "The 11th...instantly broke and fled in confusion to the rear," explained Barry. When prompted to continue the fight, the Zouaves disobeyed orders, refusing "to rally and return to the support of the batteries."¹⁰⁹

Although none of the prizefighters enlisted with the 11th New York Volunteers died at the First Battle of Bull Run, the psychological impact of defeat ravaged the ranks of the Zouaves. In the days following the carnage at Manassas, many Zouaves threw down their weapons and deserted. For boxer Johnny Lazarus, the Civil War proved a fleeting cause, worthy for a time, but ultimately abandoned. Although the *New York Tribune* suggests that Lazarus was honorably discharged earlier in the war by Elmer Ellsworth himself, existing military documents suggest otherwise. The official muster rolls for New York City state that Johnny Lazarus deserted the 1st Fire Zouaves on August 1, 1861.¹¹⁰ Lazarus was by no means alone in his decision to desert. Lacking leadership following the deaths of Ellsworth and Farnham, members of the 1st Zouaves deserted in large numbers. The idealized notions of adventure and patriotism promoted by magazines, newspapers, and recruiters, embraced by impressionable male northerners, promptly evaporated in the midst of thundering guns and widespread bloodshed. The physical and mental toll of the war exceeded even the grimmest of imaginations. To Lazarus and others like him, the roar of rifles and muskets, stink of death, and monotonous, nervous patches of inactivity proved considerably less desirable than the sporting lives they left behind.

Following the death of Farnham and the Union loss at First Bull Run, the downtrodden 11th New York Volunteers were sent back to Manhattan to be reorganized. On September 21, 1861, rather than focusing on the reorganization of the regiment or their poor showing at First Bull Run, Fire Zouaves Tom McCabe and Ted McCuff contested a prizefight in Weehawken, New Jersey. Interestingly, and contrary to prevailing logic in the working-class sporting subcultures of New York and New Jersey, the McCabe-McCuff bout was fought for no monetary purse, the men content to battle 130 rounds, encompassing two hours and twenty-two minutes, to simply determine the better pugilist. Although both men were “badly punished,” McCuff ultimately proved victorious.¹¹¹ A prizefight in the midst of reorganization only supported the unit’s detractors who, as Spann suggests, treated the 11th New York Volunteers as “little better than deserters and mutineers.”¹¹² Feeling disrespected and unappreciated, the Zouaves continued to behave poorly upon their return to Virginia. With their reputation already in tatters, the 11th New York Volunteers’ regimental banners, presented to the unit by the women of New York City, were discovered in a trash heap in Virginia, further diminishing the Zouaves’ pool of supporters and well-wishers.

After redeployment to Virginia, the 11th New York Volunteers once again turned to working-class activities for distraction and amusement, organizing a fight between Zouaves James Lavell and Michael O’Rooke. As Elliott Gorn reports in *The Manly Art*, the Lavell-O’Rooke contest was held on New Year’s Day, 1862. Harry Lazarus acted as referee, while other members of the 11th Volunteers served as seconds. O’Rooke was seconded by Michael Trainor and Peter Smith, while Lavell received the assistance of

Horrigan and Tom Ross. Much to the chagrin of the fighters and their fellow Zouaves, an officer broke up the prizefight in the twenty-first round, just as it seemed O'Rooke would put Lavell to the turf for good.¹¹³ The fact that an officer interrupted the prizefight suggests that, while endorsed by Sergeant Lazarus, prizefighting was not embraced by all officers serving in the 11th Volunteers. The aggression, competitiveness, and individualism frequent in the working-class sporting subculture of New York City was suppressed in the Union Army as officers attempted to encourage more communal understandings of masculinity.

Following their reorganization in New York City, the 1st Fire Zouaves were a battle-tested unit, hardened by their experiences at First Bull Run. The 11th New York Volunteers' reputation, however, never fully recovered from their disappointing performance at the First Battle of Bull Run. The Union Army was hesitant to use the Zouaves in significant battles with the Confederacy, relegating the 11th New York Volunteers to various guard duties. With their regiment detailed to low risk operations, requiring little fighting, prizefighters grew weary of life in the 1st Fire Zouaves. Michael Trainor, after rising to the rank of Sergeant, was discharged from service for disability on January 28, 1862.¹¹⁴ Harry Lazarus was mustered out with the remainder of the 1st Fire Zouaves on June 2. Dennis Horrigan, despite less than encouraging experiences with the 11th New York Volunteers, carried on as a member of the 'regular' Union Army.¹¹⁵

“We Boys is Sociable with Pavin’ Stones!” The Trials and Tribulations of Billy Wilson’s Boys

On April 23, 1861, George Templeton Strong came upon a “desperate-looking set” of men, ready to serve the Union cause. “They didn’t clearly know what regiment they were told they belonged to,” wrote Strong, “but said they were ‘Billy Wilson’s crowd.’” An ex-alderman and retired prizefighter – or an “aldermanic bully” – Wilson tended to incorporate his pugilistic talents into his political dealings, resorting to violence and intimidation at the ballot boxes.¹¹⁶ Like Ellsworth’s Zouaves, Wilson’s 6th New York Volunteer Regiment recruited mostly unskilled and skilled laborers, particularly those renowned for toughness and violence in their communities. The members of “Billy Wilson’s Boys” observed by Strong in on April 23 were eager for action, initially expressing interest in punishing the Baltimore rioters responsible for the deaths of four Union soldiers. “We can fix that Baltimore crowd!” they cried in the streets, “Let’em bring along their pavin’ stones; we boys is sociable with pavin’ stones!”¹¹⁷ However, due to Wilson’s and his men’s reputations for illegal acts of violence the Union Army was hesitant to deploy the 6th New York Volunteers. A degree of strategic discrimination was exercised against the prizefighter colonel and his men, delaying their deployment and limiting their role in major engagements. This section takes a two-pronged approach to the history of the 6th New York Volunteer Regiment, focusing on Billy Wilson’s personal politics and pre-war experiences, before examining the history of the 6th New York Volunteers more broadly, detailing the regiment’s experiences in Florida and Louisiana.¹¹⁸

A former prizefighter, militia leader, and political bully, Billy Wilson was a man accustomed to violence by the outbreak of Civil War in 1861. During the 1840s, Wilson established himself as one of the finest lightweight pugilists in America by defeating Ned Hughes in Louisiana in 1844 and James Stewart in Connecticut in 1846.¹¹⁹ In the 1850s, Billy Wilson expanded his share of the violence trade by entering New York City ward politics and joining the militia. Wilson put his pugilistic talents on display during his 1856 campaign for First Ward alderman, inciting a violent, three-hundred-person riot at the polls. Wilson quite literally fought his way to political power, assaulting voters and smashing ballot boxes to win the 1856 election. Wilson was subsequently indicted for his role in the 1856 election violence, only to be acquitted of all charges and permitted to maintain his political office.¹²⁰ While serving as an alderman in 1857, Wilson was appointed commander-in-chief of the “New York Citizen Volunteers” militia, promising to oppose the Republican Party, founded in 1854, by upholding the principles of “true (not black) republicanism.”¹²¹ The term “Black Republican” came into common parlance in the late 1850s, particularly amongst Democrats, mocking the Republican Party’s devotion to African Americans and the containment of slavery.



Above: Colonel William "Billy" Wilson, *Library of Congress*, LC-B813- 1382 B [P&P] LOT 4192. New York: c. 1861.

A fervent Democrat during his political career, Wilson openly and vigorously opposed the Republican Party, containment of slavery, and abolition. Wilson, however, took his support for slavery a step further than some other Northern Democrats, not only encouraging the spread of slave-labour into the American territories, but helping organize William Walker's racially-charged filibustering campaigns in Nicaragua. According to historian James M. McPherson, "although Walker himself and half of his filibusters were southerners, the enterprise thus far [the spring of 1856] did not have a particularly pro-southern flavor."¹²² With attempts to spread slavery into the western territories proving largely unsuccessful, however, Walker recognized an opportunity to generate Southern support through the implementation of slavery in Nicaragua,

attempting “to bind the Southern States to Nicaragua as if she were one of themselves.”¹²³ In Walker’s 1860 book dedicated to his Nicaraguan exploits, he describes his vision for slavery in Central America, explaining and encouraging the use of “negro slavery in Nicaragua” to “furnish certain labour for the use of agriculture” and “separate the races and destroy the half-castes.”¹²⁴ Although much of Walker’s material support and settlers came from the Southern, slave-holding states, many pro-slavery Northern Democrats, like Billy Wilson, also provided assistance.¹²⁵ In 1857, Wilson sat on a Manhattan-based committee raising “money, provisions, clothing, arms and ammunition” to aid Walker in Nicaragua.¹²⁶ Walker’s reign in Nicaragua, however, proved short lived. In 1857, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras, successfully joined forces to oust Walker from his makeshift Nicaraguan government, returning the American mercenary to New Orleans.¹²⁷ Walker’s second and third campaigns to Nicaragua were prevented by the American Navy and a shipwreck, respectively. Evidently undeterred by his mounting list of failures, Walker made one last ill-fated attempt to take Nicaragua in 1860, resulting in his execution at the hands of Honduran authorities.¹²⁸

Given Wilson’s Democratic politics, support for slavery, and involvement with William Walker, his voluntary enlistment in the Union Army in 1861, at first glance, appears to represent a drastic shift in Wilson’s ideology. Although a New York Democrat, Wilson distanced himself from the more radical politics emerging in his party, particularly those of Mayor Fernando Wood, calling for – amongst other things – the secession of New York City from New York State, creating a neutral, independent city. By

establishing a free city of New York, Wood argued, the city would benefit from continuing trade with the South, eliminating the influence of Republican Governor Edwin Morgan in Albany.¹²⁹ Although Wilson was no fan of Edwin Morgan, he firmly believed the continuation of the Union trumped political affiliations and agendas. Furthermore, early in the Civil War, Lincoln and the Republican Party remained open to reconciliation with the South, allowing pre-war slavery practices to be continued. Although opposed to abolition and Republicanism, Wilson desired the continuation of the Union under pre-war norms, retaining the South's right to hold slaves.

When it came to the preservation of the Union, Wilson preferred swift, violent action over diplomatic negotiations. Billy Wilson recruited men he felt were aptly suited for combat, following his own working-class sensibilities. In Wilson's estimation, the toughest New Yorkers were regular patrons of the boxing fraternity. In April 1861, the prizefighter-colonel patrolled the rougher sections of Gotham in search of battle-hardened brawlers and other sporting regulars to man his regiment.¹³⁰ Most of Wilson's recruits likely enlisted with the Union for reasons comparable to those of their prizefighter-leader. As Burrows and Wallace eloquently suggest, Wilson's followers considered the war, first and foremost, an "adventurous brawl-writ-large."¹³¹ Unlike Elmer Ellsworth, however, Wilson's regiment embraced the working-class culture. As a leading figure in working-class sport, Wilson fully understood his volunteers' lot in life, encouraging his men to transfer their knowledge of street and tavern violence into their service as Union soldiers. In addition to volunteers of a sporting stripe, the 6th New York Volunteers included former filibuster mercenaries, Mexican-American War

veterans, and – reports suggest – a number of known criminals.¹³² Attempting to spur working-class pride, Wilson equipped his regiment with weapons typically used in the gang-related violence of Manhattan, arming each with a bowie knife, pistol, and mini rifle. After swearing to fight to the death, Wilson led his troops throughout the hall, flanked by two officers, one carrying a banner stating “Death to Secessionists!” while another held a pistol and bowie knife high above his head. Before long, the recruits were whipped into frenzy, chanting “Blood! Blood! Blood!” as crowds of well-wishers seethed shouts of approval.¹³³

Despite the unit’s enthusiasm, the Union Army was hesitant to send Wilson and his “Boys” into battle. Although Wilson, along with a handful of Mexican-American War veterans and Walker mercenaries, could boast of military training, the 6th New York Volunteers were largely untrained in martial service. Negative reviews of Elmer Ellsworth, a far more polished leader, respected by the military establishment and broader middle class, gave the Union Army cause for concern over regiments intentionally filled with working-class ‘thugs.’ Furthermore, uncertainty within the military establishment regarding a prizefighter’s ability to effectively lead, organize, and control the 6th New York Volunteers must have factored into the unit’s delayed deployment. While the Union Army contemplated the future of Wilson and his men, reports from the frontlines further emboldened and inspired the 6th New York Volunteers. Wilson’s men itched dreadfully for their turn to the battlefield, but the month of April passed, followed by the entirety of May, and still Wilson’s regiment remained inactive, encamped at Staten Island. When a Methodist minister visited

Wilson and his men in May, Wilson imparted the regiment's readiness for battle upon the preacher: "the boys don't know much about scripture. They think h—l [hell] is somewhere between Montgomery and New Orleans, and they are d----d [damned] anxious to get down in that neighbourhood."¹³⁴ Suffering under the weight of boredom and frustration, some of Wilson's men made their own excitement. As Ernest McKay shows in *The Civil War and New York City*, the arrival of Wilson's Zouaves in camp at Staten Island coincided with a number of robberies in the surrounding area. When the 6th New York Volunteers received word of their imminent deployment in mid-June, Wilson unwisely issued a twelve hour furlough to his men, resulting in a raucous celebration. Following the furlough, seventy-five of the 6th New York Volunteers were so drunk and disorganized they failed to board the steamship *Vanderbilt* for departure the next day.¹³⁵

Wilson's Zouaves left Manhattan on June 15, 1861, destined – much to their dismay – for Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island, Florida.¹³⁶ The Confederate press scoffed at Wilson and his like, the New Orleans' *Daily-Picayune* newspaper proudly stating: "Our ranks are not filled with penitentiary convicts, Billy Mulligans, Dan Sickleses, Ellsworths, Billy Wilsons and such likes. When our battalions shall be hurled upon their fanatical hordes, the North will find that they cannot conquer or subjugate us."¹³⁷ In the opinion of the Confederacy, Wilson's largely working-class regiment would fall quickly in combat with the South's respectable, slave-owning officers. The fact that Wilson, like many antebellum pugilists, made his name partly in Louisiana was conveniently ignored by his Southern critics. Criticism of Wilson's Zouaves, however, was not limited to the

Confederate press or even the south more broadly. To middle-class, male northerners soldiering was an honorable vocation, instilling the self-discipline and resolve required to succeed in the civilian workforce later in life.¹³⁸ Within the Union military establishment, officers often praised career soldiers or “regulars,” while regarding volunteer regiments with suspicion or outright contempt.

Many long-time members of the military institution felt volunteers, particularly urban working-class units, lacked the experience and resolve necessary for large-scale combat with the Confederacy. Colonel Harvey Brown, commanding officer at Fort Pickens, was no different.¹³⁹ When informed he would be receiving assistance for the 6th New York Volunteers, Brown regarded Wilson and his men as more burden than blessing. Despite a dire need for additional troops at Fort Pickens, Brown was convinced that he and the Fort were better off without Wilson’s men. Although Brown desired regular troops, the Union Army lacked a standing force capable of providing career soldiers to all regions at once. In the wake of Brown’s protestations, the 6th New York Volunteers landed at Santa Rosa Island, Florida, on June 24, as reinforcements for Fort Pickens.¹⁴⁰ Brown was incensed by the arrival of Wilson and his men. “When, in the face of repeated applications and urgent entreaties for more regular officers, and...necessity of more regular companies...nine of my officers...are taken from me, and a regiment of undrilled New York City volunteers, entirely undisciplined, are sent to me,” wrote a frustrated Brown in a June 16 letter to Assistant Adjutant-General E.D. Townsend, “I can only attribute it to a want of confidence in my judgement, or disbelief in, and disregard to...the wants and necessities of this fort.”¹⁴¹ Many of Wilson’s volunteers were also

unhappy with their deployment to Fort Pickens, believing the Union Army intentionally sent them to “the most inhospitable island on the face of this earth.” The abundance of snakes, lizards, and insects, proved particularly unsettling for the 6th New York Volunteers, as did the monotony of camp life and the lack of action. “We are essentially a fighting regiment,” wrote a frustrated, anonymous Zouave, and “the majority is composed of men bred in their early days to privation and toil, accustomed to laugh at danger, who value their lives as nothing, and would as soon go to a fight as to a frolic.” Wilson’s men desired deployment in Virginia, like Ellsworth’s Zouaves, to protect the nation’s capital.¹⁴² It was not long, however, before “Wilson’s Boys” experienced the rigours of Civil War combat.

In October 1861, Braxton Bragg, a decorated Mexican-American War veteran and future commander of the Army of Tennessee, organized a force of Confederate troops in Pensacola, crossing over to Santa Rosa Island to attack Wilson and the 6th New York Volunteers.¹⁴³ Bragg’s men moved out on October 8, hitting the shores of Santa Rosa at approximately two o’clock on the morning of October 9. Ever the boastful prizefighter-politician, Wilson wrote to his wife of his regiment’s success repelling Bragg’s attack: “We killed about four hundred of the rebels, and took forty prisoners...my men fought good. The pickets fought like devils.”¹⁴⁴ The true number of rebels killed was likely a small fraction of that reported by Wilson. According to Colonel Harvey Brown, only fourteen rebels were killed before Bragg’s men took flight.¹⁴⁵ Wilson’s outnumbered 6th New York Volunteers, fighting Bragg’s forces on its own before reinforcements arrived, suffered just ten or eleven casualties.¹⁴⁶ Although some

of Wilson's men did indeed perform admirably under fire, Lieutenant Richard H. Jackson, of the 1st United States Artillery, was unimpressed with many of soldiers the 6th New York. "I am sorry to have to state," wrote Jackson to Major Lewis Golding Arnold, of the 1st United States Artillery, "that on my arrival at Colonel Wilson's camp I was greatly surprised to see so many men wandering around, some of them without arms (although there were plenty to be had), and to find in camp with them 3-4 officers who did not even attempt to organize the men or move forward with them."¹⁴⁷ Wilson, the prize-fighter leader of the Zouaves, evidently performed satisfactorily in this initial clash with the Confederates, showing the pluck and determination of his ring career on the field of battle.

Following the attack on Wilson's Zouaves, Fort Pickens responded with an artillery attack on Fort McRee and Pensacola Harbour, disabling the Fort and about two-thirds of the Confederate Naval Yard while suffering "little loss" of Union Troops.¹⁴⁸ Fort Pickens continued to launch artillery attacks on the mainland into 1862, leaving the 6th New York Volunteers to maintain the line. A series of appointments in 1862 briefly left Wilson as the commanding officer at Fort Pickens. In April 1862, Colonel Harvey Brown was appointed commander of New York Harbour, leaving Wilson as the senior officer at Fort Pickens. Brown, though content with Wilson's service, wrote Brigadier General Lorenzo Thomas to request that an officer with "more rank than I have" be sent to Fort Pickens, preventing Wilson from maintaining command. According to Brown, Wilson was incapable of upholding order within the ranks of the 6th New York Volunteers, suggesting he was ill-prepared to take over command of a large unit. "The 6th

Regiment, I am sorry to say, so far as the officers are concerned,” explained Brown, “is in a state of disorganization; criminations, recriminations, charges, and countercharges [*sic*], between the officers, and especially between the colonel and two or three espousing his side and the other officers of the regiment.”¹⁴⁹ Brown’s wish was granted in February 1862, when the Union Army placed Louis Golding Arnold, rather than Billy Wilson, in command of the Department of Florida.¹⁵⁰

On May 12, 1862, the Confederate forces in Pensacola gave up their position, permitting Arnold to occupy the city with a force of 1,000 soldiers.¹⁵¹ With Pensacola secured, the 6th New York Volunteers spent their time scouting the surrounding area. The Confederates, however, appeared content to give up Pensacola, leaving the 6th New York with little in the way of action. The boredom of camp life soon afflicted Wilson’s men. In efforts to occupy their time in Pensacola, the 6th New York Volunteers organized a series of entertainments consistent with the working-class sporting subculture of New York City. Initially, theatrical productions, dancing, and singing, dominated the leisure pursuits of Wilson’s men but, when the 75th and 91st New York Volunteers arrived at Fort Pickens as reinforcements, things took a more sporting turn. Eager to prove their superiority to these regiments of “countrymen,” the 6th New York Volunteers organized sparring contests, with Wilson’s men demonstrating considerably more “skill with their hands” than their newly arrived, countryside counterparts.¹⁵² During this lull in military operations, Arnold was appointed to the Department of the Gulf, allowing Wilson to assume momentary command in Florida before being replaced by Neal Dow.¹⁵³ One of America’s leading temperance advocates and a fervent

proponent of rational recreation, Dow possessed a character worthy of the challenges awaiting him in Florida, earning a reputation as a determined, principled man through his work in antebellum politics. In 1851, Dow completed his crowning achievement, securing the passage of the “Maine Law,” implementing state-wide prohibition. A disciple of rational recreation, Dow not only read *Tom Brown at Rugby*, he met Thomas Hughes personally in 1857.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, Dow considered himself “fairly expert” with boxing gloves “for an amateur,” learning to spar as a young man in Portland, Maine.¹⁵⁵ Despite their common interest in boxing, the working-class soldiers of the 6th New York Volunteers and Dow contested the concept of appropriate soldiering for the duration of their shared existence in Florida. While Dow attempted to enforce strict discipline, punishing drunkenness and profanity at Pensacola, the 6th New York Volunteers begrudgingly followed the Maine temperance man’s lead, viewing Dow as “a crank, much given to issuing temperance advice,” lacking any knowledge of “the ways of city-bred volunteers.”¹⁵⁶

Much to their delight, Wilson and the rest of the 6th New York Volunteers were ultimately sent to Louisiana in December 1862 to serve under Brigadier General William Dwight, alongside the 12th Maine, 22nd Maine, and 131st New York regiments.¹⁵⁷ While marching his 6th New York Volunteers through Louisiana, Billy Wilson enjoyed a degree of respect previously unmatched during his lifetime. In New York, Wilson was praised by Democrats and sporting men, but received little mainstream political appreciation. In Florida, Wilson was typically under the thumb of a higher ranking officer. Obstacles to Wilson’s advancement, however, deteriorated alongside the Army. As soldiers fell ill,

died in combat, or deserted their regiments, opportunities for less experienced men like Wilson became more readily available. According to Issac Winslow Case of the 22nd Maine Volunteers, as “senior colonel” Wilson was brigadier of a unit encompassing the 6th New York Volunteers, another New York Regiment, as well as the 2nd Louisiana Volunteers, 4th Wisconsin Volunteers, and Winslow’s own 22nd Maine Volunteers. No longer was Wilson merely a colonel to sporting New Yorkers, but a leader of men from all walks of life, hailing from regions south, west, and north of New York.¹⁵⁸

Wilson’s enhanced role in the Union Army in Louisiana was short lived. In July 1862, Congress passed the Militia Act, allowing for the enlistment of African Americans in the Union Army. Much to the dismay of Wilson and some of his men, Louisiana was home to the 1st Regiment Native Guards, the first officially recognized black regiment in the Union Army, formed on September 27, 1862. This initial regiment of African Americans was joined by the 2nd and 3rd Regiments of Native Guards in October and November, respectively.¹⁵⁹ According to the pro-Confederacy newspaper *The Crisis*, “Colonel Billy Wilson’s New York Zouaves refuse to drill with Negroes, and have caused quite a stir.”¹⁶⁰ The Republican press also reported the “ill treatment of the colored soldiers in Louisiana” by Wilson’s men. “We venture to say that the colored soldiers of Louisiana,” reported the *New Bedford Republican Standard*, “are in every sense the superiors of these scoundrels [Wilson’s Zouaves].”¹⁶¹ The Republican leaning *New York Times* also issued criticism of the 6th New York Volunteers’ treatment of African-American soldiers, mockingly noting that Wilson’s men demonstrated “their bravery by attacking in numbers a single African, thus showing their superior courage and

bravery.”¹⁶² On May 1, 1863, the reports of violence toward African-American soldiers by Wilson’s regiment printed by the *Crisis*, *Republican Standard*, and *Times* were given additional validity by Major General Benjamin Butler’s report to the American Freedman’s Inquiry Commission. “Now, then, since I have returned,” explained Butler, “that all these colored officers have been required to resign, and have resigned, upon the ground that A, B, C, or D – principally, I believe, Billy Wilson’s Zouaves – won’t associate with them, won’t stand on an equality with them, as I understand it. I agree to that proposition.”¹⁶³

Dwight ultimately removed thirty of the more troublesome members of the 6th New York Volunteers from service during the march from Baton Rouge to Donaldson, Louisiana, in hopes of calming the regiment’s prevailing state of disorder.¹⁶⁴ “The offenders in the 6th Regiment New York Volunteers have been punished,” reported Dwight, “and I may be permitted here to say that the conduct of the regiment since it has been purged of its bad officers and soldiers has been such to deserve great praise.”¹⁶⁵ What Dwight did not explicitly state in his report was that Colonel Billy Wilson was amongst the officers removed from the regiment. In the 1868 memoir *Recollections of a Checkered Life*, an anonymous member of Wilson’s regiment claimed the colonel was detained and imprisoned at New Orleans for the remainder of the regiment’s service. According to this anonymous member of the 6th New York Volunteers, known only as “Good Templar,” Wilson and other “hard cases” of the regiment sang the Confederate song “Bonnie Blue Flag” while marching, much intoxicated, from their camp in Baton Rouge to their transport ship, destined for

Donaldsonville. Once Wilson and his fellow agitators reached the ship, they commenced to throw several African-American passengers into the water.¹⁶⁶ The details of the incident slowly seeped back North through the press. The *Troy Daily Times*, for example, reported that Wilson was under arrest for incidents related to intoxication, but stopped short of mentioning the assault of African-American soldiers.¹⁶⁷ The politically Democratic *New York Herald*, however, took another route, sympathizing with Wilson, portraying the colonel as “an ill-used man” imprisoned without charge, simply to “carry out the purposes of other people, there not having been the slightest just ground for it.”¹⁶⁸ With Wilson under lock and key, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Cassidy took over as commanding officer of the 6th New York Volunteers for the remainder of the unit’s service.

After Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Cassidy finished marching the 6th New York Volunteers through Louisiana, leading the unit through the Battles of Indian Bend, Irish Bend, and Vermillion Bayou, Wilson was released from custody to lead his regiment back home to New York City. With Wilson once again at the helm of the 6th New York Volunteers, all the fine leadership exhibited by Cassidy went virtually unrecognized by the broader public. When the 6th New York Volunteers arrived in Manhattan, they were received with a parade and banquet, complete with a National Guard detail. According to the *New York Herald*, Wilson and his men looked “remarkably well” for serving two years in the south, “marching with precision.” Following the official reception, however, Wilson’s men attended to previous enjoyments, having “a high time among themselves

in the Park Barracks,” contesting bouts of rough and tumble with each other, as well as a few unfortunate bystanders.¹⁶⁹

Boxers and the Draft: The Sporting Subcultures and the Realities of Total War, 1862-1863

“We shall have trouble before we are through,” wrote George Templeton Strong regarding the Union draft of 1863.¹⁷⁰ The overwhelming patriotism fueling enlistment in the Union military through 1861 dwindled as battle reports rolled off the presses, detailing Union losses. Union defeats at Bull Run and Wilson’s Creek in 1861, followed by the costly Union victory at the Battle of Shiloh and gruesome defeat in the Seven Days Battle, left the Northern populace dejected and disillusioned. The swift, decisive Union victory predicted by many newspapers and politicians did not materialize. By July 1862, the Union was embroiled in total war with the Confederacy, with no conclusion in sight. In most cases, the enthusiastic prizefighter recruits of 1861 declined to reenlist following their initial terms of service. The Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, further deterred enlistment from the racist, anti-abolition groups. Racial tensions boiled over in July 1863, when the Union government attempted to institute a draft. The fiercest rioting erupted in New York City, where African Americans were attacked, injured, and, in a number of instances, killed, by angry mobs, convinced the draft was a death sentence, initiated to secure the end of slavery. After the riotous conditions of July, calm returned to urban settings, and many pugilists set about turning a profit from

the draft. Prizefighters, including Barney Aaron and Joe Coburn, set up substitution businesses, through which draftees could pay the pugilists to locate a substitute to serve on their behalf. This section will focus on the prizefighters' responses to the Union draft, exploring the various reasons for their withdrawal from, or total avoidance of, military service.

In the absence of the prompt, glorious victory promised by Union politicians, the initially high, patriotic morale amongst Northern soldiers and citizens plummeted early in the Civil War. On July 21, 1861, at the First Battle of Bull Run – the first major clash of the Civil War – Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson led the Confederacy to victory near Manassas, Virginia, forcing a Union retreat.¹⁷¹ The “Ninety Days War” many Northerners hoped for – and sincerely believed would come to pass – was growing into a much grander conflict. In August, less than a month removed from Bull Run, the Confederacy earned its second victory in as many major engagements, defeating the Union at the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, producing what James McPherson has aptly dubbed “aftershocks to the earthquake at Bull Run.”¹⁷² According to McPherson, Ulysses S. Grant believed a Union victory at Shiloh on April 6-7, 1862, would signal the fall of the Confederacy and begin the nation’s road to reunion. After the Union effectively repulsed the Confederacy at Shiloh, however, Grant was less optimistic. The Battle of Shiloh was a slaughter for both sides, with Union and Confederacy Armies losing roughly 13,000 and 10,000 men, respectively, inspiring little confidence for either side. In the North, public opinion turned against Grant, becoming increasingly disturbed by

mounting casualty lists and a drawn out conflict.¹⁷³ Shiloh took its toll on the psyche of the Union soldiers, as well. Between 50,000 and 70,000 men abandoned their comrades at Shiloh, nearly costing the Union Army the battle.¹⁷⁴ The Seven Days Battles, often simply called “the Seven Days,” left the population of the North in a state of disbelief. When Union Major General George B. McClellan’s Army of the Potomac and Confederate General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia finished their corpse-ridden clash in late June-early July 1862, almost 16,000 Union men laid dead in Virginia. Although over 20,000 Confederate soldiers lost their lives, the Seven Days is still considered a Confederate victory due to McClellan’s retreat from the field.¹⁷⁵ As the reality of a protracted war with the South sank in, citizens of the North descended into grief and apprehension. Men already wary of joining the Union ranks saw their worst fears materialize as reports of the Seven Days streamed into the press. Although framed as a Union victory by Northern newspapers, the death toll of the Seven Days alone served as a major deterrent to recruitment. At the same time, the catastrophic losses experienced by McClellan’s army in Virginia, combined with the emerging reality of total war, made the acquisition of recruits of paramount importance to the Union war effort. As historian Bruce Catton eloquently mused in his *Mr. Lincoln’s Army*, the Seven Days represented a turning point in the war, signalling either the “end of everything or a new beginning.”¹⁷⁶ Unfortunately, many Northerners believed it was the former. By 1863, Union casualties, rampant disease in camp, desertions, dwindling interest in volunteering, and a general underestimation of the troops required, all compounded, pushing Lincoln and his government towards a draft.¹⁷⁷

On July 2, 1862, Lincoln called for an additional 300,000 volunteers to serve three year terms in the Union Army.¹⁷⁸ Few men, pugilists included, held any great desire to serve three years. Prizefighter Harry Lazarus mustered out with the rest of the 11th New York City Volunteers in 1862, travelling to California to support his brother Johnny, who deserted from the same regiment in 1861, in a prizefight against Tom Daley.¹⁷⁹ Michael Trainor, about whom very little was reported, also hung up his rifle in 1862, opting to tend bar in Manhattan rather than reenlist.¹⁸⁰ Both Harry Lazarus and Mike Trainor, however, were eligible to be drafted back into military service in 1863, their initial service terminating on June 2, 1862, and January 28, 1862, respectively.¹⁸¹ Billy Wilson was mustered-out of service on June 25, 1863. According to the Enrollment Act, no soldier who was actively serving on March 3, 1863, or later, was eligible to be drafted, exempting Wilson from conscription.¹⁸² Although Wilson was commissioned to the 69th New York Volunteers later in the war, he never again saw active military service.¹⁸³ Not all prizefighters and boxers, however, avoided military service in the post 1861 North. Patrick "Scotty" Brannigan, a Brooklyn-based prizefighter of Scottish birth, was commissioned as an officer to the 158th New York Volunteers on August 31, 1862. Brannigan served until August 24, 1864, rising to the rank of Full 1st Lieutenant in the process.¹⁸⁴

For those pugilists who opted not to enlist at all, there were several methods of avoiding drafted service. First of all, one could pay a commutation fee of three hundred dollars, like prizefighter John Morrissey.¹⁸⁵ At no point during the war did Morrissey, a

retired American heavyweight champion famous for defeating Yankee Sullivan and John C. Heenan, actively serve in the Union Army; he paid for commutation instead. John C. Heenan, a self-proclaimed American heavyweight champion following Morrissey's retirement, remained in England after his famous bout with Tom Sayers in 1860, avoiding military service. The methods used by other prize fighters are less clear. As most pugilists were of either Irish or English birth, many likely claimed alien status. According to historian Tyler Anbinder, alien status claims constituted the second most common reason for exemption, with 14% of all Union draftees claiming alien status – honestly or dishonestly – to avoid service in the war. Englishman Richard Hollywood, a sensational featherweight boxer from New York, for example, may have invoked the alien clause of the Emancipation Act.¹⁸⁶ Irish American heavyweight champion Joe Coburn likely claimed alien status as well, following the example of his less prominent boxing brother, Jim Coburn. Other boxers avoided military service through one particular physical exemption, beneficial to the pugilistically inclined – poor teeth. Although an exemption for poor teeth, or lack of teeth, seems absurd by present day standards, teeth were an absolute necessity to the civil war soldier, required to bite open cartridges of gun powder on the field of battle.¹⁸⁷ Unable to afford the three hundred dollar commutation fee paid by John Morrissey, some pugilists likely paid for substitutes. Substitution was a relatively straight forward process, allowing drafted men to provide an able bodied substitute to take their place. Since most men, by 1863, were not eager to march for the battlefield, some degree of financial compensation was typically required to obtain a substitute. Several boxers used this demand for substitutes

to turn a profit, locating willing replacements for a fee. Prizefighter and sparring aficionado Young Barney Aaron, for example, provided draft substitutes for fifty to one hundred and fifty dollars a head.¹⁸⁸ Heavyweight champion Joe Coburn also provided affordable substitutes for drafted men, eventually earning enough money to buy a race horse.

Conclusion

When war erupted with the Confederacy, the fraternity of northern prizefighters reacted in ways comparable to the male population more generally. A handful of pugilists rushed to volunteer for the Union, some slowly came around to the idea, while others still found ways around military service. Those who did enlist with the Union proved every bit as unprepared for war as the typical civilian volunteer. No amount of experience in the prize ring could prepare the boxers of the north for the gruesome realities of war. In general, both prizefighting and gloved sparring continued within the Union ranks, providing soldiers with an important source of entertainment and masculine performance during the lingering war with the Confederacy. Meanwhile, those boxers who remained behind kept boxing alive on the home front. As the following chapter demonstrates, pugilism continued in wartime New York State, proving an important component of working- and middle-class masculinities, becoming one of the leading attractions for war-weary civilians.

Endnotes

¹ Elliott Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 137.

² Lawrence W. Fielding, "Sport: The Meter Stick of the Civil War Soldier," *Sport History Review* 9, no. 1 (1978), 1.

³ Based on Rotundo's discussion of the American middle-class shift from "self-made manhood" to "passionate manhood" in the late nineteenth century. E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 3-6.

⁴ *New York Clipper*, September 19, 1863.

⁵ A rumor circulated suggesting Morrissey was willing to pay thousands of dollars to avoid service. This seems unlikely considering a commutation could be purchased for three hundred dollars. For the rumour see, *Evening Union* (Washington), August 27, 1863; *Chicago Tribune*, September 5, 1863; *Hartford Courant*, September 4, 1863.

⁶ Numerous diaries and letters pertaining to the Union Army illustrate the place of baseball in Union encampments. See, Heyward Emmell, *The Civil War Diary of Private Heyward Emmell, Ambulance and Infantry Corps*, ed. by Jim Malcolm (Lanham, Maryland: Fairleigh Dickson University, 2011), 69; Thomas Christie and William Christie, *Brother of Mine: The Civil War Letters of Thomas and William Christie*, ed. by Hampton Smith (St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2011), 111, 123; Samuel Edmund Nichols, "Your Bold Soldier Boy": *Civil War Letters of Edmund Nichols, Amherst '65 of the 37th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers*, ed. by Charles Sterling Underhill (Buffalo, New York: Privately Printed, 1929), 97, 101. Some soldiers still preferred cricket when it came to team sports. See, Christie and Christie, *Brother of Mine*, 113, 118, 123.

⁷ For Peet's first attempt to attain his boxing gloves see, Frederick Tomlinson Peet, *Civil War Letters and Documents of Frederick Tomlinson Peet* (Newport: Privately Printed, 1917), 29-30. For his second attempt see, *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹ Albert O. Marshall, *Army Life: From a Soldier's Journal* (Joliet, Illinois: Printed for the Author, 1883), 56.

¹⁰ For Charles B. Haydon's intention to get boxing gloves see, Charles B. Haydon, *For Country, Cause, and Leader: The Civil War Journal of Charles B. Haydon*, ed. by Stephen W. Sears (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1993), 178. For Haydon securing a pair of gloves and boxing see, *Ibid.*, 183-184.

¹¹ *New York Clipper*, December 26, 1863.

¹² John P. Reynolds, *In Her Hour of Sore Distress and Peril: The Civil War Diaries of John P. Reynolds*, ed. by Jeffrey L. Patrick (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2013), 72.

¹³ Mason Whiting Tyler, *Recollections of the Civil War: With Many Original Diary Entries and Letters Written from the Seat of War, and with Annotated References*, ed. by William S. Tyler (New York: C.P. Putnam's and Sons, 1912), 59. Elliott Gorn explains that Fielding wrote about the 37th Massachusetts Regiment boxing for warmth in his PhD Dissertation. Lawrence Webster Fielding, "Sport on the Road

Appomattox: The Shadow of Army Life" (diss. University of Maryland, 1974), as cited by Gorn, *Manly Art*, 161. See note on page, 287. The exact page of Fielding's discussion of the 37th Massachusetts Regiment is not identified.

¹⁴ Antebellum unskilled labourers often worked long hours, with labour agitation for ten hour work days being the norm. See, David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labour and the Working Day* (New York: Verso, 1989), 81.

¹⁵ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 3-6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷ Christie and Christie, *Brother of Mine*, 30.

¹⁸ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰ Fielding, "Sport: The Meter Stick," 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²² *The Knickerbocker*, April, 1862.

²³ James T. Fritsch, *The Untried Life: The Twenty-Ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012), 154.

²⁴ Richard E. Matthews, *The 149th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Unit in the Civil War* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1994), 121.

²⁵ Gouverneur Morris, *The History of a Volunteer Regiment: Being a Succinct Account of the Organization, Services and Adventures of the Sixth Regiment New York Volunteers Infantry Known as Wilson Zouaves* (New York: Veteran Volunteer Publishing Company, 1891), 80.

²⁶ John Weber Chase, *Yours for the Union: The Civil War Letters of John W. Chase, First Massachusetts Light Artillery* (Bronx, New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 283.

²⁷ Michael Eagan, *The Flying, Gray-haired Yank: or, The Adventures of a Volunteer; A True Narrative of the Civil War* (Edgewood Publishing Company, 1888), 136-139.

²⁸ James M. MacPherson, *Battle Cry for Freedom: The Civil War Era [BCF]* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 486.

²⁹ For an excellent scholarly treatment of medical care during the Civil War see, Margaret Humphries, *Marrow of Tragedy: The Health Crisis of the American Civil War* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2013).

³⁰ For diarrhea and/or dysentery see, Mrs. C.E. McKay, *Stories of Hospital and Camp* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1876), 59; Harriet Eaton, *This Birth Place of Souls: The Civil War Nursing Diary of Harriet Eaton*, ed. by Jane E. Schultz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 203; Daniel M. Holt,

A Surgeon's Civil War, ed. by James M. Greiner, Janet L. Coryell, and James R. Smither (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1994), 242.

³¹ For measles see, Holt, *A Surgeon's Civil War*, 76; Eaton, *Birth Place of Souls*, 68, 73.

³² James K. Hosmer, *The Color-Guard* (Boston: Walker, Wise, and Company, 1864), 109.

³³ Norbert Hirschhorn, Robert G. Feldman, and Ian A. Greaves, "Abraham Lincoln's Blue Pills: Did our 16th President Suffer from Mercury Poisoning?," *Perspective in Biology and Medicine* 44, no. 3 (2001), 324.

³⁴ David T. Courtwright, "Opiate Addiction as a Consequence of the Civil War," *Civil War History* 24, no. 2 (1978), 101.

³⁵ James Langstaff Dunn as quoted by Paul B. Kerr, *Civil War Surgeon: Biography of James Langstaff Dunn, M.D.* (Bloomington, Indiana: Authorshouse [self-publisher], 2012), 228.

³⁶ Guy R. Hasegawa, "Military Medicines," in *Civil War America: A Social and Cultural History with Primary Sources*, edited by Maggi M. Morehouse and Zoe Trodd (New York: Routledge, 2013), 140. For the prescription of 'blue pills' for jaundice see, Ned Smith, *The 22nd Maine Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War: A History and Roster* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2010), 97.

³⁷ Peter Welsh. *Irish Green and Union Blue: The Civil War Letters of Peter Welsh, Color Sergeant, 28th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers*, ed. by Lawrence Frederick Kohl and Margaret Cosse Richard (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 52.

³⁸ Hosmer, *The Color-Guard*, 81. A student at Brown University prior to the war, James Peck Brown of the Tenth Rhode Island Volunteers sat reading *Tom Brown at Oxford* in 1864, while in New Orleans. See H.S. Burrage, ed., *Brown University in the Civil War: A Memorial* (Providence, Rhode Island: Providence Press Company, 1868), 307. In his prison diary, Brigadier General Neal Dow also wrote of reading *Tom Brown at Oxford*. Neal Dow, *A General Behind Bars: Neal Dow in Libby Prison*, ed. Frank L. Byrne (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1962), 64.

³⁹ Lucien A. Voorhees, "Army Correspondence, Camp 15th N.J.V., Feb. 26, 1864," in Dominick Mazzagetti, *True Jersey Blues: The Civil War Letters of Lucien A. Voorhees and William MacKenzie Thompson, 15th Regiment New Jersey Volunteers* (Lanham, Maryland: Fairleigh Dickson University Press, 2011), 225.

⁴⁰ Marshall, *Army Life*, 56.

⁴¹ A fascinating discussion regarding the difficulties associated with examining suicide during the Civil War has been ongoing in the *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*. An article prompting much debate about the validity of sources and factors contributing to Civil War suicide is, B. Christopher Frueh and Jeffery A. Smith, "Suicide, alcoholism, and psychiatric illness among union forces during the U.S. Civil War," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 26, no. 7 (2012), 769-775. See also, Richard J. McNally, "Psychiatric Disorder and Suicide in the Military, Then and Now: Commentary on Frueh and Smith," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 26, no. 7 (2012), 776-778; R. McCutcheon, N.T. Fear, et al. "Letter to the Editor," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 27, no. 5 (2013), 543.

⁴² Many soldiers suffered from what the Union Army dubbed 'nostalgia,' or homesickness. See, Adelaide W. Smith, *Reminiscences of an Army Nurse*, 88 Frances Clarke, "So Lonesome I Could Die: Nostalgia And Debates Over Emotional Control In The Civil War North," *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 2 (2007), 253-

282; David Anderson, "Dying of Nostalgia: Homesickness in the Union Army during the Civil War," *Civil War History* 56, no. 3 (2010), 247-282.

⁴³ Lawrence W. Fielding, "War and Trifles: Sport in the Shadow of Civil War Army Life," *Journal of Sport History* 4, no. 2 (1977), 151. In a letter to his brother Joe, Sergeant Thomas W. Smith of the Sixth Pennsylvania Calvary recounted a whole week of inactivity in 1862. "It is not very pleasant [*sic.*] sitting in our tents for over a week with nothing to do but eat and sleep." Thomas W. Smith, *We Have it Damn Hard Out Here: The Civil War Letters of Sergeant Thomas W. Smith 6th Pennsylvania Calvary*, ed. by Eric J. Wittenberg (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999), 8.

⁴⁴ Bliss Morse, *Civil War Diaries of Bliss Morse*, ed. by Loren J. Morse (Pittsburgh, Kansas: Pitchcraft, Inc., 1964), 24.

⁴⁵ Duren F. Kelley. *The War Letters of Duren F. Kelley, 1862-1865*, ed. by Richard S. Offenbergh and Robert Rue Parsonage (New York: Pageant Press, 1967), 56.

⁴⁶ Haydon, *For Country, Cause, and Leader*, 183-184. As Fielding has shown, most officers did not organize sport for their men. See, Fielding et al., "The Demise of Officer Involvement," 72.

⁴⁷ *The Independent*, August 22, 1861.

⁴⁸ *The Knickerbocker*, April, 1862.

⁴⁹ For homesickness in the 149th Pennsylvania Volunteers see, Matthews, *The 149th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry*, 120.

⁵⁰ Peter Thorén et. al., "Endorphins and Exercise: Physiological Mechanisms and Clinical Implications," *Medicine and Exercise in Sports and Exercise* 22, no. 4 (1990), 417-418.

⁵¹ Gorn agrees, suggesting that "pugilistic customs were sufficiently well known that man men resorted to them to resolve their differences." Gorn, *Manly Art*, 162.

⁵² *New York Clipper*, February 6, 1864.

⁵³ *New York Clipper*, June 13, 1863.

⁵⁴ Wilhelm Pohlman stayed in Virginia following the Civil War. See "Pohlman, Wilhelm." *Historical Register Of National Homes For Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1866-1938*, Veterans Administration - National Homes Service: Southern Branch, Hampton, Virginia. Record Group 15, Microfilm 1749, Patient 7252, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Accessed Online: www.ancestry.com Accessed: September 30, 2013. For Pohlman as a butcher see, "Pollman, William." United States of America, Federal Census, 1870, Brookland Township, Henrico County, Virginia, pg. 20, dwelling 146. Accessed Online: www.ancestry.com Accessed: September 30, 2013.

⁵⁵ *New York Clipper*, September 19, 1863.

⁵⁶ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 163.

⁵⁷ Thomas Christie to James Christie, January 26, 1863, in Christie and Christie, *Brother of Mine*, 96-97.

⁵⁸ William Christie to Alexander Christie, February 6, 1863, in Christie and Christie, *Brother of Mine*, 101.

⁵⁹ Haydon, *For Country, Cause and Leader*, 96.

⁶⁰ Elliott J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Back Country," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (1985), 19.

⁶¹ The most significant 'rough and tumble' to occur in antebellum New York City was likely the Bill Poole-John Morrissey contest at the Amos Street docks. See *New York Times*, July 29, 1854.

⁶² *New York Clipper*, December 26, 1863.

⁶³ Alfred Davenport, *Camp and Field Life of the Fifth New York Volunteer Infantry* (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1879), 103.

⁶⁴ *New York Clipper*, February 6, 1864.

⁶⁵ *New York Clipper*, February 27, 1864.

⁶⁶ The *New York Clipper* reports the men as simply 'Cliff' and 'Fitzgerald.' See, *New York Clipper*, October 31, 1863. The only two men with these surnames in the Twelfth Illinois Volunteer Regiment, however, were Zeno Cliff and Patrick Fitzgerald. For Zeno Cliff see, "Cliff, Zeno," *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Illinois*, Record Group 94, Microfilm 539, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Viewed Online: www.nps.gov Accessed: September 26, 2013. For Patrick Fitzgerald see, "Fitzgerald, Patrick." *Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Illinois*, RG 94, M539, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Viewed Online: www.nps.gov Accessed: September 26, 2013. Cliff's hometown of Perrysville, Indiana, is listed in the Adjutant General's Report. Cliff survived the war, mustering out on July 10, 1865. See *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois*, vol. 1 (Springfield, Illinois: H.W. Rokker, 1886), 552. Fitzgerald is not listed in the Adjutant General's Report, but is listed as a native of Illinois in the U.S. National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers records. See: "Patient Record: Fitzgerald, Patrick," *Historical Register Of National Homes For Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, 1866-1938*, Veterans Administration – National Homes Service: Danville, Illinois Branch. Record Group 15, Microfilm 1749, Patient Number 11129, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Accessed Online: www.ancestry.com Accessed: September 26, 2013.

⁶⁷ *New York Clipper*, October 31, 1863.

⁶⁸ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 160.

⁶⁹ *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861.

⁷⁰ *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861.

⁷¹ *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861.

⁷² *New York Clipper*, May 4, 1861.

⁷³ Under ideal circumstances, the history of each boxer-solider enlisted in the Union Army would be discussed at length. For the study at hand, however, an analysis of a small segment of enlisted pugilists

must suffice. Thus, this section will focus on two Union regiments well-known for their boxer-enlistees. The experiences of the Sixth and Eleventh New York Volunteers, known for their volunteer firefighters and prizefighters, was gleaned from contemporary newspapers, sporting papers, letters, and official Union Army correspondence.

⁷⁴ John Steinbeck, "East of Eden," in *Steinbeck: Novels, 1942-1952* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 592.

⁷⁵ Ruth Painter Randal, *Colonel Elmer Ellsworth: A Biography of Lincoln's Friend and First Hero of the Civil War* (Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company, 1960), 43.

⁷⁶ Charles A. Ingraham, *Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth: First Hero of the Civil War* (Reprinted from the *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 1, no. 4, 1918), 361.

⁷⁷ J. Frank Kernan, *Reminiscences of the Old Fire Laddies and Volunteer Fire Departments of New York and Brooklyn: Together with a Complete History of the Paid Departments of Both Cities* (New York: M. Crane, 1885), 145.

⁷⁸ For the United States Zouave Cadets in Cincinnati see, *Chicago Press and Tribune*, August 11, 1860; For Cleveland see, *Chicago Press and Tribune*, July 11, 1860; For Manhattan see, *Chicago Press and Tribune*, July 18, 1860; For Albany see, *Chicago Press and Tribune*, July 18, 1860; For Philadelphia see, *Chicago Press and Tribune*, August 3, 1860.

⁷⁹ *Chicago Press and Tribune*, August 8, 1860.

⁸⁰ Abraham Lincoln to Simon Cameron, March 5, 1861, in Abraham Lincoln, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4, ed. by Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 273.

⁸¹ Abraham Lincoln to Elmer E. Ellsworth, April 15, 1861, in Lincoln, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 4, 333.

⁸² Richard B. Stott, *Workers in the Metropolis: Class, Ethnicity, and Youth in Antebellum New York City* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 234.

⁸³ Clyde Griffen, "Reconstructing Masculinity from the Evangelical Revival to Waning of Progressivism: A Speculative Analysis," *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, Edited by Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 186.

⁸⁴ Kernan, *Old Fire Laddies*, 147.

⁸⁵ The *New York News* as cited by the *Troy Daily Whig*, April 26, 1861.

⁸⁶ E.D. Morgan to Simon Cameron, Secretary of War, May 6, 1861, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 3, vol. 1, 165-166.

⁸⁷ Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, as quoted by *New York Times*, August 30, 1861.

⁸⁸ Strong makes special reference to the "Baltimore mobs" in his entry for April 29, referring to the riots in that city on April 19, 1861. After the dust settled, four Union soldiers and twelve civilian, confederate sympathizers lost their lives. George Templeton Strong, *The Diary of George Templeton Strong: The Civil*

War, 1860-1865, Vol. 2, Edited by Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas (New York: McMillian Company, 1952), 137.

⁸⁹ As Anthony Rotundo vividly illustrates in *American Manhood*, aggression and combativeness were virtues of passionate masculinity. Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 3-6.

⁹⁰ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 6, 1861.

⁹¹ *New York Times*, May 8, 1861.

⁹² For the Lazarus-Horrigan Fights see, *National Police Gazette*, August 28, 1880; *National Police Gazette*, September 25, 1880.

⁹³ The *New York Clipper* placed “no reliability” in these accusations, which were forwarded to the sporting paper by a “Washington letter writer.” *New York Clipper*, June 1, 1861.

⁹⁴ *National Republican* [Washington], May 10, 1861.

⁹⁵ Edward K. Spann, *Gotham at War: New York City, 1860-1865* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 28.

⁹⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel Noah H. Farnham, to Brigadier General Mansfield, Commanding Department, Washington, May 24, 1861, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 2, 41-42. See also, *New York Sun*, May 25, 1861.

⁹⁷ Kernan, *Old Fire Laddies*, 147.

⁹⁸ *New York Times*, August 16, 1861.

⁹⁹ *New York Times*, August 16, 1861.

¹⁰⁰ *New York Clipper*, July 27, 1861.

¹⁰¹ Wilmer L. Jones, *Generals in Blue and Gray*, vol. 1 (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 2004), 49-50.

¹⁰² John Hennessey in John Hennessey, Ethan Rafuse, and Harry Smeltzer, “Historians Forum: The First Battle of Bull Run,” *Civil War History* 57, no. 2 (2011), 111-112.

¹⁰³ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative* [CWN], vol. 1, (New York: Random House, 1958), 70.

¹⁰⁴ *BCF*, 335.

¹⁰⁵ *National Police Gazette*, October 9, 1880.

¹⁰⁶ *BCF*, 347. Shelby Foote puts the number of Union casualties at 481. *CWN*, vol. 1, 84.

¹⁰⁷ *New York Sunday Mercury*, July 28, 1861, as quoted by William B. Styple, ed. *Writing and Fighting the Civil War: Soldier Correspondence to the New York Sunday Mercury* (Kearny, New Jersey: Belle Grove Publishing Company, 2000), 35.

¹⁰⁸ Colonel Andrew Porter to Captain J.B. Fry, Assistant Adjutant-General, July 25, 1861, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 2, 385.

¹⁰⁹ Major William F. Barry to Captain J.B. Fry, Assistant Adjutant-General, July 23, 1861, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 2, 347.

¹¹⁰ According to the *New York Tribune*, Johnny Lazarus returned to Manhattan with an honorable discharge signed by Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, suggesting he was dismissed from service very early in the conflict. *New York Tribune*, March 15, 1862. According to the official muster rolls of New York City, however, Johnny Lazarus deserted the Eleventh New York Volunteers in August, 1861. See, *New York Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, 1861-1900*; Archive Collection #: 13775-83; Box #: 52; Roll #: 893-894, Enlistee 873. Viewed online: www.ancestry.com Accessed: October 3, 2013.

¹¹¹ *New York Clipper*, September 21, 1861.

¹¹² Edward K. Spann, *Gotham at War: New York City, 1860-1865* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 28.

¹¹³ *New York Police Gazette*, February 19, 1881. See also, Gorn, *TMA*, 160. The company affiliation of each fighter was drawn from, Adjutant General's Office N.Y.S., *A Record of the Commissioned Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Privates, of the Regiments Which Were Organized in the State of New York and Called into Service for the United States to Assist in Suppressing the Rebellion Caused by the Secession of Some of the Southern States of the Union, A.D. 1861, as Taken From the Muster-In Rolls on File in the Adjutant General's Office, N.Y.S.*, vol. 1 (Albany, New York: Comstock and Cassidy Printers, 1864). For Dennis Horrigan, James Lavell, and Thomas Ross, see, 245; For Henry 'Harry' Lazarus see, 256. For Michael Trainor see, 257. For Peter Smith see, 259. For the date each man ceased serving in the Union Army, and under what circumstances, the *New York Muster Roll Abstracts* were consulted. See, *New York Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, 1861-1900*; Archive Collection #: 13775-83; Box #: 52; Roll #: 893-894. Ancestry.com. *New York, Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, 1861-1900*, New York State Archives, Cultural Education Center, Albany, New York. Viewed online: www.ancestry.com. Accessed: October 3, 2013. James Lavell was mustered out with the rest of the Eleventh New York Volunteers on June 2, 1862, as a private (Abstract 869). Michael Trainor discharged for disability on January 28, 1862 (Abstract 1445). Harry Lazarus was mustered out with the rest of the Eleventh New York Volunteers on June 2, 1862, as a second lieutenant (Abstract 869). Peter Smith was mustered out with the rest of the Eleventh New York Volunteers on June 2, 1862, at the rank of private (Abstract 1361). Thomas Ross was mustered out with the rest of the Eleventh New York Volunteers at the rank of private. Ross reenlisted with the One Hundred and Thirty-Second New York Volunteers in 1863 (Abstract 1285). Michael O'Rooke (also spelt O'Rouke) was mustered out of service with the rest of the Eleventh New York Volunteers on June 2, 1862, at the rank of private (Abstract 1175). No muster out information could be found for Dennis Horrigan.

¹¹⁴ "Trainor, Michael," *New York Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, 1861-1900*; Archive Collection: 13775-83; Box: 54; Roll: 895 New York State Archives, Cultural Education Center, Albany, New York. Viewed Online: www.ancestry.com Accessed: October 3, 2013.

¹¹⁵ *New York Clipper*, April 30, 1864; *New York Clipper*, November 26, 1864.

¹¹⁶ Strong, *Diary*, vol. 2, 132.

¹¹⁷ Strong, *Diary*, vol. 2, 132.

¹¹⁸ Morris is sure to make this clear in his history of the Sixth Regiment: “Also he was not an anti-slavery man; it took two years of bitter fighting to induce the New York City soldier to believe that the abolition of slavery might be at any rate a good military measure.” Morris, *Sixth Regiment New York*, 20.

¹¹⁹ For Wilson’s victory over Hughes see, *Times-Picayune* [New Orleans], April 17, 1844. For Wilson’s victory over Stewart see, *American Fisticiana* (New York: H. Johnson, 1849), 30. Wilson’s obituary also notes his activity as a prize fighter. See, *New York Times*, November 16, 1874. See also, Richard Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 222.

¹²⁰ *New York Tribune*, November 28, 1857.

¹²¹ *New York Times*, May 26, 1857.

¹²² *BCF*, 112.

¹²³ William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua* (New York, 1860), 263, as quoted by *BCF*, 112.

¹²⁴ William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua* (Mobile, Alabama: S.H. Goetzl, 1860), 262. See also, Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 151; *BCF*, 113.

¹²⁵ In his study of America in 1857, Stampf concludes: “Walker also had his friends and admirers within the business community of New York City and among the expansionist Democrats of the Old Northwest.” Kenneth M. Stampf, *America in 1857: A Nation on the Brink* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 191. William V. Wells, *Walker's Expedition to Nicaragua: A History of the Central American War* (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1856), 98.

¹²⁶ *New York Herald*, May 10, 1856; See also, *New York Times*, June 2, 1857; Wells, *Walker's Expedition*, 227.

¹²⁷ Stampf, *America in 1857*, 191; *BCF*, 114.

¹²⁸ *BCF*, 114.

¹²⁹ Phillip S. Foner, *Business and Slavery: The New York Merchants and the Irrepressible Conflict* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), 285-289. See also Ernest A. McKay, *The Civil War and New York City* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 33-34; Spann, *Gotham at War*, 6.

¹³⁰ Stott, *Jolly Fellows*, 222.

¹³¹ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 871.

¹³² Strong noted in his diary that Wilson’s Zouaves were likely of lesser “social status” than Ellsworth’s Zouaves. Strong drew this conclusion after seeing Wilson’s men marching on April 23, 1861. Strong, *Diary*, vol 2., 137.

¹³³ Richard Miller Devens, *The Pictorial Book of Anecdotes and Incidents of the War of the Rebellion* (Hartford, Connecticut: Hartford Publishing Company, 1867), 184. George Templeton Strong also noted the knives and pistols brandished by Wilson's regiment. Strong, *Diary*, vol. 2, 132.

¹³⁴ Billy Wilson as quoted in a letter to *Freedom's Champion*, May 25, 1861.

¹³⁵ McKay, *Civil War and New York City*, 74. The unit's regimental history by Gouverneur Morris paints a more flattering picture of Wilson's men, claiming "a great deal of absolutely vicious nonsense was at this time talked and written about the personnel of the sixth." As Thomas Power Lowry points out, however, Morris' account appears to greatly sanitize the regiment's history. Lieutenant Colonel John Creighton, for example – notorious for firing at a federal vessel while the Zouave's were stationed in Florida – is not mentioned in Morris' history. See Morris, *Sixth Regiment New York*, 22; Thomas Power Lowry, *Curmudgeons, Drunkards, and Outright Fools: Courts-Martial of Civil War Union Colonels* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003 [1997]), 82.

¹³⁶ Morris, *Sixth Regiment New York*, 33. *New York Herald*, June 15, 1861; *New York Times*, June 16, 1861.

¹³⁷ *Daily-Picayune* [New Orleans], June 26, 1861.

¹³⁸ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 21.

¹³⁹ This was by no means unique to Wilson's Zouaves. According to McPherson, "Civil War regiments learned on the battlefield to fight, not in the training camp. In keeping with the initial lack of professionalism, the training of recruits was superficial. McPherson, *BCF*, 330. See also, Barney, *BGU*, 148; Foote, *CWN*, vol. 1, 71; Bruce Catton, *Centennial History of the Civil War [CHCW]*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1961), 410.

¹⁴⁰ For the landing of Wilson's Zouaves in Florida, see: *New York Herald*, July 11, 1861; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 6, 1861; *Trenton State Gazette*, July 8, 1861.

¹⁴¹ Harvey Brown to E.D. Townsend, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 1, 434.

¹⁴² Anonymous Zouave to *New York Herald*, in *New York Herald*, July 16, 1861.

¹⁴³ For Braxton Bragg in early Civil War Florida, see, Edwin C. Bearss, "Civil War Operations in and Around Pensacola," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1957), 146. Bruce Canton believes that, following the arrival of Wilson and his Zouaves, "the danger that Braxton Bragg would sweep the place [Fort Pickens] into the sea was gone forever." *CHCW*, vol. 1, 298.

¹⁴⁴ William Wilson to "Wife," in *Hartford Daily Courant*, October 30, 1861. General Harvey Brown biographer Henry Jackson Hunt also suggests Wilson's "picket and the guards sustained the brunt of the attack, and behaved well, enabling the command to fall back..." Henry Jackson Hunt, *Sketch of the Life and Services of Colonel Harvey Brown, U.S. Army* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1874), 17.

¹⁴⁵ Harvey Brown also notes that a local paper reported losses of 21 for the rebels. Harvey Brown to E.D. Townsend, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 1, 441.

¹⁴⁶ Wilson put the number of casualties at eleven. See, William Wilson to "Wife," in *Hartford Daily Courant*, October 30, 1861; In his official report, Brown states there was ten casualties suffered by the Zouaves. Harvey Brown to E.D. Townsend, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 1, 441. The autobiography of

Colonel James Patton Anderson of the First Florida Regiment states that, of his one hundred men: "my loss in this fight was eleven killed, twenty-four wounded and twelve captured." Margaret Uhler and James Patton Anderson, "Major General James Patton Anderson: An Autobiography," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (1987), 250. Jack D. Combees states that Anderson ultimately reported "18 dead, 39 wounded, and 30 missing," but does not provide a source for these statistics. Jack D. Coombe, *Gunfire Around the Gulf: The Last Major Naval Campaigns of the Civil War* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 32.

¹⁴⁷ R.H. Jackson to Lewis G. Arnold, October 10, 1861. *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 457.

¹⁴⁸ L. Thomas, "Congratulatory Orders of Major-General McLellan, U.S. Army," *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 457. See also, Morris, *Sixth New York Volunteers*, 66-67; Coombe, *Around the Gulf*, 32.

¹⁴⁹ Colonel Harvey Brown to Brigadier General Lorenzo Thomas, December 27, 1861. *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 673-674.

¹⁵⁰ General Orders No. 6, L.G. [Louis Golding]Arnold, February 22, 1862. *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 673-694.

¹⁵¹ Brigadier-General L.G. Arnold to Major Charles G. Halpine, May 15, 1862. *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 6, 659. See also, Morris, *Sixth New York Volunteers*, 74-75.

¹⁵² Morris, *Sixth New York Volunteers*, 80.

¹⁵³ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1992 [1964]), 10. For Dow, see Morris, *Sixth New York Volunteers*, 80; George C. Strong, Assistant Adjutant-General, "Special Orders No. 429," October 2, 1863. *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 53, 538.

¹⁵⁴ Neal Dow, *Reminiscences of Neal Dow: Recollections of Eighty Years* (Portland, Maine: Evening Express Publishing Company, 1898), 595.

¹⁵⁵ Dow, *Reminiscences*, 67.

¹⁵⁶ Dow, *Reminiscences*, 664-665; Morris, *Sixth New York Volunteers*, 80.

¹⁵⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel and Assistant Adjutant-General Richard B. Irwin, "Special Orders No. 599," *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 15, 626.

¹⁵⁸ *Diary of Issac Winslow Case* (Manuscript), January 1, 1863. Bowdoin College, George G. Mitchell Department of Special Collections and Archives, M194 .C374. Case's description of Wilson as a brigadier is supported by Major General Frank Gardiner: "Brig. Gen. Cuvier Grover is in command, assisted by the notorious Billy Wilson, who has lately been appointed a brigadier." See, Major General Frank Gardiner, Port Hudson, Louisiana, to Major General Richard Taylor, Alexandria, Louisiana, January 3, 1863, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 15, 92-933.

¹⁵⁹ John David Smith, *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 79-80.

¹⁶⁰ *The Crisis* [Columbus, Ohio], March 4, 1863.

¹⁶¹ *New Bedford Republican Standard*, as quoted by, *The Liberator*, April 17, 1863.

¹⁶² *New York Times*, February 23, 1863.

¹⁶³ Major General Benjamin Butler, "Testimony by the Former Director of the Department of the Gulf before the American Freedman's Inquiry Commission," in *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867*, Ser. II, vol. 1, ed. Ira Berlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 314.

¹⁶⁴ Colonel Nicolas W. Day, "Report of Nicholas W. Day, One hundred and thirty-first New York Infantry, of Operations March 26-April 20," *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 15, 381.

¹⁶⁵ William Dwight, Brigadier General, to J. Hibbert Jr., Captain and Assistant Adjutant-General, April 27, 1863, *War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 15, 370.

¹⁶⁶ Anonymous ("Good Templar"), *Recollections of a Checkered Life* (Napanea, Ontario: S.T. Hammond, 1868), 66.

¹⁶⁷ *Troy Daily Times*, May 4, 1863.

¹⁶⁸ *New York Herald*, June 9, 1863.

¹⁶⁹ *New York Herald*, June 12, 1863.

¹⁷⁰ Strong, *Diary*, Vol. 2, 333.

¹⁷¹ Evidence of the Union Army's defeat and hardship at the First Battle of Bull Run presented itself in the streets of Washington. "Human fragments of the routed army drifted up and down the streets of Washington," wrote historian Bruce Catton, "clotting the sidewalks and alleys, eddying sluggish about the bars, as soiled and depressing to see as fragments of the broken republic itself..." *CHCW*, vol. 2, 1. For more on the outcome of the First Battle of Bull Run see, *CWN*, vol. 1, 82; *BCF*, 344-345; William C. Davis, *Battle at Bull Run: A History of the First Major Campaign of the Civil War* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1977), 243-262.

¹⁷² *BCF*, 350. For more on the outcome of the Battle of Wilson's Creek see, *CHCW*, vol. 2, 20-21; *CWN*, vol. 1, 94-95. William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher explain how each side's newspapers, Union and Confederate, attempted to claim victory through the press. The Battle of Wilson's Creek, however, was certainly a Confederate victory, resulting in the retreat of Union forces. William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher, *Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought it* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 318-319.

¹⁷³ *BCF*, 413-414. In his *Civil War America: Voices From the Home Front*, James Marten refers to the Battle of Shiloh as a "bloody but decisive victory" for the Union. James Marten, *Civil War America: Voices From the Home Front* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 100. For number of casualties on both sides at Shiloh see, William L. Richter, *Historical Dictionary of the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 562; *CWN*, vol. 1, 350; *CHCW*, vol 2., 238. Whether or not military opinion turned against Grant following his bloody victory at Shiloh is a matter of great debate between historians. Major General Henry J. Halleck did indeed remove Grant from service following Shiloh, but the exact reasons for this action remain somewhat mysterious. Recently, Carl N. Schenker has suggested: "It is often reported that Halleck's treatment of Grant after Shiloh was rooted in 'envy' of his success, or 'disdain' for his shortcomings, or shock at Shiloh's casualty list. But Halleck's first reactions to Shiloh

actually seem those of a supportive senior partner.” See Carl N. Schenker, “Ulysses in His Tent: Halleck, Grant, Sherman, and ‘The Turning Point of the War’,” *Civil War History* 56, no. 2 (2010), 188.

¹⁷⁴ Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1966), 223.

¹⁷⁵ Most historians of the Civil War consider McClellan’s retreat a colossal blunder, costing him his military reputation. Bruce Catton, for example, wrote of McClellan, “Now he was being ruined, his career as a professional soldier closing in black disgrace.” Bruce Catton, *The Army of the Potomac: Glory Road* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1952), 130. McPherson suggests that “McClellan was a whipped man mentally” after the third battle of the Seven Days (Gaines’ Mill). *BCF*, 468. See also, *CWN*, vol. 1, 532-53; *CHCW*, vol. 2, 347-348.

¹⁷⁶ Bruce Catton, *Mr. Lincoln’s Army* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1954), 144.

¹⁷⁷ Getting soldiers from their communities of origin to the battlefield was an astronomical challenge for the Union Army. In some instances, the mixing of urban and rural volunteers led to increased spread of disease (rural enlistees, for example, were unaccustomed to mumps and measles), leaving up to fifty percent of a regiment bedridden before they reached the battlefield. Many men suffered from three main ailments: diarrhea, typhoid, pneumonia. Malaria and venereal disease were also major obstacles in the camps. See *BCF*, 487-488. A lack of medical knowledge concerning antibiotics also led to high mortality rates for wounded men, further diminishing the number of battle ready soldiers. In most cases, amputation was required to prevent a soldier’s death from a wound. See *BCF*, 486-487. Lincoln stopped recruiting efforts in April, 1862. As the Army’s numbers dropped, Lincoln’s decision to forgo further recruits proved a costly blunder. In July, Lincoln called for 300,000 more volunteers, reversing his previous decision to halt recruitment. The pro-war fervour that bubbled in Northern communities in 1861, however, was not evident in 1862. See *BCF*, 491.

¹⁷⁸ *BCF*, 491.

¹⁷⁹ *National Police Gazette*, June 12, 1880.

¹⁸⁰ *New York Clipper*, December 19, 1863.

¹⁸¹ Data for a soldier’s muster out date can be obtained via the Historical Data Systems Civil War Soldier Records and Database, currently offered by Ancestry.com. According to Ancestry.com, “this database is a compilation of military records (including state rosters, pension records, and regimental histories) of individual soldiers who served in the United States Civil War.” See, <http://search.ancestry.ca/search/db.aspx?dbid=1555&enc=1>, accessed: September 10, 2013. For Michael Trainor see, *U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865*, www.ancestry.com Accessed: September 9, 2013. For Harry Lazarus see, *U.S. Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865*, www.ancestry.com Accessed: September 10, 2013.

¹⁸² William L. Richter, *Historical Dictionary of the Civil War and Reconstruction*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 154.

¹⁸³ Billy Wilson, “U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865,” www.ancestry.com Accessed: September 10, 2013.

¹⁸⁴ Patrick Brannigan, “U.S., Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles, 1861-1865,” www.ancestry.com Accessed: September 10, 2013. See also *New York Clipper*, October 4, 1862.

¹⁸⁵ *New York Clipper*, August 29, 1863. Rumours that Morrissey was offering 5,000 dollars for a substitute, circulated in several newspapers were false. A commutation could be purchased for 300 dollars and a substitution for even less. For the rumour, see *Evening Union* (Washington), August 27, 1863; *Chicago Tribune*, September 5, 1863; *Hartford Courant*, September 4, 1863.

¹⁸⁶ Tyler Anbinder, "Which Poor Man's Fight? Immigrants and the Federal Conscription of 1863," *Civil War History* 52, no. 4 (2006), 352.

¹⁸⁷ Tyler Anbinder, "Which Poor Man's Fight?" 353.

¹⁸⁸ *New York Clipper*, August 22, 1863.

***The Empire State of Pugilism: Sparring, Prizefighting, and Civil War in New York City,
Brooklyn, and Rochester***

As John A. Lucas observed, “during the decades prior to the Civil War, the [American] nation wrestled with Puritanism, pioneer optimism, religious revolutions, social reforms, and the bewildering complexities of the industrial revolution.”¹ In New York State, interrelated debates emerging from religious tensions, class divisions, and nativism made sport contested terrain by the Civil War years. The emergent middle class, employed in various managerial, entrepreneurial, medical, and legal capacities, often promoted rational recreation, focused on the physical and mental improvement of the individual, as a component of “self-made manhood.”² Although most middle-class New Yorkers considered prizefighting a vulgar occupation, private sparring lessons were an immensely popular component of ‘rational’ exercise regimens during the antebellum and Civil War years. At the same time, the State’s growing working class, engorged by immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and elsewhere, used neighbourhood halls and saloons to organize sport on their own terms. In the working-class saloons of New York City, Brooklyn and, eventually, Rochester, masculine identities revolved around physical, sometimes violent displays of bravado. In this working-class sporting subculture, bare-knuckle prizefighting was the sport of choice, followed closely by public displays of competitive sparring. This chapter will focus on boxing in the Civil War era

working-class sporting subcultures of New York City, Brooklyn, and Rochester, illustrating the challenges faced by pugilists in each city.

This chapter has four main objectives. First of all, the antebellum foundations of Civil War era boxing will be examined, focusing on the impact of immigration, nativism, and temperance reform on prizefighting and sparring in New York City and Buffalo, explaining periods of boom and bust in each boxing scene. Secondly, this chapter will explore the cultural nuances of sparring benefits in New York City, from their early organization in working-class neighbourhoods for working-class entertainment, to their gentrification and relocation to more middle-class environs like the City Assembly Rooms in 1862. Thirdly, this chapter will explore the status of prizefighting in Civil War era New York City, from the sport's early renaissance in 1861, to its booming revival during the career of local Irish heavyweight Joe Coburn. Next, the chapter shifts focus to Brooklyn, New York – the nation's third largest city by 1860 and the State's second most active boxing scene – emphasizing the influence of antebellum nativism on Irish culture. Persistent violence towards Brooklyn's Irish population, it will be argued, produced a working-class sporting subculture comparable to Manhattan, reveling in violent, competitive displays of masculine prowess like sparring and prizefighting. Lastly, this chapter will use the example of Rochester, New York, to illustrate the status of boxing in Western New York State, placing the sport in the context of the region's religious and political tensions.

“The Shillelah and the Mauley:”³ Ethnic Politics, Violence, and Boxing in Antebellum New York City, 1854-1858

New York State’s Civil War era boxing scene was deeply rooted in the ethno-political tensions of the previous decade. In the midst of staggering Irish immigration, New York City’s municipal Democratic Party, headed by Fernando Wood, turned to prizefighters for support. Heroes of Manhattan’s bustling Irish communities, prizefighters generated immigrant support for the “Soft Shell” wing of the Democratic Party at the polls and organized gangs of rough-hewn Irishmen to assist with electioneering.⁴ American heavyweight champion John “Old Smoke” Morrissey, of Templemore, County Tipperary, Ireland, led Wood’s political muscle, recruiting brawlers from the ‘Five Points’ slum for the 1854 municipal election. At the same time, Manhattan’s fast-growing, nativist American Party sought mayoral power on an anti-immigrant platform, enlisting the services of American-born prizefighters and ruffians to interfere with the immigrant vote. James W. Barker, the American Party’s 1854 mayoral candidate, enlisted the services of infamous rough and tumbler Bill “The Butcher” Poole and former American heavyweight champion Tom “Young America” Hyer.⁵

When the dust cleared following the violent 1854 municipal election, Fernando Wood was elected mayor, narrowly defeating American Party candidate James Barker by a plurality, taking nine of the twenty-five seats and 33.6% of the vote.⁶ Amongst Manhattan’s prizefighters and ethnically-divided, working-class sporting subculture, however, the ethno-political competition was just beginning. Protected and empowered

by influential politicians, prizefighters like John Morrissey and Tom Hyer continued the Democratic-nativist rivalry in the saloons, theatres, and streets of the city. Shielded from legal action by financially and politically influential patrons, the rough, competitive masculine culture of the urban tavern spilled into the streets, escalating from tussles and fistfights, to brutal gouging contests and murderous shooting affrays. Those pugilists who, like John Morrissey, survived the antebellum era's wild days of politically-motivated street crime, amassed significant political and underworld influence, using their saloons and gambling houses to accumulate large sums of money and powerful working-class followings. At the same time, Morrissey and his allies produced a booming working-class sporting subculture, using their substantial political and financial pull to protect sports like rat-baiting, dog-fighting, cock-fighting, and competitive sparring.

Mayor Fernando Wood took office on January 1, 1855, garnering praise for instituting his famous "complaint book" during his first month in office, encouraging citizens to record local issues in need of remedy. An ambitious but labour-intensive endeavor, Wood's complaint book proved unmanageable by the summer of 1855, losing much of its force as a tool of reform.⁷ Some of Wood's other reform-oriented promises also fell by the wayside during his initial year in office. Initially promising the enforcement New York City's Sunday closing laws for taverns, Wood buckled under the pressure exerted by his heavily Irish and German voter base, demanding their saloon-based cultural institutions be protected every day of the week. Wood's close relationship with several saloon-based sporting men like John Morrissey and publican-aldermen Isaiah Rynders (who was also a fearsome rough and tumbler), also hindered

the mayor's ability and/or desire to enforce Sunday closing laws. To protect the saloons of his immigrant voter base, Wood installed loyal Irishmen in the Municipal Police force, ordering his appointees to ignore legal infractions at Irish and German saloons.

When State-wide temperance legislation was handed down to Wood from the capital in Albany, the savvy mayor seized the opportunity to abolish the Sunday laws. According to the Prohibitory Act of 1855, domestically produced liquor could no longer be sold for consumption, handicapping working-class saloons dependent on such products. Eager to appease the wealthy elements of the Empire City, the State's new temperance legislation permitted the sale of more expensive, imported liquors commonly consumed by affluent Gothamites.⁸ With a clever bit of political gamesmanship, Wood claimed the Prohibitory Act superseded the city's old temperance legislation, voiding pre-existing Sunday closing laws. At the same time, Wood informed his Municipal Police that the new Prohibitory Act was too vague to enforce, encouraging them to ignore the new State legislation.⁹ Thus, for a time, liquor and leisure were common *every day* in Manhattan, protected by Wood and his partisan police force.¹⁰

Ethno-political tensions evident in antebellum Manhattan politics were manifested more violently within the working-class sporting subculture. Carrying their political affiliations into the city's streets and saloons, prizefighters and other working-class toughs incorporated political rivalries into their violent, physical displays of masculine prowess. Throughout 1854 and into 1855, a feud raged between Democratic

enforcer John Morrissey and nativist shoulder-hitters Bill Poole and Tom Hyer. After Hyer refused to return from retirement to fight Morrissey for anything less than ten thousand dollars a side, Morrissey and his supporters ambushed Hyer at the Abby Hotel. Confronted by Morrissey, Hyer reiterated his previous terms, agreeing to fight Morrissey when the Irishman came up with ten thousand dollars. In the meantime, Hyer offered to face Morrissey in a duel, offering 'Old Smoke' his choice of pistols. Morrissey declined.¹¹ A week later, however, Hyer's close friend and fellow nativist "Butcher" Bill Poole agreed to fight Morrissey in a "rough and tumble" contest. On July 27, 1854, Poole and Morrissey punched, bit, and gouged each other near the Amos Street Docks, resulting in a gory victory for the "Butcher." After Morrissey called "enough," signaling his capitulation, Poole's supporters descended upon the Irishman, kicking and tearing at the already severely wounded pugilist.¹² The following day, Morrissey's friends sought revenge. Daniel "Dad" Cunningham located Poole, challenging the butcher to a fight, but the men were separated without exchanging blows.¹³ Patrick "Paudeen" McLaughlin, another Morrissey man, searched high and low for Poole and his supporters, finding and fighting an associate of Poole's named Thomas Allen. Allen escaped McLaughlin's initial assault, but was found badly beaten, with his eyes plucked from their sockets, a few nights later. Who, exactly, plucked out Allen's eyes remains unknown, but McLaughlin *was* one of the city's most decorated rough and tumblers, known for biting and gouging his opponents with proficiency.

Violence between the Democratic and Nativist thugs became increasingly severe in 1855. On January 7, Jack Turner and off-duty policeman Lew Baker forced Tom Hyer

into a backroom at Wallack's Theatre at gun point. Hyer and Turner took turns firing their pistols, posturing but not fighting. Unamused with his assailants, Hyer seized Turner by the throat. With Turner in trouble, Baker joined the fray, striking Hyer with the butt of his pistol. Undeterred, Hyer disarmed Baker, holding his assailant for authorities. When the police arrived, they recognized Baker as a fellow officer, refusing to arrest him. Frustrated, Hyer personally dragged Baker to a police station, handing his assailant over to authorities.¹⁴ Less than two months later, the Morrissey-Poole/Hyer rivalry reached its horrific climax. On February 25, 1855, Bill Poole was fatally attacked by several of Morrissey's followers at Stanwix Hall. In the melee, Lew Baker – the man police had refused to arrest for assaulting Hyer at Wallack's Theatre – pulled his pistol, placed it a short distance from Poole's heart, and discharged it twice. Poole died of his injuries on March 8. Although Morrissey was initially implicated in Poole's murder, much of the court's attention fell on Lew Baker, who initially eluded authorities by boarding a ship to the Canary Islands. When Baker was finally detained and brought to trial, three hung juries resulted in his freedom.¹⁵

With Wood's men running amuck in New York City, law makers in Albany once again challenged the mayor's *laissez-faire* approach to liquor regulation by passing new temperance legislation via the 1857 Excise Law. Aware that Wood used the Municipal Police to thwart previous temperance measures, Republicans in Albany imposed a new, State-controlled Metropolitan Police force on the Mayor.¹⁶ As Edward K. Spann has shown, several aspects of the Excise Law were sure to trouble Wood's German and Irish voter base, especially the implementation of "expensive licenses to serve liquor." Even if

a small Irish or German tavern could afford the fifty to three hundred dollar licensing fee, proof of “good moral character” via “petition of 30 respectable ‘freeholders’” was still required to obtain the new licenses.¹⁷ When the Metropolitan Police arrived at City Hall in 1857, Wood ordered his Municipal Police, assisted by a large mob of disgruntled Irish and German immigrants, to confront their State-controlled counterparts, triggering a brutal riot dubbed the “Police War.”¹⁸ According to the Republican *New York Times*, “a great many fighting men (not policemen) from the fourth and other wards” assisted Wood’s men during the riot, including several boxers.¹⁹ Retired prizefighter turned First Ward Alderman Billy Wilson, for example, got his ‘licks’ in on the Metropolitan Police, skillfully brandishing a club during the riot, reveling in the bloody chaos.²⁰ Irishman Pat Matthews, leader of one faction of the Bowery Boys gang and a highly respected rough and tumbler, also assisted Wood.²¹ Badly outnumbered and frightfully beaten, the Metropolitan Police retreated as cheers of “Fernandy Wood!” and “Down with the Black Republicans!” resonated throughout the pro-Wood crowd.²²

Despite the united resistance mounted by Wood’s Municipal Police and their Irish and German supporters, the existence of the State-controlled Metropolitan force was upheld by the courts, effectively ending Manhattan’s “Police War.” When the dust settled, Wood was fined 13,000 dollars for defying the State and inciting a riot. The Municipal Police were disbanded. Following the police debacle in Manhattan, city and State Democrats, embarrassed by Wood’s brash, egocentric behavior, refused to support the Mayor. John Morrissey, wary of Wood’s knack for making enemies, continued to serve the Mayor, albeit with a healthy dose of caution. “John felt no

particular loyalty to the mayor,” explains Morrissey biographer Jack Kofoed. Indeed, as Kofoed suggests, Morrissey’s support for Wood likely rested upon “a foundation of business expediency.”²³

On July 4, 1857, rioting filled the streets of Manhattan once again, with residents of the Sixth, Seventh, and Thirteenth Wards clashing with Metropolitan Police and fellow citizens. In essence, the Independence Day riot was the last great clash between pro- and anti-Wood factions of Manhattan society. John Morrissey was notably absent from the rioting, already distancing himself from Wood’s tarnished image.²⁴ Morrissey, however, was not entirely finished with the Mayor, lending assistance to Wood again during the mayoral race of 1857, recruiting muscle from Philadelphia to skew voting lists with “dead men and men who had never existed.”²⁵ Even with Morrissey’s help, however, Wood lost the election by a few thousand votes. “Realizing his political mentor was on the down-grade,” explains Kofoed, Morrissey bid Wood *adieu*.²⁶

“You’ll Never Improve a Man by Repelling Him:” Israel Lazarus, Canada West, and the Buffalo, New York, Fight Scene, 1857-1859

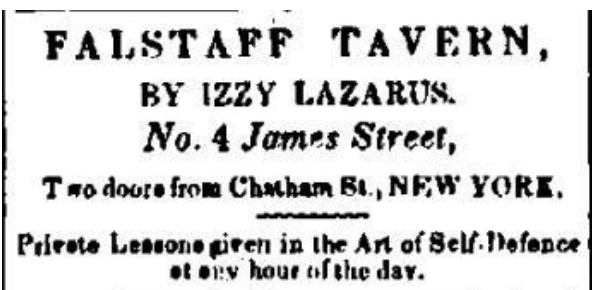
Following the formation and implementation of the Metropolitan Police in 1857, prizefighting slumped into decline in and around New York City. Under State control, the new police force all but eradicated the bareknuckle sport. Yet, as Fyodor Dostoyevsky once wrote, “you’ll never improve a man by repelling him.”²⁷ Instead of changing their ways, prizefighters moved their operations upstate to Israel Lazarus’ ‘New York Hotel’ in

Buffalo. Buffalo proved an ideal city for prizefighting for several reasons. First and foremost, Buffalo's proximity to Canada West provided easy access to international fighting grounds, beyond the reach of American authorities. Secondly, in Buffalo the nativist American Party failed to garner support comparable to its New York City counterparts, resulting in fewer restrictions on working-class leisure. Lastly, Buffalo lacked the coordinated police presence of New York City, allowing Israel Lazarus to make arrangements for prizefights with relatively little resistance from authorities. For these reasons, antebellum Buffalo was briefly transformed into a Northeastern boxing hub, hosting numerous prizefights from 1857 to 1859, as well as a thriving sparring scene.

Prizefighting in Buffalo was almost entirely organized and facilitated by a retired Anglo-Jewish prizefighter named Israel Lazarus. Known as 'Izzy' to friends and admirers, Lazarus made his English prizefighting debut in the 1830s, earning a reputation for skill, durability, and resolve within London's working-class sporting subculture. After defeating 'Surrender' Lane with bare-knuckles and 'Hammer' Lane with gloves, Lazarus faced the talented Owen Swift near Royston, Hertfordshire, England, in 1837. After contesting 113 rounds of gruelling combat with Swift, Lazarus' corner threw up the sponge, admitting defeat. Questioning his abilities as a boxer, Lazarus retired from prizefighting, pursuing a career as a publican in Liverpool, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and London.²⁸ After spending a decade of his pugilistic retirement in England, Lazarus moved to America, establishing the "Falstaff Tavern" – a tribute to Shakespeare's portly

comedic character and Lazarus' own jolly demeanour and ample waistline – in New York City by July, 1853.²⁹

In New York City, Israel Lazarus experienced none of the barriers typically faced by the city's other Jewish immigrants. As Robert Ernst illustrates in his monumental study of immigrant life in antebellum Manhattan, the city's heavily Polish and German Jewish population often faced daunting linguistic barriers upon their arrival in America, limiting their opportunities for employment.³⁰ When Lazarus arrived in New York City, however, he was already fluent in English and skilled in the relevant, but controversial, occupations of saloon keeping and pugilism. Lazarus' experiences and expertise in boxing, combined with the welcoming atmosphere of his "Falstaff Tavern," garnered immediate respect within Manhattan's working class. Lazarus accumulated additional accolades by regularly participating in sparring matches, volunteering his time and abilities for the benefit of other boxers. By 1854, Lazarus was trusted as a stakeholder by prizefighters, reflecting his privileged position within the subculture.³¹ Sometime before 1857, however, Lazarus relocated to Buffalo, New York, opening the 'New York Hotel' on Exchange Street.³² Drawing on his experiences in the English prize ring, Lazarus transformed his hotel into a meeting place for the fancy, facilitating prizefights for boxers from all over the northeast.



Above: Advertisement for Izzy Lazarus' "Falstaff Tavern." New York Clipper, August 18, 1854

Although 'Izzy' Lazarus was the driving force behind prizefighting in antebellum Buffalo, the city's fight scene was also a product of broad social changes beginning earlier in the century. As Laurence A. Glasco explains, "by the mid-nineteenth century...Buffalo had a large, rapidly-growing immigrant population, jostling alongside a native-born, American population drawn mainly from New England and the eastern part of New York State."³³ During the late 1840s and 1850s, hundreds of Irish and German immigrants flowed into Buffalo, producing several distinct sporting milieus. German immigrants often arrived in Buffalo with a degree of artisanal expertise, finding employment in the city's semi-skilled and skilled labour force, deriving masculine worth via a combination of skillful labour and participation in traditional German leisure activities in sport, dancing, theatre, and music.³⁴ In sport, German Buffalonians set up *Turnvereins*, organizing regimented gymnastic pursuits for their communities. The Buffalo German community also produced an exceptional 'plank-walker' named James Winterfield, better known as the "German Stag," and an outstanding billiardist named John Seereiter.³⁵ Arriving from primarily agricultural backgrounds, Irish Buffalonians

tended to work as unskilled laborers, particularly in the city's dockyards.³⁶ As William Jenkins has shown, saloons were the nuclei of Buffalo's Irish neighbourhoods, providing important information regarding "employment, conditions in 'the old country,' and local politics," as well as leisurely drinking, debate, and "amateur pugilism."³⁷ More so than their contemporary German counterparts, the Buffalo Irish associated masculinity with physical competition, praising saloon-based contests like fighting, lifting, and wrestling as trials of manhood. Within the combative realm of Irish saloon culture, prizefighters and sparrers emerged as ideal representations of Irish manhood, holding privileged positions within the working-class sporting subculture.³⁸

Although the social and cultural foundations of Buffalo's antebellum boxing scene were established throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, pugilism was guided to new heights in the "Queen City" by Israel Lazarus beginning in 1857. One of America's most successful antebellum sporting entrepreneurs, Lazarus organized prizefights at his "New York Hotel" in Buffalo, staging contests across the Niagara River in the British colony of Canada West. In the process, Lazarus generated a tidy profit, serving food and drink at his hotel, while organizing chartered steam tugs to transport fighters and fans across the international border.³⁹ Although Lazarus was undeniably the kingpin of Buffalo prizefighting, the efforts of Sherriff Samuel Couthard of Canada West were also indispensable. At the close of the antebellum era, Couthard was well known for selecting safe, efficient fighting grounds in Canada West and providing ideal training quarters at his Waterloo Ferry Hotel. When Englishman Ed Price was preparing to fight

Irish-born “Australian” James Kelly in 1859, for example, he conducted his training camp at Couthard’s hotel, under the protection of the Sheriff.⁴⁰

The first of the 1857 Buffalo-Canada West prizefights featured Lazarus’ son Harry against fellow Englishman Denny Horrigan for three hundred dollars a side. According to the *New York Clipper*, “hundreds could be seen wending their way towards the foot of Erie Street, where three large tugs were in waiting to convey the principals and their respective friends to the scene of action.”⁴¹ Once aboard the steam tugs, boxers and spectators were ferried along the Niagara River, into Lake Erie, to the fight grounds at Point Abino, Canada West. Lazarus and Horrigan fought ninety-seven rounds in front of Canadian and American onlookers, including a number of female spectators from Canada West. With Horrigan hurt, Lazarus landed a single, well-placed punch, dropping his opponent to the turf in the final round. With their man struggling on the turf, Horrigan’s corner threw up the sponge in defeat.⁴² With the Horrigan-Lazarus bout decided, the American-based boxers and spectators returned to Buffalo, suffering no molestation from Canadian or American authorities.⁴³

The resounding success of Horrigan-Lazarus prompted a string of Buffalo-Canada West prizefights, featuring boxers from around the Northeast. Philadelphians Dominick Bradley and S.S. Rankin, for example, staged their 1857 prizefight near Fort Erie, Canada West, across the Niagara River from Buffalo, where local sheriff Samuel Couthard procured suitable fighting grounds for the fighters.⁴⁴ In one of the most anticipated fights of the late 1850s, Denny Horrigan and Harry Lazarus were rematched, fighting a

one hundred and twenty-eight round draw on October 10, 1857, stopping their contest on account of darkness.⁴⁵ According to the *Clipper*, Horrigan-Lazarus II was “one of the best and most severely contested fights that ever took place on this continent.”⁴⁶ Although a number of sensational bouts were conducted via Buffalo during the antebellum years, prizefighting reached its pinnacle in the ‘Queen City’ on October 19, 1858, when John Morrissey successfully defended his American heavyweight championship against John C. Heenan at Point Abino, knocking the latter out in just thirteen minutes.⁴⁷

The city of Buffalo was also home to a thriving antebellum sparring scene. After establishing his New York Hotel, Israel Lazarus and his sons Harry and Johnny all offered sparring lessons in Buffalo. The Lazarus trio were also a staple of the city’s sparring benefits, regularly lending their services to local and visiting boxers and stage performers. According to the *Buffalo Daily Courier*, for example, the Lazarus clan provided sparring entertainment at a benefit for a local singer in 1858 at Buffalo’s Metropolitan Theatre.⁴⁸ Sparring, when included in ‘variety’ shows combining singing, dancing, comedy, and other acts, rarely prompted much objection from Buffalo’s middle and upper classes. The tendency for prizefighters to hold sparring benefits in Buffalo to raise funds to cover past and/or future training, however, drew the ire of social reformers. Following a sparring benefit at Buffalo’s Townsend Hall in 1857, for example, Denny Horrigan and Harry Lazarus agreed to contest a bareknuckle prizefight in Canada West.⁴⁹ The clear link between prizefighting and sparring in Buffalo energized the sport’s detractors. When Johnny Mackay and Frank McIntyre received a joint sparring benefit

on August 8, 1857, for example, Buffalo's working-class sporting subculture was already facing opposition from the city's social reformers. Undeterred, boxers in Buffalo resisted the admonitions of temperance advocates, determined to "have their fun in spite of all opposition."⁵⁰

Although most sparrers in Buffalo were 'white' American, Irish, and English, a small group of African-American boxers also called the city home. In an 1859 Sparring exhibition at the Buffalo Theatre, for example, a sparring match between two African-American pugilists was included in the evening's events.⁵¹ African American participation in sparring was typically a segregated affair, with black boxers facing each other, rather than white opponents. Sport-related segregation was common in antebellum Buffalo, where aboriginal pedestrians represented some of the most active athletes in the city, competing in 'Indian' only races over various distances.⁵² When, on rare occasions, aboriginal and 'white' runners did compete against each other in Buffalo, a friendly race could quickly transform into a donnybrook. On October 2, 1854, for example, "Mickey Free and the Indians" – the latter including runners named Burton, Armstrong, Bennett, and Steeprock - engaged in a five mile hurdle race. Soundly defeated on the track, Free was severely beaten by irate spectators for giving up the race after completing only four and a half miles.⁵³ The segregation experienced by aboriginal walkers was typical of most, if not all, Buffalo sporting activities. A prominent stop along the Underground Railroad, helping run-away slaves reach freedom in the British colonies, Buffalo's working-class sporting subculture nonetheless segregated African-American athletes at sparring benefits and exhibitions.

Although Buffalo never developed a nativist movement comparable in scale to New York City, temperance advocates nonetheless associated much of the city's drinking and rowdyism with the heavily Irish working class.⁵⁴ Israel Lazarus, for example, was regularly pursued by temperance reformers, appearing before the courts in 1857 for "keeping a disorderly house," receiving a one hundred and twenty-five dollar fine.⁵⁵ It was not until 1859, however, that authorities in Buffalo made a more concerted effort to expel Lazarus and expunge prizefighting from the city. Following the Price-Kelly prizefight at Point Abino, Canada West, in 1859, the Buffalo authorities took legal action against the pugilists frequenting their city. "After a period of no less than six months," explained the *Clipper*, "the grand jury holding sessions in Buffalo are seized with conscientious scruples" regarding the Price-Kelly prizefight, "and although they quietly looked on and tacitly encouraged the two fights between Denny Horrigan and Harry Lazarus (the latter one of their own citizens), the contests between Bradley and Rankin, Coburn and Gribben, Barney Aaron and Scotty of Brooklyn, and Morrissey and the Benicia Boy...they now think it their duty to step in and punish the principals, seconds, and some few of the spectators."⁵⁶ Shortly after the Price-Kelly fight, Israel Lazarus' New York Hotel was destroyed by a fire of unknown origin.⁵⁷ Rather than reorganize in Buffalo, Lazarus and his sons relocated to New York City, effectively ending the 'Queen City's' golden age of prizefighting.

Despite opposition to the prize ring in Buffalo and New York City, John Morrissey and John C. Heenan vividly illustrated the lucrative opportunities available to heavyweight prizefighters in antebellum America. After establishing himself as a

gambling baron in New York City, Morrissey spent the Civil War era organizing a retreat in Saratoga Springs, transforming the upstate locale into one of the most popular gambling resorts in America, living as a millionaire by 1867.⁵⁸ As Morrissey's pugilistic successor, Heenan endeavoured to establish himself on the international stage, challenging British champion Tom Sayers to an international contest in 1860, taking the popularity of prizefighting to new heights in America.⁵⁹ Although the Heenan-Sayers contest was declared a draw, the Troy-born pugilist returned to New York City dubbed "the conquering hero," enshrouded by the admiration of unprecedented numbers of Americans.⁶⁰ In New York State, the momentum of the Heenan-Sayers contest carried over into the Civil War era, providing the foundation for the nation's busiest wartime fight scene.

Testing the Pugilistic Waters: Mobilization, Bull Run, and Prizefighting in New York City, 1861-1862

The outbreak of Civil War drastically altered boxing's prospects in New York City. Mobilization consumed the minds and manpower of the Metropolitan Police, which tried mightily to maintain order as massive encampments of volunteers took shape at City Hall Park, Central Park, and elsewhere.⁶¹ Although men of all social classes and distinctions enlisted to serve the Union, the Metropolitan Police spent much of their increasingly valuable time dealing with Billy Wilson's 6th New York Volunteers. Recruited almost exclusively from the working class, Wilson's men gave municipal authorities headaches for three months by harassing citizens until their deployment in

June.⁶² Fernando Wood won the mayoral race of 1860, further complicating matters for local police by maintaining an anti-war stance until his departure from office in 1862. During his second term as mayor, Wood sparked Manhattan's own secession controversy, suggesting the city break with the Union, to become an independent economic entity.⁶³ Despite Wood's local independence movement, most New Yorkers initially supported the Union Army, with men of all social classes and distinctions offering their services to put down the Confederacy.

While politicians struggled to wrap their minds around Fernando Wood's call for an independent city of New York and the Metropolitan Police laboured to maintain orderly mobilization, Manhattan's working class mapped out its next prizefight. Although several accomplished boxers, like Billy Wilson, Harry Lazarus, Johnny Lazarus, and Michael Trainor, immediately volunteered in the Union Army, Manhattan still boasted scores of talented pugilists, eager to exploit the increasingly overworked police force. No longer under the thumb of Mayor Wood, Manhattan's police enforced the wishes of an upper- and middle-class Republican, State Government, keen on upholding Victorian notions of temperance. With a healthy respect for Wood's guile and cunning, Republican Governor Edwin D. Morgan saw to it that the three man Metropolitan Police Commission was occupied entirely by Republicans, with spine enough to oppose Wood.⁶⁴ Although the Metropolitan Police tried to ration their attention between civilian and martial matters in 1861, the tumultuous early days of mobilization drew focus away from the working-class sport, allowing the boxers of New York to successfully stage three prizefights in the vicinity of the city.

Amidst the chaos of mobilization, New York City's working-class sporting entrepreneurs organized a prizefight between lightweights Edward Toughey and Oweny Goneghan, travelling across the East River to New Brighton, Staten Island, on April 17. In total, only about one hundred and fifty New Yorkers set out for the Toughey-Goneghan bout, camping in the wilderness overnight "in humble imitation of the other surrounding cattle."⁶⁵ Unbeknownst to the fighters and spectators camping out near New Brighton, about thirty Metropolitan Police officers also made the crossing to Staten Island on April 17, poised to arrest those in attendance. The following morning New Brighton was abuzz with typical pre-fight fervor as Toughey and Goneghan selected their respective seconds. After the fighters agreed upon officials, Toughey "shied his castor in the circle," entering the ring to wait for his opponent.⁶⁶ Before Goneghan could cross the ropes and join Toughey, however, the Metropolitan Police made their descent, arresting thirty spectators. After paying fines of two or three dollars to a Justice of the Peace, the captured spectators were released, returning home to New York City.⁶⁷ Their movements closely scrutinized by the police, Toughey and Goneghan opted to contest their prizefight behind closed doors, preventing further interference. With just twenty friends in attendance, the Toughey-Goneghan bout commenced on the morning of April 20, at the stroke of four, in a room on the east side of the city. A catch-weight affair, Toughey and Goneghan likely weighed in the vicinity of one hundred and thirty pounds, but Goneghan was the naturally heavier man.⁶⁸ Using his larger frame to out-wrestle the thinner, taller Toughey to the floor, Goneghan eventually threw his opponent temple first into a bench. With Toughey badly dazed, lacking sufficient

equilibrium to continue, Goneghan was declared the victor. “Had the battle taken place on turf,” reflected the *Clipper*, “there might have been a different termination to the affair.”⁶⁹

Prizefights in private, like Toughey-Goneghan, were considerably less attractive to the working class, preventing the drinking, gambling, and revelry typically enjoyed by spectators. Furthermore, prizefighting’s value as a boon to rough, violent masculine prowess was intimately tied to the sport’s public nature. By forcing Toughey and Goneghan to contest their bout in private, the Metropolitan Police – knowingly or not – robbed the prizefight of its social power. After all, how could the working-class praise or emulate something, in this case a prizefight, if it was sheltered from public view? Although the Toughey-Goneghan fight proved less than ideal, fight organizers compensated for the private bout by holding a sparring benefit for Toughey at Montgomery Hall on May 6, 1861, featuring the beneficiary and Goneghan in the evening’s final bout. By matching Toughey and Goneghan at a sparring benefit, the working class could view its heroes in action, in a safe and legal fashion, gaining a sense of what the prizefight might have looked like.⁷⁰



Above: Richard Hollywood, *National Police Gazette*, February 5, 1881.

As the war effort grew ever more complicated, the Metropolitan Police organized its labour to maximize efficiency. The death of Colonel Elmer E. Ellsworth, the ambitious, twenty-four year old leader of the 11th New York Volunteers, on May 24, 1861, stirred up anti-Confederate sentiment in the city, generating a new rush of impatient, motivated volunteers. Until mid-July, 1861, the Union and Confederate Armies took turns winning minor affrays, with neither side gaining an advantage. With few casualties reported on either side, volunteers flocked to the Union cause. In the minds of most New Yorkers, Union victory was imminent.⁷¹ The Metropolitan Police

struggled to keep pace with mobilization and civilian matters. The Fire Laddies, in particular, created additional work for the police, fighting amongst themselves and triggering false fire alarms. On July 4, for example, the Metropolitan Police were called to the scene of a vicious rough and tumble between two Fire Laddies named Elias P. Wisner and John Streble. After Wisner bit off a chunk of Streble's cheek, the latter chewed on Wisner's thumb. Although neither man seemed to have life-threatening injuries, Wisner died on July 16 from infection.⁷² The same week Wisner died, cases involving stabbings, robbery, infanticide, and another possible murder came across the police chief's desk.⁷³

With the police occupied with numerous issues in New York City, fight aficionados organized a prizefight between a promising young Irish featherweight named Richard Hollywood and an unknown pugilist in the vicinity of New York City on July 14. Brutally beaten during his one hour and fifteen minute bout with the unknown, Hollywood emerged the winner by disqualification when his opponent lost track of time, failing to approach the scratch for the twenty-third round.⁷⁴ As a featherweight, however, Hollywood attracted limited attention in New York City. The *New York Clipper*, for example, did not report on Hollywood's fight until August 10, almost a full month after it occurred. A featherweight, Hollywood's inability to generate 'buzz' around his initial foray into the prize ring can be partially explained by his light weight and small stature. By the 1860s, both the working and middle classes favoured large, muscular builds, viewing heavyweights as the pugilistic ideal. The wide-spread appeal of the Heenan-Sayers bout of 1860, the most highly anticipated sporting event of the

antebellum era, further legitimated the heavyweight division's privileged position in the sport. A week after Hollywood's victory, the Union Army was defeated at First Bull Run, casting a thick cloud of fear and anxiety over Manhattan. When combined with the prevailing heavyweight bias in boxing, the Union setback at Bull Run all but annihilated popular recognition of Hollywood's pugilistic accomplishments in the city. Following First Bull Run, to quote historian Ernest A. McKay, "everyone and everything seemed to be at odds [in Manhattan], and the differences affected the attitude of the entire city."⁷⁵ New York City's "Peace" Democrats used the Union defeat at Bull Run to chastise the war. The fiercely anti-Republican Benjamin Wood, publisher of *the New York Daily News* and brother of Mayor Fernando Wood, urged the Union Army to lay down arms and return home. Catholic Archbishop John Hughes called for peace with the South. Even Horace Greeley, owner of the Republican *New York Tribune*, called for an armistice.⁷⁶ Outside of the working-class sport enclave, awareness of Hollywood's victory over the unknown remained muted, if not entirely erased.

While Northern politicians and journalists locked ideological horns over the aims of the Civil War, New York City's working class arranged a prizefight between African Americans Ed Heddy, of Manhattan, and George Brown, of Chicago.⁷⁷ A former jockey and coal heaver, Brown was trained by noted African-American sparring instructor John Bailey in Boston, becoming a "scientific pugilist" noted for "speed and strength." Heddy was a less polished boxer than Brown, but boasted a reputation for brutality in the ring, supposedly breaking a man's back in a previous fight.⁷⁸ Hamstrung by prevailing racial discrimination in the North and white anxiety towards powerful, black men, Heddy-

Brown was the only prizefight contested between two African Americans for the duration of the Civil War. On July 24, 1861, the day after the Confederate victory at Bull Run, a meagre fifty spectators looked on while Heddy and Brown fought twenty-three rounds somewhere in the vicinity of New York City. Far from being an entirely segregated affair, Brown and Heddy were assisted by well-known members of the boxing fraternity, including white boxing standouts like Johnny Lazarus, Johnny Monaghan, Kit Burns, and Johnny Roche. Although Brown utilized the much frowned upon tactic of “getting down” following contact, intentionally hitting the turf, he responded well to Harry Lazarus’ calls to stay on his feet and fight, out-boxing Heddy from the tenth round on. Following a well-timed throw by Brown in the twenty-third round, Heddy was unable to continue, ending the match.⁷⁹ With the police anxiously watching post-Bull Run debates unfold in New York City, the Heddy-Brown contest went off without a hitch, resulting in zero arrests.⁸⁰ African Americans, however, never figured in another Civil War era prizefight. Any hopes of additional contests between black fighters were likely derailed in 1863, when the fatal, racially motivated New York City Draft Riots overtook the city.⁸¹

Despite a second major Union defeat at Wilson’s Creek on August 10, 1861, patriotic fervor in the Empire City remained strong.⁸² Within city limits, the Metropolitan Police continued to suppress saloon-based leisure, but the force lacked the time and resources to effectively monitor sporting events staged on the fringes of Manhattan. Thus, New York City’s working class faced little resistance while organizing a featherweight prizefight between Richard Hollywood and Michael Dorsey for December

2, scheduled to occur across the East River on Long Island. With the Metropolitan police consumed with wartime matters, the Hollywood-Dorsey match was advertised publically, with details of the contest appearing in the *Clipper*.⁸³ The Metropolitan Police, however, allowed the fight to unfold on Long Island near Calvary Cemetery. As Hollywood-Dorsey unfolded, spectators surveyed their surroundings nervously, expecting police interference at any moment. “Between both fear and hope the commotion was most lively,” explained the *New York Evening Express*, “and great gratification was expressed when both principals were placed in their carriages and driven off, with a half mile of vehicles following in order, like a funeral of reasonable dimensions.”⁸⁴ After about thirty rounds of fighting, Hollywood’s seconds threw up the sponge, saving their man from further punishment.⁸⁵ For those in attendance, the Hollywood-Dorsey contest was a welcome distraction from the realities of war, proving “a nice bit of sport for the boys,” explained the *New York Clipper*, “who enjoyed it amazingly.”⁸⁶

“Young and Vigorous Men of Muscle:” Competitive Sparring as a Primarily Working-class Pursuit, 1861-1862

Despite losing to Dorsey, Hollywood was financially compensated for his bravery in the ring by Manhattan’s fight fans. According to Benjamin G. Rader, “As within a family, the fraternity [sporting subculture] developed its own set of special understandings, its own argot, its own acceptable behaviors, and its own concept of honor.”⁸⁷ Providing financial support for defeated pugilists was part of the subculture’s

moral code, compensating such men for entering the ring. Numerous Manhattan sporting figures assisted Hollywood financially following his bout with Dorsey, showing their appreciation for the Irishman in several ways. First of all, after the 'stakes' or 'purse' was awarded to Dorsey at Billy Clarke's saloon, Hollywood was presented with the proceeds of a subscription. Secondly, Hollywood was honored with a sparring benefit at Kerrigan's Hall, where Dorsey and other boxers volunteered their services. Thirdly, spectators supported Hollywood by paying the twenty-five cent admission fee to attend his sparring benefit.⁸⁸

Hollywood's sparring benefit was typical of comparable events held during 1861 and into 1862, attracting almost exclusively working-class spectatorship. In general, the price of admission at sparring benefits, ranged from twenty-five cents to one dollar, deterring many of New York City's poorest, unskilled laborers from attending, producing audiences composed largely of semi-skilled and skilled workers. The middle-class audience for sparring, it seems, left the sport with Otto van Hoym. During the twilight of the antebellum era, many of New York City's sparring benefits were held at 'Hoym's Theatre,' located at 199 Bowery. Hoym owned the larger Stadttheatre as well, where he catered primarily to German New Yorkers, providing performances in their native tongue. Established by Hoym in 1858, Hoym's Theatre offered different fare than the more famous Stadttheatre, hosting sports, music, and plays, in both German and English, attracting patrons from all corners of New York society. From 1858 to 1860, Hoym's Theatre became the venue of choice for sparring benefits, hosting events dedicated to numerous prizefighters, including American heavyweight champion John C.

Heenan.⁸⁹ Upon the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, however, Hoym and many other German-Americans formed the Twentieth Regiment New York Volunteers, also known as the “United Turner Rifles.”⁹⁰ With Hoym away at war, boxers used either Kerrigan’s Hall or Montgomery Hall for sparring benefits, shifting the sport into rougher sections of the city.

Despite Hoym’s absence, at least eleven sparring benefits were held in New York City from April 13 to December 31, 1861, featuring no less than eighty five separate match-ups and over eighty different athletes. During the second half of 1861, most of New York City’s sparring benefits were held at Kerrigan’s Hall, located at 22 White Street, in Manhattan’s Sixth Ward. The “Bloody Ould Sixth,” as the ward was known, was a poor, predominantly Irish section of New York City, notorious for the ‘Five Points’ slum within its boundaries.⁹¹ The name “Kerrigan’s Hall” was a reference to the building’s previous usage as the headquarters of Sixth Ward councilman and noted Fenian James E. Kerrigan. In the late 1850s, English pugilist Harry Jennings leased Kerrigan’s Hall, transforming it into the Sixth Ward’s leading sporting resort. In the years leading up to the Civil War, Jennings hosted sparring at Kerrigan’s Hall on a regular basis, offering bouts every Wednesday night.⁹² During the first calendar year of the war, at least eight benefits were held at Kerrigan’s Hall, with no interference from police or social reformers. The audience at Kerrigan Hall sparring events was typically composed of “young and vigorous musclemen,” particularly fire laddies, Union Volunteers, and prizefighters.⁹³ At a benefit for prizefighter Young Drumgoole, for example, the *New York Clipper* noted the presence of the “Black Joke, Chelsea, Hudson, Knickerbocker,

Union, Jackson, and Mazeppa” volunteer fire companies, along with members of “half a dozen” other companies.⁹⁴ A few months later, members of the Irish “Fighting Sixty-Ninth” Volunteers and Second Fire Zouaves gathered around the stage to watch an evening of sparring.⁹⁵

In addition to performances by skilled prizefighters such as Richard Hollywood, Ed Toughy, Johnny Roche, and others, one of the most popular attractions at Kerrigan’s Hall was a one-armed boxer named Charley O’Hare, known for keeping an audience “in a continual roar.”⁹⁶ Novelty performances like O’Hare’s were popular in antebellum New York City, where P.T. Barnum’s American Museum made a tidy profit displaying mermaids, bearded women, Siamese twins, Tom Thumb, and other ‘attractions.’⁹⁷ O’Hare proved an active member of the working-class sporting subculture, lending his services at the sparring benefits of fellow boxers, earning the respect of his peers. On December 5, 1861, the boxers of the New York City repaid O’Hare, providing the one-armed pugilist with a sparring benefit of his own at Kerrigan’s Hall. Much to the delight of the audience, O’Hare contested the final sparring match of his benefit with a fellow one-armed boxer named Kelly.⁹⁸

Although New York City’s middle class tolerated the sparring benefits offered at Kerrigan’s Hall, other working-class sporting activities proved worthy of scrutiny and sanction. As middle-class men increasingly embraced Muscular Christianity and rational recreation, efforts to extinguish idle, ‘disreputable’ working-class tavern sports increased. Sport, argued middle-class reformers, should include physical activity,

thereby strengthening body and spirit, improving an individual's lot in the workforce. Most semi-skilled and unskilled laborers, however, lacked the time and/or discretionary income to pursue instruction in rational recreation. Although the middle class supported some sports, "traditional sports characterized by orgies of violence," explain Gorn and Goldstein, "remained anathema to bourgeois Victorians and were banished to the urban underworld."⁹⁹

At Kerrigan's Hall, Harry Jennings catered to prevailing working-class tastes in sport, providing regular rat baits and dog fights for his patrons.¹⁰⁰ Although he was adored within the working-class sporting subculture, middle-class reformers despised Jennings' regular offerings of blood sports, bristling at the idle spectatorship, gambling, rowdyism, and drunkenness such events promoted. In April of 1861, persistent complaints about Jennings and his establishment paid off for social reformers, resulting in the arrest of the popular tavern keeper for the vague offence of "being the proprietor of a disorderly place, the resort of dissolute persons, subversive of public morals, and a nuisance to the neighborhood."¹⁰¹ After posting bail, Jennings brazenly reorganized, challenging city officials by returning to Kerrigan's Hall to host a rat bait, boldly advertising his intentions in the *New York Herald*, resulting in his re-arrest.¹⁰² In court, Jennings' attorney argued that, contrary to the charges against him, no animal fighting was occurring at Kerrigan's Hall. Quite the contrary, Jennings was simply offering the public the opportunity to view dogs killing rats. The Court of General Sessions, however, considered the attorney's clarification of the sport conducted at Kerrigan's Hall insignificant, fining Jennings two hundred dollars, sentencing the sporting man to thirty

days in prison.¹⁰³ Although Jennings' fine was waived, he did indeed serve his sentence. If authorities thought a stint in "the toms" would deter Jennings from holding further animal sports, they were sorely disappointed. Four weeks after his release, Jennings was imprisoned again for conducting blood sports at Kerrigan's Hall.¹⁰⁴ Growing weary of being arrested, but unwilling to give up blood sports, Jennings put Kerrigan's Hall up for sale in December of 1861, removing himself and his passion for working-class sport to Boston.¹⁰⁵

The three other sparring benefits held in New York City during 1861 were hosted at Montgomery Hall, located at 76 Prince Street, near the corner of Prince and Broadway, along the boundary separating the eighth and fourteenth wards.¹⁰⁶ Although dominated by the Irish, the eighth and fourteenth wards were quite culturally diverse. The eighth ward included residents from the "Central and South Americas, West Indies, and France," while a German community existed in the "Irish Fourteenth."¹⁰⁷ Like Kerrigan's Hall, Montgomery Hall was a thoroughly working-class establishment, regularly used for meetings by the Irish community and broader workingmen's groups like the Cartmen's Benevolent and Protective Society.¹⁰⁸ The performers at sparring benefits at Montgomery Hall reflected the working-class flavor of such gatherings. Ed Toughey, a prizefighter and a boilermaker, performed in at least two of three sparring benefits held at Montgomery Hall in 1861, as did a sailor named "Young Grady," and the "press boy" turned prizefighter, Richard Hollywood. Attendance at Montgomery Hall sparring events was similar to those held at Kerrigan's Hall, drawing mechanics, curious students, and showmen (singers and actors), as well as more decorated members of the

boxing fraternity like retired-prizefighter and saloon-keeper Israel Lazarus, and prizefighters Harry Lazarus, John Woods, and Johnny Roche.¹⁰⁹

At the dawn of 1862, the Manhattan populace was greatly crestfallen towards the war. “No dramatic Union victories inspired the people,” explains McKay, “and there was profound doubt about the strength of the nation to sustain the war.”¹¹⁰ Stuck in the doldrums of wartime dissatisfaction, the citizens of Manhattan turned to the city’s abundant theatrical and athletic distractions to escape the realities of Civil War. Frank Queen, editor of the *New York Clipper* and a major proponent of boxing, encouraged working-class boxers to capitalize on increased demand for distractions by holding sparring benefits at “a good place in a respectable locality, as there are many rather timid about attending exhibitions in dilapidated halls in out of the way streets.”¹¹¹ The boxers of Manhattan responded, moving a large number of their sparring benefits and exhibitions out of Kerrigan and Montgomery Halls into venues more palatable to middle-class tastes like the City Assembly Rooms and Stuyvesant Institute.

Something More “Elegant and Commodious:” The Gentrification of New York City Sparring Benefits, 1862-1864

Early in 1862, Frank Queen of the *New York Clipper* urged the city’s pugilists to offer sparring benefits in more “respectable” environs. In a sense, Queen was suggesting the gentrification of boxing, hoping to transform the sport into something less objectionable to middle- and upper-class New Yorkers. Heeding Queen’s advice in May of 1862, New York’s boxers held a sparring benefit at the City Assembly Rooms at

446 Broadway. According to the *New York Weekly Review*, the City Assembly Rooms were “elegant and commodious,” the finest concert hall in the city when established in 1856.¹¹² From its “musical inauguration” in 1856, to sparring’s debut in 1862, the City Assembly Rooms hosted a variety of gatherings including numerous musical events, including performances of Mozart, Schubert, and Mendelssohn; philanthropic gatherings like the Ladies’ Union Aid Society for the Aged and Infirm and St. Vincent de Paul festival for the benefit of the poor; an Annual celebration of Thomas Paine’s birthday, and various balls and celebrations. In short, the City Assembly Rooms were a well-recognized centre of culture and entertainment throughout New York City’s social hierarchy.

The orderliness and quality of sparring performances at the City Assembly Rooms eased upper- and middle- class fears regarding violence and crime often associated with more working-class establishments. Unfortunately, the City Assembly Rooms were beyond most boxers’ budgets. In 1863, however, boxers found a venue comparable to the Assembly Rooms when the managers of Stuyvesant Institute opened their doors to sparring benefits, becoming the boxers’ main venue for performances. The Stuyvesant was originally part of the University Medical College, but was sold in 1851 when the college changed locations.¹¹³ Although unfamiliar to the average member of the working class, the Stuyvesant hosted numerous events and activities throughout the Civil War period, including concerts, lectures, and political meetings.¹¹⁴ The writers of the *New York Clipper* were pleasantly surprised by the Stuyvesant, writing: “knowing what a difficult matter it is generally to get a good seat from lack of

accommodation, we arrived quite early, but instead of finding a barn, like most of the so called halls used for benefits, we were surprised to find the finest place, barring the City Assembly Rooms, in the city.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, the Stuyvesant’s comfortable chairs and sloped seating made attending sparring benefits more enjoyable than ever before, while the building’s history as an upper- and middle-class educational hub, combined with the safety of its environs, encouraged a socially-diverse crowd, representing all classes of society.¹¹⁶ When manager Vesey of the City Assembly Rooms died in mid-1863, his replacement forbid sparring benefits, making the Stuyvesant the most attractive facility available for sparring events. From November of 1863 to April of 1865, no less than thirty-six sparring benefits were held at the Stuyvesant, bringing boxing to the verge of mainstream approval.¹¹⁷

Despite a general shift towards more ‘bourgeois’ venues like the City Assembly Rooms and Stuyvesant Institute, boxers continued to hold sparring benefits in the “dilapidated halls” of the city. Montgomery Hall, for example, was still occasionally used for sparring in 1862.¹¹⁸ A hall at 600 Broadway, dubbed the ‘Fives Court’ – referring to the five fingers on a fist – was also used for sparring in 1862. Consisting of a room, with a stage at one end and a single level of seating across the length of the hall, the Fives Court was generally ill-suited for sparring. Although the stage was sufficiently large, its location at one end of the hall, combined with the single tier seating, made it difficult for spectators at the back of the Fives Court to see the sparring “without standing on their seats.”¹¹⁹ Thus, while sparring made headway as a middle- and upper-class

spectator sport in Manhattan from 1862 onwards, it continued to exist as a predominantly working-class entertainment in less expensive venues.

From Convict to Champion: Joe Coburn and the American Heavyweight Championship

Although sparring was the most readily available form of boxing entertainment in New York City, bareknuckle prizefighting also made a resurgence after 1862. With John C. Heenan residing in England, Manhattan's sporting aficionados sought out the next American heavyweight champion. In 1862, the working-class sporting subculture of New York City reached a general consensus, viewing Irishman Joseph Coburn, a relatively unheralded middleweight, as Manhattan's next American heavyweight champion. Weighing only 145lbs in his latest contest, Coburn was considered a remarkable boxing talent, with skills comparable to the finest sparring instructors in America.¹²⁰ Furthermore, unlike other prizefighters, Coburn expressed a willingness to face any man, "bar none," demonstrating the bravery and bravado exalted by New York City's working class.¹²¹ Born in Middletown County, Armagh, Ireland, in 1835, Coburn was a well-known, but generally underappreciated middleweight fighter during the 1850s, toiling in the shadows cast by heavyweight champions such as John Morrissey and John C. Heenan. On May 1, 1856, Coburn made his prize-ring debut at Still Pond, near Boston, Massachusetts, taking on Ed Price of London, England, for the American middleweight championship. Coburn showed remarkable endurance in this preliminary foray into prizefighting, battling Price to a stalemate for over three hours, fighting into the dusk of the evening when the referee finally halted proceedings for want of light,

ruling the bout a draw. Price, though “a game man,” was not among the sport’s elite, his punches lacking “the force necessary to win a battle.”¹²² Upon his return to New York City, Coburn’s marathon prizefight with Price was celebrated by fellow boxers, conducting a sparring benefit in the Irish middleweight’s honour at Kerrigan’s Hall.¹²³

At his post-Price sparring benefit in 1856, Coburn performed in the evening’s main attraction, sparring with Harry Gribben of Belfast, Ireland. The following year, Coburn and Gribben agreed to contest a prizefight in Canada West, for five hundred dollars a side. A veteran of no less than five prizefights, Gribben was a seasoned pugilistic veteran, ten years the senior of Coburn, with three victories to his credit. Already showing signs of the managerial savvy he showed in the Civil War era, Coburn insisted Gribben weigh in at 147lbs for their contest, requiring the older pugilist to fight ten pounds below his typical competition weight. While Gribben weighed in at precisely the 147lbs limit, looking physically drained and badly over trained, the twenty-three year old Coburn made weight with room to spar, tipping the scales at 145.5lbs. Known for administering devastating uppercuts, Gribben’s punches lacked their typical power. Unafraid of the punches coming from his exhausted opponent, Coburn countered Gribben’s attacks with stronger, more damaging blows. Coburn’s slick counter-punching brought the bout to an end in the twenty-first round, when Gribben “led off with his left, but missed, receiving in return a chance but terrific left handed hit, immediately below the region of the heart. And as he was falling Coburn again caught him with the right on the side of the face.” With their man in trouble, Gribben’s corner threw up the sponge, admitting defeat.¹²⁴ Despite his clear-cut victory over Gribben, opinions

regarding Coburn's pugilistic quality were far from unanimously positive. According to the *New York Clipper*, some within the New York sporting community labelled Gribben a "stale, played out fighter, whose defeat reflected no credit or honor on his victor."¹²⁵ While the *Clipper* itself acknowledged Coburn's "superior science as a boxer," it nonetheless attributed much of middleweight's success against Gribben to simple advantages in size and strength, created in part by Coburn's insistence on a 147lbs weight limit. Although Coburn's style was unquestionably effective, the *Clipper* also criticized the young Irishman for fighting a largely defensive bout, failing to capitalize upon several openings created by Gribben's more aggressive, come-forward style.¹²⁶ Following the contest, Coburn was honoured with a sold-out sparring benefit at Montgomery Hall in New York City, after which he offered to fight "any man in America at 148lbs, for any amount of money" or "Harry Gribben at his own weight."¹²⁷

Due to a series of run-ins with the law, Coburn's career as a professional prizefighter was put on hold following his victory over Harry Gribben. On January 11, 1858, a warrant for Coburn's arrest was issued in New York City after the pugilist broke into a saloon, assaulting the female owner. The police did not immediately exercise the warrant for Coburn's arrest, permitting the prizefighter to continue his antics. When Coburn and fellow prizefighter Jim Hughes viciously attacked a police officer the following month, however, Coburn was held on five hundred dollars bail for his January attack on the saloon proprietress and an additional one thousand dollars for assaulting a police officer. Councilman Thomas Dunn ultimately came to Coburn's aid, putting up the one thousand five hundred dollars required to bail out the prizefighter.¹²⁸ With a

forthcoming contest agreed to with “Australian” James Kelly in December of 1858, it appeared Coburn’s hiatus from the ring was about to end. On December 12, 1858, however, Coburn stabbed a police officer on Houston Street, leaving the man struggling for his life.¹²⁹ Running from the law once again, Coburn failed to meet Kelly, forfeiting his portion of the stakes deposited by that date.¹³⁰ Coburn went into hiding, emerging only after the officer recovered, freeing him from a charge of murder.¹³¹ After turning himself in to authorities, Coburn was held for three thousand dollars bail, which was paid by one Matthew Hilleck of Eighth Avenue.¹³² Once free, Coburn carried on sparring and sporting, performing at a sparring benefit for English prizefighter James Massey in March at Hoym’s Theatre.¹³³ On May 7, 1859, Coburn was brought before Judge Davies for sentencing, in a court room crowded with the “rowdy population” of the city. According to the *New York Times*, many of Coburn’s friends expected the pugilist to be “let off easy.” Due to the gravity of his crime, however, Coburn was tried by the Court of Oyer and Terminer, used only in serious criminal cases, preventing his friends from using coercion to sway the more agreeable city judges. Coburn ultimately pled guilty to “assault with a dangerous weapon,” receiving a sentence of three years hard labour at Sing Sing Prison.¹³⁴

When Joe Coburn’s time in Sing Sing Prison ended in May of 1862, New York City was in the grips of Civil War. Although Manhattan was far from any fighting, conflict with the Confederacy took a dire toll on the psyche of the city’s inhabitants. In early April, 1862, about a month before Coburn’s release, the Union endured a costly victory at the Battle of Shiloh, resulting in over 13,000 dead, wounded, missing, or captured

Union soldiers. Following the carnage at Shiloh, the population of New York City was eager and willing to seek out distractions, new and old. When a sparring benefit was organized for Joe Coburn on May 26, 1862, at the City Assembly Rooms, war-weary citizens happily turned out to help Coburn re-establish himself in New York City. In return for their hard-earned money, Coburn provided the crowd with one of the finer displays of boxing skills witnessed in New York City since the outbreak of the Civil War, showing that imprisonment did little to dull his pugilistic prowess. Coburn's sparring partner for the evening's main event was English sparring aficionado Bill Clarke, the finest boxer in Manhattan during Coburn's absence, producing a wonderful display of sport for those in attendance. "They are really clever boxers," explained the *New York Clipper*, "and so well matched with the gloves, that it would be difficult to choose between them."¹³⁵

The New York City market for distractions likely surged in the second half of 1862, as citizens of all social classes struggled to come to terms with roughly 35,000 casualties suffered by the Union Army at the Battles of Antietam, Second Bull Run, and Fredericksburg. Abraham Lincoln's *Emancipation Proclamation* of January 1, 1863, rocked New York City, prompting increased discontent, particularly amongst working-class Irish. "The Irish," explains historian Susannah J. Ural, "linked the abolition of slavery with new labor competition from free blacks in an already difficult market."¹³⁶ Although most New Yorkers opposed the outright abolition of slavery, most were willing to support Lincoln and the war all the same.¹³⁷ It was against this backdrop of

enormous Union casualties and the divisive *Emancipation Proclamation*, Joe Coburn and Billy Clarke arranged one of more novel entertainments of the season: a 'glove fight.'

Following positive reviews of their sparring performance on May 26, Joe Coburn and Billy Clarke agreed to contest a 'glove fight' for two hundred dollars a side on January 28, 1863. Although a variation of prizefighting, glove fights and sparring were considered one and the same in the eyes of authorities, permitting Coburn and Clarke to hold their contest at a venue within city limits. By holding their bout at Mozart Hall, Coburn and Clarke were able generate a profit from gate receipts, something relatively uncommon at the outdoor bareknuckle prizefights of the day. Unlike later glove fights, conducted according to the Marquis of Queensbury Rules, the Coburn-Clarke bout featured blackened gloves, covered with bone char. When one of the boxers landed a punch, the bone char on the gloves left an identifiable mark on his opponent. For the Coburn-Clarke contest, a thirty minute time limit was implemented and only clean blows to the head were counted as scoring punches. Defensive boxing, like that displayed by Coburn in his 1857 contest with Harry Gribben, was of the utmost importance.

Despite his renown as a boxer in New York City, the *New York Herald* described Billy Clarke as "only an amateur boxer." Although Clarke "long maintained a high reputation as a professor and teacher of the art of self defense," the Englishman lacked experience in the professional, bareknuckle ranks. Coburn, on the other hand, was described as a "clever professional pugilist" who "fought successfully in the ring" in previous years. To help offset the cost of the event, a \$1.00 admission fee – roughly

double the admission fee at the more expensive New York City sparring benefits – was charged at the door of Mozart Hall. The combination of sparring and prizefighting in a legal, gloved prizefight intrigued many New Yorkers, drawing a varied group of spectators. Coburn and Clarke “performed before an assemblage of spectators which, in point of respectability and social standing, would have compared favourably with any assemblage that has of late been gathered within the spacious auditorium of Mozart Hall,” explained the *New York Times*, “whilst in regard to patriotism and orderly behavior it would not only have compared favourably but distanced competition.”¹³⁸

Although the Coburn-Clarke glove fight, in practice, was a respectable, entertaining demonstration of boxing at its highest level, the rival *New York Herald* and *New York Times* newspapers played an important role in the sanitization of the proceedings. Both the *Herald* and *Times* ignored Coburn’s unsavory character and previous legal infractions, including his brutal 1858 stabbing of a police officer. In the eyes of reporters, the event, not the boxers, was the big story. “Last night’s set-to between these heroes was really worth seeing,” explained the *New York Times*, “there was nothing disgusting and a great deal that was neat about it.”¹³⁹ Following the Coburn-Clarke bout the *New York Herald* encouraged pugilists to organize additional glove fights in the city. According to the *Herald*, “the greatest order and decorum prevailed, and it is very likely that this mode of deciding the relative boxing merits of pugilistic aspirants will become prevalent, as it is entirely devoid of the repulsive features of the prize ring.” In the end, Coburn earned a razor thin victory over Clarke,

winning the competition eleven punches to ten, taking home the four hundred dollar purse.¹⁴⁰

Although Coburn's conquest of Clarke convinced many New Yorkers that the Irishman was the premier pugilist in America, only a *bona fide* bareknuckle contest, against a legitimate contender, would satisfy the sporting subculture and solidify the Irishman's claim to the American heavyweight title. In order to fight for the title, however, Coburn needed to stay out of prison. Shortly after his gloved victory over Clarke, Coburn was arrested for throwing a sixteen pound dumbbell at a woman named Cecelia Lyon, striking her in the chest. Lyon, however, was unable to attend court to testify against Coburn, leading the judge to discharge the prizefighter.¹⁴¹ Coburn and his backers moved quickly to arrange a fight for the American heavyweight title, agreeing to fight fellow Irishman Michael McCoolle, of St. Louis, Missouri – widely considered the 'western champion' – for the American heavyweight championship and 1,000 dollars a side at Charleston, Maryland, in May of 1863.



Above: Following his victory over Mike McCoolle, Joe Coburn was presented as champion of America on the front page of the *New York Clipper*. *New York Clipper*, May 16, 1863.

Although Charleston was not a 'fight scene' of any sort, it was ideally situated to host prizefighting during the Civil War era. Close enough to New York City and Philadelphia to permit fighters, their camps, and spectators to travel to the fight quickly by rail, Charleston was also far enough from each city's authorities to avoid police interference. Furthermore, Maryland was a border state during the Civil War, neither rejecting slavery, nor leaving the Union. Political tensions ran thick in Charleston, as friends and family members went their separate ways, split by their Union or Confederate allegiances.¹⁴² The Coburn-McCoole fight consumed the imagination of the country, with media coverage appearing in numerous newspapers, including mainstream publications like the *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Times*.¹⁴³ McCoole was an imposing individual, towering over and significantly outweighing Coburn. The Missourian was first and foremost a brawler, trained in the rough and tumble world of Mississippi boatmen, lacking Coburn's skill and technique. According to the *New York Herald*, Coburn "fought with a coolness, judgement and science which surprised even his warmest friends. His straight, quick and well-timed hitting," and "admirable judgement of distance" prevented McCoole from establishing any momentum in the contest.¹⁴⁴ Coburn was virtually unscathed when, in the sixty-seventh round, McCoole hit the turf for the final time. Some of those present at Coburn-McCoole criticized the mismatch, but the *New York Clipper* was quick to sing Coburn's praises: "He has proved himself a thoroughly clever, scientific and game boxer, and has well won the proud title of which he is now fairly entitled, of 'Champion of America.'"¹⁴⁵ Weighing just 152lbs,

Coburn was the lightest boxer to win the heavyweight championship in a bareknuckle prizefight, well below John Morrissey's previous mark of 175lbs.¹⁴⁶

After thoroughly outclassing Michael McCoole in the prize ring, Coburn received a hero's welcome in Manhattan. Friends of Coburn procured the City Assembly Rooms to honour their new champion, attracting Gothamites from all walks of life. "We scarcely recollect ever attending a sparring exhibition where so large a number of influential and respectable people were present," reflected the *Clipper*.¹⁴⁷ Flush with money following his defeat of McCoole and subsequent sparring benefit, Joe Coburn followed in the footsteps of many Irish immigrants before him, using a portion of his earnings to open a tavern. Coburn went into business with veteran Civil War Captain James Saunders, formerly of the 69th Regiment New York Volunteers.¹⁴⁸ According to the *New York Clipper*, Saunders was a "highly popular and brave soldier."¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Saunders was one of only three of the 69th Regiment's commissioned officers to make it out of Fredericksburg alive.¹⁵⁰ Saunders' return to civilian life, however, occurred under less than glorious circumstances. According to the *General Orders of the War Department*, Saunders was discharged from military service for assaulting a Provost Marshall in 1862.¹⁵¹ The building Coburn and Saunders selected for their tavern was the "White House," located at 113 Grand Street, just off Broadway. According to the *New York Clipper*, the White House was "the finest saloon of its kind in the city." Boasting a separate room for private sparring lessons and dumbbell and Indian club exercises, the White House was an ideal facility for Coburn's new sporting saloon, capable of satisfying working-class patrons as well as middle-class fitness and sparring enthusiasts.¹⁵²

Although boxing and other entertainments provided a welcomed, if fleeting, reprieve from the realities of wartime, such activities did not extinguish the prevailing grievances of civilians, frustrated with the federal government's handling of the war. Civilian discontent with the war effort boiled over on July 13, 1863, producing one of the ugliest riots in American history.

A World Title Challenger?: The Failed Coburn-Mace Bout of 1864

Shortly after Coburn won the American heavyweight championship, former champion John C. Heenan returned to the ring in Wadhurst, Sussex, England, to face Tom King. Little more than a recurring textual representation in New York City's sporting columns and periodicals, Heenan's return against King generated significantly less popular enthusiasm than his 1860 bout with Tom Sayers. In what Elliott Gorn aptly dubs "Heenan's pathetic collapse," King needed only twenty-five rounds and thirty-five minutes to dispose of the win-less American.¹⁵³ Coburn was eager to face Heenan's conqueror, challenging King to fight him in Canada West, for the hefty sum of five thousand dollars a side plus an additional one thousand dollars to defray the Englishman's travel expenses and training.¹⁵⁴ News of Coburn's *defi* to King spread rapidly, becoming national news, appearing in the *Baltimore Daily Sun*, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, and *San Francisco Bulletin* newspapers, to name a few.¹⁵⁵

While challenging King, Coburn also issued a *defi* to Jem Mace, a talented English fighter with a win over Heenan's conqueror, Tom King. Mace accepted a modified version of Coburn's offer, agreeing to fight the American in Ireland. Although Mace's

backers provided Coburn with five hundred dollars for travel and expenses, additional money was needed to make the contest a reality. Coburn and Saunders put the 'White House' tavern up for sale, along with the liquor, mirrors, and other furniture left within.¹⁵⁶ Coburn also raised money by conducting a sparring tour of the northeast including stops in Boston, Hartford, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.¹⁵⁷ Before his departure for Ireland, Coburn performed in one last benefit in Manhattan on May 10, filling the City Assembly Rooms with a diverse crowd including "the army and navy, mechanic, tradesman, gentleman of leisure, gambulier, parson, and all classes," as well as "the Fenian Brotherhood and other patriotic societies."¹⁵⁸ Earlier in the year, saloon proprietors Bob Smith, Israel Lazarus, Ed Wilson, and Harry Hill set about raising money for a championship belt for the Irishman.¹⁵⁹ An initial 'belt benefit' was held on February 26, 1864, at the City Assembly Rooms, complete with sparring, singing, and dancing, but came up short financially, leaving the belt in jeopardy.¹⁶⁰ Eager to provide Coburn with his championship belt before his departure for Ireland, several unnamed benefactors donated the funds necessary, presenting Coburn with this symbol of American boxing supremacy at his 'farewell benefit.'

When Coburn set out for Ireland aboard the *City of Washington* steamer, three thousand well-wishers crowded the docks to see the champion off.¹⁶¹ The joy and enthusiasm Manhattan fight fans showered upon Coburn was echoed by their Irish counterparts across the Atlantic, who embraced Coburn as their champion following his arrival in Ireland.¹⁶² The Coburn-Mace fight, however, did not materialize. Disagreement between the Mace and Coburn camps during pre-fight referee selection jeopardized the

match. According to the *Irish Times*, Coburn insisted the fight proceed, with a referee to be selected at ringside. Mace was less eager to consummate the contest, opting to pay Coburn's travel expenses, offering to reschedule the fight for a future date in Canada West.¹⁶³ Following his failed fight with Mace, Coburn refrained from prizefighting for the remainder of the Civil War era. Disgusted with the sport, Coburn retired in 1865, leaving the title to Michael McCoolle. Coburn returned to the ring in 1871 to face Jem Mace, fighting to a twelve round draw for the 'heavyweight championship of the world.'

"The Manly Art Does not Seem to Flourish on This Side of the River:" Prizefighting and Sparring in Civil War Brooklyn

Second only to New York City in pugilistic output, Brooklyn – 'The City of Churches' – hosted a number of sparring benefits during the Civil War era, producing a few high calibre prizefighters in the process. Like New York City, immigrants from the Emerald Isle arrived in Brooklyn in droves during the 1840s and 1850s, filling the ranks of unskilled labour. Like their Manhattan and Buffalo counterparts, the Brooklyn Irish used local taverns as centres of political, economic, and leisure activities, giving the city's working-class sporting subculture a thoroughly Irish character. America's third most populous city by 1860, antebellum Brooklyn was bursting with Irish culture. On any given day, citizens could experience a *mélange* of Irish traditions including, but not limited to, pipe music, patriotic speeches, Irish famine relief organizations, and lectures on Irish history and culture. Threatened by the prevalence of Irish culture in their midst, numerous American-born Brooklynites turned to nativism during the 1850s, coming into

violent conflict with the city's Irish. Following the intense ethno-political tensions of the antebellum years, Brooklyn's Irish prizefighters garnered the admiration of their countrymen, representing hyperbolized examples of the combative, physical masculinities required to resist cultural assimilation during the previous decade.

Irishman Phil Clare of South Brooklyn was the leader of Brooklyn's Civil War era boxing scene. A noted sparrer and prizefighter during the 1850s, Clare continued to perform at sparring benefits in Manhattan and Brooklyn into the Civil War years. Clare also operated a saloon/hotel in Brooklyn, where he acted as a trainer of boxers and stakeholder for prizefights. Despite Clare's efforts, however, Brooklyn's boxing scene lagged behind its New York City counterpart, producing fewer prizefighters and less lucrative sparring benefits. After a less than stellar turnout for a Brooklyn sparring benefit in 1860, for example, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* noted "the manly art does not seem to flourish on this side of the river."¹⁶⁴ Brooklyn's already small pool of boxers was further diminished following the outbreak of Civil War in 1861, losing Patrick 'Scotty' Brannigan, arguably the city's most promising pugilistic prospect, to the Union Army.

Although pugilism did not "flourish" in Civil War era Brooklyn to the same degree as Manhattan, it nonetheless persisted. Prizefights were uncommon in Brooklyn, but not unheard of. As in New York City, the presence of the Metropolitan Police in Brooklyn after 1857 made the city unattractive for prospective prizefights. The few prizefights conducted in or near Civil War era Brooklyn were impromptu affairs between relatively unknown men. Jimmy Gardiner and Billy Carey, for example, contested an impromptu

prizefight on March 10, 1864, at Green-Wood Cemetery, just outside Brooklyn. More organized prizefights, featuring well-known pugilists, were typically held in more remote areas, including rural New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Brooklyn's most successful prizefighters were trained by Phil Clare who, like Israel Lazarus in Buffalo and Manhattan, put his antebellum experiences as a prizefighter to use, training some of the city's most promising boxers. Clare's star pupil was his nephew James Dunn. Born in Athy, County Kildare, Ireland, Dunn sparred regularly in Brooklyn and New York, before distinguishing himself as a prizefighter. In 1863, Clare earned a degree of notoriety by defeating Jimmy Elliott of New York in a twelve-round, thirty-five minute bareknuckle prizefight at Bull's Ferry, New Jersey.¹⁶⁵ Following the fight, Elliott was arrested and imprisoned in New Jersey.¹⁶⁶ Shaken by his near imprisonment, Dunn refrained from prizefighting for several years before returning to the ring in 1865.

On May 16, 1865, Dunn faced undefeated, three-fight veteran Bill Davis, of Belfast, Ireland. Davis made his name in the Californian fight scene before crossing the continent to test his skills in the east. With Coburn in retirement, Dunn and Daley agreed to fight for two thousand dollars and a claim to the heavyweight championship of America. Like Coburn before them, Dunn and Daley were small heavyweights, tipping the scales at 154lbs and 164lbs, respectively.¹⁶⁷ Although Dunn-Daley had the makings of a truly exciting prizefight, it was largely ignored by an American populace reeling from Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 9 and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln on April 14. Nonetheless, Davis and Dunn did not chance an altercation with local authorities, traveling by rail to Pike County, Pennsylvania, to contest their bout.

The larger of the two, Davis struggled to land on Dunn, telegraphing his punches to his faster, more defensively-apt opponent. In the forty-first round, the *New York Clipper's* correspondent at ringside counselled Davis' backer to throw up the sponge to protect his fighter, but the latter refused. During the forty-second round a spectator echoed the newspaperman's feelings, crying "take him away – a brave man should not suffer anymore."¹⁶⁸ Finally, after fighting forty-three rounds, over a span of one hour and six minutes, Davis' backer threw up the sponge, bringing an end to his fighter's plucky, but utterly hopeless struggle with Dunn.

Phil Clare also trained Michael Noonan of South Brooklyn, a regular sparrer and occasional prize fighter during the Civil War era. Noonan earned a measure of local fame by defeating Michael Dorsey, the same pugilist who defeated Manhattan's Richard Hollywood in 1861, on October 6, 1864. Noonan's patience and willingness to counter ultimately resulted in his victory over Dorsey, who was unable to adapt to Noonan's superior wrestling abilities. Noonan, however, never attained a following comparable to Dunn's. Indeed, despite his ample abilities as a fighter, it was Dunn's 'heavyweight' status that ensured his popularity in Brooklyn. While Dunn, despite weighing only 154lbs for his fight with Davis, could pass as a heavyweight, Noonan fell physically short of the mark. As a featherweight, Noonan could never expect to fight for the American heavyweight championship, seriously diluting interest in the otherwise incredibly skillful Irishman.

Brooklyn's boxing fraternity also hosted sparring benefits during the Civil War years, albeit at a far lesser frequency than their Manhattan neighbours. Ironically, most Brooklyn-based sparring benefits were held at the 'Temperance Hall,' despite the working class' well known fondness for intemperate activities like drinking, rowdyism, and gambling. Most of the sparrers performing in Civil War Brooklyn were Irish. The sparring brothers Edward and William Lowery, for example, were born in Ireland in 1842 and 1844 respectively. As in Manhattan, publicans figured prominently in Brooklyn's sparring scene. Regular sparrer Ed Lowery, for example, was a bartender in 1860 and proprietor of Brooklyn's 'Fulton Ale Vaults' during the Civil War. Numerous other boxers, largely from New York City, also performed in Brooklyn-based sparring events, with notable Manhattan boxers including Michael Trainor, Richard Hollywood, and Mileage Cornell making appearances in the 'City of Churches.'

"Burned-Over" Boxing: Charlie Perkins and the Struggle for Organized Boxing in Rochester, New York

The "Burned-Over District," a region touched by intense religious reform during the Second Great Awakening, encompasses the western-most-counties of New York State. The Second Great Awakening, led by Charles Grandison Finney in the Empire State, resulted in the spread of Evangelical Protestantism throughout New York State. Although Evangelical revivals associated with Finney occurred in New York City and other eastern communities, developing manufacturing towns along the Erie Canal were particularly receptive to Finney's "optimistic message of personal autonomy and human

potential for salvation.”¹⁶⁹ The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, however, also facilitated the spread of German and Irish Catholics throughout New York State, establishing their own churches and traditions. In antebellum Rochester, New York, a diverse, reform-minded, middle-class community grew from the revivalist seeds planted by Finney in the 1830s, including proponents of temperance, sabbatarianism, and abolitionism. At the same time, however, Rochester’s booming manufacturing industry attracted a large, diverse working class, with little interest in American, Protestant reform. Instead of embracing the prevailing middle-class causes of temperance, sabbatarianism, and abolitionism, much of Rochester’s working class pursued traditional tavern-based activities, consistent with their counterparts in New York City and Brooklyn. During the antebellum years and into the Civil War era, Charlie Perkins of Rochester tried to establish boxing in his hometown, conducting small sparring tours of Western New York. Unable to facilitate the growth of pugilism in Rochester, Perkins joined John C. Heenan’s tour in 1861, sparring all across America. This section will focus on Perkins’ experiences as a Western New York boxer, both in the evangelical hotbed of Rochester and throughout the country.

Following the completion of the Erie Canal from the Hudson River to Rochester in 1823, demand for the city’s products grew, increasing demand for semi-skilled and unskilled labour. Rather than toiling in the ultra-competitive labour markets of antebellum New York City and Brooklyn, many native and foreign workers migrated up the Erie Canal to join the growing Rochester workforce. By the end of the 1850s, the Irish represented Rochester’s largest ethnic community, followed closely by their

German counterparts.¹⁷⁰ For working-class Irish and German Rochesterians, six-day work weeks were common, leaving Sunday for sport and leisure. Determined to limit Sunday activities to prayer and reflection, Rochester's Protestant population endeavoured, with little success, to convert their Catholic neighbours to a more Calvinist, Protestant interpretation of Christianity. As James E. McElroy has shown, the Monroe County Bible Society and like-minded groups organized during the 1820s "to promote Calvinism on the local level," but proved ineffective, with Irish and Germans "refusing to accept tracts or bibles."¹⁷¹ Before long, the American Sabbath was enforced by law in Rochester, closing bowling alleys, circus performances, and theatres on Sundays. According to historian Paul E. Johnson, "County officials, most of them Rochesterians, promised to scour the woods for men who spent the Lord's Day hunting and fishing."¹⁷² Rochester's Sabbath laws, however, proved difficult to enforce. Eager to maintain American Christian norms in their increasingly diverse community, a number of residents turned to evangelical revivalism and Charles Grandison Finney for assistance

Charles Grandison Finney was invited to Rochester by the Third Presbyterian Church in 1830. Finney personally led three revivals in Rochester in 1830, 1842, and 1855, finding support amongst the city's wealthiest residents. "What was quite remarkable in the three revivals that I have witnessed in Rochester," explained Finney in his memoir, "they all commenced and made their first progress among the higher classes of society."¹⁷³ Indeed, Finney's thoroughly anti-Catholic view of religion, opposing what he dubbed "particular modes and forms, and ceremonies and fooleries" of the Roman Catholic Church, tended to resonate more with wealthy, Protestant

employers, eager to reign in the leisure activities of their workers. The 'continental' Sabbath, with its typical sport, play, drink, and music, was one Catholic 'foolery' opposed by Finney and his followers.

In the autumn of 1855, Charles Grandison Finney arrived in Rochester for his third and final evangelical revival in the city. Reflecting upon his last Rochester revival in his *Memoirs*, Finney claimed he converted "some men who had been open Sabbath-breakers, others that had been openly profane, indeed, all classes of society, from the highest to the lowest, richest to the poorest."¹⁷⁴ Although Finney likely did convert some of the 'poorest' Rochesterians, the city's working-class population was too large for any single evangelist to handle. Despite Finney's long held contention that sport would leave men "lost in the abyss of damnation," working-class sport blossomed following Finney's 1855 revival, with Rochesterians organizing cockfighting, dogfighting, ratting, and competitive sparring. The increased visibility of immigrant customs in Rochester, however, stoked local nativism. Receiving support from evangelical and conservative Rochester Protestants, the nativist American Party won the mayoral elections of 1854 and 1855. Like Manhattan's Democratic mayor Fernando Wood, the Rochester American Party used 'shoulder-hitting' tactics at the polls in 1855, preventing many immigrants from casting their votes. Enraged by American Party violence against foreign-born citizens, Rochester's immigrant population pushed back, sending the city into a riotous state of disorder. According to Peck, the "foreigners...vented their wrath not only upon the [American Party] challengers but upon the policemen who were stationed at the different polling-places, and in many cases they attacked the officers in

such numbers as to overpower them, drive them away from the polls, roll them in the mud and otherwise maltreat them.” Following the election, ethnic tensions eased somewhat in Rochester. The suppression of ‘foreign’ culture and custom was greatly relaxed, leading to a boom in working-class sport.¹⁷⁵

With Irish Rochesterians gaining increasing influence in local politics, the city’s working-class sporting subculture blossomed, diversifying the sporting opportunities available within the city. Prior to the 1855 dust-up between nativist and immigrant Rochesterians, trotting – a sport dominated by the middle class – was Rochester’s sole claim to fame in sporting circles.¹⁷⁶ By the summer of 1856, however, Rochester-based, working-class sports also graced the pages of the *New York Clipper*, suggesting increasing tolerance in the city for sports such as dogfighting, rapping, and boxing. In August, 1856, for example, Rochester’s Phillip French brashly used the *New York Clipper* to challenge Barney Flood to a prizefight for one hundred dollars.¹⁷⁷ The subsequent year, Flood was still unsure of the protocol for challenging a fellow pugilist via the press, writing to the *Clipper* for clarification.¹⁷⁸ Before the end of 1856, Rochester-based rapping challenges also appeared in the *Clipper*.¹⁷⁹ Denizens of Rochester’s salon-based sporting scene also trained fighting dogs, issuing challenges to their fellow canine aficionados in America and Canada by 1857.¹⁸⁰

Despite significant increases in the frequency and variety of working-class sport in Rochester, athletes and spectators still faced local barriers to some sports. Although working-class cricket existed elsewhere, Rochester’s cricket club was likely restricted to

middle and/or upper class participation.¹⁸¹ Rochester's working class also struggled to establish consistent boxing in the city. In 1857, for example, a Rochesterian reader of the *New York Clipper* suggested boxing gloves were unavailable in his city.¹⁸² In 1858, boxing gloves were still unavailable for purchase in Rochester, forcing interested parties to order gloves from Toronto, Canada West.¹⁸³ City officials hemmed in the contestation of boxing matches by imposing enforcing Sunday laws, banning recreation on the Sabbath, arresting a group of boys for playing baseball on a Sunday in 1857.¹⁸⁴

Despite a lack of boxing equipment in Rochester, and general middle-class opposition to working-class sport, antebellum Rochester produced a talented heavyweight pugilist named Charlie Perkins. Where and how the 6'2" Perkins learned to box remains a mystery, but his 'big break' most likely came in Buffalo, New York, beyond the restrictive confines of Rochester, at a sparring benefit for American Heavyweight champion John Morrissey in 1860.¹⁸⁵ According to the *New York Clipper*, the Morrissey benefit proved "the best exhibition of the kind ever given in Buffalo, owing to the high quality of the sparring displayed."¹⁸⁶ Shortly after his performance in Buffalo, Perkins tried to dredge up interest in boxing in Palmyra, New York, about twenty miles from Rochester. The original site of Joseph Smith's Latter Day Saints Movement, Palmyra was one of many western New York communities touched by evangelical revivalism prior to the Civil War. Despite the town's evangelical leanings, Perkins enticed a Palmyra native named Dennis to contest the main event with him for the "young sports" of the town.¹⁸⁷ On Christmas Day, 1858, Perkins once again performed in Palmyra, holding an evening of sparring at William's Hall, filling the venue "with a respectable audience." Following

the success of sparring shows in Palmyra, Perkins contemplated establishing a boxing school in the town, but likely decided against it. Two days after his stint in Palmyra, Perkins and his merry men rolled into Newark, New York, for another performance. At the end of a successful show in Newark, Perkins challenged “any amateur of heavy weights [*sic*] for a fair stand up fight for five hundred or a thousand dollars a side.” The “man and money” for such a contest, explained Perkins, could be presented at the Lawrence Hotel in Rochester.¹⁸⁸ Opponents for Perkins, however, were not forthcoming. In June, 1859, Perkins helped pugilist Bish Overocher of Troy, New York, hold a sparring benefit at the Temperance Hall in Rochester. With his benefit completed, Overocher challenged Perkins to a prizefight, offering to meet the Rochesterian in Canada West for three hundred dollars. The Perkins-Overocher contest did not materialize.¹⁸⁹

Charley Perkins did not enter the bareknuckle prize ring for the entirety of his boxing career, but did become one of the most noteworthy heavyweight sparrers of the late antebellum and Civil War years. When John C. Heenan returned from his drawn contest with Tom Sayers in England, Perkins travelled with the champion, performing in sparring exhibitions across the nation. Heenan started his sparring tour in New York State, hitting Syracuse and Rochester before crossing the border into Canada West. While in the British Colonies, Heenan performed in London, Hamilton, Toronto, and St. Catherine’s in Canada West and Montreal in Canada East.¹⁹⁰ The Canadian leg of Heenan’s tour, however, was plagued by smaller than average crowds. “The [Heenan] corps were not very favorably impressed with Canada,” explained the *New York Clipper*, “and they got out of the wilderness as soon as possible.”¹⁹¹ Upon his return to New York

State, Heenan held exhibitions in Ogdensburg and Auburn, adding Charley Perkins to his retinue following the latter. As part of Heenan's ensemble, Perkins sparred all over America, performing in Williamsport and Harrisburg in Pennsylvania; Wheeling in Virginia; Zanesville, Toledo, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Cleveland in Ohio; Kalamazoo and Detroit in Michigan; Chicago, Peoria, and Springfield in Illinois; Milwaukee in Wisconsin; Terre Haute and Indianapolis in Indiana; St. Louis in Missouri; Nashville and Memphis in Tennessee; and, Lexington in Kentucky.¹⁹²

For all the good Perkins did for boxing, he also made significant mistakes. In February 1861, just before the outbreak of Civil War, Perkins was accused of accepting money to appear in Columbus, Ohio, at a sparring benefit organized by Johnny Sweetman, only to leave town, taking his money without performing.¹⁹³ When Perkins failed to appear, disappearing with a portion of proceeds, the people of Columbus cried foul, warning the *Clipper* – and therefore the broader Northeastern sporting public – about Perkins' tactics, encouraging them to avoid all benefits or exhibitions connected to the pugilist. For many potential supporters of boxing, Perkins' actions in Columbus likely reinforced prevailing middle-class reservations towards boxing, casting the sport in the unsavory shadow of corruption. By contacting the *Clipper*, disgruntled Columbus ticket holders tarnished Perkins' name – justifiably or not – hindering his ability to perform throughout the Northeast.

Perkins' alleged bilking of a Columbus boxing crowd was only part of the problem for Rochester's boxing prospects. With Perkins away on sparring tours for

much of the late antebellum years, Rochester's publicans and boxing enthusiasts lacked the knowledge and infrastructure required to cultivate talented boxers. During the Civil War years, reports of Perkins, or anyone else for that matter, sparring in Rochester are scarce. According to the *New York Clipper*, Perkins sparred at a benefit for Joe Coburn in New York City in 1863, just before the latter faced Mike McCool for the heavyweight championship of America.¹⁹⁴ Following the passage of the Enrollment Act in 1863, three thousand Rochesterians, including Perkins, were drafted by the Union military. However, only about four hundred of Rochester's three thousand conscripts were called upon for military service, most of whom provided paid substitutes to serve in their place.¹⁹⁵ Despite his relatively young age and native birth, Perkins managed to avoid military service for the duration of the Civil War

According to his Civil War draft registration record, Perkins lived as a "sporting man" in 1863, surviving with his wife via gambling and boxing.¹⁹⁶ Yet, there is little evidence that Perkins' sparred much between 1863 and 1865. In 1864 a degree of progress was made in Rochester's pugilistic prospects, when James McBride started offering sparring lessons at his saloon on State Street.¹⁹⁷ Correspondence between McBride and the *New York Clipper* suggests the upstart Rochesterian sparring instructor catered to both middle- and working-class patrons, providing private instruction for the former, while obtaining artwork of prizefighters like Joe Coburn and Jem Mace for the latter.¹⁹⁸ With McBride established in Rochester, Rochester's burgeoning working-class sporting subculture reached out to Charley Perkins in hopes of recognizing his contributions to boxing via a sparring benefit. Perkins accepted the Rochester invitation,

performing at the Corinthian Hall on September 17, 1864, putting on a “fine display of science” with John C. Heenan’s brother Jim.¹⁹⁹ Following the war, Perkins remained involved in sport, while putting his passion for risk and reward to good use, making a living as a cattle speculator.²⁰⁰

Conclusion

While prizefighters like Harry Lazarus and Michael Trainor served in the Union Army, the vast majority of New York State’s boxers stayed at home, continuing to ply their trade in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Prizefighters continued to jostle authorities for space in New York State, holding a number of successful contests in the environs of New York City. For the working class, boxing remained a popular method of proving one’s masculine worth, despite the war raging to the South. As the war lingered, persisting longer than most Northerners had anticipated, public sparring events became a welcomed reprieve for war-weary citizens from all classes of society. With boxing experiencing a wartime wave of popularity, ex-convict Joe Coburn rose to fistic stardom, providing the North with its first heavyweight championship contest since Morrissey-Heenan in 1858. Utterly bombarded with grim news from the battlefields, working- and middle-class Manhattanites proved willing to overlook Coburn’s sordid past, so long as he continued to lift the city’s spirits. Pugilism, however, was not practiced in earnest in all New York cities and towns. After waves of antebellum Evangelical revivals, Rochester boasted a rudimentary boxing scene by the Civil War era, but nothing approaching the sparring benefits and prizefights witnessed in and around New York City. Elsewhere in the

northeast, a similar patchwork of boxing scenes struggled against middle-class opposition, with varying degrees of success.

Endnotes

¹ John A. Lucas, "A Prelude to the Rise of Sport: Ante-bellum America, 1850-1860," *Quest* 11 (1968), 56.

² E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 3.

³ *National Police Gazette*, September 11, 1880.

⁴ In the slavery debate, "Soft-Shell Democrats" favored popularity sovereignty for American territories, while "Hard-Shell Democrats" were pro-extensionist, believing the federal government should be able to extend slavery as it pleased. During the election of 1854, Wood also convinced some Hard-Shell Democrats to support his candidacy for Mayor of New York City. See Jerome Mushkat, *Fernando Wood: A Political Biography* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1990), 27. John Morrissey was an employee of Fernando Wood see, Gorn, *Manly Art*, 125.

⁵ For James W. Barker as American Party candidate for Mayor of New York City see, *New York Times*, October 11, 1854.

⁶ Barker received 31% of the vote, while the rival Hard-Shell Democratic candidate Wilson H. Hunt received 25.8%. Mushkat, *Fernando Wood*, 36. For Wood's victory in the 1854 New York City mayoral race see, *New York Times*, November 11, 1854.

⁷ Mushkat, *Fernando Wood*, 43. The *New York Times* regularly provided examples from Wood's "Complaint Book." For example, see complaints of prostitution, crying dogs, and noisy fish peddlers, in *New York Daily Times*, July 12, 1855; By August, 1855, a journalist for the *New York Times* suggests the Wood's "Complaint Book" was no longer being used effectively. See, *New York Daily Times*, August 10, 1855.

⁸ Christine Sismondo, *America Walks into a Bar: A Spirited History of Taverns and Saloons, Speakeasies and Grog Shops* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 133; Edward K. Spann, *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 373.

⁹ Mushkat, *Fernando Wood*, 44.

¹⁰ Tyler G. Anbinder, "Fernando Wood and New York City's Secession from the Union: A Political Reappraisal," *New York History* 68, no. 1 (1987), 68.

¹¹ Peter Gammie, "Pugilists and Politicians in Antebellum New York: The Life and Times of Tom Hyer," *New York History* 75, no. 3 (1994), 288.

¹² Jack Kofoed, *Brandy for Heroes: A Biography of the Honorable John Morrissey, Champion Heavyweight of America and State Senator* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1938), 125; *New York Times*, July 28, 1854.

¹³ *New York Times*, July 29, 1854.

¹⁴ My description of Hyer's run-in with Baker and Turner in January, 1855, is based on Peter Gammie's summation of the event. Peter Gammie, "Pugilists and Politicians," 288.

¹⁵ Jack Kofoed, *Brandy for Heroes*, 135-136; Peter Gammie, "Pugilists and Politicians," 289.

¹⁶ Edward K. Spann, *New Metropolis*, 382; Paul O. Weinbaum, "Temperance, Politics, and the New York City Riots of 1857," *New York Historical Society Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (1975), 246-247.

¹⁷ Spann, *New Metropolis*, 386. See also, Paul O. Weinbaum, "Temperance, Politics, and the New York City Riots of 1857," 246; Sismondo, *America Walks into a Bar*, 134-135.

¹⁸ *New York Times*, May 26, 1857.

¹⁹ *New York Times*, June 17, 1857. See also, Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997), 153.

²⁰ *New York Times*, June 17, 1857. According to the *New York Tribune*, a warrant was granted for Wilson's arrest based on eyewitness testimony. *New York Tribune*, June 18, 1857.

²¹ *New York Tribune*, June 18, 1857.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Kofoed, *Brandy For Heroes*, 142.

²⁴ Neither newspaper reports nor Jack Kofoed's biography of Morrissey suggest 'Old Smoke' was present at the riot.

²⁵ Kofoed, *Brandy for Heroes*, 144.

²⁶ Kofoed, *Brandy for Heroes*, 144.

²⁷ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (Madison, Wisconsin: Cricket House Books, 2010 [1866]), 92.

²⁸ Frank L. Dowling, *Fights for the Championship and Celebrated Prize Battles* (London: Bell's Life Office, 1855), 354-362.

²⁹ *New York Clipper*, July 30, 1853. The year of Izzy Lazarus' arrival in America is provided in the obituary of his son, Izzy Jr. See, *New York Sun*, January 18, 1884.

³⁰ Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825-1863* (Port Washington, New York: Ira J. Friedman, Inc., 1865),

³¹ When Patrick 'Scotty' Brannigan and Charles Holmes were considering a prize fight, for example, it was Israel Lazarus they selected as stake holder. See, *New York Clipper*, December 2, 1854.

³² The *Buffalo Daily Courier* places Israel Lazarus in Buffalo in 1857. See *Buffalo Daily Courier*, October 28, 1857. See also *The Commercial Advertiser Directory for the City of Buffalo* (Buffalo, New York: E.R. Jewett, 1858), 204.

³³ Laurence A. Glasco, "The Life Cycles and Household Structure of American Ethnic Groups: 'Irish, Germans, and Native-born Whites in Buffalo, New York, 1855,'" *Journal of Urban History* 1, no. 3 (1975), 341.

³⁴ Andrew P. Vox, "Bonds of Community: Buffalo's German Element, 1853-1871," *New York History* 66, no. 2 (1985), 143.

³⁵ For Turnvereins in Buffalo see, Vox, "Bonds of Community," 143. For James Winterfield see, *New York Clipper*, July 29, 1854. For John Seereiter see, *New York Clipper*, April 23, 1859. Seereiter reported himself as born in 'France' in 1880, but 'Alsass' in 1860. Given the billiardist's last name, journalistic references to his ethnicity as 'dutch', and the use of the German 'Alsass', rather than the French 'Alsace' in the 1860 federal census, one can conclude that Seereiter was German. Seereiter's wife, Catherine, was also German, hailing from Wurtemberg. See, "Seereiter, John," United States of America, *Federal Census*, 1860, Detroit, Ward 4, page 22, dwelling 139.

³⁶ William Jenkins, "Deconstructing Diasporas: Networks and Identities Among the Irish in Buffalo and Toronto, 1870-1910," in *Irish Migration, Networks, and Ethnic Identities Since 1750*, ed. by Enda Delaney and Donald M. MacRaild (New York: Routledge, 2007), 214. See also, William Jenkins, "In the Shadow of a Grain Elevator: A Portrait of an Irish Neighbourhood in Buffalo, New York, during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *New Directions in Irish-American History*, ed. by Kevin Kenny (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 164.

³⁷ Jenkins, "Deconstructing Diasporas," 217.

³⁸ The leisure pursuits of the Buffalo Irish closely resemble the "Passionate Manhood" exhibited by middle-class men of the early twentieth century. See, Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 5-6. The violent displays of the Buffalo Irish also mirror the leisure pursuits of their New York City counterparts. See, Kaplan, "Tavern Violence," 592.

³⁹ Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 113.

⁴⁰ Kelly won the Australian championship against Jonathon Smith in Melbourne, Australia, in the December of 1855. *New York Clipper*, October 15, 1859.

⁴¹ *New York Clipper*, June 20, 1857.

⁴² *New York Clipper*, June 20, 1857.

⁴³ *New York Clipper*, June 20, 1857.

⁴⁴ *New York Clipper*, August 8, 1857. See also, Gorn, *Manly Art*, 113-114.

⁴⁵ *New York Clipper*, October 17, 1857.

⁴⁶ *New York Clipper*, October 17, 1857.

⁴⁷ *New York Clipper*, October 30, 1858.

⁴⁸ *Buffalo Daily Courier*, December 18, 1858. For the Lazarus trio performing in Syracuse, see: *Syracuse Standard*, December 6, 1852.

⁴⁹ *New York Clipper*, May 9, 1857.

⁵⁰ *New York Clipper*, August 15, 1857.

⁵¹ *New York Clipper*, April 14, 1860.

⁵² For aboriginal walking races see, *New York Clipper*, October 28, 1854; *New York Clipper*, November 11, 1854.

⁵³ *New York Clipper*, November 4, 1854.

⁵⁴ Support for the nativist American Party was surprisingly low in Buffalo. Despite running former President Millard Fillmore as their presidential candidate in 1856, the American Party received a meager 25.6% of the vote in Buffalo. Steven J.L. Taylor, *Desegregation in Boston and Buffalo: The Influence of Local Leaders* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 28.

⁵⁵ *Buffalo Courier*, December 10, 1857.

⁵⁶ *New York Clipper*, November 26, 1859.

⁵⁷ *Fremont Journal*, November 18, 1859; *New York Clipper*, November 26, 1859.

⁵⁸ David G. Schwartz, *Roll the Bones*, 277.

⁵⁹ According to Melvin L. Adelman, the Heenan-Sayers bout of 1860 “drew more public comment than any other single sports event between 1820 and 1870. Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-1870* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 233.

⁶⁰ *New York Times*, July 16, 1860.

⁶¹ Ernest A. McKay, *The Civil War and New York City* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 69.

⁶² McKay, *Civil War and New York City*, 74.

⁶³ Anbinder, “Fernando Wood,” 67.

⁶⁴ Anbinder, “Fernando Wood,” 83.

⁶⁵ *New York Times*, April 19, 1861.

⁶⁶ *New York Times*, April 19, 1861.

⁶⁷ The *Clipper* reported fines of two dollars and upward, while the *Times* reported fines of three dollars. The *Herald* suggests authorities merely dispersed the crowd. *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861; *New York Times*, April 19, 1861; *New York Herald*, April 19, 1861.

⁶⁸ According to the *New York Clipper*, Goneghan typically weighed around one hundred and thirty three pounds when in fighting trim, while Toughey usually weighed slightly less. *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861.

⁶⁹ *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861.

⁷⁰ *New York Clipper*, May 18, 1861. For Donnelly as a fire laddie see, *New York Clipper*, June 30, 1866.

⁷¹ McKay, *Civil War and New York City*, 79-80.

⁷² *New York Times*, July 18, 1861.

⁷³ *New York Times*, July 18, 1861.

⁷⁴ *New York Clipper*, August 10, 1861.

⁷⁵ McKay, *Civil War and New York City*, 93.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

⁷⁷ Brown's full name is not provided by the *New York Clipper*. For more on George Brown see, Kevin Smith, *Black Genesis: The History of the Black Prizefighter 1760-1870* (Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse, 2003), 142.

⁷⁸ Smith, *Black Genesis*, 137.

⁷⁹ *New York Clipper*, August 3, 1861. Smith suggests Heddy suffered a broken arm, but I have been unable to corroborate this claim. See Smith, *Black Genesis*, 142.

⁸⁰ *New York Clipper*, August 3, 1861.

⁸¹ Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 43-72.

⁸² Although the Union Army suffered roughly 1,300 casualties at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, historians suggest this battle had a limited impact on the morale of citizens outside of Missouri. *BCF*, 352.

⁸³ *New York Clipper*, November 20, 1861.

⁸⁴ *New York Evening Express*, December 2, 1861. *The New York Times* also reported a "general feeling of apprehension that the Police would make their appearance on the ground." See *New York Times*, December 3, 1861. The *New York Clipper* suggested that a "party of police tried to keep on their track, but were easily eluded." See *New York Clipper*, December 7, 1861. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* claimed the police got lost on their way to the fight and ended up in Flushing, New York. See *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 2, 1861.

⁸⁵ The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and *New York Times* both state the fight last twenty nine rounds. See *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 2, 1861; *New York Times*, December 3, 1861. The *New York Evening Express* stated the fight ended in the thirtieth round. See *New York Evening Express*, December 2, 1861. The *New York Clipper* stated the fight ended in the thirty-third round. *New York Clipper*, December 7, 1861. The *New York Herald* ran the coverage provided by the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. See *New York Herald*, December 3, 1861.

⁸⁶ *New York Clipper*, December 7, 1861.

⁸⁷ Rader, *American Sports*, 32.

⁸⁸ For the benefit to Richard Hollywood see *New York Clipper*, December 14, 1861.

⁸⁹ The *New York Times* even called the Hoym's Theatre audience a "respectable looking crowd" in 1859. *New York Times*, March 25, 1859.

⁹⁰ John Koegel, *Music in German Immigrant Theatre, New York City 1840-1940* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 42. See also *New York Times*, May 11, 1863. Hoym was taken prisoner on June 29 or 30, 1862, in Virginia. Koegel, *Music in German Immigrant Theatre*, 42.

⁹¹ By the 1850s the Five Points was becoming more diverse, but remained largely Irish. Nonetheless, other groups including African American, 'Native Born' Americans, Polish Jews, Germans (Jewish and Christian), English, and Italians also resided in the 'Points.' See Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825-1863*, 39. Carol Groneman adds Dutch Jews and Scots, along with "fifteen hundred persons of other nationalities." See Carol Groneman, *The 'Bloody Ould Sixth': A Social Analysis of a New York City Working-Class Community in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (PhD Dissertation, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, 1973), 36.

⁹² *New York Clipper*, December 11, 1858.

⁹³ *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861.

⁹⁴ *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861.

⁹⁵ *New York Clipper*, August 24, 1861.

⁹⁶ *New York Clipper*, November 23, 1861.

⁹⁷ P.T. Barnum bought the American Museum in 1841, offering a wide variety of attractions at this location until it burnt down in 1865. See, A.H. Saxon, *P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 10, 108.

⁹⁸ *New York Clipper*, December 14, 1861.

⁹⁹ Gorn and Goldstein, *American Sports*, 94.

¹⁰⁰ *New York Times*, March 4, 1859.

¹⁰¹ *New York Times*, April 17, 1861. See also *New York Evening Post*, February 26, 1861.

¹⁰² The event featured Jennings' dog Damsel attempting to kill two hundred rats in twenty minutes. Admission was twenty five cents. *New York Herald*, April 14, 1861. For Jennings' subsequent arrest see *New York Times*, April 17, 1861.

¹⁰³ *New York Herald*, June 30, 1861.

¹⁰⁴ *New York Times*, August 23, 1861.

¹⁰⁵ *Wilkes Spirit of the Times*, December 21, 1861.

¹⁰⁶ Ernst provides an excellent map, illustrating settlement patterns in 1855 New York City. See Ernst, *Immigrant life in New York*, 43. The location of Montgomery Hall was determined by cross referencing the *New York Clipper*, *Trow's New York City Directory* and Augustus Mitchell's 1860 map of New York City. See

New York Clipper, November 19, 1861; H. Wilson, compiler, *Trow's New York City Directory, 1865* (New York: John F. Trow, 1864), 51; Samuel Augustus Mitchell, *Mitchell's New General Atlas* (Philadelphia: S.A. Mitchell, Jr., 1860), 17.

¹⁰⁷ For Eighth Ward See Ernst, *Immigrant Life*, 45. For Fourteenth Ward see Ernst, *Immigrant Life*, 42.

¹⁰⁸ For use of Montgomery Hall by Cartmen's Benevolent and Protective Society see *New York Times*, August 12, 1853. For use of Montgomery Hall by Irish see *New York Times*, June 11, 1852; *New York Evening Express*, March 7, 1856.

¹⁰⁹ *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861. For Johnny Roche as a prizefighter see, *National Police Gazette*, February 5, 1881. For John Woods as a prizefighter see *National Police Gazette*, January 29, 1881.

¹¹⁰ McKay, *Civil War and New York City*, 116.

¹¹¹ *New York Clipper*, March 22, 1862.

¹¹² *New York Weekly Review*, February 9, 1856.

¹¹³ For the Stuyvesant as part of the New York University Medical College see, Wickman, *Osceola's Legacy*, (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 180; Herman Le Roy Fairchild, *History of the New York Academy of Sciences* (New York: Published by Author, 1887), 48.

¹¹⁴ Early in its history, the Stuyvesant Institute served a multitude of functions. It was founded in 1837, as a venue for lectures science, history, and other topics of "little general interest." It was an exclusive facility, the management of which refused to provide popular entertainments of the time. This exclusivity ultimately led the institute into bankruptcy in 1839. See Eric Homberger, *Mrs. Astor's New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2002), 87. By the 1840s the venue became more democratic. In 1844, Polish exiles used the meeting rooms to celebrate the anniversary of their failed revolution in 1830. See, *New York Herald*, November 30, 1844. In 1845, men and women of a "respectable appearance" attended a lecture on the resurrection. See, *New York Herald*, February 22, 1845. In 1848, another "respectable" audience attended a lecture on the writings of Goethe. See, *New York Herald*, January 14, 1848. The Shakespearean performances of Fanny Kemble Butler were reported throughout the country. See *State Gazette* (Trenton, NJ), March 5, 1849; *Boston Daily Atlas*, March 8, 1849; *The Sun* (Baltimore), March 6, 1849; *Daily Picayune* (New Orleans), March 13, 1849. For a concert at the Stuyvesant Institute see *New York Herald*, May 13, 1861. For a psychology lecture delivered at the Stuyvesant Institute see, *New York Herald*, March 24, 1863. For the Stuyvesant's displays of fine art see Wickman, *Osceola's Legacy*, 180; *New York Times*, December 26, 1851; *State Gazette* (Trenton, NJ), September 25, 1851. Throughout the 1850s, the Stuyvesant also hosted numerous group meetings, many of a political nature, including the 'City Reform League,' 'Free Democracy' and 'Young Mens National Democratic Union.' See (respectively), *New York Times*, September 23, 1852; *New York Weekly Herald*, October 29, 1853; *The Sun* (Baltimore), November 21, 1853.

¹¹⁵ The first benefit held at the Stuyvesant Institute in the Civil War era was Ned Wilson's, on November 26, 1863. *New York Clipper*, December 12, 1863.

¹¹⁶ *New York Clipper*, December 12, 1864.

¹¹⁷ Based on articles found in the *New York Clipper* from 1863-1865.

¹¹⁸ Venues and number of benefits hosted: Montgomery Hall, 3; Hoym's Theatre, 2; Fives Court, 2; City Assembly Rooms, 2; New Bowery Theatre, 1. Based on data collected from the *New York Clipper*.

¹¹⁹ *New York Clipper*, March 22, 1862.

¹²⁰ *New York Clipper*, November 28, 1857.

¹²¹ *New York Clipper*, May 25, 1862.

¹²² According to the *Clipper*, Coburn-Price was the longest fight conducted in America to date, lasting three hours and twenty-five minutes. *New York Clipper*, May 10, 1856.

¹²³ *New York Clipper*, May 24, 1856.

¹²⁴ *New York Clipper*, November 28, 1857.

¹²⁵ *New York Clipper*, May 16, 1863.

¹²⁶ *New York Clipper*, November 28, 1857.

¹²⁷ *New York Clipper*, December 12, 1857.

¹²⁸ *New York Tribune*, February 17, 1858.

¹²⁹ *New York Herald*, December 13, 1858.

¹³⁰ *New York Herald*, December 14, 1858.

¹³¹ *New York Times*, December 30, 1858; *New York Herald*, December 30, 1858.

¹³² *New York Herald*, December 30, 1858; *New York Tribune*, December 30, 1858.

¹³³ *New York Times*, March 25, 1859.

¹³⁴ *New York Times*, May 9, 1859. Coburn was still imprisoned as of the summer of 1860. See, *New York Times*, August 20, 1860.

¹³⁵ *New York Clipper*, June 7, 1862.

¹³⁶ Susannah J. Ural, "'Ye Sons of Green Erin Assemble': Northern Irish American Catholics and the Union War Effort, 1861-1865," in *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America's Bloodiest Conflict*, ed. by Susannah J. Ural (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 114. See also, McKay, *Civil War and New York City*, 159-160; Edward K. Spann, *Gotham at War: New York City, 1860-1865* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 119.

¹³⁷ McKay, *Civil War and New York City*, 158.

¹³⁸ *New York Times*, January 30, 1863.

¹³⁹ *New York Times*, January 30, 1863.

¹⁴⁰ *New York Herald*, January 29, 1863. For another report of the Coburn-Clarke bout, see *New York Clipper*, February 7, 1863.

¹⁴¹ *New York Herald*, January 31, 1863.

¹⁴² Harold R. Manakee, *Maryland in the Civil War* (Baltimore, Maryland: Maryland Historical Society, 1961), 20-21; James M. McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 152-153; Peter J. Parrish, *The American Civil War* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1975), 114-115.

¹⁴³ *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 1863; *New York Times*, March 26, 1863.

¹⁴⁴ *New York Herald*, May 6, 1853.

¹⁴⁵ *New York Clipper*, May 16, 1853.

¹⁴⁶ For Morrissey see, Nat Fleischer, *The Heavyweight Championship: An Informal history of Heavyweight Boxing from 1719 to the Present Day* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), 58; For Tom Hyer see, *Spirit of the Times*, February 17, 1849. James "Yankee" Sullivan weighed around 155 lbs, but claimed the title by default following the retirement of Hyer.

¹⁴⁷ *New York Clipper*, April 22, 1863.

¹⁴⁸ According to Kaplan, "tavern proprietorship was an important avenue of upward mobility for the immigrant Irish." Michael Kaplan, *The World of the B'hoys: Urban Violence and the Political Culture of Antebellum New York City, 1825-1860* (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 1996), 12.

¹⁴⁹ *New York Clipper*, July 18, 1863. The *New York Herald* also states, much earlier, that Saunders was a Captain in the 69th Regiment New York Volunteers. *New York Herald*, November 3, 1861.

¹⁵⁰ Francis Augustin O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock* (New Orleans, Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 2006), 312.

¹⁵¹ Thomas M. O'Brien and Oliver Diefendorf, *General Orders of the War Department*, vol. 2 (New York: Derby and Miller, 1864), 313.

¹⁵² *New York Clipper*, July 18, 1863.

¹⁵³ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 166.

¹⁵⁴ Coburn even made a five hundred dollar deposit at the office of the *New York Clipper*, January 16, 1864. See also *New York Clipper*, January 30, 1864; *New York Clipper*, February 6, 1864.

¹⁵⁵ *Baltimore Daily Sun*, December 31, 1863; *Hartford Daily Courant*, January 5, 1864; *Daily Richmond Examiner*, January 28, 1864; *San Francisco Bulletin*, January 4, 1864; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, February 5, 1864.

¹⁵⁶ *New York Clipper*, March 26, 1864.

¹⁵⁷ For Coburn's benefit in Boston see, *New York Clipper*, April 16, 1864. For Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, see *New York Clipper*, April 23, 1864; For Hartford see, *Hartford Daily Courant*, March 16, 1864.

¹⁵⁸ *New York Clipper*, May 21, 1864.

¹⁵⁹ *New York Clipper*, February 13, 1864.

¹⁶⁰ *New York Clipper*, March 5, 1864.

¹⁶¹ *New York Clipper*, May 21, 1864.

¹⁶² *New York Clipper*, August 6, 1864.

¹⁶³ *Irish Times*, as quoted by the *New York Clipper*, October 22, 1864. See also *New York Clipper*, November 5, 1864.

¹⁶⁴ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 10, 1860.

¹⁶⁵ For more on prizefighting in New Jersey see chapter four.

¹⁶⁶ *New York Clipper*, May 27, 1865. For more on the Clare-Elliott bout, see chapter four.

¹⁶⁷ *New York Clipper*, May 27, 1865. Davis' weight is not legible in the *Clipper* report. For Davis' weight see, *National Police Gazette*, May 7, 1881.

¹⁶⁸ *New York Clipper*, May 27, 1865.

¹⁶⁹ Ray Gunn, "Society, Religion, and Reform," in *The Empire State: A History of New York*, ed. by Milton M. Klein (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 330.

¹⁷⁰ Blake McKelvey, *Rochester on the Genesee: The Growth of a City* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 71. See also, Blake McKelvey, "The Irish in Rochester: A Historical Retrospect," *Rochester History* 19, no. 4 (1957), 6.

¹⁷¹ James L. McElroy, "Social Control and Romantic Reform in Antebellum America: The Case of Rochester, New York," *New York History* 58, no. 1 (1977), 20-21.

¹⁷² Paul E. Johnson, *The Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 73,

¹⁷³ Charles Grandison Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1876), 437.

¹⁷⁴ Finney, *Memoir of Rev. Charles G. Finney*, 438.

¹⁷⁵ William F. Peck, *History of the Police Department of Rochester, New York: From the Earliest Times to May 1, 1903* (Rochester, New York: Rochester Police Benevolent Association, 1903), 98. The nativists lost mayoral power in the election of 1856. See *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁷⁶ For a description of the Union Course at Rochester see, *Spirit of the Times*, July 27, 1850. See also, Melvn L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time*, 61; Riess, *City Games*, 32.

¹⁷⁷ *New York Clipper*, August 16, 1856.

¹⁷⁸ *New York Clipper*, September 12, 1857.

¹⁷⁹ *New York Clipper*, August 23, 1856.

¹⁸⁰ *New York Clipper*, April 11, 1857.

¹⁸¹ *New York Clipper*, July 11, 1857; *New York Clipper*, August 29, 1857.

¹⁸² *New York Clipper*, February 21, 1857.

¹⁸³ See the *Clipper's* reply to "H.J." of Rochester, *New York Clipper*, November 6, 1858. A writer for the *Clipper* tells an individual from Rochester to mail a Mr. McKay, of the Shakespeare Rowing Club, in Toronto, Canada West, to obtain boxing gloves.

¹⁸⁴ Priscilla Astifan, "1825.1 Thurlow Weed and the Growth of Baseball in Rochester, New York," *BaseBall* 5, no. 1 (2011), 66.

¹⁸⁵ Perkins height and weight is recorded in a report regarding a John C. Heenan sparring tour. See, *New York Clipper*, December 1, 1860; *New York Clipper*, December 15, 1860.

¹⁸⁶ *New York Clipper*, November 6, 1858.

¹⁸⁷ *New York Clipper*, December 18, 1858.

¹⁸⁸ *New York Clipper*, January 8, 1859.

¹⁸⁹ For sparring benefit featuring Bish Overocher, see *New York Clipper*, June 25, 1859. For challenge by Overocher see, *New York Clipper*, July 23, 1859.

¹⁹⁰ For Heenan's sparring performances in Hamilton, Toronto, and Montreal, see *New York Clipper*, November 24, 1860.

¹⁹¹ *New York Clipper*, November 24, 1860.

¹⁹² For Perkins joining Heenan's tour in Auburn see, *New York Clipper*, December 1, 1860. For Perkins in St. Louis, Missouri, and Springfield, Illinois, see, *New York Clipper*, December 15, 1860. For Perkins in Chicago, Milwaukee, Kalamazoo, and Detroit see, *New York Clipper*, December 8, 1860. For Perkins in Zanesville, Cleveland, Toledo, Harrisburg, Williamsport, and Wheeling see, *New York Clipper*, December 1, 1860. For Perkins in Terre Haute and Peoria see, *New York Clipper*, December 22, 1860. For Perkins in Dayton, Cincinnati, Lexington, Nashville, and Memphis, see *New York Clipper*, January 5, 1861.

¹⁹³ *New York Clipper*, February 23, 1861.

¹⁹⁴ *New York Clipper*, April 25, 1863.

¹⁹⁵ Blake McKelvey, "Rochester's Part in the Civil War," *Rochester History* 23, no. 1 (1961), 19.

¹⁹⁶ "Perkins, Charles," *Consolidated Enrollment Lists, 1863 – 1865*, Monroe and Orleans Counties, New York, Record Group: 110, pg. 402, *Records of the Provost Marshall General's Bureau, 1861-1907*, National Archives. Washington, D.C. Accessed: www.ancestry.com Date accessed: November 10, 2013.

¹⁹⁷ *New York Clipper*, October 15, 1864. See also, *Boyd's Rochester and Brockport Directory, 1864-5* (Rochester, New York: Andrew Boyd, 1864), 157.

¹⁹⁸ *New York Clipper*, July 23, 1864.

¹⁹⁹ *New York Clipper*, August 27, 1864.

²⁰⁰ "Perkins, Charles," United States of America, *Federal Census 1870*, Seventh Ward, Rochester, Monroe County, New York; Dwelling Number 378; pg. 44. Accessed: www.ancestry.com Access Date: November 10, 2013.

**Ruffians on the Rails and Gentlemen in the Gymnasia: Prizefighting and Sparring in the
Late Antebellum and Civil War Era Northeastern Region**

“Until prize fighting [sic] can be conducted in a more manly and honest manner than has characterized the Ring [sic] in this country of late years,” explained the *New York Clipper* on February 2, 1861, “we do not believe that the ‘institution’ can be very popular...”¹ During the antebellum era, rowdyism and corruption tainted the prize ring in the northeast, preventing the sport from making headway in many towns and cities. While rowdyism and corruption diminished the ring’s reputation amongst middle-class Americans, the dilution of the artisanal system and immigration of unskilled famine-era Irish workers produced violent, impoverished urban neighbourhoods where fighting with one’s fists was a necessary part of life. “Survival in the slums for a boy,” explains historian Benjamin G. Rader, “could depend as much on his skills in using his fists as on his intelligence.”² Threatened by Irishmen willing to work for a fraction of their wages, many native-born Americans embraced the nativist political movements of the 1840s and 1850s, provoking several violent riots in New York City, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia. The severe discrimination faced by Irish immigrants produced further violence, particularly between Irish and African Americans. Although Irish-Black violence can be attributed, in part, to competition for jobs within the unskilled labour force, Irish attacks on African Americans were also demonstrations of ‘whiteness.’ As David Roediger has shown, “it was by no means clear that the Irish were white.”³ For newcomers to

America, following in the footsteps of native-born whites, the most obvious way to exert one's whiteness was to persecute African Americans. Within these ethnically and racially divided working-class communities, fighting with one's fists was not just helpful, it was an accepted part of day-to-day life.

As shown in the previous chapter, Manhattan was particularly prone to ethnic and racial violence during the 1840s and 1850s. The "Empire City," however, was not the only northeastern centre to languish under the effects of cultural violence, with similar social tensions affecting life in numerous other northeastern communities. For the purposes of this study, the northeast is treated as a broad geographic region, encompassing the coastal Atlantic states from New Jersey north to Maine, and the lands located west to the Pennsylvania-Ohio border and north to the borders of the British Colonies of Canada West, Canada East, and New Brunswick. This chapter will focus on several of the most active boxing scenes during the late antebellum and Civil War years, including Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts; and parts of rural New Jersey. In each case, I will examine the ebb and flow of prizefighting, the presence and/or absence of sparring instructors, and the prevalence of working-class sparring benefits and exhibitions in the context of each area's particular social history, exploring the impact of race, ethnicity, class, and masculinity on the sport of boxing.

“Fight is now the word everywhere...why should the prize ring be tabooed”?: New Yorkers and Prizefighting in Civil War Era New Jersey

Unlike their counterparts across the Hudson River in Manhattan, New Jersey sporting enthusiasts did not develop a particularly robust boxing culture during the antebellum era. German workers formed *Turnvereins*, American-born laborers turned to team sports, native-born and Irish workers joined fire companies for the thrill of racing and fighting, but boxing remained a marginal sport. Although ethnic violence was not unheard of, it was less prevalent in New Jersey cities like Newark and Jersey City, than in more congested centres like Manhattan, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Boston.⁴ During the Civil War era, however, New Jersey was transformed into a prizefighting hotbed by itinerant Manhattan and Brooklyn prizefighters seeking a reprieve from the anti-prizefighting efforts of the Metropolitan Police in their own State. This section will explore the tenuous existence of New Jersey prizefighting, from its rise during the late antebellum and early Civil War era, to its decline following increased New Jersey police surveillance in 1864 and 1865.

Due to New Jersey's economic ties with the South, historians often treat the “Garden State” as a hotbed of Confederate sympathizers or ‘Copperheads’ during the Civil War era. Recent studies, however, suggest anti-Union sentiment in New Jersey was restricted to political fringe groups like the “Peace Democrats.” In fact, like their neighbours in New York, New Jersey's male population eagerly enlisted in the Union Army upon the outbreak of war in 1861.⁵ War weariness, however, set in throughout

New Jersey in the wake of mounting casualties, leading citizens to seek out distractions. In their war weariness, New Jerseyans were often joined by visitors from Pennsylvania and New York seeking to forget the horrors of Civil War via leisurely visits to the "Garden State." As historian J. Thomas Jable observed, "New Jersey has long served as the playground for New York City and Philadelphia, two great metropolises that buttress each end of the state."⁶ Hudson County, located on the western shore of the Hudson River, opposite Manhattan, was particularly popular for sport and recreation. Antebellum baseball clubs from Manhattan, for example, routinely played games at the Elysian Fields in Hoboken. Gothamites in search of a "romantic stroll" often spent the Sabbath in Weehawken. During the early nineteenth century, Hudson County was also used for duelling matches, selected for its relative distance from authorities in Manhattan. Founding father Alexander Hamilton and Vice President Aaron Burr, for example, fought a duel in Weehawken in 1804, leading to the death of Hamilton.⁷ As prizefighting grew in popularity in antebellum Manhattan and Philadelphia, so too did the need for a safe, reliable fighting ground, away from the prying eyes of police. Civil War era Hudson County proved to be one of these relatively reliable fighting locales. For the most part, a New Jersey fight scene only truly existed in a physical, geographical sense. The fighters, seconds, referees, and a large percentage of spectators present at prizefights in New Jersey were predominantly from the neighbouring states of Pennsylvania and New York, and particularly the cities of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia.

Following the Confederate victories in major battles at Bull Run and Wilson's Creek in the summer of 1861, New Jerseyans and New Yorkers increasingly sought out distractions, using the wilderness of Hudson County, New Jersey, to revitalize tattered minds and bodies, increasingly strained by the grim realities of Civil War. While some New York pugilists, like Richard Hollywood, preferred to fight across the East River on Long Island, others turned to the "Garden State," staging their prizefights outside the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police. In January, 1862, for example, a proposed match between native-born Hen Winkle and Irishman Jimmy Elliott, both based in Manhattan, was initially prevented by the Metropolitan Police, intervening at the docks before Winkle and his supporters could board steam tugs to New Jersey on New Year's Day. The Winkle-Elliott fight was eventually held later in the month, with increased care for secrecy. On January 6, Winkle, Elliott, and a small group of one hundred spectators avoided police intervention by remaining "shady and quiet" when organizing their excursion to New Jersey.⁸ Conducted on a 'need to know' basis, the Winkle-Elliott bout was almost entirely a New York affair, with few if any New Jerseyans reported at ringside. Elliott, for example, was seconded by Manhattan-based prizefighter John Woods – previously of Boston, but born in of Belfast, Maine – and New York City's famed sparring publican, Englishman William Clark.⁹ Winkle was also seconded by New Yorkers, recruiting Manhattan prizefighter and hotel proprietor Johnny Roche and well-known New York City saloon owner and sparrer Kit Burns to run his corner.¹⁰ Due to the covert nature of the bout, and a snow storm the day of the contest, only a small group of spectators – reportedly between one and two hundred persons – witnessed the

Elliott-Winkle prizefight.¹¹ Nonetheless, the *New York Times* reported that many who “wened [*sic*] their way, plodding along through the heavy snow-storm on foot and in various descriptions of vehicles” were from New York, not New Jersey.¹² Unfortunately for those who braved the cold and snow, the Elliott-Winkle contest fell short of expectations, terminating when Elliott was kicked by a spectator. In their own defense, Winkle’s group claimed Elliott was kicked for choking their fighter, using a “deadly grasp” about his throat to gain an advantage. Kicking Elliott, claimed Winkle’s supporters, was the only way to break the Irishman’s strangle hold. Hoping to avoid a “general scrimmage” between the spectators, seconds, officials, and pugilists, both sides agreed to declare the contest a draw after ninety-five rounds of fighting.¹³



Above: Jimmy Elliott, National Police Gazette, December 25, 1880.

The most reported and controversial prize fight held in New Jersey occurred on May 13, 1863, when Jimmy Elliott returned to the ring to face Jim Dunn of Brooklyn.¹⁴ Elliott and Dunn initially intended to fight on May 11 on Staten Island, but were prevented from doing so by the Metropolitan Police. Thus, Elliott and Dunn decided to postpone their contest and reconvene on May 13 northeast of Weehawken at Bull's Ferry, Hudson County. According to the *New York Clipper*, "all night long carriages were passing over the Canal and Barclay Street ferries to Hoboken, *en route* to the battle ground."¹⁵ From Hoboken, the spectators travelled north to Weehawken, enjoying the hospitality of Manhattan prizefighter and Weehawken hotel proprietor Ed Wilson at his "Ruins" hotel. When Elliott and Dunn finally entered the ring on May 13, New Jersey authorities were well aware of the impending prize fight. When the Sheriff of Hudson County appeared on the fighting grounds and ordered the crowd to disperse, however, the fighters, seconds, officials, and spectators ignored the warning, confident a single officer could offer little deterrence.

After twelve rounds of fighting between Dunn and Elliott, controversy once again erupted at ringside, following a call of "foul" from Dunn's corner. According to the *New York Clipper*, Elliott successfully pinned Dunn to the edge of the ring, administering several punches while Dunn was bent backwards over the ropes. With their man trapped and absorbing punishment, Dunn's corner protested, claiming their man was struck while down. Referee Michael 'Crow' Norton agreed with Dunn's corner, awarding the fight to the Brooklyn fighter. The situation went from bad to worse following the Dunn-Elliott bout. As disenchanted spectators made their way back to Manhattan and

Brooklyn, a large body of police officers appeared, arresting many fight-goers, much to the disapproval of the *Clipper*. “Our neighbors in the Sandy State [New Jersey],” wrote the *Clipper*, “are a little too severe on New Yorkers upon whom they lay their clutches. Surely there is no great offence committed in looking at an exhibition of the manly art of self-defense.” Furthermore, the *Clipper* believed prize fighting – as a favored pastime of Union veterans – should be encouraged as a safe mode of distraction. “Some of our pugilists, and number of supporters of pugilism,” explained the *Clipper*, “have served their country in the war now going on; there are many still in the ranks of the Union Army, assisting to defend the stars and stripes. Fight is now the word everywhere and why should the prize ring be tabooed.” Nonetheless, many spectators were held by New Jersey authorities until bail – set at five hundred dollars – was secured by each detainee.¹⁶

Following the Dunn-Elliott fight, the *Trenton State Gazette* expressed its outrage by publishing the State’s laws regarding prizefighting: “any person engaging in a prize fight in this State, and any person aiding, assisting, or abetting therein, is liable to a fine of \$1000, or imprisonment at hard labor for two years, or both.”¹⁷ Spectators, seemingly falling in a legal grey area, could also receive hefty fines or incarceration. The *Gazette’s* call to arms against the ring notwithstanding, New Yorkers tempted fate, continuing to hold their prizefights in New Jersey following the Dunn-Elliott debacle. In 1863, the “Colorado Blacksmith,” John Condle Orem, was making the rounds in Manhattan and Brooklyn, styling himself as the champion of Colorado. Eager to test the Western newcomer, Owen Goneghan – the same man who defeated Ed Toughey in

1861 – agreed to fight Orem in New Jersey. On May 19, 1863, Goneghan and Orem met near South Amboy, New Jersey, located south of Staten Island, across Raritan Bay, to contest their much anticipated prizefight. According to the *New York Times*, many Manhattanites left for New Jersey the previous night, travelling by boat – both private vessels and public ferries – to Keyport, New Jersey.¹⁸ Other spectators crossed the Hudson River to Jersey City the morning of the fight, travelling to the bout on a steam tug commissioned by Manhattan’s Harry Hill under the pretense of a fishing trip.¹⁹

According to the *New York Clipper*, the fifty individuals aboard Harry Hill’s commissioned vessel belonged primarily to the “upper strata of society,” capable of paying the three dollar fee charged by Hill for the journey.²⁰ For the most part, however, those in attendance were associated in some way with Manhattan’s working-class sporting subculture.²¹ According to the *New York Clipper*, the one thousand spectators assembled near South Amboy for the Orem-Goneghan contest were the “roughest crowd, without exception, we ever witnessed.”²² Surrounded by a large pro-Goneghan crowd, John Condle Orem was surprisingly calm and collected. Unlike fighters from nearby cities like Boston or Philadelphia, none of Orem’s local fans back in Colorado could afford the time or money to travel across the country to see their champion fight. Thus, Orem relied on local assistance when organizing his cornermen. Terrified by the rough gathering of Goneghan supporters, Orem’s seconds abandoned him, leaving the Colorado man to fend for himself. Luckily, Kit Burns – the same man who seconded Hen Winkle the previous year in Weehawken – and a man named ‘Reddy’ agreed to work Orem’s corner following the departure of his previous team. With the crowd looking

angry even before the commencement of the fight, finding a knowledgeable individual to act as referee proved exceedingly difficult, with even Harry Hill refusing the post. Out of necessity, Orem and Goneghan agreed to an incompetent and/or corrupt fellow named Charley Moore as referee.

Controversy continued to persist throughout the Orem-Goneghan fight, with a seemingly partisan referee permitting Goneghan to hit the turf without being struck. When Goneghan hit the turf in round nineteen, however, Orem followed his opponent, striking the Irishman as he fell to the ground. Goegeghan supporters cried “foul,” arguing their fighter was struck while down, violating the rules of the London Prize Ring. Referee Charley Moore was immediately surrounded by Goneghan’s supporters, several of whom drew their pistols, successfully persuading him to validate their complaint by declaring Orem the loser via disqualification.²³ Following the fight, between twenty and fifty spectators were arrested, much to the delight of the *Trenton State Gazette*.²⁴ “It is to be hoped,” stated the *Gazette*, “that they [the arrested spectators] will do the state some service in the State prison.”²⁵



Above: Owen Goneghan, *National Police Gazette*, August 14, 1880.

Numerous prizefights, less organized and more impromptu than the Elliott-Winkle or Orem-Goneghan contests were also held in New Jersey by residents of Manhattan and Brooklyn. In 1861, for example, two young pugilists named Young Franks and Jim Smith crossed over to Hoboken, New Jersey, to contest a prizefight for five dollars a side.²⁶ In 1864, Billy Dwyer of California and Jack Turner of Boston, Massachusetts, via London, England, organized a prizefight in Manhattan before crossing over the Hudson River to the “Jersey Flats” – mud flats created at low tide – south of Jersey City to hold their own prizefight. Although a fight on the flats, located between Manhattan, Jersey City, and Brooklyn, was likely an attempt to confuse the respective police departments of each city, a group of officers nonetheless descended upon the fight, arresting several spectators.²⁷

For the prize fighters, spectators, officials, and coaches of Manhattan and Brooklyn, the consistent police surveillance of prize fighting in New Jersey was making the state less and less attractive as a location for prize fights, particularly for those contests with substantial sums of money at stake. Following the Dunn-Elliott prizefight near Bull’s Ferry, New Jersey, in 1863, the State’s authorities and New York Governor Horatio Seymour were particularly eager to bring Jimmy Elliott to justice. At Seymour’s behest, Manhattan was searched for Elliott following his bout with Dunn, but to no avail. A similar search, however, was not conducted for Dunn. Indeed, Dunn’s post-fight experiences were quite the opposite of Elliott’s. While Elliott lay hidden in various locations throughout Manhattan, Dunn was publically celebrated at Phil Clare’s Hotel in Brooklyn, being “visited and hand-shook by nearly all the chivalry of the [sixth] ward.”²⁸

By late 1863, however, the New Jersey and Manhattan police appeared to give up their pursuit of Elliott. Evidently aware of what seemed to be police apathy towards his crimes, Elliott mustered the courage to participate in a sparring benefit in Newark, New Jersey, on December 21.²⁹ Elliott passed between New Jersey and New York without harassment, instilling a false sense of security in the Manhattan pugilist. When Dooney Harris and Patsy Marley were matched for a prize fight, to take place in Pennsylvania in 1864, Elliott volunteered his services as Harris' second, travelling through New Jersey *en route* for Pennsylvania. While Elliott was in Pennsylvania, the New Jersey police were informed of his whereabouts and mode of transportation, leading to his arrest at Jersey City for the crime of participating in a prizefight with Jim Dunn in 1863. According to the *New York Clipper*, Elliott was likely turned over by "some vindictive person," an "enemy of Jimmy's," otherwise "the officer would not have known him from any other man."³⁰ After their comrade had spent two weeks in prison, Manhattan's sporting subculture, led by the *New York Clipper* and Dooney Harris, set about raising the money necessary to pay the hefty fine they expected Elliott to incur.³¹ No amount of money, however, would free Elliott. In hopes of deterring future prizefights in New Jersey, a Bergen court sentenced Elliott to two years in prison, plus a five hundred dollar fine. Shocked by the court's harsh treatment of Elliott, the *Clipper* cried foul. "We look upon Elliott's sentence as not only severe, but unjust," stated the *Clipper*. "For the last fifteen or twenty years prize fights, or what is worse, murderous duels, have been fought in the State of New Jersey, and not a thing has been done to them for it."³²

Although prizefighting was vehemently opposed by many New Jersey politicians, sparring was reported in both Newark and Jersey City, without any resistance from authorities. In Newark, sparring benefits were held prior to the Civil War, but often featured boxers from New York City and/or Brooklyn.³³ In Weehawken, New Jerseyans could receive sparring lessons from Australian Kelly and Ed Wilson prior to the Civil War.³⁴ At Jersey City in the 1850s, occasional sparring benefits were held by itinerant boxers.³⁵ Although sparring decreased in frequency in New Jersey during the Civil War, it continued in a diminished way. In Newark, Peter Martin visited for a sparring benefit in 1863, performing alongside John Condle Orem in the evening's main attraction. According to the *New York Clipper*, the sparring bout between Martin and Orem was well received.³⁶ In 1864, Israel Lazarus, the retired Anglo-Jewish prizefighter turned Manhattan saloon proprietor, travelled to Newark for a joint benefit with Bob Smith, assisted by several Manhattan-based Irish and English pugs, including Irishmen Joe Coburn and Jimmy Elliott and Englishmen Dooney Harris and George Rooke.³⁷ Later in 1864, featherweight prizefighter Richard Hollywood, an Irish-born resident of Manhattan, opened a saloon called 'The Clipper Shades' in Jersey City, where he offered sparring benefits and competitions.³⁸

Although New Jersey produced few sparrers or prizefighters during the Civil War era, the "Garden State" was nonetheless an important component of the broader northeastern boxing scene. With the Metropolitan Police patrolling much of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and surrounding area, New York State prizefighters regularly travelled via steam tug to New Jersey to hold their contests beyond the jurisdiction of

the Metropolitans. As was the case in and around New York, New Jersey authorities eventually caught on to the tactics of Manhattan and Brooklyn prizefighters, making numerous arrests during the Civil War era. As anti-prizefighting laws were increasingly exercised in New Jersey, New York's fight organizers looked further abroad for safe grounds, turning to their pugilistic counterparts in Philadelphia for assistance.

Boxing in the Antebellum "Quaker State:" Industrialization, Working-Class Sport, and Pennsylvanian Pugilism

Although the wilds of New Jersey provided fighting grounds for New York boxers, the population of the "Garden State" lacked a cultural connection to boxing comparable to that of its New York neighbours. Rather than showing leniency to boxers caught for prizefighting, as was the case in New York, New Jersey officials administered heavy fines and jail time, ultimately pushing boxing to other locations. Philadelphia, though further afield than New Jersey, became the new destination of choice for New York prizefighters. Boasting its own sparring aficionados and prizefighters by the 1830s, Philadelphian society tolerated prizefighting by the late 1850s, turning a blind eye to bouts organized in Philadelphia as long as they were contested outside the city. Philadelphia, however, was not always so tolerant of boxing. As the city's workers struggled to adjust to industrialization, workingmen split into divergent factions, some of which staunchly opposed prizefighting. Although a growing number of middle-class men took to sparring in pursuit of self-made manhood, they opposed prizefighting as a source of immorality, further marginalizing the sport through the 1840s. Following an

influx of famine-era Irish immigrants in the mid-1840s, and subsequent violence between Irish and native-born Philadelphians, prizefighters earned increased respect in the tumultuous 'Quaker City.' With labour becoming increasingly affordable, the Philadelphian middle-class boomed, creating a pool of relatively sedentary males, eager to find new sources of physical activity. Quite often, these middle-class men frequented local sparring instructors to compensate for their long hours of non-manual labor. By the outbreak of Civil War, Philadelphia boasted a boxing culture second only to New York City in terms of frequency and quality of boxing events. When New Jersey lost its appeal as a fighting ground, therefore, New Yorkers turned to their Philadelphian counterparts for assistance organizing and holding bouts.

During the late eighteenth century, the artisanal system of occupational advancement, consisting of apprentices, journeymen, and masters, provided a small number of workingmen with "considerable control over the pace of work and substantial free time."³⁹ Other workers, however, were not so fortunate. As Billy G. Smith vividly illustrates in his study of Philadelphian merchant seaman, shoemakers, tailors, and laborers, many urban workers – artisanal or otherwise – struggled to maintain steady employment during the second half of the eighteenth century. Rather than controlling the duration and vigor of labour, providing ample time for leisure, many artisans struggled to feed and shelter families, generating little or no discretionary income, resulting in periodic stints in the almshouse.⁴⁰ Organized artisanal involvement in team sports, therefore, was likely limited to journeymen and masters of above average means, hailing from the most profitable trades.⁴¹ Unlike their more affluent

counterparts, artisans and labourers of lesser means enjoyed more informal leisure pursuits in hopes of generating masculine prowess denied them in the workplace or almshouse.⁴² For the typical artisan and unskilled laborer, combative, competitive recreation, involving no equipment and limited space, like wrestling and fist fighting, garnered significant respect. As Elliott Gorn has shown, organized displays of boxing were noted in Philadelphia by the 1790s.⁴³ Although early Philadelphian bouts bore little resemblance to their English counterparts, they were “not simply brawls occasioned by inebriation or quarrelsomeness, but the beginning of fist fighting as ritualized, rule-bound, respectable spectacles.”⁴⁴

Rare bareknuckle boxing matches during the late eighteenth century begat a thriving, antebellum Philadelphia boxing scene. Much of the boxing in antebellum Philadelphia, however, was likely done by middle-class sparrers and a specific segment of the city’s workingmen. Separated by vast socio-economic disparities, Philadelphia’s artisans and laborers lacked anything like a united “working-class culture” from 1820-1837. Instead, as Bruce Laurie has shown, Quaker City workers split into different cultural formations: revivalism, radicalism, and traditionalism.⁴⁵ The revivalist element of the Philadelphian workingmen embraced evangelical notions of Christianity, comparable to those preached by Charles Grandison Finney in Rochester. Led by Albert Barnes, revivalists rejected the drinking and leisure of the workingman’s tavern in favour of stringent devotion to “honest and sober industry.”⁴⁶ Radicals, in sharp contrast to revivalists, sought out rational education via lyceums and lectures, debating clubs and discussion groups.⁴⁷ Led by William Heighton, Philadelphia’s workingmen radicals

pursued “the moral and intellectual uplift of the ignorant, without subjecting them to the harsh moralizing and humiliation of revivalism.”⁴⁸ Lastly, Laurie notes the continuation of journeyman culture, revolving around leisure more so than work, in the behavior of traditionalists: “bearers of older ways, whose blend of leisure and work furnished a bountiful market for local vice industries.”⁴⁹

The men who competed in combative, “ritualized, rule-bound, respectable spectacles” of bareknuckle boxing were likely workingmen of the traditionalist variety, demonstrating “no fast and hard distinction between work and play.” Unlike their revivalist counterparts, Philadelphia’s traditionalist workers refused to label “certain amusements as sinful,” indulging in a wide range of sporting pursuits, from hunting and fishing, to balloon launchings and cockfighting.⁵⁰ Spectator sports were particularly appealing to traditionalist artisans, permitting large groups of men to exercise communal masculinities vicariously by supporting a representative – human or animal – of their group. Although cockfighting and dogfighting were popular amongst traditionalists, prizefighting was their spectator sport of choice. Andy McLane was one of Philadelphia’s earliest pugilistic heroes. McLane’s first recorded prizefight was his 1832 defeat of Jim Sanford on the outskirts of Philadelphia.⁵¹ On May 7, 1833, McLane continued his pugilistic exploits, facing William “Boss” Harrington, a New York City butcher, on neutral ground in Baltimore, Maryland, for one thousand dollars. When it became apparent that Harrington would defeat McLane, however, the latter’s followers tore down the ring, drawing their knives and pistols, to end the bout before Harrington could earn a decisive victory.⁵² The violence surrounding the McLane-Harrington bout

was exactly the sort of behavior that led many Philadelphians to demonize the prize ring, labelling it a source of immorality and vice. While Lane's popularity in Philadelphia waned, sibling English boxers Tom and Sam Barrett were incorporating sparring into the activities offered at their local gymnasium. When one of the Barrett brothers – sources differ on which – attempted to parlay his sporting popularity into a prizefight with Jim Reed of Cincinnati in 1836, however, the outcome was strikingly similar to the McLane-Harrington debacle, resulting in the destruction of the ring and a general brawl before a winner could be determined.⁵³

The Barrett-Reed prizefight, staged at Hart's Island, New York, was likely facilitated by the advent of rail transportation between Pennsylvania and New York City. In 1833, the Camden and Amboy Railroad provided relatively quick travel – about nine hours, including a ferry and stagecoach – between the Quaker and Empire cities.⁵⁴ While this new rail connection presented prizefighters with an array of potential fighting grounds, it also accelerated the formation of a more thoroughly class-based society in Philadelphia, dividing the population sharply between a working class of manual laborers and a middle class of non-manual workers. Although the new railway connecting Philadelphia to New York increased demand for Philadelphian products domestically, the locomotive also ushered in an era of considerable industrialization. The simplification and mechanization of various trades, like shoemaking and tailoring, eroded the artisanal system, as entrepreneurs increasingly restricted worker freedom by imposing hourly wages. As Stuart M. Blumin has shown, during the 1820s and 1830s “the ownership of productive enterprises was falling increasingly into the hands of men

who did not work, or no longer worked, alongside their employees on the workshop floor.” Indeed, by the late 1830s, an emerging class of non-manual proprietors and managers, with a supporting cast of clerks and accountants, was increasingly producing manufactured goods via the labour of wage-earning employees.⁵⁵ Not all artisans, however, suffered during industrialization. At least some former masters and journeymen successfully transitioned into positions as proprietors and managers of larger operations. Few of these artisans turned middle-class managers and proprietors, however, maintained any semblance of working-class traditions.

Starting in the 1830s, Philadelphian middle-class men shrugged off the yoke of communal manhood in favor of more individualistic, self-made masculinities. Like their New York counterparts, many members of this growing class of non-manual workers sought to maintain their bodies via physical activity. Tom Barrett answered this demand at his gymnasium as early as 1832, providing a wide array of gymnastic exercises for his patrons. Despite the economic downturn of 1837, Barrett continued to grow his business. In 1839, for example, *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine and American Monthly Review* sang Barrett's praises, providing a detailed drawing of his gymnasium, illustrating his various climbing, balancing, and hanging apparatuses.⁵⁶ Reflecting upon the history of sport in Philadelphia, John B. Thayer notes that, prior to the foundation of the University Barge Club in 1854, Barrett's gymnasium was one of the only sporting facilities readily available to University of Pennsylvania students, attracting great numbers of young men after classes.⁵⁷ Part of the gymnasium's attraction was Barrett

himself. According to Thayer, Barrett was “an Englishman of fine athletic proportions, tall, handsome in feature and, above all, had exceptionally good manners.”⁵⁸

By at least 1841 Tom Barrett was also performing in sparring exhibitions, offering the broader public a glimpse of his boxing techniques in various variety shows.⁵⁹ For the average Philadelphian, however, Barrett’s Gymnasium, as well as his sparring performances, exceeded available discretionary time and income. The depression of 1837 and increased industrialization of the 1840s produced hardship for many Philadelphians, but African Americans fared worse than most. Frustrated and confused by the economic downturn, white Philadelphians engaged in two violent anti-black riots in 1837, burning the headquarters of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society the following year.⁶⁰ By the mid-1840s, regardless of race, most of Philadelphia’s manual workers “toiled longer and harder to survive” than their predecessors, living “at or below subsistence levels.”⁶¹ There simply was no time for most men to engage in sporting and working, leading to a high demand for affordable spectator sports within the working class.

Sport in Philadelphia was also diversified by the arrival of large numbers of Irish and German immigrants. For many European newcomers, living in Philadelphia meant enduring persistent ridicule and discrimination from their native-born counterparts. Consisting of largely American-born, Protestant manual labourers, the revivalist workingmen of the 1840s believed both non-manual labour and immigrant culture encouraged “vice and moral languor” in Philadelphia.⁶² Although some radical

workingmen, particularly of German and English heritage, encouraged unity via education, the labour movement frayed in the late 1830s. Large numbers of radical labourers left Philadelphia during depression of 1837, while others embraced aspects of revivalism, opposing non-manual and immigrant labour on moral grounds.⁶³ At the same time, competition for Philadelphia's increasingly competitive unskilled and semiskilled manufactory and factory jobs split traditionalists along ethnic lines. Irish Philadelphians increasingly sought the comforts of traditional Irish pastimes, using music, dance, and sport to lift their spirits in their unfamiliar surroundings, while their native-born counterparts turned to nativist politics for a sense of control.

During the mid-1840s, political nativism gained a modicum of popularity in Philadelphia. Composed of native-born Protestants, the Philadelphian branch of the American Republican movement provoked popular unrest in 1844 by attempting to hold a meeting in the heavily Irish Kensington district of the city. Enraged by the nativist presence, Irish inhabitants of Kensington violently confronted their would-be oppressors, resulting in a three-day riot. About two months later, another riot occurred in the Southwark district, after Protestants noticed Catholics wheeling a large number of guns into a local church. "Protestants and Catholics both blamed each other for the bloodshed," explains historian Tyler Anbinder, "but the conflict clearly aided American Republican candidates at the polls. In October, American Republicans won two congressional seats and swept their Philadelphia county nominations into office as well."⁶⁴ Before long, however, the American Republican Party lost support in Philadelphia, virtually disappearing before the 1850s.⁶⁵ In 1854, political nativism

emerged triumphant once again in Philadelphia, electing Robert Taylor Conrad of the nativist American Party as mayor with a thoroughly anti-immigrant platform. After serving his mandated two terms, however, nativism and Conrad lost mayoral power.

In this socially fragmented era of Philadelphian history, boxing practices differed between the largely native-born middle class and the heavily Irish working class. For middle-class men – managers, clerks, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and so on – sparring with gloves remained a popular pastime in the 1850s. Like their 1840s counterparts, middle-class men continued to pursue “self-made” masculine identities throughout the following decade, viewing “the individual not the community” as the “fundamental unit of society.”⁶⁶ Seeking a competitive edge in the antebellum market economy, middle-class men in Philadelphia increasingly turned to ‘rational recreation’ as a component of self-made manhood. In Philadelphia, social reform was often spearheaded by physicians, rather than “Muscular Christian” preachers.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the Philadelphian middle class showed interest in sparring comparable to its Manhattan counterparts, using sport as part of broader temperance regimens meant to fortify the body for public life. In addition to a multitude of gymnastic exercises, middle-class men found sparring with gloves a useful and efficient component of exercise routines offered at gymnasiums like Tom Barrett’s. By the 1850s, Barrett was no longer unchallenged in the realm of sparring instruction. As Elliott Gorn has shown, James Roper also operated a gymnasium in Philadelphia during the 1850s, offering sparring lessons as well as gymnastic routines. Joe Battis, one of the city’s only African-American sparring instructors, offered lessons from his barber shop, advertising his services via “a tin sign

with a couple of men stripped to the buff having a set-to.”⁶⁸ By the 1850s, Philadelphia also boasted a number of sparring schools, including the “Philadelphia Sparring Association” and “Pocahontas Club.”⁶⁹

As was the case in New York City and Brooklyn, sparring was a popular spectator sport for working-class men in Philadelphia. Sparring benefits, particularly those featuring prizefighters such as Daniel “Young Bendigo” Smith, Dominick Bradley, Jemmy Smith, and Samuel S. Rankin, drew large audiences in Philadelphia. Although the small number of boxers could nurture their respective masculine identities by sparring, predicating their manhood on aggressive competition, most workers enjoyed sparring benefits as spectators, using the sport to reinforce communal notions of masculinity.⁷⁰ By attending sparring benefits, workers emboldened their own community-oriented masculinities by joining with friends and colleagues in support of a particular athlete. When Confederate shots rang out at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, in 1861, these same communal bonds spurred Philadelphia’s working class into Union service.

Although sparring was the most common manifestation of boxing in late antebellum Philadelphia, working-class men and, largely in secret, many middle-class men, preferred the thrill of gambling on a bareknuckle prizefight. In Philadelphia, prizefighters faced hurdles comparable to those faced by their Manhattan brethren. The threat of police intervention was particularly dire in the ‘Quaker City,’ leading most fighters to fight in rural locales, beyond the city’s limits. When Irishman Dominick Bradley of Philadelphia fought Hugh Sloan of Baltimore in 1853, for example, the

fighters and their supporters met about thirty miles from Philadelphia, near the iron town of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.⁷¹ While antebellum New Yorkers readily exploited their close proximity to a number of islands, using steam tugs and ferries to travel from Manhattan to Staten Island, Long Island, Riker's Island, and so on, Philadelphians used their State's ever improving rail system to distance their prizefights from authorities.⁷² Although Bradley, Sloan, and their followers eluded authorities long enough for Bradley to fight and defeat Sloan, police eventually caught up with, and arrested, the victorious pugilist. Unlike in New York City, where boxers were readily protected and/or 'sprung' from jail by influential political allies, Bradley was sentenced to six months in prison and fined one hundred dollars.⁷³ After serving his time, and avoiding the ring for a number of years, Bradley returned to prizefighting in 1857 against an unproven publican named Samuel S. Rankin. According to Elliott Gorn, the Bradley-Rankin contest reflected the prevailing religious tensions of the time, with Rankin and Bradley representing Philadelphia Protestants and Catholics, respectively.⁷⁴ Although the Bradley-Rankin bout generated unprecedented sporting buzz in Philadelphia, the fight was facilitated by Israel Lazarus of Buffalo, New York, and held in Canada West.⁷⁵ In the end, only about thirty Philadelphians viewed the Bradley-Rankin contest in person, leaving thousands of supporters awaiting news of the result in 'Quaker City' saloons. According to the *Philadelphia Press*, the widespread fascination showed toward the Bradley-Rankin bout could be attributed, not only to pugilism's well-established popularity within the city's working class, but also to a growing middle-class fascination with the "science" of boxing. Those Philadelphia "gentlemen" interested in the "science" of pugilism,

explained the *Press*, were the same men “apt to cry out against the details of these pugilistic encounters.”⁷⁶ After numerous inaccurate reports regarding the outcome of the Bradley-Rankin fight, Philadelphians finally received definitive news of Bradley’s victory. Regardless of outcome, the bout had a perceptible impact on prizefighting in Philadelphia, sparking a series of small, impromptu prizefights in the days that followed, with several working-class men emulating Rankin and Bradley in and around Philadelphia for the amusement of their friends.⁷⁷

When John C. Heenan travelled to England to face Tom Sayers in 1860, discussions of pugilism saturated most of Philadelphia. Even the typically restrained *Philadelphia Press* seemed to waiver in its opposition to the ring. “That the strength of muscle, power of endurance, and indimitable [*sic*] pluck, called for in the successful prizefighter need cultivation in our age, and particularly in our own country, no one will deny,” explained the *Press*.⁷⁸ With the sectional conflict heating up between North and South, the *Press* questioned the American people’s physical preparedness for military conflict, fearing Americans lacked “the physical powers of a people and powers of endurance...needed in times of war.”⁷⁹ Flirting dangerously with condoning the prize ring, the *Press* made sure to denounce prizefighting in the closing sentences of its Heenan-Sayers article, encouraging parties interested in bareknuckle pugilism to pursue physical development in a gymnasium, or partake in a cricket match – a favourite of wealthy Philadelphians – instead of subjecting themselves to the “rowdyism, gambling, and brutality” of prizefighting.⁸⁰ Less than a year later, the *Press*’ critique of the nation’s military preparedness was put to the test in open civil warfare.

“The Monster is Unveiled in all its Horrid Deformity:” The Civil War and Boxing in Philadelphia

“Yes! The Monster is unveiled in all its horrid deformity,” proclaimed the Philadelphia-based *American Presbyterian and Genesee Evangelist* newspaper. “The capital of the government itself is threatened,” continued the *Presbyterian*, “and night and day the consecrated halls of liberty have to be defended against the minions of the slave-power of our country.”⁸¹ Although most Philadelphians cared little for African Americans, less for slaves, and possibly even less for their freedom, men of all classes answered Abraham Lincoln’s call for 75,000 Union troops on April 13, 1861, in staggering numbers. For many Philadelphians, service with the Union Army was an opportunity to preserve the geographical and political integrity of the nation while experiencing an unprecedented adventure. According to J. Matthew Gallman, groups of Irish, British, and German Philadelphians promptly formed ethnic-based regiments, while “the University of Pennsylvania Classics Department, the Harrison Literary Institute, the Tivoli Hose Company, the Maennercher Vocal Society, young men from the Fifteenth Ward, and workers from numerous manufacturing establishments all offered their services.”⁸² Amidst this initial roar of martial enthusiasm, few Philadelphians spared much time for sparring or prizefighting. After all, the notoriety available to men through boxing paled in comparison to the fame and glory awaiting soldiers on the battlefield. By 1863, however, Philadelphians eagerly sought out distractions from the killing on their doorstep and by 1864 Philadelphia was one of the most important cities in American prizefighting.

During 1861 and 1862, reports of prizefights occurring in and around Philadelphia were rare. Many Philadelphians responded to Southern secession in disruptive, volatile ways. As Gallman shows in *Mastering Wartime*, secession threw Philadelphia into a riotous state of unrest for several days, with pro-Union crowds roughing up citizens considered Southerner sympathizers.⁸³ Eventually, however, an eerie normality set in throughout Philadelphia, as the initial three month military expedition against the South transformed into a full-fledged civil war. By the fall of 1861, the working class was turning its attention back to their regular leisure pursuits. A report published by the *New York Clipper* in the fall of 1861, for example, recounts a fight by “moonlight” conducted north of Philadelphia, between men named McCoy and Billy of the heavily Irish, working-class Kensington district of the city.⁸⁴ According to the *Clipper*, both men weighed approximately 130 pounds and, although fighting for a purse, were primarily settling a grudge in front of a small crowd composed of friends.⁸⁵

Another small prize fight occurred in the summer of 1863, between Ed McGonigle of Philadelphia and a New York-based fighter known as ‘Diamond’ in Darby, Pennsylvania, about eight miles from the ‘Quaker City.’⁸⁶ The general lack of prize fighting noted between the outbreak of Civil War in 1861 and McGonigle-Diamond contest of 1863, however, does not correlate to a disinterest in prize fighting in the city more generally. When Joe Coburn of Manhattan and Michael McCoolle of St. Louis, Missouri, fought for the heavyweight championship of America near Wilmington, Delaware, in May 1863, Philadelphia served as the major rendezvous point for many spectators the night before the fight. Along with well-known sporting figures from

Cincinnati and Manhattan, numerous Philadelphians were at ringside for the fight, including no less than seven of the city's aldermen.⁸⁷ The presence of so many enthusiastic followers of prizefighting in Philadelphia's saloons and hotels, permitted to proceed to the Coburn-McCoole contest without harassment from police, must have stirred interest in the sport in Philadelphia, because from 1863 to 1865, the city was one of the busiest boxing scenes in America.

Following the success of the Coburn-McCoole bout, Manhattan prize fighters started using Philadelphia as a rendezvous point for contests to be held in Pennsylvania and Delaware, rather than risking arrest in New York or New Jersey. After the McCoole-Coburn bout, a contest between Ned Wilson and Con Fitzgerald for one thousand dollars was organized in New York City and Philadelphia but conducted in rural Pennsylvania. Wilson, a native-born Gothamite, former brass-molder, and owner of the Ruins Hotel in Weehawken, was a competent fighter, but far from a national contender. Popular with working-class men of Weehawken and Manhattan, Wilson's privileged position in the sporting subculture stemmed more from hospitality and gentlemanly manner than his pluck in the ring.⁸⁸ Fitzgerald, a carpenter by trade, was born in Albany, New York, but struck out for California in search of adventure and fortune during the antebellum years. Unlike Wilson, Fitzgerald was – at least in the 1850s – highly regarded as a prize fighter, defeating Hugh Kelly, a claimant of the championship of Nevada Territory, in just thirty minutes while living in the west.

Philadelphia was used as the main rendezvous point for fans travelling to the Wilson-Fitzgerald fight, enjoying the city's food and drink at saloons, hotels, and restaurants. As the Wilson-Fitzgerald crowd massed, Philadelphia police looked on, content to maintain order. Unlike the Coburn-McCoole fight, steam tugs, rather than trains, transported Wilson, Fitzgerald, and their respective supporters to the fighting grounds via the Delaware River. According to the *Clipper*, one tug was hired to transport the combatants and their seconds and a separate boat was organized for spectators. Following a mad dash for the spectator tug, resulting in several "men overboard," the boats proceeded down the river to Fort Penn, Delaware, for the fight. Several savvy fight spectators hired a separate steam tug for the journey, travelling far more comfortably than their counterparts aboard the other vessel, overflowing as it was with human cargo. The fight itself proved a prompt affair, with both men trading punches instead of employing the popular wrestling techniques of the day.

After several early exchanges, it was apparent that Wilson, though a willing and rugged competitor, was no match for Fitzgerald. After Fitzgerald dropped Wilson to the turf with stiff punches to end the first four rounds, cries of "take him away!" could be heard throughout the crowd. Spectators pleaded with Wilson's corner to throw up the sponge and admit defeat. Undeterred by his futile efforts, Wilson carried on, suffering six more knockdowns before his corner stopped the fight. After just sixteen minutes of fighting Fitzgerald was declared the victor, leaving Wilson "weak, powerless, and bleeding profusely."⁸⁹ With fans eager to prolong their great Delaware River adventure, Con Orem – the Colorado blacksmith known in the northeast for his exceptional

performance against Owen Gonehgan in May 1863 – and a newly arrived, but pugilistically experienced Irishman named Patsy Marley stepped into the ring vacated by Fitzgerald and Wilson to contest a prizefight for fifty dollars. According to the *Clipper*, Orem and Marley agreed to fight in Manhattan, before embarking for the Wilson-Fitzgerald bout, intending to take centre stage and fight for the throngs of spectators expected to congregate in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the Orem-Marley contest went too long for its own good, coming to an unsatisfactory conclusion when Union soldiers from Fort Delaware intervened. Although Delaware was a ‘border state’ – neither seceding from the Union nor abolishing slavery – it was home to the overcrowded Union Army prison of Fort Delaware. Located on Pea Patch Island, Fort Delaware was a short distance down river from Fort Penn and the Orem-Marley prizefight.⁹⁰ A raid on the fighting grounds was led by Alvin F. Schoepf, resulting in the arrest of numerous spectators. According to the *New York Clipper*, “over one hundred were taken at the point of the bayonet, having to throw away their pistols to escape further punishment.”⁹¹ Although Con Fitzgerald, Patsy Marley, and most of the spectators managed to escape, Con Orem and Ned Wilson were both captured, along with prominent Manhattan sporting figures Harry Hill, Joe Coburn, and Jim Saunders. Although the arrested spectators were released soon after being detained, Orem and Wilson spent several days in the Newcastle prison before being released on bail.

Despite the arrest of Con Orem and Ned Wilson in October 1863, Philadelphians organized a prizefight between two local boxers in November, featuring an Irishman named Peter Martin and an Englishman named Jim Sennett, on the outskirts of the city.

Sennett hailed from the fourth ward, widely considered the most violent section of Philadelphia, while Martin – like McCoy and Billy in 1861 – lived in the Kensington District.⁹² Fighting for a sum of three hundred dollars, Martin and Sennett punched and threw each other for over an hour, before Martin finally prevailed.⁹³ Like the *Trenton State Gazette* in New Jersey, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* suggested that men with a penchant for violence should join the Union Army, rather than engage in prize fights. “If these worthies would display their valor by entering the ranks of the Union Army,” the *Inquirer* stated, it would be “more to their credit, but we have yet to learn that a prize fighter is possessed of that true courage which would enable him to shoulder a musket.”⁹⁴

Despite opposition from the *Inquirer* and other like-minded Philadelphians, the prize ring continued to maintain a presence in the city into 1864. On May 4, 1864, Patsy Marley returned to Philadelphia to face Englishman Dooney Harris, of Manhattan, in a prizefight at Gwynedd Station, about eighteen miles from Philadelphia. Following his lengthy bout with Con Orem in 1863, Marley’s reputation in Philadelphia increased dramatically, despite losing a follow-up glove fight against the ‘Colorado Blacksmith’ in Manhattan.⁹⁵ When news of the scheduled Marley-Harris bout reached Philadelphia, the city’s residents showed immense, almost blind, support for Marley, wagering fast and furious on the Irishman to win, despite advice from Manhattan sporting circles to the contrary.

“Fearful of a second Fort Penn,” only a small group of fight fans set out from Manhattan for the Marley-Harris bout, paling in comparison to the large Manhattan contingent present at the Coburn-McCoole and Wilson-Fitzgerald fights.⁹⁶ Following the success of the Martin-Sennett bout – held outside of Philadelphia but within Pennsylvania – Marley and Harris decided to avoid Delaware altogether, arranging a train to transport them and their supporters north of Philadelphia to Gwynedd Station. Marley and Harris ultimately contested seventy rounds, free from police interference, most of which were won by the latter, before Marley’s corner threw up the sponge, saving their fighter from further punishment. In defeat, Marley’s Philadelphia faithful proved a fickle lot, abandoning their battered prizefighter in rural Pennsylvania. Following the fight, the *New York Herald* suggested Marley’s skills were over estimated by his supporters. “He had no chance from the fifth round,” explained the *Herald*, “all his efforts being in vain, as his blows made no impression on Harris, and he receiving all the punishment.”⁹⁷

After several separate contests featuring New York and Pennsylvania pugilists, respectively, an inter-state affair was arranged for late October, 1864, with Peter Martin of Philadelphia facing Dooney Harris of Manhattan.⁹⁸ Billed as the ‘New York’ fighter, Harris was also popular in Philadelphia, generating his own fan base in the “Quaker City” after his impressive victory over Patsy Marley the previous year. The fight proved a headache for the fighters and organizers from the outset. During his travel to Pennsylvania, a *Clipper* reporter was disgusted with the conduct of many would-be spectators aboard the train, who boldly robbed passengers upon every stop, bumping

and shoving through crowds, pickpocketing along the way. According to the *Clipper*, one robbery resulted in a fatality when an elderly, well-to-do man from Kentucky died of shock upon realizing he was missing five hundred dollars. Uncomfortable amongst the thieves, the reporter exited the train at Middletown. Many fellow Manhattan fight enthusiasts made the same decision. In the morning, the reporter and his comrades proceeded to the fighting grounds near Ottsville in covered wagon driven by their hotel proprietor. When Dooney Harris entered the ring, however, Martin was nowhere to be found. Harris, therefore, claimed the one thousand dollar stakes, on account of Martin's failure to appear at the agreed upon time. Meanwhile, Martin was waiting for Harris, with a pitched ring, near Port Jervis, Pennsylvania. Without Martin in Ottsville, however, the crowd dispersed and returned to their places of origin.

Following the failed Martin-Harris bout, thieves again preyed on passengers on their way back to Manhattan. Word that police were waiting in Jersey City, however, provided some reprieve for innocent passengers, leading the pickpockets to disembark the train early at Paterson and Boiling Springs, New Jersey. According to the *Clipper*, by the time the police descended upon the train in Jersey City, the culprits were scattered throughout the State, resulting in the arrest of 32 passengers at Jersey City, most of whom were "respectable and reputable" citizens.⁹⁹ Although those arrested were predominantly from Manhattan, passengers from Philadelphia, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and Cincinnati, were also arrested and held to answer for crimes including assault of a soldier, rape, and theft.¹⁰⁰ By October 30, however, the number of passengers remaining in prison was whittled down to five, including four residents of Manhattan

and one of Cincinnati.¹⁰¹ The process by which detainees were released varied. Some were evidently identified by others on the train, clearing them of any wrong doing. Others, however, were released based on their social class and appearance. John and William Boarst, for example, were released on “nominal bail” because they were “respectable looking young gentlemen.”¹⁰² With no one to vouch for their innocence, and evidently lacking the ‘respectable’ appearance of the Boarsts, the five passengers who remained in custody beyond October 30 were considered guilty until proven innocent.

Finally, in late November 1864, Harris and Martin fought, contesting six rounds near Scranton, Pennsylvania. The unfavourable press afforded Harris and Martin’s initial attempt at a bout decimated the numbers of interested spectators, resulting in no more than twenty Philadelphians, twenty Gothamites, and a larger group of Scranton area coal miners composing the bulk of the crowd. Martin, though the larger of the two, was badly beaten by the more experienced Harris, who inflicted numerous cuts about Martin’s face. In the sixth and final round, Harris fell to his knees, receiving several punches from Martin while on the turf. Martin was, therefore, disqualified for striking a downed opponent, making Harris the victor. No sooner did the fight terminate, than local police pounced upon the fighters and spectators, arresting several of those involved, including Harris.¹⁰³

Following his fight with Harris, Martin sent a letter to the *New York Clipper* stating his willingness to fight “any white man in America, bar neither size or weight,

country or creed, for not less than \$1,000 a side.”¹⁰⁴ Martin’s challenge to the white world is indicative of the broader exclusion of African Americans from Civil War era pugilism and prevailing racism towards black Philadelphians within the city’s Irish-American social landscape. As David Roediger persuasively argues in his book *The Wages of Whiteness*, Irish-American, working-class urbanites clashed with their black counterparts over jobs and, perhaps more significantly, to align themselves with other ‘white’ citizens in a racially polarized society.¹⁰⁵ For Martin, fighting an African American would be tantamount to admitting racial equality between Irish and black Philadelphians, contradicting the Irish-American quest for a ‘white’ racial identity. Towards the end of 1864, however, convincing any pugilist to compete near Philadelphia, regardless of race, became incredibly unlikely. Reports of Martin-Harris train robberies appeared throughout the northeast, in newspapers in – at the very least – New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.¹⁰⁶ Fear of police interference dramatically reduced the frequency of prize fights staged near Philadelphia, all but silencing the ‘Quaker City’ fight scene for the remainder of the Civil War era.

“Furnish them with the Means of Innocent Pleasure:” Class, Leisure, and Morality in Antebellum Boston

In 1837, Unitarian minister and early rational recreation advocate William Ellery Channing addressed a crowd gathered at the Odeon Hall in Boston, Massachusetts. “The first means which I shall suggest, of placing a people beyond the temptations to

intemperance,” pronounced Channing, “is, [*sic.*] to furnish them with the means of innocent pleasure.”¹⁰⁷ Channing’s lecture was, to a large degree, a response to the ongoing industrialization of Boston’s economy and impact of grueling labor on the city’s workers. “Multitudes” of Bostonians, explained Channing, “are often compelled to undergo a degree of labor exhausting to the spirits and injurious to the health” in order to “earn subsistence for themselves and their families.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, by the 1820s, the dilution of artisanal labour, noted previously in Philadelphia and New York City, swept through Boston, leaving many of the city’s journeymen lifelong wage earners.¹⁰⁹ With bouts of depression running rampant amongst Boston’s wage earners, the sports and recreations of workingmen were increasingly accompanied by heavy drinking, earning such activities a dubious reputation for intemperance. According to Channing, however, amusements like dancing, music, and theatre – widely considered conducive to intemperance – could be used intelligently and free of intoxicants, providing moral uplift to those experiencing the “incessant toil, exhausting forethought, anxious struggles, [and] feverish competitions” produced by the contemporary workplace.¹¹⁰ Workers, however, were wary of men such as Channing, viewing the preacher and others of his ilk as agents of the middle class, intimately tied to the very industrialization that constricted their time and wages.

As was the case in Philadelphia, the old artisanal labor order fractured into small, often divergent groups in Boston, espousing radical and traditionalist ideologies. Unlike Philadelphia, however, revivalists made little headway amongst manual laborers in Boston, finding more success in smaller mill towns throughout Massachusetts.¹¹¹ In their

indifference to evangelical Christianity, Boston's wage earners were comparable to most antebellum manual laborers. In fact, few antebellum workingmen attended church of any kind.¹¹² The small proportion of manual laborers who did regularly attend church, unlike the revivalist element of Philadelphian workingmen, typically kept their religious beliefs separate from "their moral practice and political imagination."¹¹³ Like their counterparts in Philadelphia, Boston's radical workingmen encouraged wage laborers to pursue additional education via lectures and debates "organized by and for labor alone."¹¹⁴ By the 1830s, radicals openly opposed lectures organized by employers, viewing such events as part of a broader upper- and middle-class monopoly on knowledge production.¹¹⁵ Although many mill operatives viewed the lectures provided by mill owners and managers – like those offered by the Boston Associates in Lowell – as conducive to "social uplift," labour radicals disagreed, arguing that employer-funded lectures overlooked working-class realities, supported the domination and exploitation of wage laborers, and attacked "the confidence of working people."¹¹⁶ By the 1840s, company funded lectures were part of a larger trend of employer philanthropy meant to distract and mislead workers, encouraging complacency towards industrial production.¹¹⁷ The lectures and debates organized by radical artisans in Massachusetts pursued the "cultural maintenance" of pre-industrial society, seeking a reprieve from long hours of wage labour through "citizenship time" away from the workplace to pursue moral and intellectual enlightenment. Indeed, with work days sometimes lasting over twelve hours, Massachusetts wage labourers were left with little time for leisurely self-improvement.¹¹⁸ Traditionalists, adhering to older artisanal practices of sporting

throughout the 1830s, hindered the ambitions of radical labourers, providing ample evidence of the 'dangers' of workers' leisure via their drinking, blood sports, and gambling.

The strength of radical labour reform was further diluted following the mass immigration of Irish workers in the 1840s, culturally dissimilar to the existing pool of wage laborers. The famine era Irish arrived in droves, finding a higher, if still abysmal, standard of living in antebellum Boston than they experienced across the Atlantic. As Bruce Laurie suggests, the Irish "counted themselves fortunate to have work at all and were more aggressive at first in defending their culture than in pursuing economic justice."¹¹⁹ Indeed, unskilled and Catholic Irish newcomers had little in common with their American counterparts. Frustrated by increased competition in the workforce, native-born Bostonians were "hostile and intolerant" towards the Irish newcomers, further fragmenting the city's already racially divided class of workingmen.¹²⁰ Largely shunned by the native-born traditionalists and radicals, the Boston Irish used local taverns for music, dancing, sport, and other cultural displays, carving out their own ethnic working-class enclaves. The contempt native-born workers showed towards the famine era Irish was echoed by some middle-class Bostonians. Repulsed, not only by Irish Catholicism and poverty, but by their rowdy, tavern-based leisure culture, reform-minded elements of the Massachusetts middle class suppressed Irish pastimes, taking aim at Sabbath drinking and prizefighting. Following James "Yankee" Sullivan's prizefight with John Morrissey for the American heavyweight championship in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, in 1853, for example, Sullivan was detained by New York City police,

handed over to Massachusetts authorities, and held in Boston on fifteen hundred dollars bail.¹²¹

In the decade preceding the Civil War, native-born Bostonians, like their New York and Pennsylvania counterparts, organized a branch of the nativist American Party, successfully electing candidates for mayor and governor in 1854.¹²² With broad political power, nativists deported Irish paupers and mental patients to England; disbanded Irish militia units; made Protestant bible readings mandatory in public schools; and, enacted strict temperance laws.¹²³ Although the Irish fared poorly under American Party rule, Massachusetts' black population had reason to celebrate. Eager to win the affection of anti-slavery Whigs in Massachusetts, the American Party opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act and called for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law.¹²⁴ Boston's Irish bristled at the idea of increased rights for African Americans, fearing black competition for unskilled jobs.¹²⁵ Anti-black riots comparable to those initiated by the New York City and Philadelphia Irish, however, did not unfold in Boston. Although the American Party fell from mayoral power in 1856 and State power in 1858, its anti-Catholic policies had a lasting effect on the Irish. Prizefighting, a highly respected sport within Boston's Irish community, was suppressed long after the American Party's demise.¹²⁶ The police arrested Harry Finnegas, a bartender for Boston-based English pugilist Ed Price, following his 1857 loss to Johnny Roberts of Chicago. Although Finnegas and Roberts endeavored to keep their bout a secret, holding it in a small hall in South Danvers, Massachusetts, their friends "let their tongues run" too much after the fight, resulting in Finnegas' arrest.¹²⁷

Despite Harry Finnegas' brave showing in the prize ring, no one came forward to pay his five thousand dollars bail, leading to the pugilist's imprisonment at Newburyport.¹²⁸ According to the *New York Clipper*, the mistreatment of prizefighters by their backers was nothing new in Massachusetts. "In that State, and in Boston more particularly," explained the *Clipper*, "these things are managed by a set of men who style themselves 'the principal supporters of sports' in that locality – who get up these battles – who back the men – who use them as long as they need them, and then send them adrift with a few dollars, or suffer them to be locked up in prison."¹²⁹ Learning from the mistakes of his predecessors, John Woods, a Maine-born Bostonian, dared not contest a prizefight in his own city. Instead, Woods – also known as 'Cocky' – fought and defeated George King of Cleveland, Ohio, on December 5, 1860, in Weehawken, New Jersey.¹³⁰

Native-born, middle-class Bostonians experienced boxing in very different ways than their working-class counterparts. Following in the footsteps of Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing, a number of prominent Bostonians championed rational recreation during the 1840s and 1850s, including the likes of Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Edward Everett Hale.¹³¹ Amidst Boston's industrializing nineteenth century landscape, a growing middle class found communal notions of masculinity socially antiquated. Toiling in the highly-competitive market economy, middle-class male entrepreneurs, managers, and professionals, increasingly embraced a "self-made" model of manhood.¹³² With mentally rigorous, but largely sedentary, work becoming the middle-class norm, many bourgeois men turned to

gymnasia for private physical exercise. By the 1830s, these middle-class exercise regimens included the English practice of sparring with boxing gloves to strengthen one's body into a robust, muscular vessel for the mind. John Hudson was a popular sparring instructor by the 1830s, offering regular lessons in Boston while making occasional teaching trips to Portland, Maine, and Providence, Rhode Island.¹³³ In nearby Salem, Massachusetts, Charlie Ottignon operated a sparring school by 1835, prompting other boxing aficionados to visit the Massachusetts town by the 1840s.¹³⁴ Sparring instruction was more readily available in Boston by the 1850s, with lessons offered by white instructors, like W.G. Taylor and James Hart, and African-American gym owners like Alexander D'Orsay, Peyton Stewart, and John Bailey. According to historian Louis Moore, "while middle-class whites exercised to protect and prove their manhood, black gym owners used physical culture to demonstrate their 'fitness' for federal citizenship by offering their healthy bodies as proof that they harbored necessary middle-class values."¹³⁵

Working-class men, often denied the leisure time necessary to personally pursue physical activity, adapted sparring for their own use, incorporating public boxing displays into the broader, spectator-oriented sporting culture of the tavern. While most working-class men acted as spectators at sparring performances, a small number of men donned the gloves, displaying combative, competitive masculine identities. The boxers at Boston-based sparring benefits were of various cultural backgrounds, with Irish, English, and native-born pugilists representing the *status quo*. Boston's status as a predominantly sparring-oriented boxing culture persisted into the Civil War era, but

lacked the volume and quality of matches known in the antebellum years. The decline in Boston's sparring scene can be attributed, in part, to the loss of noted trainers and organizers of working-class sparring. James Hart, well-known as a teacher of the 'manly art' by both working- and middle-class Bostonians and as a leading organizer of sparring benefits, died in 1859. W.G. Taylor, another renowned instructor and organizer of boxing, left Boston to serve the Union Army as Deputy Provost Marshall of New Orleans in 1862.¹³⁶ Well known for organizing Boston-based sparring benefits for John C. Heenan and Joe Coburn, Taylor travelled the Northeast during the antebellum years, promoting the virtues of sparring to all who would listen.¹³⁷ Unfortunately, Taylor never returned from the war, dying in New Orleans in 1864. Following Taylor's death the *New York Clipper* eulogized: "the professor was a gentle fellow, rare company, and a host of friends will read of his decease with painful feelings."¹³⁸

Boxing in Civil War Era Boston

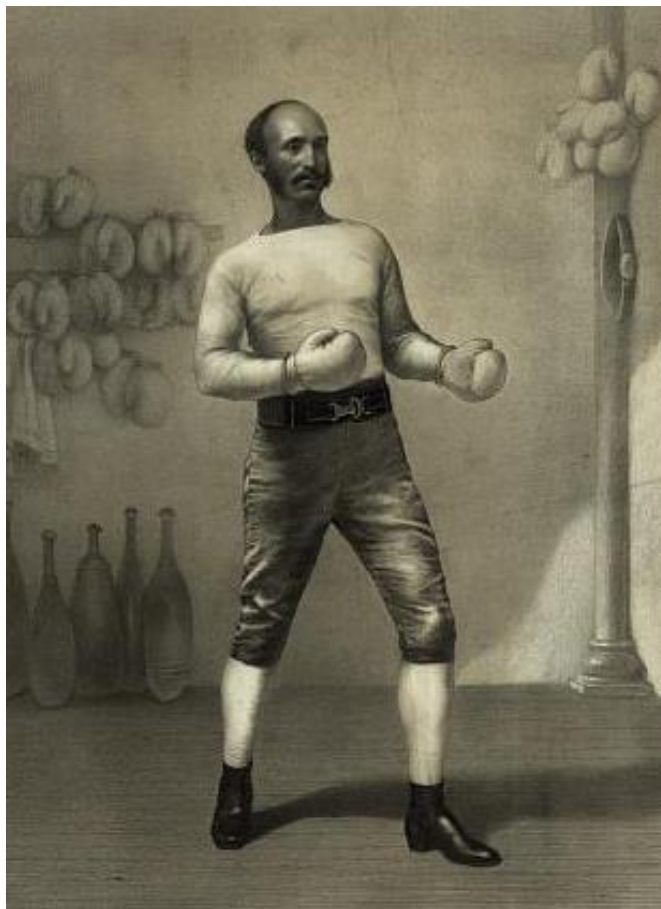
The late antebellum era was a tumultuous time in Boston. Abolitionists and anti-abolitionists seemed perpetually on the verge of violent confrontation. When Frederick Douglass attempted to take the podium at an abolitionist gathering at Tremont Temple to commemorate the anniversary of John Brown's execution, for example, anti-abolitionists went wild, prompting fighting throughout the gathering. Douglass himself, after holding his own with his fists, was overcome and thrown down a staircase. Wendell Phillips, a well-known white abolitionist, required the protection of forty fellow abolitionists to reach his home.¹³⁹ Violence once again surrounded Phillips two weeks

later, when anti-abolitionists broke up his address at the Music hall.¹⁴⁰ Although many of the anti-abolition agitators of 1860 were immigrants from the Emerald Isle, Irish Bostonians did not hesitate to serve the Union Army. “As long as the Civil War was waged to preserve the Union rather than to free the slaves,” explains historian Dennis P. Ryan, “the Irish supported the Northern cause.”¹⁴¹

Although a large number of Irish and native-born Americans served the Union, a large segment of the working class also remained behind. Pugilistic activities in Boston slowed to a crawl following W.G. Taylor’s departure for the war in 1862, but never disappeared entirely. Sparring benefits occasionally broke the monotony of wartime for the working class and, on occasion, middle-class Bostonians attended sparring as a spectator sport. Prizefighting also persisted, despite opposition from city officials, but in a greatly diminished state. The bustling days when talented fighters like Harry Finnegas and Jack Turner fought in Boston were a distant memory, belonging to an antebellum golden age. Rather than risk imprisonment like Finnegas and Turner, Bostonians either refrained from prizefighting or took their contests outside the city, and sometimes the State, to avoid police interference. Ironically, those who did hold prizefights within the city were rarely pursued by the overworked police force, struggling to maintain order amidst mobilization.

The Union defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run engulfed the Boston populace with a chilling uncertainty. According to historian Thomas H. O’Connor, Bostonians “fully expected the war to be over in one glorious victory.” Instead, the bewildered city

struggled to comprehend the “ignominious thrashing” of the Union Army in its first major battle.¹⁴² To assuage the ugly reminders of the unfolding war, middle-class Bostonians attended a private sparring exhibition at Chapman Hall on June 2, 1862. William G. Taylor, well-known for providing gentlemanly sparring instruction at Chapman Hall on a regular basis, acted as the master of ceremonies, introducing a number of northeastern boxers from Boston, Chelsea, New York City, and Bangor and two English pugilists from Birmingham and Liverpool for the approval of “gentleman of the highest respectability.”¹⁴³ Quite a different scene prevailed on November 22, when Jimmy Carroll held a sparring benefit at the “chockfull” National Theatre. Instead of a private gathering of “gentlemen,” the audience was a lively lot of sporting aficionados, cheering the sparrers on in a “tremendous and fierce” manner. After several hotly contested bouts between the “men of muscle,” the audience retired to a saloon to debate the Heenan-King prizefight scheduled for England and the value of a potential bout between Joe Coburn of New York and Joe Goss of England.¹⁴⁴ Unlike the sparring benefits held at New York City’s Stuyvesant Institute and City Assembly Rooms during the Civil War, there was little mingling of working-class and middle-class sparring fans in Boston, with events remaining largely segregated along class lines.



Above: John B. Bailey, *Library of Congress*

The middle-class portion of Boston's sparring scene largely evaporated following William G. Taylor's departure for Union service in New Orleans. Sparring benefits in general became a rarity until 1864, when Jack Turner of London, England, arrived back in town to take the reins of Boston's boxing fraternity. An antebellum casualty of middle-class Boston's crusade against the prize ring, Turner was arrested and imprisoned for contesting a bout with Andy Gidlow on Brewster Island (in Boston Harbour) during the August of 1860. When Turner was released from prison on September 20, 1861, he returned to the prize ring, but not in Boston.¹⁴⁵ On November 21, 1861, Turner travelled north to the British colony of New Brunswick for a prizefight

near Rothsey, defeating John Geary in seven rounds.¹⁴⁶ Sometime following his fight with Geary, Turner travelled to New Orleans where he was reportedly forced into service with the Confederate Army. After participating in several raids on Union territory, Turner returned to the North in 1864, establishing the 'London Tavern' in Boston.¹⁴⁷

In 1864 and 1865, Jack Turner contributed to both sparring and prizefighting in Boston. On June 1, 1864, for example, Turner lent his services as a sparrer for a benefit to fellow Londoners Barney Aaron and Dooney Harris at the Tammany Hall in Boston.¹⁴⁸ After proving his worth with the gloves, Turner's Boston backers arranged for the former Confederate soldier to meet Jem Kerrigan of New York City in a prizefight for two thousand dollars.¹⁴⁹ To raise money for the fight, Turner was garnered a sparring benefit at Tammany Hall on September 9, 1864. In front of a large audience of friends and "intruders," boxers from the south and west ends of Boston took turns trading leather, before Turner and Joseph Smith of St. John, New Brunswick, took the stage, providing a display of pugilism worthy of the "thunderous applause" it received.¹⁵⁰ Rather than risk a run-in with authorities in New York City or Boston, Turner and Kerrigan agreed to fight at Island Pond, Vermont. Turner, however, came into the fight overweight and was forced to forfeit the contest. Later, trained and ready to fight, Turner promptly arranged another match, this time with Jim Dwyer of Brooklyn. Turner and Dwyer met on the Jersey Flats on October 11, 1864 – between the States of New York and New Jersey - to contest a prize fight for \$200, but were ultimately prevented from finishing their contest due by police intervention.¹⁵¹

On occasion, particularly eager Bostonian aspirants for pugilistic fame struck out for the outskirts of the city in hopes of contesting a prizefight while alluding authorities. In 1861, for example, Johnny Morris of Boston and Frank Keary of Lowell met outside of Boston to contest a prize fight for one hundred dollars. The fight was a rather disorganized affair, resulting in a draw after a 'foul' was claimed by Morris, but disallowed by the referee. According to the *Clipper*, "as both men were pretty well punished, it was concluded to make it a draw."¹⁵² More brazen, impromptu fights, adhering to some variation of prize ring rules, also occurred in Boston. Two men known only as 'Nosey' and 'Second Class,' for example, contested part of a bout in a room somewhere in Boston in 1861, but both men were too drunk to fight for long. The contest ended after just seven rounds, when Nosey ran to his corner, forcing the referee to declare Second Class the winner. The fight was too short and insignificant to incur the wrath of police, amounting to little more than a loosely-organized tavern fight.¹⁵³ Although prizefights were rare outside of Boston, a small number of contests were indeed organized and contested in other Civil War era Massachusetts locales. In 1861, for example, the *Lowell Daily Citizen and News* reported a prize fight between two locals named Barber Larry and Barney Sullivan, along the "Chelmsford Line" of the railway. Sullivan was trained by Mike Leavitt for the bout, a noted sparring instructor in Lowell and later Lawrence, but ultimately lost to Larry after five rounds of fighting. As in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Boston, the *Citizen and News* was quick to note the popularity of the Larry-Sullivan contest amongst the city's "adopted citizens," referring to the large Irish population residing in Lowell by the 1860s.¹⁵⁴ On another

occasion, Mike Leavitt entered the prize ring personally, fighting Frank McAleer about a mile from Lawrence on June 11, 1864. According to the *New York Clipper*, both Leavitt and McAleer hailed from Lawrence at the time, creating quite a stir amongst the small local population of roughly 17,000. After a brief fight of ten rounds, the Leavitt-McAleer contest was declared a draw for undisclosed reasons.¹⁵⁵

“A Beautiful and Crafty Sparrer:” Race, Labour, and Boxing in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1850-1865

Worcester, a town of about 25,000 people in central Massachusetts, was markedly different from Boston, or even smaller, mill-based towns like Lowell and Lynn. The artisanal system, increasingly diluted via industrialization in other parts of Massachusetts, remained rather more intact in Worcester, where “the city’s mechanics, fiercely independent and wary of finance capitalism, formed associations within and across trades to police the market behavior of individual firms and pursue interests in common.”¹⁵⁶ Less constrained by the tyranny of capitalist labour, some Worcester artisans came to sympathize with Southern slaves, comparing their servitude to the plight of poorly paid, white mill operatives.¹⁵⁷ Artisans were often native-born whites or well-established Irishmen, not the famine era Irish newcomers of the 1840s and 1850s. Proud of their exalted position over their Famine Era counterparts, Worcester’s established, English-speaking, pre-famine Irish community, initially refused to cooperate with Gaelic-speaking immigrants, resulting in a fierce rivalry between the two groups until the 1850s. The rise of the nativist American Party in municipal and State politics in

1855 galvanized the Worcester Irish community against a common, anti-Catholic foe.¹⁵⁸ The St. Patrick's Day parade, an annual source of leisure and Irish pride, became a concerted march against nativism in Worcester. Class divisions, however, weakened Irish resistance to nativism somewhat, with affluent members of the community like Edward Fitzgerald, refusing to assist the less "cultivated members" of the Irish community, believing it was "beneath his dignity" to march beside them.¹⁵⁹ African Americans also faced significant hurdles to social inclusion in Worcester. Although slavery was long dead in Massachusetts, black Worcesterians still suffered segregation, denying them a sense of "genuine belonging" in the community.¹⁶⁰

Despite persistent barriers to social mobility, African-American and Irish Worcesterians attained a degree of respectability by offering sparring lessons to native-born, middle-class citizens during the antebellum era. African-American boxer Aaron "Molineaux" Hewlett, for example, was one of the finest sparring instructors in Worcester, if not America. Hewlett was well known in northeastern sporting circles, earning a reputation as a skillful and respectful boxer while teaching the 'manly art' in Brooklyn and Hoboken.¹⁶¹ In Worcester, Hewlett continued to impress sparring practitioners and spectators by holding exhibitions and benefits. Following an 1856 benefit in Worcester, for example, "three cheers were given by the audience for Professor Mollineaux [*sic.*]" and his sparring partner Sam Scranton.¹⁶² A *New York Clipper* report in 1858 explained Hewlett's abilities in detail, calling him "a beautiful and crafty sparrer," skilled in the art of footwork, moving with the ease of a "cricket" to avoid the punches of his adversaries.¹⁶³ Hewlett's reputation, not only as a sparring

instructor, but as an all-round expert in physical exercise, led Harvard University to hire “Professor Molineaux” as its physical education instructor, leading the sparring expert to leave Worcester for Boston in 1859.¹⁶⁴

Following Hewlett’s departure for Harvard, James O’Neil, a native-born son of Irish Immigrants, became the top sparring instructor in Worcester.¹⁶⁵ O’Neil was born into a working-class family, living his early life between Sutton and Worcester. In Sutton, his father Charles was master of a boarding house, used mainly by spinners, weavers, and other employees of the Sutton Manufacturing Company, owned by John Slater, son of American manufacturing pioneer Samuel Slater.¹⁶⁶ The O’Neil family moved from Sutton to Worcester, Massachusetts, sometime before Charles’ death in 1852.¹⁶⁷ In Worcester, the O’Neil’s thrived. James, initially a painter, became a well-respected gymnast and Thomas, the other boxer in the family, became a sub marine diver.¹⁶⁸ Like Jack Turner in Boston, James O’Neil taught boxing in Worcester and organized sparring benefits locally and in neighbouring communities. On February 9, 1860, for example, O’Neil travelled to Fitchburg, Massachusetts, to help James May organize a benefit at the Town Hall.¹⁶⁹ Later in 1860, O’Neil filled the Worcester Theatre for a benefit featuring local talent like Young Brown, Bob Healey, and other Massachusetts pugilists from Boston, Fitchburg, and Lowell.¹⁷⁰

Riding a wave of popularity, O’Neil agreed to face James Fitzpatrick of Providence, Rhode Island, in a prizefight for five hundred dollars. Although neither O’Neil nor Fitzpatrick could boast prize ring experience, both proved themselves skilled

pugilists with the sparring gloves, generating considerable intrigue within northeastern sporting circles. Unconvinced that a prizefight could be carried out in the environs of Worcester or Providence, O'Neil and Fitzpatrick agreed to contest their bout near North Berwick, Maine, travelling to the fighting grounds with their respective supporters via a four-car train. The fight proved a brutal, four hour and twenty minute affair, becoming the longest prize fight to that point in American history. According to the *Boston Herald*, both men appeared fresh in the sixty-sixth and final round, but O'Neil overthrew a punch, falling without incurring a blow. According to the Rules of the London Prize Ring, a fighter who falls without being hit or thrown must be disqualified. Fitzpatrick, therefore, was declared the winner, bringing America's longest prizefight to a less than satisfactory close. Following the fight, the *Boston Herald* praised both men for their "considerable physical force" and commended Harry Finnegas, the Boston pug so poorly handled by his own 'supporters' in 1857, for working O'Neil's corner "with the utmost zeal and activity."¹⁷¹

Following his prizefight with Fitzpatrick, O'Neil and his brother Tom opened a tavern in Worcester in April, 1861 – just before the outbreak of Civil War – while continuing to teach sparring in a separate location.¹⁷² Like many fighters, particularly in New York City, O'Neil attempted to parlay his pseudo-celebrity in the northeast into a successful business venture in hopes of obtaining a stable income. When Lincoln called for the mobilization of the North, however, the O'Neil brothers dropped their saloon-based aspirations to serve with the Twenty-Fifth Massachusetts Volunteers. Once in uniform, Thomas and James used their boxing abilities to amuse their fellow volunteers,

performing in sparring bouts during downtime in camp.¹⁷³ Back in Worcester, however, boxing struggled to continue in the O'Neils' absence. In March of 1863, for example, a local Worcester pugilist named Johnny Healey implored mayor D. Waldo Lincoln to permit a sparring benefit in Worcester for Manhattan's famous saloon keeper Israel 'Izzy' Lazarus.¹⁷⁴ Ultimately, Lincoln refused Healey's request, for reasons undisclosed in newspaper reports, but did eventually give sparring a chance later in 1863. On June 17, 1863, Lincoln licensed and attended a sparring benefit for Johnny Healey, to assess the sport in person. The mayor's opinion of the Healey's event remains unknown, but another Worcester-based sparring event was not reported to the *New York Clipper* for the duration of the war. The scepticism exhibited by Mayor Lincoln in Worcester was likely typical of many Massachusetts communities during the Civil War era.

Conclusion

The industrialization and cultural diversification of the antebellum northeast produced unique fight scenes in Boston, Worcester, and Philadelphia. How these fight scenes fared during the Civil War era, however, depended upon a series of local circumstances. Although boxing persisted into the Civil War years in Worcester, Boston, and Philadelphia, each sporting community faced its own unique challenges. In Boston and Philadelphia, the social tensions stemming from immigration, industrialization, abolitionism, and nativism in the antebellum era produced a working class familiar and comfortable with violent confrontations. Although the violent nature of working-class life produced boxing subcultures in both Boston and Philadelphia, only the latter

experienced regular prizefighting during the Civil War era. The decline of boxing in Boston, however, can be attributed more so to a series of unfortunate events, depriving the city of its best pugilists, than the conquest of middle-class reform over working-class leisure. After losing three of its most talented and respected boxers before the end of the war, prizefighter and Confederate veteran Jack Turner tried to maintain Boston's boxing subculture, but failed to generate the same quality of sparring or prizefighting witnessed in the antebellum city. Worcester's sparring scene suffered a similar fate, losing the support of municipal authorities following the departure of the O'Neill brothers for the Union Army.

While Boston's boxing scene struggled, Philadelphia's flourished. After Manhattan prizefighters were chased out of New Jersey via stiff fines and jail time in 1863, they used the railway to travel to Philadelphia, organizing fights with their Quaker City brethren. Unlike New Jersey police and their Metropolitan counterparts in Manhattan and Brooklyn, Philadelphian authorities permitted prizefights outside their city, allowing local hotels and restaurants to benefit from the transient fight goers. When potential spectators started robbing and assaulting train passengers in 1864, however, both New Jersey and Pennsylvania took steps to prevent the movement of prizefighting related individuals – fighters, seconds, spectators – throughout their respective States, making a prizefight in the northeast more difficult to stage than ever before. Nonetheless, during the Civil War era, Philadelphian authorities momentarily demonstrated the tacit approval of prizefighting common place later in the nineteenth century, showing a willingness to accommodate working-class sporting pursuits

generally absent from Massachusetts, New Jersey, and even New York. Following the suppression of the Pennsylvania fight scene, prizefighters could look further afield for bouts, beyond the “Quaker State’s” border with Ohio to the culturally diverse Midwestern and Western boomtowns.

Endnotes

¹ *New York Clipper*, February 2, 1861.

² Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folks Games to the Age of Televised Sports* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2004), 43.

³ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 2007 [1991]), 134.

⁴ Newark's population reached 71,941 in 1860, while Philadelphia and New York City, for example, reached 565,529 and 1,174,779, respectively. As Susan E. Hirsch suggests in her study of Newark, New Jersey, it was possible for German, Irish, and native-born workers to retreat into their respective cultural units when outside the workplace. Susan E. Hirsch, *Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark, 1800-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 106. In the bustling slums of New York City and Philadelphia, cultural self-segregation was pursued, but likely more difficult to achieve.

⁵ According to William Gillette, "When war came, New Jersey ignited with patriotic fire." William Gillette, *Jersey Blue: Civil War Politics in New Jersey, 1854-1865* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 9. See also, Leonard Bussanich, "'To Reach Sweet Home Again': The Impact of Soldiering on New Jersey's Troops During the American Civil War," *New Jersey History* 125, no. 2 (2010), 38. Union soldier John Young Foster of New Jersey suggests that the State government was also ill-prepared for war. See John Young Foster, *New Jersey and the Rebellion: A History of the Service of the Troops and People of New Jersey in Aid of the Union Cause* (Newark, New Jersey: Martin R. Denis, 1868), 36.

⁶ J. Thomas Jables, Review of *The Jersey Game: The History of Modern Baseball From Its Birth to the Big Leagues in the Garden State* by James M. DiClerico, and Barry J. Pavelec, in *Journal of Sport History* 19, no. 2 (1992), 174.

⁷ For baseball see, Betty Spears and Richard A. Swanson, *History of Sport and Physical Activity in the United States*, 101; Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports*, 70; Steven A. Riess, *City Games*, 37; Melvin L. Adelman, "The First Baseball Game, the First Newspaper References to Baseball, and the New York Club: A Note on the Early History of Baseball," *Journal of Sport History* 7, no. 3 (1980), 132. For Hudson County as a summer resort for leisure seekers see, *The Dublin Penny Journal*, September 20, 1834. For the Hamilton-Burr duel see, Joanne B. Freeman, "Duelling as Politics: Reinterpreting the Burr-Hamilton Duel," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (1996), 289-318; W.J. Rorabaugh, "The Political Duel in the Early Republic: Burr v. Hamilton," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15, no. 1 (1995), 1-23.

⁸ *New York Clipper*, January 18, 1862.

⁹ Although the text of the *New York Clipper* for February 22, 1868, is blurry and difficult to read, it appears to state John Woods was born in "Belfast, Me." *New York Clipper*, February 22, 1868. Woods was based out of Boston, Massachusetts during the antebellum area, appearing in numerous sparring events. In 1860, Woods faced George King of England in a prizefight in New Jersey. See *New York Times*, December 6, 1860; *National Police Gazette*, January 26, 1861. Woods is also notable as an early 'exhibition' opponent John L. Sullivan. See Michael T. Isenberg, *John L. Sullivan and his America*, 36. For more on William Clark in Manhattan see chapter 2.

¹⁰ Johnny Roche – of Manhattan's predominantly Irish fourth ward – fought at Jersey Beach, New Jersey, earlier in the Civil War era, defeating Jim Twistram after fighting thirty six rounds in just over an hour.

Following the match, Roche declared his intention of abstaining from the prize ring if a suitable purse could not be raised in the future. See *New York Clipper*, August 17, 1861. A competent sparrer, Kit Burns was best known for staging ratting contests and dog fights at his saloon on Water Street, Manhattan. According to, Burns moved to America when he was young. Robert Sullivan, *Rats: Observations on the History and Habitant of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), 77.

¹¹ *New York Clipper*, January 18, 1862; *New York Times*, January 7, 1863.

¹² *New York Times*, January 7, 1862.

¹³ *New York Clipper*, January 18, 1862.

¹⁴ For more on Jim Dunn, see chapter 2.

¹⁵ *New York Clipper*, May 23, 1863.

¹⁶ *New York Clipper*, May 22, 1863.

¹⁷ *Trenton State Gazette*, May 15, 1863.

¹⁸ *New York Times*, May 20, 1863.

¹⁹ *New York Clipper*, June 6, 1863; *New York Times*, May 20, 1863; *New York Herald*, May 20, 1863.

²⁰ *New York Clipper*, June 6, 1863.

²¹ Many of these men were likely friends and associates of Owen Geoghegan. *New York Herald*, May 20, 1863.

²² *New York Clipper*, June 6, 1863; *New York Herald*, May 20, 1863.

²³ *New York Clipper*, June 6, 1863.

²⁴ The number of spectators arrested following the fight varies depending upon the source. According to the *New York Clipper*, between twenty and thirty individuals were arrested. See, *New York Clipper*, June 6, 1863. The *Trenton State Gazette* suggests a higher figure, between forty and fifty. *Trenton State Gazette*, May 25, 1863.

²⁵ *Trenton State Gazette*, May 22, 1863.

²⁶ Although not stated explicitly, the author assumes – based on the vagueness of the article and the common practices of the time – that Franks and Smith were from Manhattan.

²⁷ From which city the police officers originated is not stated. *New York Clipper*, October 22, 1864.

²⁸ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 13, 1863.

²⁹ *New York Clipper*, January 9, 1864.

³⁰ *New York Clipper*, May 14, 1864.

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- ³¹ *New York Clipper*, June 4, 1864.
- ³² *New York Clipper*, June 11, 1864.
- ³³ See *New York Clipper*, March 14, 1857; *New York Clipper*, June 18, 1859. *New York Clipper*, June 4, 1859.
- ³⁴ For Australian Kelly see, *New York Clipper*, November 3, 1860.
- ³⁵ *New York Clipper*, June 3, 1854.
- ³⁶ *New York Clipper*, October 17, 1863.
- ³⁷ *New York Clipper*, January 9, 1864.
- ³⁸ *New York Clipper*, March 19, 1864.
- ³⁹ Steven A. Riess, *Sport in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (Malden, Massachusetts: John Wiley and Sons, 2013 [1995]), 46.
- ⁴⁰ Billy G. Smith, "The Vicissitudes of Fortune: The Careers of Laboring Men in Philadelphia, 1750-1800," in *Working and Labor in Early America*, ed. Stephen Innes (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: North Carolina University Press, 1988), 224.
- ⁴¹ Steven A. Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 31.
- ⁴² Ric Northrup Caric, "'To Drown the Ills That Discompose the Mind': Care, Leisure, and Identity Among Philadelphia Artisans and Workers, 1785-1840," *Pennsylvania History* 64, no. 4 (1997), 475.
- ⁴³ Elliott Gorn, *Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prizefighting in America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989) 37.
- ⁴⁴ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 38.
- ⁴⁵ Bruce Laurie, *Working People in Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 34.
- ⁴⁶ Albert Barnes, The Choice of a Profession: An Address delivered before the Society of Inquiry in Amherst College, August 21, 1838 (Amherst, Massachusetts: J.S. and C. Adams, 1838), 11, as quoted by Laurie, *Working People in Philadelphia*, 12.
- ⁴⁷ Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia*, 70-71.
- ⁴⁸ Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia*, 79.
- ⁴⁹ Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia*, 54.
- ⁵⁰ Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia*, 54-55. See also, Caric, "'To Drown the Ills That Discompose the Mind,'" 475; Bruce Laurie, "'Nothing on Compulsion': Life Styles of Philadelphia Artisans, 1820-1850," *Labor History* 15, no. 3 (1974), 346-348.

⁵¹ Patrick Timothy, *American Fisticiana* (New York: H. Johnson, 1849), 29; *National Police Gazette*, June 5, 1880; George Siler's regular boxing history column in the *Chicago Tribune* also mentions the McLane-Sanford bout. *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 1900.

⁵² Timothy, *American Fisticiana*, 29; *National Police Gazette*, June 5, 1880.

⁵³ Most historical works claim it was Tom Barrett who fought Jim Reed. See, Timothy, *American Fisticiana*, 29; *National Police Gazette*, June 5, 1880. A resident of Pittsburgh, however, wrote the *New York Clipper* in 1858 claiming it was in fact Sam Barrett that fought Reed. See, *New York Clipper*, November 20, 1858.

⁵⁴ The train portion of the journey alone was seven hours. See, John F. Stover, *American Railroads*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 16. For the early days of the Camden and Amboy Railroad see also, Albro Martin, *Railroads Triumphant: The Growth, Rejection, and Rebirth of a Vital America Force* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 44-45. The Camden and Amboy Railroad eventually permitted Camden to attract industry and immigrants, resulting in significant economic expansion. See, Howard Gillette, Jr., *Camden After the Fall: Decline and Renewal in a Post-Industrial City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 18.

⁵⁵ Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 75.

⁵⁶ *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine and American Monthly Review*, September, 1839.

⁵⁷ John B. Thayer, "The Early years of the University Barge Club of Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 29, no. 3 (1905), 282.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *The Dramatic Mirror and Literary Companion*, October 2, 1841.

⁶⁰ Russell V. Weigley, "'A Peaceful City': Public Order in Philadelphia from Consolidation through the Civil War," *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940*, eds. Allan F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 156. See also, Michael Feldberg, "The Crowd in Philadelphia History: A Comparative Perspective," *Labor History* 15, no. 3 (1974), 326.

⁶¹ Laurie, *Working People in Philadelphia*, 138.

⁶² Laurie, *Working People in Philadelphia*, 140.

⁶³ Laurie, *Working People in Philadelphia*, 172-173.

⁶⁴ Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850's* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 12.

⁶⁵ Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 12-13.

⁶⁶ Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 19.

⁶⁷ Matthew Warner Osborn, "A Detestable Shrine: Alcohol Abuse in Antebellum Philadelphia," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29, no. 1 (2009), 121.

⁶⁸ Joe Battis was brought to my attention by historian Louis Moore, Grand Valley State University. For an overview of Joe Battis' career see, Louis Moore, "Fit for Citizenship: Black Sparring Masters, Gymnasium Owners, and the White Body, 1825-1886," *Journal of African American History* 96, no. 4 (2011), 453-456.

⁶⁹ For James Hart see, *New York Clipper*, November 27, 1858; For Philadelphia Sparring Association see, *New York Clipper*, June 24, 1854; *New York Clipper*, September 9, 1854; For Pocahontas Club see, *New York Clipper*, May 3, 1856.

⁷⁰ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 2-3.

⁷¹ *New York Clipper*, December 10, 1853. For another account of the Bradley-Sloan fight see, Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker, *Annals of Phoenixville and Its Vicinity: From the Settlement to the Year 1871* (Philadelphia: Bavis and Pennypacker, 1872), 154-155.

⁷² John Rickard Betts highlights the value of steamships to New York City boxers, as well as the significance of railways for sports like horseracing, rowing, and boxing. See John Rickard Betts, "The Technological Revolution and the Rise of Sport, 1850-1900," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 40, no. 2 (1953), 234.

⁷³ *New York Clipper*, August 8, 1857.

⁷⁴ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 113.

⁷⁵ *New York Clipper*, August 8, 1857.

⁷⁶ *Philadelphia Press*, August 4, 1857.

⁷⁷ *Philadelphia Press*, August 31, 1857.

⁷⁸ *Philadelphia Press*, May 2, 1860.

⁷⁹ *Philadelphia Press*, May 2, 1860.

⁸⁰ *Philadelphia Press*, May 2, 1860.

⁸¹ *American Presbyterian*, April 18, 1861.

⁸² J. Matthew Gallman, *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia During the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 12.

⁸³ Gallman, *Mastering Wartime*, 170.

⁸⁴ *New York Clipper*, October 5, 1861. The *Clipper* refers to their place of origin as "Cohocksink," which was the name of the creek/sewer flowing through the Kensington area. See Denis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1973), 43.

⁸⁵ The exact value of the purse is not listed in the *Clipper*. *New York Clipper*, October 5, 1861.

⁸⁶ *New York Clipper*, August 1, 1861; *Baltimore Sun*, July 25, 1863; *Daily Constitutional Union* (Washington, D.C.), July 25, 1863.

⁸⁷ *New York Clipper*, May 15, 1863. Also the *Philadelphia Inquirer* did not describe the spectators with the detail of the *New York Clipper*, it did provide a length report on the fight and pre-fight crowds in Philadelphia. See *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 6, 1863.

⁸⁸ *New York Clipper*, November 7, 1863.

⁸⁹ *New York Clipper*, November 7, 1863.

⁹⁰ Dale Fetzer and Bruce Edward Mowday, *Unlikely Allies: Fort Delaware's Prison Community in the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books), xiv.

⁹¹ For more on General Albin F. Schoepf see, Miecislaus Haiman, "General Albin F. Schoepf," *Polish American Studies* 2, no. 3/4 (1945), 70-78; Edmund Vasvary, "Note on General Schoepf," *Polish American Studies* 3, 1/2 (1946), 42; "General Albin Francis Schoepf: A Preliminary View," *Polish American Studies* 23, 2 (1966), 93-96.

⁹² David R. Johnson, "Crime Patterns in Philadelphia, 1840-1870," in *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower Class Life, 1790-1940*, edited by Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 104.

⁹³ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 25, 1863. Although few details are available regarding who was in attendance, the *New York Clipper* states that Johnny Morris of Boston, who was visiting in Manhattan, actually travelled to Philadelphia for the fight. *New York Clipper*, November 21, 1863.

⁹⁴ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 25, 1863.

⁹⁵ *New York Clipper*, December 12, 1863.

⁹⁶ *New York Clipper*, May 14, 1864.

⁹⁷ *New York Herald*, May 5, 1864.

⁹⁸ In early October, after being prevented from fighting on Long Island, New York, Micheal Noonan of Brooklyn and Michael Dorsey of Manhattan, and Berry of London and McManus of Manhattan, engaged in prize fights near Philadelphia in the vicinity of Edgehill. *New York Herald*, October 8, 1864; *Philadelphia Press*, as cited by the *New York Clipper*, October 15, 1864.

⁹⁹ *New York Clipper*, November 5, 1864.

¹⁰⁰ *New York Herald*, October 29, 1864; *New York Herald*, October 30, 1864.

¹⁰¹ Williamsburg constitutes a portion of present day Brooklyn. Twelve more individuals were detained later that night. *New York Herald*, October 29, 1864.

¹⁰² *New York Herald*, October 30, 1864; *New York Clipper*, November 5, 1864.

¹⁰³ *New York Clipper*, November 26, 1864.

¹⁰⁴ *New York Clipper*, December 3, 1864.

¹⁰⁵ Although Roediger is skeptical of job competition as the root of Irish American racism towards African Americans, he concedes that competition in the labour force was likely a contributing factor in Philadelphia. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 2007) 147. Gary B. Nash attributes 'white' working-class Philadelphian racism towards black workers in similar occupations as rooted in competition in the labour force. Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: the Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 173, 253.

¹⁰⁶ *New Haven Daily Palladium*, October 31, 1864; *Boston Daily Advertiser*, October 31, 1864; *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, November 1, 1864; *Vermont Chronicle*, November 5, 1864.

¹⁰⁷ William Ellery Channing, "An Address on Temperance Delivered by Request of the Council of the Massachusetts Temperance Society at the Odeon, Boston, February 28, 1837," in *The Works of William Ellery Channing*, vol. 3, ed. Joseph Barker (Newcastle-on-Tyne, England: Joseph Barker, 1844), 173.

¹⁰⁸ Channing, "An Address on Temperance," 162.

¹⁰⁹ William F. Hartford, *Money, Morals, and Politics: Massachusetts in the Age of the Boston Associates* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001), 65.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹¹¹ See, for example, Teresa Anne Murphy's work on mill town revivals in chapter four of *Ten Hours' Labor*. Teresa Anne Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor: Religion, Reform, and Gender in Early New England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 73-100.

¹¹² Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 212.

¹¹³ Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor*, 72.

¹¹⁴ Hartford, *Money, Morals, and Politics*, 69. See also, Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor*, 59.

¹¹⁵ Hartford, *Money, Morals, and Politics*, 71.

¹¹⁶ Teresa Anne Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor*, 60.

¹¹⁷ As historian Robert F. Dalzell Jr. explains in his book *Enterprising Elite*, by the 1840s, the philanthropic endeavors of employers, "designed initially to prevent class divisions," were "rapidly becoming one of the principle means of maintaining those divisions." Robert F. Dalzell, Jr., *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associates and the World they Made* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), 161.

¹¹⁸ Both male and female workers participated in the ten hour day movement. See, Hartford, *Money Morals, and Politics*, 74.

¹¹⁹ Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 212. See also, Dennis P. Ryan, *Beyond the Ballot Box: A Social History of the Boston Irish, 1845-1917* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickson University Press, 1983), 21.

¹²⁰ Jack Tager, *Boston Riots: Three Centuries of Social Violence* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001), 128.

¹²¹ *New York Clipper*, November 12, 1853.

¹²² Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Athens of America: Boston, 1825-1845* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 145.

¹²³ Tager, *Boston Riots*, 133. See also, O'Connor, *Athens of America*, 145; John R. Mulkern, *The Know-Nothing Party in Massachusetts: The Rise and Fall of a People's Movement* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), 102.

¹²⁴ Mulkern, *The Know-Nothing Party in Massachusetts*, 72.

¹²⁵ Ryan, *Beyond the Ballot Box*, 130.

¹²⁶ As Dennis P. Ryan suggests, "professional boxing, like the Irish wake, was never fully accepted by Yankees or Irishmen sensitive to outside opinion." Ryan, *Beyond the Ballot Box*, 115.

¹²⁷ *New York Clipper*, March 14, 1857. See also, *Boston Evening Transcript*, March 9, 1857.

¹²⁸ *New York Clipper*, October 10, 1857.

¹²⁹ *New York Clipper*, April 4, 1857.

¹³⁰ *New York Clipper*, December 15, 1860.

¹³¹ Riess, *City Games*, 28-29.

¹³² Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 3-4.

¹³³ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 49. For Hudson's full name see *New England Galaxy and United State Literary Advertiser*, July 2, 1830. For Hudson in Boston, see *The Daily Atlas* (Boston, Massachusetts), June 10, 1841. For Hudson in Portland, Maine, see *Eastern Argus* (Portland, Maine), March 9, 1830.

¹³⁴ *Salem Gazette*, May 26, 1835. Two men named Cram and Sutton taught sparring in Boston during the 1840s, travelling to the neighboring community of Salem in 1841 to provide an exhibition of "Science against Strength." See, *Salem Gazette*, February 23, 1841.

¹³⁵ Louis Moore, "Fine Specimens of Manhood: The Black Boxer's Body and the Avenue to Equality, Racial Advancement, and Manhood in the Nineteenth Century," *MELUS* 35, no. 4 (2010), 61.

¹³⁶ According to the *New York Herald*, Taylor was serving as Deputy Provost Marshall in New Orleans in 1863. *New York Herald*, April 6, 1863.

¹³⁷ Taylor's first name was likely William, as the *New York Clipper* affectionately dubbed him 'Billy' upon his leaving for the Civil War. See, *New York Clipper*, October 11, 1862. According to the United States *Federal Census* of 1860, Taylor was an Englishman, employed as a gymnast. For Taylor's benefit for William Blackwood see, *New York Clipper*, October 7, 1854. Taylor received high praise for the benefit he organized for Tom Davis in 1854. See, *New York Clipper*, December 2, 1854. For W.G. Taylor in Hartford, Connecticut, see *Hartford Daily Courant* February 20, 1855. For Taylor in New York City, see *New York Herald*, January 10, 1859.

¹³⁸ *New York Clipper*, July 30, 1864.

¹³⁹ Thomas H. O'Connor, *Civil War Boston: Home Front and Battlefield* (Lebanon, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1997), 42-43. See also, Ryan, *Beyond the Ballot Box*, 131.

¹⁴⁰ O'Connor, *Civil War Boston*, 44.

¹⁴¹ Ryan, *Beyond the Ballot Box*, 131.

¹⁴² O'Connor, *Civil War Boston*, 71.

¹⁴³ *New York Clipper*, June 14, 1862. For the location of Taylor's sparring club see, *The Boston Directory* (Boston: Adams, Sampson, and Company, 1862), 397.

¹⁴⁴ *New York Clipper*, November 22, 1862.

¹⁴⁵ *New York Clipper*, October 5, 1861.

¹⁴⁶ *New York Clipper*, December 7, 1861.

¹⁴⁷ *New York Clipper*, October 8, 1864.

¹⁴⁸ *New York Clipper*, June 11, 1864.

¹⁴⁹ *New York Clipper*, September 24, 1864.

¹⁵⁰ *New York Clipper*, October 1, 1864.

¹⁵¹ *New York Clipper*, October 22, 1864. For more on this particular prize fight, see the section of this chapter pertaining to New Jersey.

¹⁵² *New York Clipper*, June 29, 1861.

¹⁵³ *New York Clipper*, July 13, 1861.

¹⁵⁴ *Lowell Daily Citizen and News*, June 8, 1861.

¹⁵⁵ Based on population in 1860 (17,639). For fight, see *New York Clipper*, June 21, 1864.

¹⁵⁶ Bruce Laurie, *Beyond Garrison: Antislavery and Social Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 134.

¹⁵⁷ Laurie, *Beyond Garrison*, 139.

¹⁵⁸ Timothy J. Meagher, "Why Should We Care for a Little Trouble or a Walk through the Mud': St. Patrick's and Columbus Day Parades in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1845-1915," *The New England Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1985), 7.

¹⁵⁹ George Hynes, "A Chapter From the Local History of Know Nothingism, *New England Magazine*, September 1896, pp. 85-96, as quoted by Timothy J. Meagher, "Why Should We Care for a Little Trouble or a Walk through the Mud," 8.

¹⁶⁰ B. Eugene McCarthy and Thomas L. Doughton, eds., *From Bondage to Belonging: The Worcester Slave Narratives* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), xli.

¹⁶¹ Louis Moore, "Fit for Citizenship: Black Sparring Masters, Gymnasium Owners, and the White Body, 1825-1886" *Journal of African American History* 96, no. 4 (2011), 467. Kevin Smith, *Black Genesis*, 134-135.

¹⁶² *New York Clipper*, August 30, 1856.

¹⁶³ *New York Clipper*, February 5, 1858.

¹⁶⁴ Moore, "Fit for Citizenship," 466. See also, Kevin Smith, *Black Genesis*, 135.

¹⁶⁵ For James O'Neil's cultural background and status as a "gymnast" see, 1860 United States Federal Census, State of Massachusetts, County of Worcester, City of Worcester, Ward 5, Household 1471, p. 171. Accessed via www.ancestry.com Accessed: December 10, 2013.

¹⁶⁶ For the mill in John Slater's ownership see, Jonathon Prude, *The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999 [1983]), 205.

¹⁶⁷ J. Waldo Denny, *Wearing the Blue in the Twenty-Fifth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, with Burnside's Coast Division, 18th Army Corps, and Army of the James* (Worcester: Putnam and Davis Publishers, 1879), 327; "Charles O'Neill," *Deaths Registered in the City of Worcester, 1852*, p. 33, no. 184. Accessed via www.ancestry.com Accessed: December 10, 2013.

¹⁶⁸ 1860 United States Federal Census, State of Massachusetts, County of Worcester, City of Worcester, Ward 5, Household 1471, p. 171. Accessed via www.ancestry.com Accessed: December 10, 2013.

¹⁶⁹ *New York Clipper*, February 4, 1860; *New York Clipper*, February 25, 1860.

¹⁷⁰ *New York Clipper*, August 18, 1860. A similar event, dedicate to John McGlade, was held at the Worcester Theatre in October. See, *New York Clipper*, October 20, 1860.

¹⁷¹ *Boston Herald*, as quoted by *New York Clipper*, December 15, 1860.

¹⁷² *New York Clipper*, April 20, 1861.

¹⁷³ J. Waldo Denny, *Wearing the Blue in the Twenty-Fifth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry*, 183.

¹⁷⁴ *New York Clipper*, March 28, 1863.

Sparring and Prizefighting in Union and Border States West of the Ohio River

In the Northeast, prizefighting was nourished primarily by class conflict and ethnic rivalries. As the artisanal system slowly crumbled under the weight of industrialization, displaced tradesmen increasingly found themselves competing for semi-skilled and unskilled positions within a much broader pool of workers. Rather than settling workplace tensions on the job, American-born, Irish, German, and other European workers turned to sports like prizefighting and baseball to demonstrate ethnic pride via athletic competition. As artisanal labor was displaced, a middle-class of clerks, managers, merchants, and lawyers, expanded to meet the demands of industrialization. These middle-class men interpreted sport and physical activity very differently than their working-class counterparts, using exercise as a boon to 'self-made' manhood, seeking a mental and physical edge in the competitive world of mid-nineteenth century urban business. Of the many activities favoured by middle-class men for personal fortification, sparring with boxing gloves was amongst the most popular. Yet, not all working- and middle-class men turned to sport and exercise to cope with life in Northeastern cities. Indeed, for those who could afford it, the Midwestern and Western regions of the country offered fresh starts and new opportunities. This chapter will demonstrate how burgeoning communities in America's Midwest and West attracted citizens and foreign newcomers away from the Northeast to forge new lives in the

nation's boomtowns, some of which embraced prizefighting and/or sparring as legitimate sporting activities.

In the Midwest, prizefighting and sparring were treated with both excitement and contempt, with reactions to boxing varying drastically from community to community. The city of St. Louis, Missouri, located on the shores of the Mississippi River, proved a particularly fertile landscape for bare-knuckle prizefighting and public sparring exhibitions, benefiting from a small police force's struggles with a growing population. Like its Northeastern counterparts, St. Louis endured a violent era of political nativism, boiling over into rioting in the mid-1850s.¹ While New York City prizefighters were hired by municipal politicians for electioneering and nativist-Irish rioting, their St. Louis counterparts were less politically mobilized, helping the group as a whole avoid the wrath of authorities. During the Civil War era, however, the relative freedom enjoyed by St. Louisian prizefighters was greatly curtailed. After positioning Missouri as a Border State – maintaining slavery, but remaining in the Union – wartime officials faced the unenviable task of appeasing a population ideologically split between the Union and Confederacy. As tensions between the State's sectional factions increased, martial law was imposed, largely preventing boxers from organizing prizefights or sparring exhibitions for much of the Civil War.

Missouri's response to prizefighting and sparring was not typical of Midwestern States more generally. To illustrate the different reactions to boxing evident throughout the region, this chapter also discusses boxing in wartime Illinois and Ohio. In the city of

Chicago, Illinois, I argue, prizefighting was vigorously opposed by authorities, while sparring exhibitions were carefully scrutinized for connections to the prize ring. The sparring benefits commonly used to raise funds for a prizefighter's training in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City, therefore, were opposed and sometimes prevented in Civil War era Chicago, hamstringing both sports on the local level. The reasons for Chicago's intolerance of prizefighting and sparring were connected to a broader pursuit of law and order by local officials, eager to improve the city's crime-ridden image for potential investors. In Ohio, prizefighting and sparring also failed to gain a foothold in several Civil War era sporting scenes, where a handful of boxing aficionados attempted to grow the sport from their respective sparring saloons. With immigrant populations dominated by German, rather than Irish or English settlers, boxing proved a hard sell in cities like Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus, where some of the nation's earliest *Turnvereins* stood as lasting testaments to local German culture.

When hostilities between North and South commenced at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, in 1861, prizefighting and sparring were occurring on both sides of the continent, from the northeastern metropolis of New York to the burgeoning Pacific coast State of California. After an antebellum population boom, spurred by the California Gold Rush, San Francisco developed a thriving Civil War era boxing scene, including middle-class sparring practitioners and working-class prizefighters. Although the growing middle-class population opposed prizefighting in San Francisco on moral grounds, the sport continued to thrive, going unmolested on the outskirts of the city, attracting numerous northeastern boxers to the coast. Other western boomtowns

proved even more accommodating to prizefighters than their California counterparts, with communities in the Nevada, Colorado, and Montana Territories taking shape during the late 1850s to accommodate incoming miners, merchants, tradesmen, and publicans. In these young territorial towns, social norms evolved alongside diverse, growing populations. Prizefighters, arriving early on the scene, found communities hungry for entertainment, largely untouched by the anti-prizefighting biases of the Northeastern middle class. Indeed, the middle-class reform impulse, tirelessly endeavoring to sanitize working-class amusements in the Northeast and later the Midwest, was largely absent in the antebellum west, providing boxers with the freedom to experiment with new, commercial approaches to the sport. Rather than boarding trains to far flung rural outposts in neighboring States, as was the custom in the Northeast, westerners held both prizefighting and sparring in halls, corrals, and amphitheaters, permitting gate receipts, larger and more socially diverse audiences, and increased crowd control. To illustrate the evolution of boxing in western frontier settlements, this chapter will examine three Civil War era communities: Virginia City, Nevada; Denver City, Colorado; and Virginia City, Montana.

“The Very Air Seemed Filled with Shrieking Devils”: Prizefighting and the Law in Late Antebellum St. Louis

By at least the mid-1850s, St. Louis, Missouri, was the heart of Midwestern sparring and prizefighting. Located on the Mississippi River, St. Louis grew exponentially following the introduction of steamboats, permitting relatively quick transportation

between the city and New Orleans. Acquired by the United States government via the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, St. Louis became the “first major urban center of the antebellum west.”² According to Jeffrey S. Adler, the transformation of St. Louis from a sleepy frontier town into an attractive, booming urban center can be attributed largely to Northeastern merchants who invested heavily in St. Louis-based ventures in hopes of capitalizing on the city’s position as a commercial hub for the west. Many merchants even relocated to the Midwest, introducing “Yankee culture throughout the Ohio and Mississippi valleys.”³ With these “Yankees” came middle-class masculine leisure ideals, focused on developing “self-made manhood.”⁴ Yankee merchants, however, also created a plethora of working-class jobs in St. Louis, attracting not only Americans, but “tens of thousands of Irish and German settlers.”⁵ Like their middle-class counterparts, Irish and German immigrants carried their respective cultures with them to St. Louis, encouraging communal forms of masculine behavior, revolving around local taverns. As historian Walter B. Stevens illustrates, taverns facilitated an array of important political and social activities in early nineteenth century Missouri, serving as court rooms, hotels, restaurants, political meeting rooms, repositories of agricultural information, and drinking establishments, all rolled into one.⁶ After Irish and German immigrants settled in large numbers throughout the late 1840s and 1850s, new taverns, with new traditions, sprang into existence. German St. Louisans became famous for the singing, dancing, and lager beer consumption in their taverns, while Irish and English publicans earned reputations for more violent fare, including impromptu fist fights, wrestling, and sparring exhibitions, amidst their own offerings of alcohol, singing, and dancing.

By the end of the 1840s, the spectator-oriented, working-class sports of the northeast were already firmly entrenched in St. Louis. By the late 1850s, Irish and English prizefighters flocked to St. Louis, making prizefighting and sparring two of the city's most popular sports. As the St. Louis population grew, however, police struggled to preserve order, ultimately "managing crime rather than eliminating criminal or disruptive behavior."⁷ With the city's population more than doubling between 1850 and 1860 – rising from 77,860 residents to 160,773 – St. Louis languished through an era of growing pains, punctuated by a bloody nativist riot during the 1854 congressional elections.⁸ "Despite the level of disorder in the 1840s and 1850s," explains historian John C. Schneider, "the city did not respond by instituting a strong professional police force."⁹ With ethnic tensions seemingly stretched to their limit, prizefighting was not a primary concern of St. Louis' antebellum law enforcement, resulting in well-organized bouts on the outskirts of the city, free of police interference.

Although dwarfed in numbers by their German counterparts, an Irish community of roughly 30,000 residents called St. Louis home by 1860, arriving in Missouri aboard the numerous Mississippi River steamboats that reached the city from north and south.¹⁰ Irish saloons, a major target during the nativist riot of 1854, typically provided the broader community with entertainment, hosting public sparring benefits and organizing prizefighting. From 1856 to 1859, prizefighting was tacitly permitted in St. Louis, with men conducting bouts beyond the city – often five or six miles north of St. Louis – or on one of the numerous islands situated along the Mississippi River. One of the most popular locations for prizefights was a sandbar known as 'Bloody Island.'

Located along the border of Missouri and Illinois, Bloody Island was a jurisdictional grey area, where neither State typically enforced the rule of law. As early as 1810, St. Louisans used Bloody Island for dueling with pistols.¹¹ By the 1850s, prizefighters also frequented Bloody Island, holding their comparatively less violent displays of masculine honour with little interference from authorities. In 1856, for example, two men named Brooks and Williams met on Bloody Island, fighting sixteen, police-free rounds, for a purse of one hundred dollars.¹² Fighting in rural locations around St. Louis was also common, particularly around the “Gravois Coal Diggings.”¹³ When St. Louis police did arrest prizefighters, punishment was a fraction of that doled out in the northeast. For example, when police arrested James Hughes and Mike Murray for prizefighting in 1859, each man was simply fined twenty dollars. Although the fine administered to Murray and Hughes was stiff punishment by St. Louis standards, it was undoubtedly preferable to the jail time being imposed in contemporary Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

Although antebellum St. Louis did not produce any national pugilistic sensations like New York’s John Morrissey or Philadelphia’s Dominick Bradley, the city did boast a crop of very active Celtic pugilists, eager to enter the prize ring for local honour and relatively small monetary stakes.¹⁴ For example, Jim Coburn, a brother of American heavyweight champion Joe Coburn, fought two bouts against fellow Irishman Jack Looney in 1858, resulting in a win and a loss for Coburn.¹⁵ In between the two Coburn-Looney bouts, “Welsh” Joe Stevenson fought and defeated John Reese for the championship of the Gravois Coal Mines.¹⁶ Between September 1856 and the same month in 1859, no less than thirteen prizefights were held in the environs of St. Louis,

most of which were orderly affairs, free of the prevailing police and spectator interference hindering the sport in the northeast. On August 9, 1859, however, the violence and disorder associated with prizefighting in the Northeast finally emerged in St. Louis. Adhering to prevailing St. Louis prizefighting practices, two Irishmen named Michael “Shanghai” Connors and Jim Burns travelled north up the Mississippi River from St. Louis on August 9, meeting at Eagle Island, near present day Elsberry, Missouri. Connors took control of the fighting in round one, scoring first blood and first knockdown. The fighting was quite even from the first round on, with both men holding an advantage at various points. In the thirteenth round, however, Connors claimed Burns struck him while down, leading the referee to disqualify the latter. Foreseeing trouble, Connors immediately boarded his boat, while Burns and his supporters tore down the ring in a rage. Before long, a “general and indiscriminate melee occurred,” with Burns seizing the referee by the throat, while his supporters attacked the crowd wildly.¹⁷

During the return trip to St. Louis from the Burns-Connors bout, shooting broke out between the Burns and Connors factions, with pistol fire “flying around...like hail.” In the confusion, Johnny Monaghan – a Connors supporter and influential patron of the Civil War era New York City fight scene – shot his friend John Riley, Connors’ main backer, in the stomach.¹⁸ After suffering for over a week, Riley died of his wound on August 20.¹⁹ Unfortunately, Riley’s death was just one of several unsavory aspects of the Burns-Connors bout. Despite the binding decision made by referee Landy Moreland, awarding the stakes to Connors, stakeholder Thomas McGrath retained the purse,

suggesting the men fight a second time. Further complicating matters, John Montgomery – a prominent St. Louis sporting man and umpire for Connors – reported rumours that McGrath himself wagered on the fight, bringing into question the stakeholder’s neutrality.²⁰ On August 18, Montgomery’s own credibility was attacked when Con Quinn, Burns’ trainer, filed an affidavit with a St. Louis justice of the peace claiming Montgomery tried to fix the fight, allegedly offering him five hundred dollars to convince Burns to throw the bout. Burns, however, declined the offer, preferring to “win or die in the ring.”²¹ Neither death nor corruption seemed to garner much attention from local police. Despite the chaos surrounding Connors-Burns, prizefighting continued to occur around St. Louis, proceeding in a more orderly fashion for the remainder of the antebellum years.

Tim Monaghan, Martial Law, and the Manly Art: Prizefighting in Civil War era St. Louis, Missouri

When war broke out between the North and South in 1861, Missouri was geographically and politically stuck in the middle of the two powers. Early in the war, Missouri Governor Claiborne Jackson tried in vain to align his State with the Confederacy. Under Jackson’s orders, Lincoln’s call for four regiments of Missouri volunteers was ignored in favour of a camp of militiamen – dubbed “Camp Jackson” – located on the western edge of St. Louis. Jackson placed his militiamen under the command of General D.M. Frost, intending to seize the St. Louis arsenal before Union forces could intervene. The Governor’s plot was foiled, however, when Union General Nathaniel Lyon disguised

himself as a woman, entering Camp Jackson undetected, to gather intelligence regarding the governor's pro-Confederate plans. With four regiments, Lyon marched on Camp Jackson, forcing the surrender of Frost's men without firing a shot.²² After displaying remarkable cunning to circumvent Jackson's plans, Lyon brashly marched the captured St. Louisans through the city, transforming a peaceful conquest into a bloody riot. Interpreting Lyon's actions as an insurrection, residents of St. Louis lashed out at the Union troops, treating Lincoln's Army like a hoard of invaders. When the dust settled, twenty-eight St. Louis civilians were dead and many more injured.²³ While St. Louis' Union and Confederate authorities mobilized their respective forces, prizefighting continued, thriving in the city's chaotic disorder.

One of the most successful St. Louis-based prizefighters of the Civil War era was an Irishman named Tim Monaghan. Respected within the sporting subculture of St. Louis for his "courage, endurance, and fancy manhood," Monaghan was the most active bare-knuckle boxer in Civil War Missouri.²⁴ On May 9, 1861, while Confederate and Union supporters were busy posturing, Monaghan fought fellow Irishman Neil Doyle at the St. Louis Fair Grounds. Doyle, who weighed one hundred and forty-five pounds, came into the contest with a significant size advantage, outweighing the smaller Monaghan by seventeen pounds. Using his weight advantage to out-wrestle Monaghan, Doyle fared well in the early stages of the fight, scoring first blood in round two. As the fight progressed Monaghan's "superior science and pluck" took its toll on Doyle. In round four, Monaghan landed on Doyle's nose, initiating some bleeding, before scoring the first knockdown of the fight with a well-aimed right hand to Doyle's left eye. Finally,

after much punishment, Doyle capitulated in the eighth round, going to the turf without suffering a blow, resulting in his disqualification.²⁵ If St. Louis officials intended to charge Monaghan and/or Doyle, they were quickly distracted by the Camp Jackson affair and subsequent rioting.

Missouri's status as a border state – neither seceding from the Union, nor abolishing slavery – was by no means certain by the summer of 1861. On June 17, Union forces defeated a group of pro-Confederate Missouri State Guards at the Battle of Boonville, only to be defeated at the Battle of Carthage on July 5, in Jasper County, Missouri. While Missouri politicians and military officials scrambled to maintain some semblance of order, prizefighting went unchecked in St. Louis. Two months after his contest with Doyle, Tim Monaghan returned to the prize ring, facing Martin Flaherty at Bloody Island on July 7, 1861, two days after the Confederate victory at Carthage. As in the Doyle bout, Monaghan was the smaller man, weighing just one hundred and twenty-five pounds to Flaherty's one hundred and sixty. Despite the glaring size difference, Monaghan dominated Flaherty in six short rounds, winning the contest after just twenty minutes of fighting. In a rare and despised act of common sense and self-preservation, Flaherty refused to toe the scratch for the seventh round, recognizing the futility of his efforts.²⁶ As was the case following Monaghan-Doyle, the police neither charged nor fined those involved with the Monaghan-Flaherty bout. During the early days of the Civil War, it seems, chasing after prizefighters was not a priority for St. Louisan authorities.

The Union defeat at Bull Run on July 21, 1861, emboldened Missouri's Confederate sympathizers, heightening anxiety amongst St. Louis' Union caretakers.²⁷ With more pressing matters consuming the time of city and state officials, the St. Louis sporting subculture continued to hold prizefights. On August 4, 1861, the prizefighters and boxing aficionados of St. Louis convened at the 'Clipper Saloon' on Fifth Street to finalize the location for a bout between William "Cleveland Pet" Powell and Jim Reynolds, settling on a grove near the St. Louis fair grounds. Unlike Monaghan and his opponents, Reynolds and Powell were roughly the same size, with both standing 5'7" tall and weighing around one hundred and thirty-three pounds. Powell – "a dark haired tawny looking chap" – found success early in the fight, scoring first blood in round one, before Reynolds tossed him to the turf. For the duration of the contest, Reynolds dominated when wrestling, but absorbed immense punishment to the face and head, blurring his judgment as the fight wore on. In the seventy-sixth and final round, Reynolds was disqualified after throwing Powell to the turf, striking him twice while he lay on the ground. With the "Cleveland Pet" declared victorious, pandemonium – comparable to the Connors-Burns debacle of 1859 – erupted at ringside, resulting in an attack on the referee.²⁸

The Reynolds-Powell contest was the last St. Louis-based prizefight reported by the *New York Clipper* for quite some time. Fallout from the Confederate victory at the Battle of Wilson's Creek, fought near Springfield, Missouri, on August 10, 1861, wreaked havoc on leisure in St. Louis. Reeling from the Union defeat at Springfield, John C. Fremont, Commander of the Union Army's Department of the West, declared martial

law in St. Louis, placing Provost Marshall Justus McKinstry in charge of the city. The social freedoms previously enjoyed by men like Tim Monaghan, Neil Doyle, William Powell, Martin Flaherty, and other pugilists, were drastically curtailed. According to James Neil Prim, “theatres, dance halls, and concert halls were closed at 10:30 during the week and all day on Sunday” and “street assemblages were forbidden.” By the end of August, 1861, “McKinstry closed all saloons except those in major hotels, which took care of the Irish bars without disturbing important citizens or the beer gardens.”²⁹ The urban saloon, so central to the organization of prizefighting and sparring benefits, was virtually wiped from existence and, for much of the Civil War, boxing disappeared along with it.³⁰

Fremont was relieved of his duties in Missouri in November, 1861, and replaced by Henry Halleck, who enforced an even stricter brand of martial law in St. Louis. During Halleck’s tenure as commander of the Department of Missouri, prizefighting in the ‘Gateway to the West’ almost ceased to exist. When Samuel R. Curtis replaced Halleck in September of 1862, prizefighters were tentative to ply their trade. It was not until 1863 that St. Louis pugilists started to reorganize and mend their tattered boxing scene. The historical record for boxing in St. Louis from 1863 to 1865 is fragmented, but several reports suggest a resurgence in pugilism during the administrations of John Schofield and William Rosecrans, respectively, as commanders of the Department of Missouri. In early April, 1863, Jerry Donovan of Chicago performed in a sparring exhibition in St. Louis at the ‘Sportsman’s Hall.’³¹ A fifty-three round prizefight between men named Albert and Kenna took place somewhere in St. Louis in August, 1863, but few details

reached the press other than Kenna's victory.³² Despite taking some modest steps towards reestablishing the once thriving St. Louis fight scene, the city was still avoided by some pugilists as late as 1864. Following a series of sparring benefits and prizefights in the northeast, John Condle Orem passed throughout Missouri on March 7, 1864, during his return home to Colorado. During the antebellum years, St. Louis was a regular stopping place for pugilists, but Orem bypassed the city entirely in 1864, stopping in St. Joseph, Missouri, near the border with Kansas. Whether Orem skipped over St. Louis due to the city's well-publicized political tensions, or refused to stop in St. Louis for reasons of expediency, is impossible to determine from the existing source material. Orem was, however, already scheduled to perform in Fort Leavenworth, in northern Kansas, making St. Joseph – located just south of Fort Leavenworth – an ideal stopping place for the Missouri leg of his journey. Although the southern portions of Kansas were active Civil War battlefields, northern sections of the State were largely safe for travel. In Fort Leavenworth, Orem performed for two nights, before completing the final leg of his sparring tour to his home in Denver, Colorado, avoiding St. Louis in the process.

A semblance of normality returned to the St. Louis boxing scene in the summer of 1864. On June 16, 1864, Tim Monaghan returned to the prize ring, defeating Tom Donnelley after ten rounds and twenty minutes of fighting in the vicinity of Seven Mile House, near St. Louis.³³ The Monaghan-Donnelley contest functioned as a sort of measuring stick for the city's tolerance for prizefighting, ultimately proving that a relatively important prizefight could be held in St. Louis without provoking arrests. At least three more prize fights occurred near St. Louis before the end of 1864, none of

which attracted much attention from authorities.³⁴ On July 10, for example, Jerry Donovan and Jim Burns – fighters who split time between St. Louis and Chicago – fought near St. Louis “without any disturbance.”³⁵ The damage inflicted upon the St. Louis prize ring by martial law, however, took time to mend completely. Throughout the remainder of the 1860s, a relatively small number of prizefights occurred in and around St. Louis. By the turn of the decade, Missouri was surpassed by Ohio as the prizefighting State of choice in the Midwest.

“As the Old Cock Crows the Young One Learns:” Sparring and Prize Fighting in Chicago, 1856-1865

Although smaller than St. Louis, Chicago was the fastest growing urban centre in mid-nineteenth century America, experiencing significant growth throughout the first half of the century. In 1833, Chicago was a distant Midwestern outpost containing less than four hundred people.³⁶ Yet, even in those early days of settlement, sports and games were prevalent, including “playing at cards, racing on foot or horseback, trading, dancing, and flying high on corn ‘likker,’ rum, and French brandy.”³⁷ Attracted initially by employment along the Illinois and Michigan Canal in the 1830s, Irish immigrants continued to arrive in Chicago throughout the 1840s and 1850s, fleeing persistent famine in their homeland.³⁸ As was the case in virtually all major American cities, German immigrants also arrived in the late 1840s and 1850s, fleeing the failed 1848 rebellions in Europe. By mid-century, Chicago’s population had exploded, increasing more than a hundred fold by 1860, becoming a city of over 112,000 people. Although

Chicago's Irish and German populations were comparable in size by the 1850s, many more German settlers boasted a skilled trade than their Irish counterparts, while the later disproportionately suffered the dire straits of poverty.³⁹ Like their Northeastern counterparts, Chicago Germans organized *Turnvereins* for their athletic pursuits and beer gardens for music, drinking, and dancing.⁴⁰ The Chicago Irish, generally poorer than their German neighbours, combined their sport, drinking, dancing, and music under one roof, using saloons for most local entertainment. Although the Irish are often singled out as slum dwelling, saloon-goers, they were not alone in Chicago. As Kelleher has demonstrated, working-class Chicago saloons were also frequented by patrons of English, German, and American-born descent, of similar social standing to many unskilled Irish laborers. Regardless of ethnicity, Kelleher explains, "Most of the raucous adherents of rough culture were young and held jobs; but the color in their lives emanated from the kinetic atmosphere of boardinghouses, saloons, theaters, and prizefighting rings."⁴¹ This 'rough culture' did not go unchecked. In Chicago, unlike St. Louis, a middle class labored towards the elimination of prizefighting from its city, targeting not only bare-knuckle contests, but also sparring benefits suspected of supporting the prize ring.

Chicago's antebellum and Civil War working-class saloons, like their counterparts in New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, and St. Louis, were typified by rough, physical displays of masculine prowess. Fighting with one's fists was a noble endeavor and fighting for money was particularly adulated. In this context, both sparring and prizefighting gained a tenuous foothold in Chicago's sporting pantheon. Unfortunately,

the historiography of boxing in Chicago to date focuses primarily on the post-Civil War era. Indeed, two popular historians go so far as to state “boxing in Chicago really began after the Civil War.”⁴² Before the end of the 1850s, however, Irish Chicagoans were already experimenting with prizefighting, both locally and further afield. In 1858, for example, two newsboys named Sullivan and Doyle contested a prizefight in an empty freight car at the city’s Michigan Central Depot. The police pursued Doyle and Sullivan, but the young boxers eluded the authorities, contesting eighteen rounds before Sullivan’s corner threw up the sponge. The *Chicago Democrat*, reflecting on the Doyle-Sullivan contest, blamed older prizefighters for youths’ experimentation with the prize ring. “As the old cock crows,” explained the *Democrat*, “the young one learns.”⁴³

Although few prizefights occurred in Chicago prior to the Doyle-Sullivan contest, the youngsters could have looked to a handful of local prizefighters for inspiration. In 1854, for example, Patrick Maddoc defeated John Young in one hour and ten minutes for four hundred dollars.⁴⁴ To make a real impact as a prizefighter, however, one needed to travel east. Johnny Roberts, one of Chicago’s leading pugilists by the mid-1850s, for example, spent much of his early career in the northeastern region. Roberts debuted in the American prize ring in January, 1856, defeating John Murphy on a fowl near the New Hampshire-Canada East border. Later that year, Roberts returned to the ring, losing to Johnny Mackey of Liverpool, England, in the “Queen’s Dominions.”⁴⁵ In the northeast, Roberts sparred at various events in Manhattan and Boston, with each city’s sporting nebulous organizing sparring benefits for the Chicagoan.⁴⁶ Following his victory over Roberts, Mackey and fellow English pugilist James Parker relocated to Chicago, opening

the “Sportsman’s Hall” sparring saloon in the fall of 1856.⁴⁷ Catering to the working and middle classes alike, Mackey and Parker attempted to, in the words of the *Clipper*, transform Chicago into “the New York of the West,” by offering sparring instruction and bi-weekly exhibitions.⁴⁸ Before the close of 1856, Mackey and Parker already boasted “quite a number of scholars learning the art of boxing.”⁴⁹ A testament to their growing popularity, prizefighter Harry Lazarus paid Mackey and Parker a visit on December 3, 1856, performing at a well-attended sparring benefit. The Mackey-Parker partnership, however, came to a prompt conclusion in the spring of 1857, when Parker, suffering from tuberculosis, sold his share of the saloon to Mackey, relocating to New York City.⁵⁰

Under the leadership of Mackey and Parker, sparring was conducted “in a quiet and orderly manner” in Chicago, “becoming a popular movement in consequence.”⁵¹ While Mackey and Parker maintained boxing in Chicago, Johnny Roberts continued to carry the city’s name into the prize ring. In 1857, Roberts – still reported as a Chicagoan – fought Harry Finegass near Boston, Massachusetts, winning after over two hours of fighting. Although Finegass, and numerous others, were arrested following the bout, Roberts somehow managed to escape, making his way to the booming fight town of Buffalo, New York, earning a position training Harry Lazarus for his prizefight with Denny Horrigan.⁵² While in Buffalo, Roberts – dubbed “Chicago Jack” in Upstate New York – was advertised as part of a Lazarus sparring benefit at Townsend Hall, but was still suffering the ill effects of his prizefight with Finegass. Despite having an infection on his face lanced by a doctor just prior to the Lazarus benefit, Roberts promised to perform if the audience wanted him to, wishing to provide paying customers with the advertised

attractions. The audience, appreciative of Roberts' dedication to honest sport, let the Chicagoan sit out for the evening.⁵³ Well respected in Buffalo, it was "Chicago Jack" who diffused a dispute between Harry Lazarus and Denny Horrigan at an April, 1857, sparring benefit, convincing the men to pursue a more tactful course of action, culminating in a smooth evening of sparring and terms for the first Lazarus-Horrigan prizefight.⁵⁴

With Johnny Roberts in Buffalo and Jem Parker in New York City, Johnny Mackey did what he could to keep boxing alive in Chicago. Under Mackey's direction, Chicago's boxing scene proved relatively inclusive, showing racial tolerance comparable to their northeastern counterparts, Mackay hosted a successful benefit for African-American pugilist George Brown, or "Young Molineux," at Sportsman's Hall on May 30, 1857.⁵⁵ In June of 1857, Mackey was joined by Johnny Roberts, bolstering the Chicago fight scene. Eager to display Roberts to the public, Mackay gladly arranged a benefit for the city's most noteworthy prizefighter.⁵⁶ Once reacquainted with his hometown, Roberts travelled northwest to Rockford, Illinois, staging the "first sparring exhibition ever given" in that community.⁵⁷ During the late antebellum years, a Welshman named Jerry Donovan also garnered attention in Chicago, performing at numerous sparring benefits, becoming a highly touted Midwestern prospect.⁵⁸ On May 18, for example, Donovan participated in "one of the best sparring exhibitions witnessed in Chicago," completing a "slashing set-to, a regular glove fight in fact," with Jim Coburn.⁵⁹ With sparring benefits generating capacity crowds, Chicagoans experimented with women's sparring in 1860, offering female bouts for interested spectators. Women's boxing in antebellum Chicago,

however, was treated as a novelty, rather than a legitimate alternative to all-male events.⁶⁰

Following the outbreak of Civil War in 1861, Chicago's pugilists attempted to expand the city's boxing scene, using the momentum of antebellum successes to spur the sport forward. During the first year of the Civil War, sparring events held in Chicago continued to be well-attended affairs, featuring well-known prize fighters such as Jerry Donovan, John McGlade, Daniel 'Bendingo' Smith, and Jim Burns, as well as lesser known aspirants for pugilistic glory. Sparring, however, became increasingly intertwined with prizefighting. In May of 1861, for example, John McGlade, of Ireland, held a sparring benefit at Witkosky Hall to defer the costs of training for his upcoming prizefight with Jerry Donovan.⁶¹ On June 15, 1861, Donovan mirrored McGlade, holding a sparring benefit at Kingsbury Hall, raising funds for his own training. Donovan's sparring benefit on June 15, 1861, was considered "a complete success," with Donovan's finale against Philadelphian prizefighter Daniel 'Bendingo' Smith proving particularly exciting for those in attendance.⁶² Prizefighter Johnny Roberts also continued to perform in sparring benefits during the first year of war, holding an event one week after Donovan's benefit.⁶³ Although sparring benefits regularly featured prizefighters in Chicago, prizefights were exceedingly rare up to 1861. Thus, when a prizefight between Ben Jennings and Pete Gleason was successfully held outside Chicago in May, local authorities intended to prevent and/or least punish, future contestants.⁶⁴

With Chicago authorities on the lookout for prizefights, Jerry Donovan and Johnny McGlade staged their June, 1861, contest beyond State lines in Indiana. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, “a special train of four cars was made up on the Michigan Southern Railway, and every seat was filled, the tickets \$2.50 each.” The train transported four hundred spectators along the southwest shore of Lake Michigan, east across the Illinois-Indiana border to Ainsworth Station, Indiana.⁶⁵ After leaving the train, spectators congregated in a forested area, not far from the tracks, where the Donovan-McGlade contest promptly commenced. Donovan took control of the contest early, scoring first blood in the second round, before wrestling McGlade to the ground. In the third round, Donovan locked McGlade in a choke hold, leaving the latter unconscious on the turf. McGlade’s seconds gathered their man and managed to rouse the Irishman for the fourth round. Donovan out-boxed and out-wrestled McGlade for the duration of the affair when, in the twelfth round, a badly swollen and bloodied McGlade swung out at Donovan, lost his balance, and crashed to the turf, without being thrown or struck, resulting in his disqualification.⁶⁶ When the Chicago fight goers returned to their City that evening, McGlade was carried upon a makeshift stretcher, made of a window shutter. The streets were abuzz with fight talk and numerous would-be pugilists followed Donovan and McGlade throughout the streets, fixated on their respective idol’s summation of the fight. The four hundred individuals that turned out to see the fight, according to the *Tribune*, were a “motley” bunch, with a few “respectable” citizens scattered throughout the crowd. Initially, the police made no arrests in connection with the Donovan-McGlade fight. After two weeks of freedom, however, authorities made

their move on Donovan and McGlade, targeting a sparring benefit featuring both men on July 15, rounding up and arresting both prizefighters and two hundred others.⁶⁷ The following day, the “great throng” of sparring enthusiasts arrested with McGlade and Donovan received their day in court, resulting in the busiest day to that point in Chicago Police Court history.⁶⁸

Resilient, Chicago’s boxers regrouped following the mass arrests of July 16, 1861, arranging a prizefight between Johnny McGlade and Daniel ‘Bendigo’ Smith. Fans and fighters loaded onto a train and travelled via the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, and Chicago Railroad, southeast across the border of Indiana to Wright Station. Smith scored first blood and, about twenty-eight rounds in, scored the first knockdown. The fight continued until, in the forty-sixth round, McGlade admitted defeat, and refused to come to scratch. Smith walked away from the contest relatively uninjured, but McGlade was badly beaten, suffering a grotesquely swollen eye and serious cuts on his face.⁶⁹ Learning little from his previous run-in with the police, McGlade promptly arranged a sparring benefit at Freeman’s Saloon in Chicago, albeit in the wee hours of the morning. At about five o’clock that morning, the Chicago police interrupted McGlade’s benefit, fining the prizefighter thirty dollars for organizing the event and Freeman, the saloon’s proprietor, ten dollars for hosting it. Adding insult to injury, twenty-three others were fined three dollars just for attending McGlade’s benefit.⁷⁰

Not all pugilists struggled to hold sparring benefits in Chicago. American-born John Conde Orem, for example, was greeted with open arms. After participating in a

series of prizefights in the northeast, Orem conducted a sparring tour of the Midwest on his way home to Denver City, Colorado Territory. Orem arrived in Chicago on January 12, 1864, bypassing the state of Indiana entirely. Although Indiana was a popular fighting ground for Chicago's pugilists, little boxing was organized there. For Orem, the largest crowds were beyond Indiana, in Illinois. Once in Chicago, Orem advertised his sparring event with posters and, after four days in the city, performed at Newmarket Hall on January 16, sparking the competitive impulses of Jerry Donovan. Eager to maintain his status as the top fighter in Chicago, Donovan offered to fight Orem for five hundred or one thousand dollars a side. The prospects of a fight between Orem and Donovan initially looked promising, with Orem's backer – Arthur Gore, of Detroit – agreeing to finance Orem for a one thousand dollar bout with Donovan in Canada West, two weeks after the first deposit of the stakes.⁷¹ The Orem-Donovan fight, however, promptly fell apart. Battling a bout of typhoid fever, Donovan required two months to prepare for the contest. Orem, eager to continue his sparring tour and reach Denver, Colorado, refused to stay in the area for longer than a month. Ultimately, Orem continued his tour, travelling to Missouri, while Donovan remained in Chicago, fuming at the lost opportunity.⁷²

The relative failure of prizefighting and sparring in Civil War era Chicago cannot be explained by any one factor. More so than in St. Louis, antebellum era nativism challenged the very existence of practices deemed 'Irish' in Chicago, resulting in attacks on Sabbath sport and leisure, prizefighting included. Nativism in Chicago hit its antebellum high in 1855, with the election of a nativist, American Party mayor named

Levi Day Boone.⁷³ Under Boone's administration, exorbitant fees were charged for liquor licenses and immigrants were banned from holding city positions, all to curtail the spread of Irish and German culture in Chicago. Ultimately, Boone's restrictions on European Chicagoans provoked an anti-nativist riot in 1855, resulting in one death and untold damages to city property.⁷⁴ In general, the Chicago Irish lacked the political clout of their New York City counterparts leading up to and during the Civil War. Typically supporters of the Democratic Party, the Chicago Irish saw four Republican mayors elected between 1857 and 1865, but just two Democrats. Furthermore, the machine politics so conducive to Irish political power in mid-nineteenth century Manhattan manifested much later in Chicago, allowing the Irish to make an "immense political thrust" later in the century.⁷⁵ Another factor working against boxing in Chicago, and particularly prizefighting, was a municipal dedication to boosterism. The continued growth of Chicago depended heavily upon wealth from outside sources, particularly northeastern merchants. The antebellum onset of widespread theft, gambling, prostitution, and assault, however, earned the city a reputation for criminality, threatening its allure to investors.⁷⁶ In response, the municipal government waged war on gambling dens, sporting saloons, brothels, and other "houses of 'ill fame.'"⁷⁷ As evidenced by several raids on sparring events during the Civil War years, it appears this municipal dedication to wiping out gambling extended to boxing.

Despite the *Chicago Democrat's* assertion that young, working-class men mimicked more experienced prizefighters in their sporadic ring appearances, it was likely the absence of these charismatic, nationally renowned pugilists on the local scene

that most hindered the city's boxing culture. All the great antebellum heavyweight fighters – Tom Hyer, James Sullivan, John Morrissey, John C. Heenan – lived in New York City, using that city as home base for sparring tours of the northeast. In Manhattan, young native-born Americans and Irishmen could mix and mingle with the stars of the pugilistic world and watch the greats display their skills in frequent public exhibitions. Although Chicago's Johnny Roberts was a talented prizefighter, he spent much of the antebellum period away from his hometown, performing in Massachusetts and New York, providing little in the way of boxing infrastructure for Chicago leading up to the Civil War. Thus, when Johnny Mackay arrived on the scene to offering sparring instruction in the 1850s, he was essentially constructing a fight scene from scratch. After toiling in Chicago for several years, Mackay finally admitted defeat just before the outbreak of Civil War. As a sparring instructor, and an Englishman, Mackay projected an aura of respectability for boxing during his tenure in Chicago, but that disappeared shortly after his departure. In Mackay's absence, Chicago's boxing scene limped into the Civil War years under the guidance of a handful of indiscrete prizefighters who, by using sparring benefits to fund their prizefights – mimicking practices common in New York City, put predictably unwelcome in Chicago – drew the ire of local officials, leading to the near extinction of the sport by war's end.

Boxing among the Germans: The Fleeting Nature of Boxing in Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus

During the late antebellum era, several men tried to introduce boxing in Ohio. Although Ohio boasted several cities with growing working classes, these urban landscapes were also home to large numbers of German settlers, with little interest in pugilism. The large, influential Irish and English populations, so intrinsic to the ring's success in the Northeast, simply did not exist in Ohio. As historian Andrew R.L. Cayton suggests, by the 1850s Cincinnati already "struck visitors as a German town."⁷⁸ In the much smaller city of Cleveland, Germans vastly outnumbered their Irish counterparts, representing one third of the 43,417 residents, while the Irish accounted for just one fifth.⁷⁹ Likewise, in Columbus, Ohio, German citizens represented one third of the city's 18,554 residents by 1860.⁸⁰ Although both saloons and physical activity were important parts of day-to-day life for German Ohioans, pugilism was not, preventing the small number of antebellum and Civil War era 'Buck Eye' State sparring saloons from gathering much traction.

Prior to the Civil War, prizefights were sporadically reported in both rural and urban Ohioan communities. In the countryside, however, prizefighting was typically an impromptu means of settling disputes. In 1857, for example, Alexander Bassett of New York and "Bully" Smith of Ohio contested a prizefight in Morrow County when the latter poked fun at Bassett's former appearance. Insulted by Smith's taunts, Bassett challenged the Ohioan to a prizefight for fifty dollars. Smith accepted Bassett's offer, but was thoroughly pummeled by the New Yorker, receiving a bloody nose, badly bruised

ribs, and two black eyes for his efforts.⁸¹ Unlike the Bassett-Smith bout, most of the boxing in antebellum Ohio was organized in the cities. William “The Cleveland Pet” Powell, for example, issued his first formal prizefighting challenge in 1856, offering to meet “any lad in the United States that never appeared in the ring, at a catch weight.”⁸² Powell, however, spent much of his time in St. Louis, Missouri, limiting his impact of boxing in Ohio. Although prizefighting sputtered and largely failed to take root in Ohio during the late antebellum and Civil War years, sparring enjoyed a moderate following in Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus. The Ohio sparring scene, however, was heavily dependent on two or three instructors at a time. When a boxing instructor moved, the city’s sparring scene often went with him, resulting in various, short-lived boxing cultures throughout the State.

During the late antebellum years, Ohio depended primarily on Johnny Mackey to teach and organize sparring.⁸³ After roughly two years in Chicago, Mackey relocated to Cleveland, opening a sporting saloon by the fall of 1859.⁸⁴ Why, exactly, Mackey relocated from Chicago to Cleveland is difficult to determine. A well-known promoter of betting-oriented spectator sports like cock and dog fighting, the general suppression of gambling in Chicago could have negatively impacted Mackey’s business, forcing the Englishman to move on to Cleveland. Although Chicago was home to a large working class in the 1850s, artisans and laborers shared the city with a growing reform-minded middle class, set on sanitizing the city’s reputation in hopes of attracting northeastern capital.⁸⁵ Thus, like Harry Jennings in New York City, Mackey may have relocated to Cleveland in search of a more tolerant locale for his saloon. In the Cleveland portion of

the 1860 *Federal Census*, Mackey reported himself as a gymnastics instructor, distancing himself from blood sports, if only on paper. The departure of Mackey's saloon-savvy business partner, Jem Parker, could have also hindered the former's Chicago saloon.

Perceived opportunities in Cleveland, rather than misfortune in Chicago, could also have attracted Mackey to the city. By the mid-nineteenth century, Cleveland was a bustling city, its population booming from 7,000 in 1840 to 43,417 in 1860, to a remarkable 92,829 by 1870. Much of Cleveland's fast growing antebellum population was composed of Irish and German working-class men, sparking a saloon boom in the city that reached one hundred and fifty establishments by 1860. The antebellum expansion of rail transportation in America, furthermore, eased travel between Cleveland and other Ohio cities like Cincinnati and Columbus.⁸⁶ With a growing population, improved rail access, and a large working class, antebellum Cleveland seemed an ideal location for boxing to flourish. One third of the population, however, was made up German immigrants with little or no interest in Mackey's sparring services. Composed of a large number of political refugees from the 1848 European uprisings, many Cleveland Germans preferred local *Turneverin* clubs when it came to physical activity.⁸⁷

In addition to Cleveland's heavily German population, Johnny Mackey's efforts to establish a sparring scene in the city throughout 1860 and 1861 ran up against several other obstacles, largely beyond his control. After establishing his Cleveland saloon in 1860, Mackey hosted boxers named Joe Napoleon and Jack Campbell, who ultimately

swindled him out of a pair of boxing gloves.⁸⁸ Adding to Mackey's troubles, Napoleon commenced touring under the Mackey's name, "not only injuring the latter's [Mackey's] reputation as a teacher of sparring, but also as an honorable and honest man."⁸⁹ Frustrated by his misfortune in Cleveland, Mackey visited Indianapolis, Indiana, to perform in a sparring benefit with Johnny Sweetman, before opening a new saloon in nearby Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1861.⁹⁰ Mackey remained in Cincinnati into the Civil War years, continuing to offer sparring lessons and benefits.⁹¹ Home to the first American *Turverein* (1848), Cincinnati was also heavily influenced by German settlers during the antebellum years.⁹² Finally, after three years of misfortune, Mackey admitted defeat in Ohio by 1863, leaving the state entirely to open a sparring saloon in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.⁹³ While Mackey struggled to generate a following in Cincinnati, Johnny Sweetman tried to nurture a sparring scene into existence in Columbus.⁹⁴ Nicknamed the 'Queen City,' Columbus was one of the "most prosperous cities in the nation" by 1850, attracting German and, on a smaller scale, Irish immigrants.⁹⁵ As the capital of Ohio, Columbus was first and foremost a political centre, limiting the development of working-class sport in the city. Despite the efforts of Mackey and Sweetman in Cincinnati and Columbus, respectively, neither city boasted much boxing during the Civil War years. In fact, John Conde Orem's 1863/1864 sparring tour likely produced the most significant boxing events in both Cincinnati and Columbus from 1861 to 1865.

Following Johnny Mackey's departure for the northeast, boxing in Ohio slowed to a crawl, only to be briefly reinvigorated by John Conde Orem in 1864. During the Midwestern leg of his 1863/1864 sparring tour, Orem stopped in Cincinnati, giving

exhibitions on December 28 and 29 at the National Theatre with local sparring aficionado Tom Brown. From the Cincinnati Orem backtracked to Columbus, Ohio, organizing a joint sparring benefit with Johnny Hickey on December 31.⁹⁶ Following their performance in Columbus, the *New York Clipper* reported, Orem and Hickey made tentative plans to travel northeast for performances in Cleveland, Ohio; Buffalo, New York; and Toronto and Hamilton, Canada West. Such a tour, however, was contrary to Orem's ultimate goal of visiting his home in Colorado, leading the 'Colorado Blacksmith' to continue his tour west to Chicago, Illinois. Men looking for fights and adventure typically followed Orem's lead, setting their sights further west, travelling to the young State of California and the mining districts of the Montana, Colorado, and Nevada Territories, in search of more fertile geographies for sparring and prizefighting.

Prizefighting and Sparring on the Pacific Coast: The Pugilistic Culture of Late

Antebellum and Civil War Era California

"Remote from the principal theatres of war as California may have been," explains historian Glenna Matthews, "the State was not immune from considerations of how it might defend itself once war broke out and of how it might contribute to the war effort."⁹⁷ A Free State, California supported the Union during the Civil War, supplying sixteen thousand troops for the North.⁹⁸ Although California was largely beyond the landscape of the war, the State did send the California Column – a two thousand man unit of the Union Army – to protect its southern borders against Confederate invasion. Led by Colonel James Henry Carleton, the California Column eventually marched to New

Mexico Territory, but was never forced to engage the enemy.⁹⁹ While the war was likely apparent to those inhabiting the southern expanses of California, life went largely unchanged in the northern sections of the State. Indeed, life in the northern sporting hub of San Francisco was virtually unaffected by developments in the war. During the antebellum years, a gold rush filled San Francisco with adventurous male citizens from all corners of America. Within this thoroughly male milieu, an urban leisure culture saturated with gambling, drunkenness, and rowdyism took root, encouraging a host of blood sports. As the 1850s progressed, however, a wider array of sports appeared in San Francisco, supported by a growing middle class, eager for non-saloon based activities. While middle-class proponents of 'self-made' manhood used sparring with gloves to strengthen their bodies and minds, the much larger working-class cohort of the city's male population supported bare-knuckle prizefighting, holding numerous contests on the outskirts of the city. As news of sparring and prizefighting reached northeastern papers, a small number of New York City pugilists made their way west to turn a profit on the booming sporting scene.

In the 1840s and 1850s, Northeastern men routinely set out for California in find their fortune via the 'gold rush.' The process usually proved more daunting than most men anticipated. "Whichever way they came, these adventurers usually arrived ill-prepared for California," explains historian Roger W. Lotchin. "They came bringing mining equipment they could never use, wearing clothing unsuitable for the climate, bearing useless directions, banded together in mining companies that dissolved upon impact with California, and swayed by a hurricane of rumours about everything

imaginable.”¹⁰⁰ Although many men promptly returned from whence they came, others settled down along the ‘golden coast,’ living lives drastically dissimilar from those they left behind. Regardless of social class or ethnicity, most men living in California indulged in games of chance during the antebellum years, using dice and cards to while away their time and their money.¹⁰¹ Bloated by gold-hungry adventurers, the population of San Francisco, the most famous Californian boomtown, exploded from a meagre 1,000 people in 1848 to 56,802 by 1860. Newcomers to antebellum California were likely taken aback by the men they crossed. Indeed, few miners and sailors bothered much with personal hygiene or middle-class manners. Many antebellum Californian men “neither bathed nor changed their clothes, but they gambled, drank incessantly, swore, and attended bareknuckle prizefights more than they attended church services.”¹⁰² Northeastern middle-class niceties, encouraging men to restrain their more primal impulses, had little relevance in the gold rush era. As Christopher Herbert has aptly observed, “the California Gold Rush upset the assumed relationship between work, reward, and character that was integral to ideologies of white and male supremacy. In an environment where risk and chance seemed to permeate all of society, these young men had to find new ways to create and maintain their identity as white men.”¹⁰³ Many freshly settled Californian men, struck by the incompatibility of northeastern norms with their new western surroundings, threw aside the old dictates of ‘proper’ middle-class masculinity, turning to gambling, drinking, and fighting, immersing themselves in a culture comparable to the “rough working-class culture of the Atlantic world.”¹⁰⁴

According to Michael S. Kimmel, the California Gold Rush created a large, predominantly “homosocial” society, where men lived in “a world of ‘rude freedom’ outside the conventional boundaries of civilization and away from wives.”¹⁰⁵ Although vigilantes and local officials tried, at various times, to transform California into a more orderly landscape, preventing men from doing as they pleased proved a Herculean task.¹⁰⁶ As newcomers mingled with Mexican locals, various blood sports, witnessed in outdoor, wooden amphitheatres, proved popular spectacles, producing bullfights, bull-and-bear fights, and cockfights, that regularly took on “ethnic and national as well as gendered meanings” while men frantically gambled upon the gore.¹⁰⁷ German immigrants – as in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago, and elsewhere – organized gymnastics in California, establishing a *Turnverein* in San Francisco in 1853.¹⁰⁸ The pedestrianism craze sweeping the antebellum Northeast also arrived in the ‘Golden State,’ producing numerous professional walkers, competing for hundreds and thousands of dollars.¹⁰⁹ The bat and ball sports of cricket and baseball were formally organized in San Francisco in 1854 and 1859, respectively.¹¹⁰ Although walking, cricket, baseball, and gymnastics enjoyed significant followings, fighting remained the pastime *par excellence* for most Californian men. For those with little leisure time, fighting was a quick source of sport, well suited for participant and spectator gambling. Fighting between consenting adults was generally tolerated, if not totally accepted, in Californian society.¹¹¹ Thus, when prizefighting blossomed into a popular Californian pastime in the 1850s, the sport faced little resistance, allowing several important prizefighters to earn pugilistic accolades during the California Gold Rush.

The Gold Rush attracted a motley crew of men to the west, including several promising pugilists. Future American heavyweight champion John 'Old Smoke' Morrissey, entered the prize ring for the first time in 1852, defeating George Thompson by knockout in California. John C. Heenan, another future American heavyweight champion, headed west at the age of seventeen, pursuing the riches of the Pacific slope. In California, Heenan distinguished himself in impromptu, free-for-all fights, showing promise with his fists. Both Morrissey and Heenan arrived in California in search of wealth, but both ultimately returned to New York to pursue prizefighting glory in earnest. For Morrissey, this meant a victorious fight against highly touted Irishman James 'Yankee' Sullivan for the American heavyweight championship. Remaining largely inactive as a prizefighter following the Sullivan fight, Morrissey still reigned in the heavyweight division when Heenan, dubbed the "Benicia Boy" for his fistic accomplishments in that Californian locale, returned to the Northeast in search of prizefights.¹¹² Eager to fight Morrissey, Heenan got his wish in 1858, fighting 'Old Smoke' at Long Point, Canada West, losing to the wily veteran after eleven rounds of combat.

Although Morrissey and Heenan eventually returned east, not all pugilists were keen to leave California. Indeed, as Elliott Gorn explains, many boxers enjoyed the relatively loose moral atmosphere of California's mining districts and urban port communities.¹¹³ By the Civil War era, California was home to enough pugilistically-savvy English, Irish, and American-born men, seeking employment beyond the saturated and hyper competitive labor force of the northeast, for sparring and prizefighting to rank

amongst the most popular sports in San Francisco. American-born prizefighters were rare in California, but not entirely absent from the fight scene. American pugilist Fred Coppers, for example, was one of many New York soldiers sent to California by the Union Army during the war, fighting Young Newton near San Francisco in 1865. Several English New York City sporting men, responding to increased reports of boxing in the west, moved to California during the Civil War to try their luck in the booming boxing scene. Prizefighter Johnny Lazarus, a former Union soldier, and sparring aficionado William Clarke, for example, both relocated to San Francisco during the Civil War era. The most infamous prizefighter in California, however, was Irishman Johnny Devine, better known as the 'Shanghai Chicken.' By the 1860s, Devine was a well-known member of the San Francisco underworld, respected by some for his accomplishments in the ring, but reviled by local authorities for his flagrant run-ins with the law.

An Irishman by birth, Johnny Devine originally settled in New York City. Devine's nickname – 'Shanghai Chicken' – is derived from two separate examples of working-class slang. The term "Shanghai" referred to the practice of drugging, or otherwise incapacitating sailors and selling them to ships without their knowledge. A sailor obtained in this fashion was said to be "shanghaied." The term "chicken" is a reference to fighting roosters, commonly applied to prize fighters in the nineteenth century. Ironically, legend has it – and much of what we know about 'Shanghai Chicken' is just that – Devine arrived in San Francisco after being "shanghaied" and forced to work on a ship himself.¹¹⁴ Although Devine did indeed live a wild and notorious life, his exploits are primarily and extensively chronicled by popular historians, leaving much of the

Irishman's life shrouded in a thick layer of hyperbole.¹¹⁵ In San Francisco, Devine entered the ring as a prizefighter, embracing the prevailing culture of risk and reward associated with California. By the 1860s, however, San Francisco's wild antebellum years gave way to a considerably more policed urban environment. When Devine fought an opponent named Brock in 1864, for example, he and his opponent were arrested after seventy-five rounds of fighting.¹¹⁶ Evidently learning from his misfortune with Brock, Devine took his next contest, against Patsy Marley in 1865, outside the city. A fellow Irishman, Marley was well known in America, appearing in prizefights earlier in the Civil War era against John Condle Orem in Delaware and Dooney Harris in Pennsylvania. Making one's way across the nation to California, however, was no easy task. There was no transcontinental railway until 1869. Rather than endure the hardships of land travel, Marley joined the crew of the clipper *Marmion*, working his way to San Francisco.¹¹⁷ The Devine-Marley fight was a protracted affair, spanning one hundred and forty three rounds before Devine was declared the winner on a foul, although Marley's infraction remains a mystery. According to the *New York Clipper*, "Marley had all the best of the so-called prize fight," committing nothing that could be construed as a foul in the final round.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, the 'Shanghai Chicken' walked away with a victory and the prize money, further reinforcing his status as one of the most skilled fighters on the Pacific Coast.

Despite Devine's pluck in the prize ring, he was too small to fight the larger, nationally renowned fighters of the northeast. Indeed, by the Civil War years, it was clear that California's best hope for national heavyweight glory was Billy Dwyer of San

Francisco. Born in Ireland in 1838, Dwyer fought with a wild, brawling style, typical of many boxers in the burgeoning western fight scene. Looking back on Dwyer's accomplishments in the 1880s, for example, the *National Police Gazette* adulated the Californian for his brawn and durability, but questioned his technical skills as a boxer.¹¹⁹ Dwyer's first appearance in the prize ring was an impromptu bout against Tom Chandler in front of about thirty people in 1862. By the time of Chandler's debut in the prize ring, he was already a trained pugilist by the time of the fight, learning the tricks of the trade under the tutelage of Joe Winrow. Chandler's boxing abilities were far superior to Dwyer's, but he lacked the latter's "bull-dog persistence" and durability in the ring. Ultimately, neither man was willing to give in to the other, resulting in a sixty-four round draw.¹²⁰ Although Dwyer went on to fight several high profile bouts, Chandler – considered an excellent prospect by most sportsmen in the west – was shot and badly wounded by Johnny Devine in 1865.¹²¹

After training and seconding Tom Chandler in his draw with Billy Dwyer, Joe Winrow brought forth Johnny Walker to face Dwyer in a more organized affair in 1863. Walker is a mysterious figure in the history of American boxing, his place of birth and occupation absent from contemporary reports. Herbert Ashbury provides a rare mention of Walker in his hyperbolized book *Barbary Coast*, describing the mysterious pugilist as a boarding house operator, crimp, and employer of Johnny Devine.¹²² Despite receiving expert training from Winrow, Walker came into his fight with Dwyer in just "passable" condition, struggling with an illness for several days prior to the bout. Dwyer, on the other hand, was described as a specimen of rowdy masculinity. According to a

report in the *New York Clipper*, Dwyer's muscles "were like iron, and his flesh as hard as marble."¹²³ Several rounds into their bout, it was clear that Walker and Dwyer were a good match, with each gaining the advantage at various points in their one hundred and six round contest. Although detailed descriptions of prizefights are not always warranted in a history such as this, the Dwyer-Walker contest provides exquisite insight into the tactics of the ring, as well as the overwhelming desire for victory, espoused by many pugilists on the west coast. Walker scored first blood in the very first round of competition, using his edge in technical boxing skills to score a hard right hand to Dwyer's nose before slipping out of striking distance. Despite Dwyer's muscular prowess, Walker managed to out-wrestle the sinewy Irishman early in the fight, throwing Dwyer to the turf in the second and third rounds. Walker's pace, however, slowed as the fight progressed, with his smooth boxing and tactful wrestling succumbing to the overall power and resilience of Dwyer. By round seventeen, Walker was badly beaten, "bleeding severely from the numerous cuts around his nose and face."¹²⁴ Recognizing his opponent's deteriorating condition, Dwyer lunged in to finish Walker in the eighteenth round, only to be thrown to the turf by Walker, who continued to wrestle expertly in his battered state. Dwyer and Walker fought into the darkness when, with all involved blinded by nightfall, the fighters were removed from the ring for the evening after agreeing to commence the battle again at six o'clock the following morning. When the Dwyer-Walker bout recommenced, Dwyer quickly took the upper hand, putting Walker to the turf nine rounds in a row. Finally, in the thirty-second round of fighting, Walker showed signs of life, landing a "stinger" on Dwyer's nose before

throwing the Irishman to the turf. For the remainder of the fight, however, Dwyer out wrestled and boxed Walker, closing up the latter's eyes. In the one hundred and sixth and final round, Walker found his way to the scratch by prying his eyes open with his fingers. Although Walker managed to lunge forward and grapple with Dwyer, he was promptly tossed to the ground, leading his seconds to halt the fight and admit defeat on his behalf. Distraught, Walker "seated himself on Winrow's knees, and cried like a child, at being debarred from continuing the struggle."¹²⁵

Following reports of California prizefights in the New York press, Englishmen Johnny Lazarus and Harry Gribben set out for California in 1863 aboard the steamship *North Star* to make their names in the west. Although plenty of sporting saloons predated Lazarus' arrival in California, he and Gribben opened their own, enjoying a degree of financial success by the endeavour.¹²⁶ After presenting himself as the lightweight champion of America, drawing contemptuous attention from local boxers, Lazarus was matched for a prizefight with fellow Englishman Peter Daley. Upon hearing the news of the scheduled Lazarus-Daley bout, Lazarus' brother Harry and William Clarke embarked on the perilous trip to San Francisco, traveling down the American coast via steamship to Panama, crossing to the Pacific Ocean via rail, before ultimately boarding another steamship for transport to California.¹²⁷ The Lazarus-Daley fight was held about a mile from Lakeville, California, near the Petaluma River.¹²⁸ Two steamers, the *Costa Contra* and *San Antonio*, conveyed the fighters, their respective camps, and approximately one thousand spectators, to the scene of the bout.¹²⁹ Back in San Francisco, a reform-minded journalist employed by the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* seethed with

disapproval.¹³⁰ “We call the attention of the Legislature,” wrote the anonymous *Bulletin* writer, “to the necessity of some enactment which may be used to prevent these demoralizing exhibitions.” Unsurprisingly, the *Bulletin* provided little coverage of the Lazarus-Daley fight, publishing only condemnations of the event. The *Sacramento Daily Union*, however, showed no such aversion, explaining the controversial details of the Lazarus-Daley battle for its readers. “The battle lasted two hours and ten minutes,” explained the *Union*, “There were thirty nine rounds. On the last round Lazarus went down without receiving a blow, and the Judges [*sic*] decided in favor of Daley.”¹³¹

Despite the less than pleasing outcome of the Lazarus-Daley bout, William Clarke and Johnny Lazarus both decided to remain in California. As historian Gary F. Kurutz suggests, Californians watched and played a multitude of saloon-oriented sports in the mid-nineteenth century, indulging in “a variety of contests, from bull-and-bear fights to billiards, laying the foundation for the State’s love affair with sport.”¹³² Monte and Faro, two gambling oriented card games, were also hugely popular in California. While sailors, miners, and other working-class Californian men revelled in San Francisco’s saloons, constructing identities firmly rooted in drunken rowdyism, gambling know-how, and sexual promiscuity, more reform-oriented residents demanded leisure beyond the confines of the saloon. By the early 1860s, San Francisco’s status as a bastion of rough masculinity was fading. Middle-class reformers attacked the alcohol-drenched, opium-fueled, sporting and gambling culture evident in many of the city’s saloons. Furthermore, by the middle of the 1860s, the city’s population was around forty percent female, greatly diluting the city’s overwhelming ‘maleness’ in the city of the previous

decade.¹³³ A middle-class civilizing process, focused more on family life and restraint, was well underway by the 1860s, reducing the city's tolerance for violent sport and gambling. Yet, despite a moral tightening of social norms, sport could be a profitable enterprise for those capable of navigating complicated middle-class expectations.

Although both Johnny Lazarus and William Clarke were Manhattan-based English immigrants of comparable social and occupational backgrounds, they experienced San Francisco in starkly different ways. Indeed, Clarke enjoyed more success than most northeastern sportsman in California, using his "Sportsman's Hall" in San Francisco as home base for the city's boxing scene. Once settled in the west, Clarke earned a reputation for his thorough and knowledgeable training of sparrers and, in 1864, was hired to "train gymnasts in the manly art" at the "Olympic Club" in San Francisco.¹³⁴ At the Olympic Club, Clarke earned the respect of San Francisco's growing middle class, helping clerks, merchants, and professionals fortify their bodies in pursuit of 'self-made' manhood.¹³⁵ Yet, like Israel Lazarus in New York and Jack Turner in Boston, Clarke was also a trusted and respected component in San Francisco prizefighting, using skills learned in the Northeast to organize fights, train pupils, and act as a cornerman.¹³⁶ Clarke's popularity in San Francisco was perhaps most apparent when the Englishman attempted to return east in 1865. After hearing news of Clarke's impending departure, a fan of the Englishman wrote a letter to the *New York Clipper* explaining that Clarke's absence would "be felt by the backers of pugilists and pugilists themselves, for his judgement was open to the one and his advice to the other at any time, and his recommendation could be relied upon for any amount."¹³⁷ While Clarke thrived,

tiptoeing between middle-class sparring and working-class prizefighting, Johnny Lazarus' fortunes spiralled downward, culminating in legal strife and near ruin.

By the 1860s, San Francisco's famous (or infamous) sporting culture was being curtailed and modified by middle-class reformers. Disgusted by the near lawless history of San Francisco, and agitated by the murder of the *Evening Bulletin's* reform-minded editor James King, a local merchant named William Coleman formed the San Francisco Committee of Vigilance (SFVC) in 1856, recruiting 2,500 members to aid in the administration of vigilante justice.¹³⁸ Although the SFVC disbanded after only three months of existence, the group managed to hang three men and deport thirty others.¹³⁹ Later in 1856, former SFVC members formed the People's Reform Party (PRP) to "carry on their work in constitutionally legitimate politics."¹⁴⁰ With overwhelming support from San Francisco's growing middle class, the PRP took power in the 1856 municipal election, initiating nine years of PRP (later renamed the People's Party) governance in the city.¹⁴¹ While Clarke flourished at the Olympic Club and his Sportsman's Hall Saloon, Lazarus' fondness for gambling invited unwanted attention from reform-oriented authorities. By November of 1863, Lazarus had been arrested for gambling on at least three occasions.¹⁴² In 1864, Lazarus was in considerably more troubled, suffering an arrest as an accessory to murder after a friend named James Rogers – alias 'Sick Jimmy' – shot Jack Foster through the eye, killing him instantly. As an eye witness, Lazarus was asked to testify, but refused. The police, therefore, arrested Lazarus for refusing to "testify or give any information when it was in his power."¹⁴³ Ultimately, Rogers was

convicted of manslaughter and Lazarus was released. Worn down by the unpredictability of Californian life, Lazarus promptly returned to New York City.¹⁴⁴

The “Next Big Thing” in American Pugilism: Prizefighting in Civil War Era Nevada Territory

Nevada Territory was little more than a vast, unpopulated expanse during the Civil War era, boasting few settlements of any size. The silver deposits located near Virginia City, however, made Nevada Territory an enormous financial boon to Union war efforts, making defensive measures for the area of paramount importance. According to Terry L. Jones, Nevada silver ultimately provided Lincoln’s army with a monetary injection of roughly forty-five million dollars.¹⁴⁵ These silver ore deposits, dubbed the “Comstock Lode,” inevitably attracted men west to Nevada Territory, resulting in the formation of the bustling community of Virginia City by 1859. Although much smaller than other boomtowns discussed in this dissertation, containing a population of less than 2,500 in 1860, Virginia City proved a hotbed of violent sporting activity during the Civil War era, attracting a number of itinerant pugilists to its welcoming saloons and ample fighting grounds. As one might suspect, the middle-class push for rational recreation and social order was less pronounced in Virginia City, where working-class men operated with considerable freedom.

In the absence of a concerted middle-class reform impulse, Virginia City quickly transformed into a “new Mecca of frontier pugilism” in the 1860s.¹⁴⁶ Following the discovery of the Comstock Lode in 1859, a steady stream of men wound its way to

Virginia City in search of wealth and adventure, but typically found only the latter.¹⁴⁷ According to George Moss, “Early Virginia City was wide-open; there were no regulations, no licensing, and no law enforcement, and no jail. Of the first 100 commercial buildings erected, 25 were saloons.”¹⁴⁸ In this “wide-open” community, prizefighting initially went unopposed by municipal officials. Before long, however, Virginia City was an organized, bustling community, with a busy police force. Although vice – particularly gambling, prostitution, and drunkenness – was commonplace in Virginia City, locals “strove for order early on.”¹⁴⁹ As Gunter Peck has shown, masculinities on the Comstock Lode were intimately tied to risk taking and the uncertainties of work underground.¹⁵⁰ Most miners living in Virginia City were wage laborers, not independent claim holders. The chances of ‘striking it rich’ on the Comstock were thin, and all but the most “naïve traveller” knew it.¹⁵¹ Nonetheless, by the Civil War era, Virginia City boasted a thriving gambling and sporting scene conducive to prizefighting.

As a boomtown, Virginia City was demographically comparable to San Francisco, consisting of a culturally diverse population from various parts of America as well as foreign countries. In his study of census returns from 1860 to 1910, historical archaeologist Kenneth H. Fliess found Virginia City residents born in all corners of the United States, as well as Ireland, Great Britain, Latin American, Asia, Europe, and elsewhere.¹⁵² Virginia City’s cultural diversity, like San Francisco, was rarely reflected in local prizefighting, dominated as it was by English and Irish pugilists. English prizefighter Harry Lazarus visited Virginia City in 1863, indulging in the boomtown’s sporting

subculture following his brother Johnny's prizefight in California.¹⁵³ In a letter to the *New York Clipper* dated September 12, 1863, Lazarus described the numerous sporting events held in Virginia City, including prizefighting, sparring, foot racing, and wrestling.¹⁵⁴ The "next big thing," according to Lazarus' September letter, was a prizefight between Tom Daley, his brother's old foe in California, and Billy McGrath, a boilermaker from New York City. Lazarus, like many northeastern men, likely underestimated the degree of violence that could accompany prizefights in the west. In Virginia City, explains historian Ronald Michael James, "at least part of the image of the Wild West was valid...Many of the people who first came to the mining district contributed to an early era of violence, reinforcing the stereotype of the frontier as popularly imagined."¹⁵⁵ The Daley-McGrath fight, which Lazarus was so eagerly anticipating, fell within this early era of Virginia City violence.

The McGrath-Daley bout of 1863 was closely contested, with both pugilists demonstrating "considerable science in sparring" throughout fourteen rounds of boxing before a violent and frenzied denouement. In the fourteenth round of fighting, McGrath knocked Daley off balance with a heavy right hand and attempted to land a left uppercut as the Californian tumbled to the turf. Following the uppercut, Daley's corner cried "foul," claiming their man was struck while on the turf. McGrath was, therefore, disqualified, much to the disgust of Harry Lazarus, who "was loud in his denunciation of the referee and everyone who agreed with him in his decision."¹⁵⁶ A man of Mexican origin, named Epitacis 'Muchacho' Moldanado, took exception to Lazarus' complaints, resulting in an impromptu duel between the men. In the excitement that ensued,

upwards of eight other men also drew their guns and, when the dust settled, Moldanado, Lazarus, and three others lay wounded from the fracas. Maldonado later died of his injuries.¹⁵⁷ Following the gruesome fallout of McGrath-Daley, the *Virginia [City] Evening Bulletin* urged local authorities to “do their utmost to abate this growing evil [prizefighting] on our young and prosperous Territory.”¹⁵⁸

Despite pleas for the prevention of prizefighting by the *Virginia Evening Bulletin*, prizefighting continued on the Comstock Lode supported by a cast of foreign-born pugilists. An Irishman named Patsy Foy, for example, fought in Nevada Territory twice in 1864, losing to Frank Bradley in April and defeating Bill Blackwood in August.¹⁵⁹ Undeterred by his mediocre record in 1864, Foy fought again in early 1865, defeating Harry Cooper of England.¹⁶⁰ As suggested by Moldonado’s presence at the McGrath-Daley contest, Nevadans of neither Irish nor English descent were also experimenting with prizefighting by the end of the Civil War era. A prizefight between a Mexican and a Polynesian islander, dubbed the “‘greaser’ and ‘kanaka’” by the *New York Clipper*, illustrates the prize ring’s growing appeal outside the English and Irish communities. Both terms – greaser and kanaka – were racial slurs, commonly used in the nineteenth century American west. According to legal scholar Steve Bender, author of *Greasers and Gringos: Latinos, Law and the American Imagination*, the slur ‘greaser’ has several possible origins. “Some suggest the derogatory description [‘greaser’] came from the practice of Mexican laborers greasing their backs to facilitate the unloading of hides and cargo,” explains Bender, “others supposed it stemmed from a similarity between Mexican skin colour and grease.” Others claim ‘greaser’ referred to a perceived lack of

hygiene amongst Mexican workers in the Southwest, resulting in “unwashed, greasy black hair.”¹⁶¹ ‘Kanaka’ was a broad racial slur, directed at Polynesian labourers in the United States, Australia, and Canada, commonly associated with Hawaiian immigrants working as unskilled labourers in the west.¹⁶² Bemused by ‘others’ trying their hand at prizefighting, the *Clipper* described the Mexican-Polynesian contest as “ludicrous and amusing,” calling the fight “one of the most ridiculous that ever was seen in any country in a prize ring.” It was evidently the ethnic backgrounds of the unnamed fighters that troubled the *Clipper*, as well as their unschooled pugilism, conducted with more wrestling than punching and, at times, open handed attacks.¹⁶³ The only form of prizefighting palatable to the *Clipper*, it seems, was that conducted by Anglo-Saxon or Celtic combatants, in accordance with the stylistic norms of the English ring.

The Colorado Champion: John Condle Orem in the Colorado and Montana Territories

East of Virginia City, boxing gripped the public’s imagination in the remote, mountainous environs of Civil War era Denver, Colorado Territory, where a promising blacksmith named John Condle Orem was rising to pugilistic prominence. Orem was a rare example of a highly-active, native-born, Civil War era pugilist. Born in Ohio, but dubbed the ‘Colorado Blacksmith’ and ‘Champion of Colorado,’ Orem travelled across the continent, performing in sparring exhibitions and prizefights, appearing in every major boxing region in the country. Orem started his pugilistic career in his adopted home, fighting Charles ‘Texas’ Delano near Denver on April 6, 1861. The *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, like many of its eastern counterparts, provided a lengthy report on the contest, detailing the stakes, wrestling holds, and first blood (scored by Orem), despite

labelling prizefighting as a “brutal” practice, that should be prevented.¹⁶⁴ In 1861, prizefights were uncommon in Denver, with Orem-Delano possibly representing the first in the community’s history.¹⁶⁵ Following the Delano-Orem contest, interest in boxing boomed in Denver, inspiring other men to try their hand in the ring, both publically and privately, with gloves and without. According to the *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, “since the encounter [Orem-Delano] last Saturday week, on the race track, the belligerent spirit has flourished amazingly.”¹⁶⁶

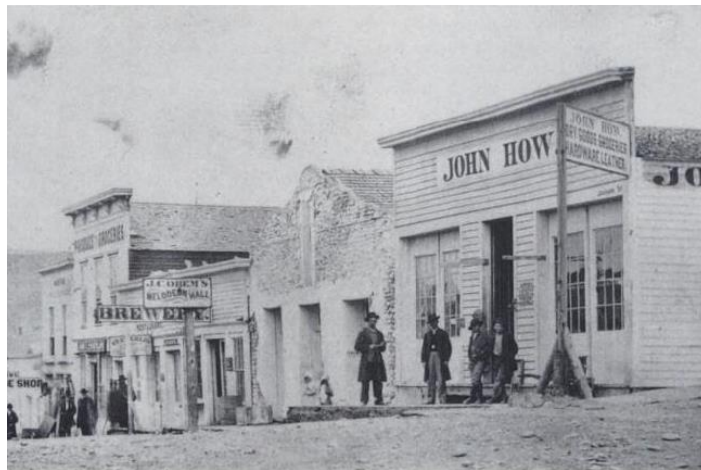
Orem capitalized on Denver’s pro-boxing sentiment, participating in a local sparring exhibition at Colorado Hall, Denver, alongside Englishman ‘Rough’ Enoch Davis. At the conclusion of their exhibition, Orem and Davis took advantage of the captive audience to announce their plans to fight thirty days later for one thousand dollars, in accordance with the Rules of the London Prize Ring.¹⁶⁷ On August 24, 1861, Orem and Davis, along with two thousand fans, proceeded to a corral - within which the ring was pitched – two miles from Denver. Inside that corral, Orem and Davis punched and wrestled their way through over one hundred rounds, with the former’s youth enduring over the latter’s experience and superior skill. In the one hundred and ninth round, an exhausted and battered Davis staggered to the scratch, only to collapse without suffering a blow, ending the contest. Chants of “Orem” filled the air and the “Colorado Champion” was born.¹⁶⁸

The Davis fight represented a crossroads for John C. Orem. The ‘Colorado Champion’ could stay in Denver, continuing his life as a blacksmith, or extend his

pugilistic career by travelling to more active fight scenes. Orem chose the latter. By January of 1863, Orem was in New York City, pedaling his pugilistic wares in the boxing capital of the nation. After much speculation in the New York sporting press, Orem made his boxing debut in Gotham in February 1863, sparring Jack Bath of England. The differences between western and northeastern sparring were immediately visible to those in attendance. Unlike his northeastern counterparts, Orem used wrestling tactics, usually reserved for bareknuckle prizefights, while sparring Bath. When a fan informed Orem that wrestling throws were prohibited in sparring, the 'Colorado Blacksmith' promptly apologized to Bath, "not knowing wrestling was tabooed."¹⁶⁹ Overall, the *New York Clipper* concluded that, while "strong as a bull," Orem had "much to learn yet in the way of science." Orem needed to hone the more technical aspects of boxing – blocking, foot work, head movement – if he intended to defeat his northeastern counterparts. After contesting two prizefights in the east – against Patsy Marely and Owen Goneghan, respectively – Orem opted to return west, arriving back in Denver in the April of 1864.

Upon arriving home in Denver, John Condle Orem promptly performed in a sparring exhibition for his local followers. The *Rocky Mountain News* proudly reported on the event, announcing: "Our Colorado Champion, Mr. John Condle Orem, of whom we are all proud, socially as well as physically, and who sustained his home reputation with *éclat* in all the cities of the east, gave a sparring exhibition the night before last in the spacious Denver Theatre."¹⁷⁰ But before long Orem faced the same predicament that forced him from the Rockies in the first place – a lack of competition. While on tour in Salt Lake City, Utah, Orem issued a challenge to Dooney Harris – an Englishman active

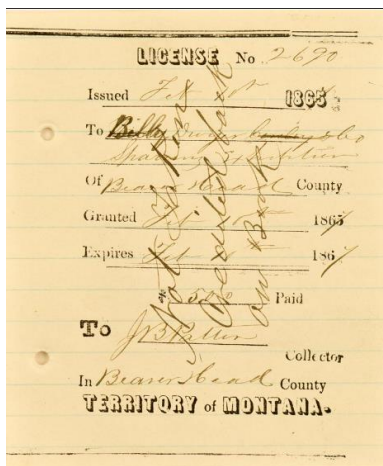
in the Eastern states – who previously agreed to fight Orem in Detroit, Michigan, or in the British Colonies. Orem offered to meet Harris ‘half way,’ for three or four thousand dollars, plus Harris’ expenses.¹⁷¹ Back in the northeast, the *New York Clipper* expressed disbelief at Orem’s offer, noting that Harris need not go “chasing Buffaloes” in the west to secure a prizefight.¹⁷² Indeed, the Northeastern prizefighting scene was booming in 1864, with Harris already scheduled to fight Peter Martin for one thousand dollars a side on October 28.



Above: If one looks carefully, a sign for ‘J.C. Orem’s Melodean Hall’ is visible near the large sign for a ‘Brewery’. Originally published in Michael Peter Malone, Richard B Roeder, William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2003), 83.

With few prospects for a fight, Orem continued to travel the west, holding exhibitions in Idaho Territory, before eventually settling in Virginia City, Montana Territory. A bustling mine town, Virginia City was the most populous community in the Territory by 1865, with newcomers arriving from all corners of the country and abroad.

According to Montana historians Malone, Roeder, and Lang, “the mining profession has always drawn together a diverse, cosmopolitan population, and the miners of Montana were no exception. Many miners and prospectors came from the Midwest and from border states like Missouri, but more drifted in directly from mining states and territories like California, Idaho, and Nevada.”¹⁷³ In Virginia City, Orem held sparring exhibitions and established a sporting saloon, providing sparring instruction to interested parties.¹⁷⁴ In a letter from ‘Old Sport’ to the *New York Clipper*, dated August 16, the author explains how one of Orem’s sparring exhibitions led to a prizefight between Joseph Riley, of Ireland, and Tom Foster, of England. According to the letter, Riley and Foster agreed to contest a prizefight via the Rules of the London Prize Ring for a purse of fifteen hundred dollars on September 20.¹⁷⁵ Orem took Riley under his wing, refusing to entertain any offers for a prizefight of his own until his pupil’s bout with Foster was complete. Like the Orem-Davis contest, the Riley-Foster match was held in a corral, preventing the crowd from interfering with the contest. The corral ultimately proved of great value. The fight was dirty from the start, with Foster receiving warnings for head-butting in rounds two and twenty-one, prompting stern words from the referee and shouts from the crowd. In the twenty-sixth and final round, Foster made a third attempt to head-butt, leading to cries of “foul” from Riley’s umpire and supporters. Fed up with Foster’s tactics, the referee disqualified the Englishman, proclaiming Riley the victor.¹⁷⁶ Despite the less than optimal outcome of the contest, an immense crowd of fight goers proceeded to Orem’s saloon, where the Virginia City Irish sang the praises of Orem as a trainer and second.¹⁷⁷



Above: A sparring license issued to John Condle Orem in 1867. The original document was auctioned off by Holabird-Kagin Americana in 2011.

Orem did not personally enter the prize ring in Virginia City, Montana, until February of 1865, when he faced Hugh O'Neill of Ireland, via Salt Lake City, for one thousand dollars a side in gold. With prizefighting going unpunished in Virginia City up to 1865, Orem rented the Leviathan Hall for his contest with O'Neill, using the gate receipts to provide the purse for the winner. The match proved a stiff test of Orem's resolve, with O'Neill outweighing the 'Colorado Champion' by a staggering fifty-two pounds. After one hundred and eighty-five rounds of fighting, taking over three hours to complete, the seconds of Orem and O'Neill declared the contest a draw.¹⁷⁸ The rules of the London Prize Ring, it seems, were only loosely adhered to in the Orem-O'Neill bout, with both men going down without a blow and O'Neill clearly striking Orem while the latter was down.¹⁷⁹ Orem did not fight again during the Civil War era, but did continue to operate his saloon in Virginia City, finally returning to the ring in a rematch with Patsy Marley later in 1865 near Helena, Montana.¹⁸⁰ Although Orem lost to Marley in their

rematch, he remained an important part of the Virginia City's sporting culture, maintaining the community's prizefighting scene for years to come.¹⁸¹

Conclusion

Aside from Elliott Gorn, few scholars of American boxing history have paid much attention to prizefighting in late antebellum Midwest and Western regions. Like the northeast, there was no *status quo* for boxing in the antebellum and Civil War Midwest. Different States approached boxing in vastly divergent ways: ranging from Missouri's *laissez-faire* approach to both prizefighting and sparring during the 1850s; to the same State's near eradication of boxing under martial law; to acceptance but disinterest in Ohio's German hotbeds of Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland at mid-century; to outright suppression of the sport in image-conscious Chicago in both the antebellum and Civil War eras. The West also boasted boxing scenes, most of which were entirely different from those struggling to exist in cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and even Chicago. It was throughout the west, along the 'golden coast' of California, and mine-dotted hills of the Nevada, Colorado, and Montana Territories that prize fighting was first truly incorporated into the pantheon of acceptable sports. Although the West and Midwest boasted their own boxers by the Civil War era, both regions experienced increased northeastern influence during wartime, producing spectacular prizefights, well-organized sparring saloons, and a number of sparring tours.

Unlike the far flung contests of the Northeast, Missouri's 'Bloody Island' bouts on the Mississippi River, or prizefights held by Chicago pugs in Indiana, prizefighting was

tolerated in the West and, in some instances, entirely embraced. Contrary to contemporary logic, John Condle Orem showed that, by holding prizefights indoors in Montana, within the Virginia City limits, greater order – not less – was introduced to prizefighting and, by extension, the community. With Orem directing fistic affairs, the wild ringside fisticuffs and gunfights noted in Missouri and Nevada Territory could be prevented by simply removing troublesome individuals from the venue. Boasting considerable experience in the northeastern boxing scene, Orem likely conceived of indoor prizefights after his glove fight with Patsy Marley in New York City. Although Northeastern influences, like those carried home to the west by Orem, were noticeable throughout the West, a vernacular style of boxing also emerged along the frontier. Indeed, rather than introducing boxing, Northeastern fighters like William Clarke and Johnny Lazarus merely augmented pre-existing boxing cultures, with their own regional, brawling style of pugilism.

Endnotes

¹ John C. Schneider, "Riot and Reaction in St. Louis, 1854-1856," *Missouri Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (1973/74), 173.

² Jeffrey S. Adler, *Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Antebellum West: The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4.

³ Jeffrey S. Adler, *Yankee Merchants*, 91.

⁴ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 3.

⁵ Jeffrey S. Adler, *Yankee Merchants*, 92.

⁶ Walter B. Stevens, "The Missouri Tavern," *Missouri Historical Review* 68, no. 1 (1973), 96.

⁷ Jeffrey S. Adler, "Streetwalkers, Degraded Outcasts, and Good-for-Nothing Huzzies: Women and the Dangerous Class in Antebellum St. Louis," *Journal of Social History* 25, no. 4 (1992), 737.

⁸ Schneider, "Riot and Reaction," 173-175.

⁹ Schneider, "Riot and Reaction," 177; See also, Adler, "Streetwalkers," 737.

¹⁰ William Barnaby Faherty, *The St. Louis Irish: An Unmatched Celtic Community* (St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2001), 53.

¹¹ For a duel in 1810 see, William L. Burton, "The Life and Death of Bloody Island: A Ferry Tale," *Western Illinois Regional Studies* 11, no. 1 (1988), 8. For duels of the 1820s, see Charles Van Ravenswaay, *St. Louis: An Informal History of the City and its People, 1764-1865* (St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1991), 188-203.

¹² Brooks ultimately defeated Williams. *New York Clipper*, September 6, 1856.

¹³ *New York Clipper*, September 11, 1858; *New York Clipper*, December 11, 1858.

¹⁴ Information regarding the nativity of Midwestern prizefighters can be gleaned from newspaper reports. For Johnny Mackey see *New York Sun*, January 25, 1865. For Nobby Clarke, see *New York Clipper*, May 23, 1863; For Johnny Sweetman, see *New York Clipper*, November 10, 1866; For Barney Duffey, see *New York Clipper*, January 31, 1863. For Jesse Sedford and James Brannon, see *New York Clipper*, October 1, 1864; For Tim Monahan and Neil Doyle, see *Chicago Tribune*, May 10, 1861; For John McGlade see, *Chicago Tribune*, July 2, 1861. For Daniel "Bendigo" Smith, see *National Police Gazette*, November 6, 1880. For McGlade-Smith prize fight see, *Chicago Tribune*, December 31, 1861; For Tom Baun see, *New York Clipper*, November 7, 1863. For Tom Shevan see, *Daily True Delta (New Orleans)*, July 13, 1864.

¹⁵ For Looney's nativity see, *1870 American Federal Census*, State: Missouri, County: St. Louis, Community: Subdivision No. 15, page 75, line 22. Accessed: www.ancestry.com Date Accessed: December 18, 2013. For Coburn-Looney bouts see *New York Clipper*, August 14, 1859. *New York Clipper*, December 11, 1858.

¹⁶ *New York Clipper*, September 11, 1858.

¹⁷ *New York Clipper*, August 20, 1859.

¹⁸ *New York Clipper*, August 20, 1859.

¹⁹ *New York Clipper*, September 3, 1859.

²⁰ *New York Clipper*, September 3, 1859.

²¹ *New York Clipper*, September 10, 1859.

²² Bruce Catton, *Centennial History of the Civil War [CHCW]*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 374-377; William L. Barney, *Battle Ground for the Union: The Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction, 1848-1877 [BGU]* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), 152-153; Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative [CWN]*, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1958), 90-91.

²³ Barney, *BGU*, 153. Catton, *CHCW*, vol. 1, 379.

²⁴ *St. Louis Democrat*, as cited by the *Chicago Tribune*, May 10, 1861.

²⁵ *St. Louis Democrat*, as cited by the *Chicago Tribune*, May 10, 1861. See also, *New York Clipper*, May 18, 1861.

²⁶ *New York Clipper*, July 20, 1861.

²⁷ Shelby Foote suggests “news from Manassas [Bull Run] dampened Unionist spirits.” Foote, *CWN*, vol. 1, 90.

²⁸ *New York Clipper*, August 17, 1867.

²⁹ James Neil Primm, *Lion of the Valley: St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980*, 243. See also, Stephen C. Neff, *Justice in Blue and Gray: A Legal History of the Civil War* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 42; Adam Arenson, *The Great Heart of the Republic: St. Louis and the Cultural Civil War* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 120-121; Dorothy Denneen Volo and James M. Volo, *Daily Life in Civil War America* (Santa Barbra, California: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 367.

³⁰ Gerteis estimates that as many as 5,000 civilians may have been jailed at Gratiot Street Prison alone. Louis D. Gerteis, “‘An Outrage to Humanity’: Martial Law and Military Prisons in St. Louis During the Civil War,” *Missouri Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (2002), 304.

³¹ *New York Clipper*, April 18, 1863.

³² *New York Clipper*, August 29, 1863.

³³ *New York Herald*, June 17, 1864. Another, smaller affair was held in April of the same year. *Smokey Hill and Republican Union*, April 23, 1864.

³⁴ Tom Shevan, of Ireland, and Adams, of Hebrew descent, fought on June 30. See *Daily True Delta*, July 13, 1864. Matt Hogan and Silas Payne fought on August 21. See *Daily True Delta*, September 1, 1864.

³⁵ *New York Clipper*, July 23, 1864.

³⁶ Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago: From Town to City, 1848-1871*, vol. 2 (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago press, 1975), 3.

³⁷ Jacqueline Peterson, "'Wild Chicago': The Formation and Destruction of a Multi-Racial Community on the Midwestern Frontier, 1816-1837," in *Ethnic Frontier: Group Survival in Chicago and the Midwest*, edited by Melvin G. Holli and Peter J'A. Jones (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1977), 50.

³⁸ Dominic A. Pacyga, *Chicago: A Biography* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 31. See also, Michael F. Funchion, "Irish Chicago: Church, Homeland, Politics, and Class – The Shaping of an Ethnic Group, 1870-1900," in *Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait*, edited by Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 57; Eileen M. McMahan, *What Parish Are You From?: A Chicago Irish Community and Race Relations* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 8.

³⁹ For Germans in the skilled workforce see, Halmut Keil and John B. Jentz, eds., *German Workers in Chicago: A Documentary History of Working-class Culture* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 3. For the Irish as impoverished Chicagoans see, Lawrence J. McCaffrey, "The Irish American Dimension," in *The Irish in Chicago*, edited by Lawrence J. McCaffrey et. al (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 2; Patricia Kelleher, "Class and Catholic Irish Masculinity in Antebellum America: Young Men on the Make in Chicago," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28, no. 4 (2009), 12.

⁴⁰ For Turner Societies in Chicago see, Steve A. Riess, *City Games*, 23; Gerald Gems, "The German Turners and the Taming of Radicalism in Chicago," in *Gymnastics, A Transatlantic Movement*, edited by Gertrud Pfister (New York: Routledge, 2011), 38-42.

⁴¹ Kelleher, "Irish Masculinity," 10.

⁴² J.J. Johnston and Sean Curtin, *Boxing in Chicago* (Chicago, Illinois: Arcadia Publishing, 2005), 11.

⁴³ *Chicago Democrat*, as quoted by *New York Clipper*, November 13, 1858.

⁴⁴ *New York Clipper*, July 8, 1854.

⁴⁵ For Roberts-Murphy see, *Chicago Tribune*, January 21, 1856; *New York Clipper*, July 5, 1856.

⁴⁶ *New York Clipper*, April 26, 1856; *New York Clipper*, August 30, 1856.

⁴⁷ Elliott Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 99. For Parker as English see *National Police Gazette*, July 17, 1880. Parker came to America in January of 1854. See, *New York Clipper*, May 6, 1854.

⁴⁸ *New York Clipper*, October 18, 1856.

⁴⁹ *New York Clipper*, December 16, 1856.

⁵⁰ Jem Parker's time in America was brief, being cut short by tuberculosis. Parker arrived in America around January of 1854 and was quickly matched to fight Harry Gribben. The Gribben fight did not materialize due to confusion regarding the fighting grounds. Parker was just twenty-two years of age when the Gribben fight fell through and should have enjoyed many more years in the ring. For a short

time, Parker operated the Sportsman's Hall saloon in Chicago with fellow Englishman Johnny Mackey, but became increasingly ill, ultimately deciding to relocate to New York. After selling his share of the Sportsman's Hall in Chicago to his partner Johnny Mackey, Parker opened the Sawdust House saloon in Manhattan. Despite his illness, Parker continued to participate in sparring benefits in 1857, performing in New York and Buffalo. When, exactly, Parker died is difficult to determine. In a summary of Harry Gribben's career published in 1860, the *New York Herald* states Parker was already deceased, succumbing to his tuberculosis. According to *New York Herald* obituaries, a twenty-eight year old named James Parker of London, England, died in New York in 1858, but it's difficult to determine if this was the prize fighter affectionately known as "Jem." For Parker's sale of his share of Sportsman's Hall to Johnny Mackey see, *New York Clipper*, March 14, 1857. For Parker's "Sawdust House" see, *New York Clipper*, March 21, 1857; *New York Clipper*, March 28, 1857; For Parker's benefit in New York City see, *New York Clipper*, April 18, 1857. For Parker in Buffalo see, *New York Clipper*, June 13, 1857. Parker's fatal battle with tuberculosis is revealed in a description of Harry Gribben's career in 1860. See, *New York Herald*, April 25, 1860. For obituary of James Parker of London, England, see, *New York Herald*, March 28, 1858.

⁵¹ *New York Clipper*, March 21, 1857.

⁵² *New York Clipper*, March 14, 1857; *National Police Gazette*, August 21, 1880.

⁵³ *New York Clipper*, April 11, 1857.

⁵⁴ *New York Clipper*, May 9, 1857.

⁵⁵ *New York Clipper*, June 13, 1857.

⁵⁶ *New York Clipper*, July 11, 1857.

⁵⁷ *New York Clipper*, April 17, 1859.

⁵⁸ *New York Clipper*, September 5, 1857; *New York Clipper*, September 22, 1860.

⁵⁹ *New York Clipper*, May 29, 1858.

⁶⁰ *New York Clipper*, March 31, 1860.

⁶¹ *New York Clipper*, June 1, 1861.

⁶² *New York Clipper*, June 29, 1861.

⁶³ *New York Clipper*, June 29, 1861.

⁶⁴ *New York Clipper*, June 1, 1861.

⁶⁵ Ainsworth Station was located southwest of Michigan City, Indiana.

⁶⁶ *Chicago Tribune*, July 2, 1861.

⁶⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1861.

⁶⁸ *Chicago Tribune*, July 17, 1861.

⁶⁹ *Chicago Tribune*, December 31, 1861.

⁷⁰ *Chicago Tribune*, January 4, 1862.

⁷¹ *New York Clipper*, February 13, 1864.

⁷² *New York Clipper*, February 27, 1864; *New York Clipper*, March 19, 1864.

⁷³ Michael F. Funchion, "Political and Nationalist Dimensions," *The Irish in Chicago*, edited by Lawrence J. McCaffery (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 62.

⁷⁴ Funchion, "Political and Nationalist Dimensions," 62. See also, Pierce, *A History*, 437-438; Pacyga, *Chicago*, 130.

⁷⁵ Funchion, "Political and Nationalist Dimensions," 63.

⁷⁶ Pierce, *A History*, 432.

⁷⁷ Pierce, *A History*, 433. Pierce notes the popularity of billiards and bowling as forums for gambling in Chicago. See Pierce, *A History*, 32. Indeed, it seems billiards proved a more important source of gambling for Chicagoans than pugilism. For more on early billiards see, Steve Riess, *City Games*, 17.

⁷⁸ Andrew R.L. Cayton, *Ohio: The History of a People* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2003), 144. According to historian David Stadling, forty percent of the population of Cincinnati was either "German or born to German parents" by 1850, while the Irish represented just twelve percent. David Stadling, *Cincinnati: From River City to Highway Metropolis* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 31. It should be noted that, although his book *Cincinnati* is published via popular press, Stadling is an accomplished professor at the University of Cincinnati, specializing in urban and environmental history.

⁷⁹ Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, "Cleveland: The Making and Remaking of an American City, 1796-1993, in *Cleveland: A Metropolitan Reader*, edited by W. Dennis Keating, Norman Krumholz, and David C. Perry (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1995), 35.

⁸⁰ Warren R. Van Tine, *A History of Labor in Columbus, Ohio, 1812-1992* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 11.

⁸¹ *New York Clipper*, March 7, 1857.

⁸² *New York Clipper*, July 5, 1856.

⁸³ Mackey is listed as a resident of Boston in the research of Dan H. Laurence and Margot Peters pertaining to George Bernard Shaw and Elliott Gorn's work on bare-knuckle prize fighting in America. See George Bernard Shaw, *Unpublished Shaw*, vol. 16, edited by Dan H. Laurence and Margot Peters (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 162; Gorn, *Manly Art*, 105.

⁸⁴ *New York Clipper*, September 3, 1859; *New York Clipper*, September 17, 1859.

⁸⁵ Gerald R. Gems, *Windy City Wars: Labor, Leisure and Sport in the Making of Chicago* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 15.

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- ⁸⁶ Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Wheeler, "Cleveland: The Making and Remaking of an American City, 1796-1993" in *Cleveland: A Metropolitan Reader*, edited by William Dennis Keating and Norman Krumholz (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1995), 35. See also, Carol Poh Miller and Robert A. Miller, *Cleveland: A Concise History, 1796-1990* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1990), 70.
- ⁸⁷ For the establishment of the Cleveland Turnverein see, William Ganson Rose, *Cleveland: The Making of a City* (Kent, Ohio: Kent University Press, 1990), 221. For the political ideology underpinning the *Turnverein* see, Robert Knight Barney, "Forty Eighters and the Rise of the *Turnverein* Movement in America," in *Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture*, edited by George Eisen and David Kenneth Wiggins (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 19-21.
- ⁸⁸ *New York Clipper*, August 11, 1860.
- ⁸⁹ *New York Clipper*, August 11, 1860.
- ⁹⁰ For Sweetman and Mackey in Indianapolis see, *New York Clipper*, December 1, 1860; For Mackey's saloon in Cincinnati see, *New York Clipper*, June 1, 1861.
- ⁹¹ *New York Clipper*, December 7, 1861.
- ⁹² For the Cincinnati *Turnverein* see, Barney, "Forty Eighters," 20.
- ⁹³ *New York Clipper*, May 2, 1863.
- ⁹⁴ Henry L. Hunker, "Columbus, Ohio," *The American Midwest: An Interpretive Encyclopedia*, edited by Richard Sisson, Christian Zacher, and Andrew Cayton, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press), 1157.
- ⁹⁵ Stradling, *Cincinnati*, 31.
- ⁹⁶ *New York Clipper*, January 9, 1864.
- ⁹⁷ Glenna Matthews, *The Golden State in the Civil War: Thomas Star King, the Republican Party, and the Birth of Modern California* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 106.
- ⁹⁸ Terry L. Jones, *Historical Dictionary of the Civil War*, vol. 1 (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 248.
- ⁹⁹ Jones, *Historical Dictionary*, vol. 1, 249.
- ¹⁰⁰ Roger W. Lotchin, *San Francisco, 1846-1856: From Hamlet to City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 4.
- ¹⁰¹ Susan Lee Johnson, "Bulls, Bears, and Dancing Boys: Race, Gender, and Leisure in the California Gold Rush," in *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West*, edited by Matthew Basso, Laura McCall, and Dee Garceau (New York: Routledge, 2001), 63.
- ¹⁰² Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 42.

¹⁰³ Christopher Herbert, 'Life's Prizes Are by Labor Got': Risk, Reward, and White Manliness in the California Gold Rush," *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 3 (2011), 341.

¹⁰⁴ Herbert, "'Life's Prizes Are by Labor Got'," 346.

¹⁰⁵ Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 42.

¹⁰⁶ For attempts at Sunday drinking reform see, Roberta J. Park, "San Franciscans at Work and at Play, 1846-1869" *Journal of the West* 22, no. 1 (1983), 46; Some newcomers to California were shocked by the prevalence of Sabbath recreations. See, Gary F. Kurutz, "Popular Culture on the Golden Shore," *California History* 79, no. 2 (2000), 281 and 301.

¹⁰⁷ Johnson, "Bulls, Bears, and Dancing Boys," 67; See also, Kurutz, "Golden Shore," 300; Park, "San Franciscans," 46 and 49.

¹⁰⁸ Roberta J. Park, "German Associational and Sporting Life in the Greater San Francisco Bay Area, 1850-1900," *Journal of the West* 26, no. 1 (1987), 49-50; Roberta J. Park, "Private Play and Public Spectacle: Ethnic Sports and Celebrations in California, 1848-1915," *Stadion* 12/13 (1986/1987), 153-154 Gary F. Kurutz, "Popular Culture on the Golden Shore," *California History* 79, no. 2 (2000), 304-305; Lotchin, *San Francisco*, 122.

¹⁰⁹ Kurutz, "Popular Culture on the Golden Shore," 304.

¹¹⁰ Park, "San Franciscans," 48-49.

¹¹¹ Roger D. McGrath, "A Violent Birth: Disorder, Crime, and Law Enforcement, 1849-1890," *California History* 81, no. 3/4 (2003), 28.

¹¹² Benicia is located less than fifty miles northeast of San Francisco, near the entrance to Grizzly Bay.

¹¹³ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 165.

¹¹⁴ Lawrance Binda, *The Big, Bad Book of John: Rogues, Rascals and Rapsallions Named John, Jonathan and Jack* (Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse, 2003), 25.

¹¹⁵ The most famous of these accounts was written by Herbert Ashbury, the same man who wrote the heavily fictionalized history *Gangs of New York*. See Herbert Ashbury, *The Barbary Coast: An Informal History of the San Francisco Underworld* (New York: Basic Books, 1933), 218-222. See also Georgia Smith, "About that Blood in the Scuppers," *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, Edited by James Brook, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy J. Peters (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 56; Binda, *The Big, Bad Book of John*, 24-26.

¹¹⁶ *New York Clipper*, July 30, 1864.

¹¹⁷ *New York Clipper*, February 5, 1865.

¹¹⁸ *New York Clipper*, February 5, 1865.

¹¹⁹ *National Police Gazette*, March 5, 1881.

¹²⁰ *New York Clipper*, July 12, 1862.

¹²¹ *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 23, 1865.

¹²² Herbert Ashbury, *The Barbary Coast: An Informal History of the San Francisco Underworld* (New York: Basic Books, 1933), 218-222.

¹²³ *New York Clipper*, November 7, 1863.

¹²⁴ *New York Clipper*, November 7, 1863.

¹²⁵ *New York Clipper*, November 7, 1863.

¹²⁶ *New York Clipper*, November 25, 1863.

¹²⁷ We know this was the route taken by Lazarus and Clarke due to the rapidity of their voyage. The duo left New York City on February 11, arriving in San Francisco sometime before March 10. The only route that would provide such a speedy journey was through Panama. For more on the Panama steamship/rail route to California see, Malcolm Rohrbough, "No Boys' Play: Migration and Settlement in Early Gold Rush California," *California History* 79, no. 2 (2000), 32. For the report of Harry Lazarus' departure from New York via steamship see, *New York Clipper*, February 14, 1863.

¹²⁸ The *National Police Gazette* refers to the fighting grounds as "one mile from Lake City, Hetaluma Creek, San Francisco." The author was likely referring to present day Lakeville, near the Petaluma River. See, *National Police Gazette*, March 19, 1881. The *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* also places the Lazarus-Daley prize fight at "Lake City." See, *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, March 11, 1863. The *Sacramento Daily Union*, however, states that the fight was one mile from "Lakeville, Sonoma County." This latter statement is almost certainly correct. See, *Sacramento Daily Union*, March 11, 1863.

¹²⁹ *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, March 10, 1863; *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, March 11, 1863; *National Police Gazette*, March 19, 1881.

¹³⁰ According to Bean and Rawls, reform oriented articles were common in the *Evening Bulletin*. See, Walton Bean and James J. Rawls. *California: An Interpretive History* (San Francisco: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1988), 114.

¹³¹ *Sacramento Daily Union*, March 11, 1863. The *Daily Alta California* also provided a report of the fight, including round by round coverage. See, *Daily Alta California*, March 11, 1863.

¹³² Gary F. Kurutz, "Popular Culture on the Golden Shore," *California History* 79, no. 2 (2000), 280.

¹³³ William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932: Politics, Power, and Urban Development* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 14.

¹³⁴ *New York Clipper*, March 12, 1864. For the name of the gymnasium see, *New York Clipper*, March 18, 1865. For more on the Olympic Club see, Park, "San Franciscans," 50.

¹³⁵ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 3.

¹³⁶ The Patsy Marley-Johnny Devine match of 1865, for example, was organized at William Clarke's "Sportsman's Hall" and Marley was seconded by Clarke. *New York Clipper*, February 5, 1862. One of

Clarke's gymnast pupils appeared in the prize ring in 1865, seconded by Clarke and Patsy Marley. *New York Clipper*, March 18, 1865. For William Clarke as a sparer see, *New York Clipper*, March 25, 1865.

¹³⁷ For the full letter detailing Clarke's contribution to boxing in San Francisco see, *New York Clipper*, March 18, 1865.

¹³⁸ James King, often known as James King of William, was murdered by an ex-convict named James P. Casey. See, Richard H. Dillon, editor and compiler, "'Rejoice Ye Thieves and Harlots!': The Vigilance Editorials of the San Francisco Journalist James King of William," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1958), 142; Bean and Rawls, *California: An Interpretive History*, 114.

¹³⁹ Edward Staniford, *The Pattern of California History* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1975), 171.

¹⁴⁰ Phillip J. Ethington, "Vigilantes and the Police: The Creation of a Professional Police Bureaucracy in San Francisco, 1847-1900," *Journal of Social History* 21, no. 2 (1987), 202. See also, Bean and Rawls, *California: An Interpretive History*, 117; Issel and Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865-1932*, 21.

¹⁴¹ Theodore H. Hitell, *History of California*, III (San Francisco, 1898), 637, as cited by Walton Bean, "Ideas of Reform in California," *California Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (1972), 214.

¹⁴² For Johnny Lazarus' arrests for gambling see, *Daily Alta California*, February 26, 1863; *Daily Alta California*, June 11, 1863; *Sacramento Daily Union*, November 21, 1863.

¹⁴³ *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, February 15, 1864.

¹⁴⁴ For Roger's conviction see, *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, July 15, 1864; *New York Clipper*, August 13, 1864. For Johnny Lazarus' plans to return to New York City see, *New York Clipper*, September 5, 1863.

¹⁴⁵ Jones, *Historical Dictionary*, vol. 2, 1000.

¹⁴⁶ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 165.

¹⁴⁷ Up until 1861, the site that would become Virginia City was part of Utah Territory. Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 57-58.

¹⁴⁸ George Moss, "Silver Frolic: Popular Entertainment in Virginia City, Nevada, 1859-1863," *Journal of Popular Culture* 22, no. 2 (1998), 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ronald Michael James, *The Roar and the Silence: A History of Virginia City and the Comstock Lode* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1998), 33.

¹⁵⁰ Gunter Peck, "Manly Gambles: The Politics of Risk on the Comstock Lode," in *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West*, edited by Matthew Basso, Laura McCall, and Dee Garceau (New York: Routledge, 2001), 77-78.

¹⁵¹ Ronald Michael James, *The Roar and the Silence: A History of Virginia City and the Comstock Lode* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1998), 23.

¹⁵² Kenneth H. Fliess, "There's Gold in Them Thar—Documents? The Demographic Evolution of Nevada's Comstock, 1860 through 1910, and the Intersection of Census Demography and Historical Archaeology," *Historical Archaeology* 34, no. 2 (2000), 78.

¹⁵³ *New York Clipper*, August 1, 1863.

¹⁵⁴ *New York Clipper*, October 17, 1863.

¹⁵⁵ James, *Roar and the Silence*, 32.

¹⁵⁶ *New York Herald*, October 18, 1863.

¹⁵⁷ *New York Herald*, October 18, 1863; *New York Clipper*, October 24, 1863.

¹⁵⁸ *Virginia Evening Bulletin*, September 13, 1863.

¹⁵⁹ For Foy's fight with Bradley see, *New York Clipper*, April 16, 1864; For Foy's fight with Blackwood see, *New York Clipper*, August 6, 1864, *New York Clipper*, March 4, 1865.

¹⁶⁰ *New York Clipper*, March 4, 1865.

¹⁶¹ Steve Bender, *Greasers and Gringos: Latinos, Law and the American Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), xiii.

¹⁶² Joe Harris and W.J. Harris, "The Struggle Against Pacific Island Labour, 1868-1902," *Labour History*, no. 15 (1968), 41. For use of the term in the American contest, see *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, November 6, 1861; *San Francisco Evening Bulletin*, December 18, 1861.

¹⁶³ *New York Clipper*, August 20, 1864.

¹⁶⁴ *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, April 8, 1861. The *New York Clipper* incorrectly reported the location of this fight as Denver City, Kansas. For the *Clipper's* inaccurate report see, *New York Clipper*, April 27, 1861.

¹⁶⁵ *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, April 8, 1861.

¹⁶⁶ *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, April 15, 1861.

¹⁶⁷ *Daily Rocky Mountain News*, July 11, 1861.

¹⁶⁸ *Weekly Rocky Mountain News*, August 28, 1861.

¹⁶⁹ *New York Clipper*, February 7, 1863.

¹⁷⁰ *Rocky Mountain Daily News* as quoted by *New York Clipper*, April 14, 1864.

¹⁷¹ *New York Clipper*, July 30, 1864; *New York Clipper*, August 6, 1864.

¹⁷² *New York Clipper*, July 30, 1864.

¹⁷³ Michael Peter Malone, Richard B Roeder, William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2003), 68.

¹⁷⁴ *New York Clipper*, September 15, 1864.

¹⁷⁵ *New York Clipper*, September 15, 1864.

¹⁷⁶ *New York Clipper*, October, 29, 1864.

¹⁷⁷ *New York Clipper*, October, 29, 1864.

¹⁷⁸ *New York Clipper*, March 18, 1865; See also, *Montana Post*, February 18, 1865.

¹⁷⁹ *Montana Post*, February 18, 1865.

¹⁸⁰ An amphitheater was actually constructed for this fight. See, *Montana Post*, November 11, 1865.

¹⁸¹ For a general overview of Orem's career in Montana see, Warren Judson Brier, *The Frightful Punishment: Con Orem and Montana's Great Glove Fights of the 1860's* (Missoula, Montana: University of Montana Press, 1969)

Conclusion and Epilogue

The Civil War influenced prizefighting and sparring differently across the Union States. There was no over-arching 'American' boxing experience during the Civil War years, but rather a number of related, albeit different, local and regional boxing scenes, moulded by prevailing notions of race, ethnicity, class, and masculinity. These local and regional social differences were also carried into the Union Army, producing a diverse array of boxing experiences throughout the North's military. Although the antebellum era boxing traditions of Union States formed the foundation for the Civil war era sport, wartime pugilism was adapted to Civil War realities by civilians and soldiers alike. The violent, nativist riots that marked the antebellum era abated during the Civil War era, stripping prizefighting of some, but not all, of its ethnic symbolism. Yet, the Irish, English, and American-born working class men continued to be disproportionately represented in the prize ring. Although German immigrants experimented with sparring and prizefighting, particularly in the Union Army and civilian boxing scenes in Ohio, few practiced the sport in earnest by the end of the Civil War years. While sparring aficionados struggled to generate traction in Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Columbus, other cities experienced a wartime boom in the sport's popularity. In some northeastern locales, for example, public sparring became a form of mass entertainment as working- and middle-class men increasingly employed communal understandings of masculinity to combat the wicked uncertainty of war. Despite the war's strong racial underpinnings,

and a growing abolitionist movement in much of the North, African Americans struggled for acceptance in sparring and prizefighting, blamed as they were for 'white' deaths on the battlefield. Although prizefighting sporadically continued throughout the Civil War era Northeast and Midwest, a number of northeastern prizefighters looked further afield, to California, Nevada, Colorado, and Montana, for more promising pugilistic opportunities. The prizefights of the Western mining frontier, however, were not limited to Irish, English, and American-born fighters. Indeed, Mexican and Polynesian workers paid increasing attention to prizefighting in the West, becoming both fans and fighters. Following the Civil War's completion, however, new social and cultural trends emerged in boxing, indicating continuity with and deviation from wartime practices.

Wartime Boxing and Ethnicity

This dissertation has shown how both sparring and prizefighting were used to demonstrate ethnic pride in the late antebellum, before ethnic tensions eased somewhat during the Civil War era. As the numbers of immigrant, famine-era Irish grew in America's antebellum cities, so too did competition in the working-class labor market. As the 1850s progressed, bareknuckle prizefighting was indicative of broader, ethnic tensions, prevailing in American cities. Irish and American-born workers, in particular, invested national pride in particular prizefighters, turning such men into symbolic representations of their respective ethnic groups. Following widespread rioting by nativist, American-born citizens and Irish newcomers in cities like New York City, Brooklyn, St. Louis, Chicago, and Philadelphia, ethnic tensions appeared stretched

beyond repair. Although tensions between Irish and America-born citizens did not disappear entirely during the Civil War, they became much less pronounced. Prizefighting became less about ethnic rivalries, and more about working-class recreation and distraction. Yet, ethnicity did play an important role in the proliferation of boxing practices throughout the country. In the Union Army, where German, Irish, and American-born immigrants interacted more than anytime previously, several German men laced up the sparring gloves or traded bareknuckles in the “magic circle.” In civilian populations, however, Irish and English populations proved a critical component of boxing popularity. In the heavily German settled communities of Ohio, for example, sparring aficionados struggled in vain to introduce boxing to citizens more interested in gymnastics and baseball.¹

Boxing, Class, and Wartime Masculinities

This dissertation has illustrated the manifold ways in which boxing impacted masculinity during the Civil War era, in both martial and civilian environments. Numerous, competing forms of masculine identification existed in the Union States, producing divergent interpretations of appropriate boxing practices. With the traditional artisanal system of labour breaking down under the weight of industrialization and commercialization, men increasingly identified with broad working- or middle-class interpretations of masculinity, which they in turn applied to boxing. For middle-class men, the competitive nature of the market economy and largely sedentary work habits of office-based positions led many clerks, lawyers, and merchants, to pursue “self-

made” notions of manhood via physical and mental fortification in private, gloved sparring lessons.² Working-class men sparred as well, but in smaller numbers, preferring public sparring benefits and exhibitions as a form of spectator sport, allowing groups of men with limited time and money to invest ethnic and masculine pride in a single performer.

In the Union Army, sparring was a common distraction for both working- and middle-class recruits, providing healthy exercise, warmth, and camaraderie for thousands of soldiers. A practice familiar to virtually all Union volunteers, soldiers adapted sparring to suit the norms of camp life. Beyond their respective, pre-war social units, for the first time soldiers of all classes and backgrounds reveled in the competitive nature of military life, giving sparring new uses and meanings. Men actively participated in boxing more than ever, competing against each other for personal and regimental bragging rights, nurturing competitive, physical, masculine identities compatible with the violent realities of military service. For many men, simply practicing or watching sparring – as was common before the war – was no longer sufficient and fulfilling. Indeed, some men took their participation in boxing to new extremes, taking off the gloves to demonstrate their physical, masculine prowess in bareknuckle prizefights to settle bets, resolve disputes, and determine the ‘best man.’

The relationship between masculinity and boxing was also altered throughout the nation’s civilian population. Prizefighting, as a form of working-class masculine expression, continued in wartime New York City, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Boston in

the Northeast and experienced an era of increasing popularity in the Western boomtowns. Yet, at the same time, prizefighting's existence was contested terrain. In the Northeast, the rituals of the prize ring faced persistent opposition from middle-class reformers, who attacked prizefighting for its subculture of drinking, rowdyism, and gambling. Beyond the well-established, reform-minded, American-born population of the Union's Northeastern states, segments of Midwestern bourgeois society also rallied against the prize ring. In Chicago, in particular, middle-class reformers sought to prevent and/or punish prizefighting, fearing that widespread intemperance amongst fighters and spectators would further tarnish the 'Windy City's' already dubious reputation for vice and crime. But not all Midwestern cities necessarily opposed prizefighting. Further west, in St. Louis the momentary disappearance of prizefighting was a direct result of martial law, rather than a concerted effort by authorities to abolish the sport. Nor did all forms of boxing suffer equally. In New York City and Boston, public sparring events became immensely popular across all classes of society. Although working-class men still typically adhered to pre-war practices of spectatorship, they were joined by a new body of middle-class fans, allowing boxers to embody the wider, wartime masculinities of the embattled male population. Communal masculinity, not self-made manhood, increasingly comforted weary Northeastern citizens, permitting commiseration and camaraderie in the shadow of war.³

Boxing, Race, and the Civil War

Race was the most persistent barrier to competition in Civil War era prizefighting. Despite the successes of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century African-American pugilists, such as Bill Richmond and Tom Molineaux, black prizefighters were thoroughly marginalized during the American Civil War. Although the war between the Union and Confederacy eventually took on an identity as an anti-slavery campaign, this had by no means been certain at the conflict's outset. Indeed, for many 'white,' working-class Americans, the Civil War was a battle to crush the Confederate insurgency and reunite the nation. When Abraham Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves of disloyal States (not including slaveholding Border States) in 1863, the free, northern African Americans and white abolitionists cheered their approval. Yet, as so many writers and scholars have noted, freedom was not equality. Working-class New Yorkers, convinced they would be conscripted and sent to their deaths to free the slaves, rioted in the streets, publically hanging several of their African-American neighbours. Many soldiers, including ex-prizefighter Billy Wilson, bucked at the notion of fighting alongside black volunteers, viciously tormenting their African-American brothers in arms. Although two African Americans named Heddy and Brown contested a prizefight near New York early in the war, after 1863 black boxers either withdrew their participation in the sport or were actively marginalized by their white counterparts, restricting their participation to sparring exhibitions in thoroughly African-American venues. In Western and Midwestern cities, where the free black population was considerably smaller, black boxing remained

as it was in the antebellum era – largely non-existent.⁴ Nonetheless, several rare exceptions existed to the wartime boom in racism. As Louis Moore has shown in the context of several Northern cities, a handful of black sparring instructors were judged less by the color of their skin, and more on their talents as boxers, producing exceptionally respected African-American ‘professors of pugilism’ in antebellum Philadelphia, Boston, Worcester, and Brooklyn. At least a portion of these men likely continued to provide sparring instruction in the Civil War era.⁵

In the Western Territories, the fragmented evidence available suggests that boxing gained popularity amongst Mexican and Polynesian populations during the Civil War years. Mexican-born spectators, for example, were ringside for the Daley-McGrath prizefight near Virginia City, Nevada, in 1863, taking the outcome seriously enough to engage their ‘white’ counterparts in a gunfight after a confusing, unsatisfactory referee’s decision. Mexican spectators, therefore, were not merely curious bystanders, watching the eccentricities of their Irish, English, and American-born counterparts, but passionate and knowledgeable followers of the sport. At least one Mexican man entered a prize ring as a combatant during the Civil War, fighting a Polynesian opponent. Although both Mexican and Polynesian laborers were common in the west by the 1860s, their participation in prizefighting – like ‘white’ attendance at Latino bullfights and Latino/Polynesian cockfights – illustrates the cultural diversity of Western working-class sport. Interestingly, aboriginal athletes and spectators were rarely, if ever, reported at prizefights. Invaded by white settlers throughout the nineteenth century, Western aboriginal groups were in perpetual conflict with their European counterparts,

resulting in several protracted conflicts including, but not limited to, the Snake War, Apache Wars, and Navajo Wars.

Epilogue: Too Much of a Good Thing, or the Post-War Boxing Landscape, 1866-1869

With victory within the Union Army's reach, Abraham Lincoln started preparing for the coming challenges of post-war leadership. Although his Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 freed the slaves of Confederate States, it was the Thirteenth Amendment that declared slavery illegal in all States of the Union, including the loyal, slave-holding Border States. "The amendment," explains William L. Barney, "was the crowning achievement of Lincoln's antislavery policy."⁶ Before war with the Confederacy officially ended, however, Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth on April 15, 1865, leaving the administration of the Union in the hands of Vice President Andrew Johnson. When Johnson came to power, the Confederacy already laid in tatters. General Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia on April 9 at Appomattox, followed promptly by the capitulation of other branches of the Confederate forces.⁷ Finally, on May 10, Confederate President Jefferson Davis was captured and his government dissolved.

This dissertation has demonstrated the widely divergent experiences of Civil War era boxers, both as sparrers and bareknuckle prizefighters. For boxers serving in the Union military, fighting with guns and bayonets required new found courage beyond that required for the boxing ring. Initially praised as ideal soldiers, it was soon abundantly clear to Union officials that prizefighters were no better suited for the

rigours of war than the average civilian. When musket balls and bullets pierced the air, the well trained fists of soldier-prizefighters like Harry Lazarus, Billy Wilson, and Michael Trainor, provided little solace to their fellow 'boys in blue.' Despite their well-documented ineptitude on the battlefield, prizefighters provided timely distraction for disenchanted soldiers languishing in camp, organizing boxing matches for their fellow soldiers. Like prizefighters, working- and middle-class men with sparring experience organized gloved contests, taught fellow soldiers to box, and occasionally represented their units in inter-regimental boxing matches. As Gorn and Goldstein explain in *A Brief History of American Sports*, "the Civil War introduced thousands of men to new sporting practices and ideas."⁸ When Union soldiers came marching home in 1865, many continued to participate in sports learned during the war, sparking a post-war demand for boxing instruction and prizefights.

While the Union Army trampled what remained of the Confederacy, the dark side of the sporting subculture prominently reared its head. On January 4, 1865, the *New York Times* published tragic news: "About four o'clock yesterday morning, Harry Lazarus, a prizefighter, and the proprietor of the X-10-U-S [saloon], was murdered," explained the *Times*, "as is alleged, by Barney Frierley [Friery], a keeper of a saloon on Houston Street."⁹ As a poem dedicated to Lazarus explains in verse, the famous boxer was "killed by the base assassin's knife, not in fair and manly strife."¹⁰ A large number of mourners, perhaps some five thousand, attended Lazarus' funeral, paying their respects to the "noble hearted, generous, good-natured soul, whom none but the most brutalized could fail to admire and appreciate."¹¹ On August 17, 1866, Friery was sent to

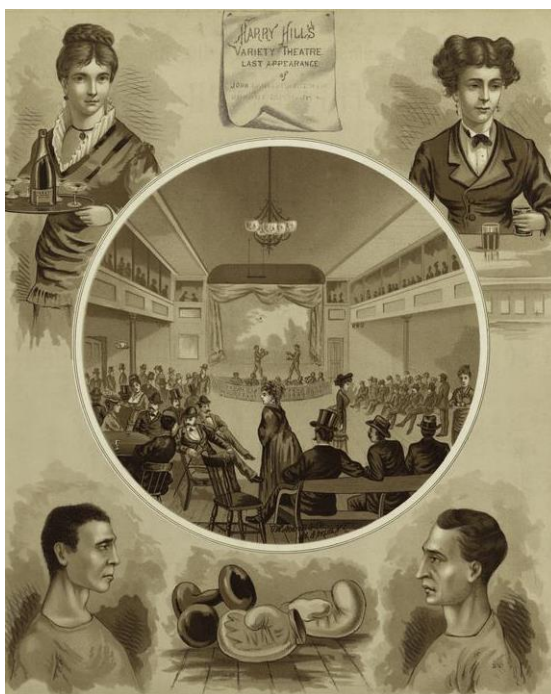
the hangman's rope. Three hundred people attended Friery's execution, prompting the Metropolitan Police to deploy two hundred officers to keep the streets clear and maintain order.¹² Within the throng of onlookers were lawyers, clerks, doctors, minstrels, publicans, and many others.¹³ Although a cross-segment of New York society undeniably respected Lazarus, including many middle-class men who relied upon the deceased for his talent as a sparring instructor, the Civil War veteran's demise underscored the violent underbelly of the urban sporting subculture for all to see.

As Elliott Gorn suggests, incidents like the stabbing of Harry Lazarus "darkened pugilism's already tarnished image."¹⁴ With matters of mobilization coming to an end with Union victory in 1865, the Metropolitan Police now focused their attention firmly on the civilian populations of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Westchester County, shortening their leash on prizefighting. Yet, try as they might, New York authorities proved unequal to the task of preventing prizefighting. To avoid detection, pugilists became increasingly secretive about their activities. The 'room fights' conducted by Manhattan prizefighters throughout the Civil War era increased in frequency during the later 1860s, essentially abandoning large scale spectatorship to ensure the integrity of the match. Public prizefights continued to occur, as well. Billy Kelly and Teddy McAuliffe, for example, successfully eluded authorities to contest a prizefight on Long Island. After two hours of fighting, it was the spectators, not the police, who ruined the contest, interrupting matters with a fight-ending brawl. With pandemonium at ringside, the referee declared the bout a draw.¹⁵ Despite police intervention and spectator rowdiness, New York continued to produce more prizefights

than any other State during the early post-war years, hosting roughly fifteen percent of all American bouts held between 1866 and 1869. The sport, however, continued to be dominated by English, Irish, and native-born fighters. In fact, Johnny Bounty was the only African-American boxer to enter a New York prize ring during the late 1860s, defeating Cornele Finch at Willis Point in 1866.¹⁶ Although Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was indeed a "turning point in national policy as well as in the character of the war," transforming "a war of armies into a conflict of societies," it ushered in few new opportunities for black prizefighters in New York.¹⁷ With the bloody, race-based violence of the New York City Draft riots still fresh in the minds of the Empire State's African-American population, some likely preferred to avoid the racist, knife- and gun-touting crowds of white sporting men, while others were likely via overt acts of racism.

The popularity of public sparring events, spurred by a class-transcending desire for wartime distraction, produced a variety of boxing entertainments in post-war New York City. The Stuyvesant Institute, praised by the *New York Clipper* for accommodating both working- and middle-class boxing enthusiasts at wartime, closed its doors to sparring events in the late 1860s.¹⁸ Before long, however, new establishments emerged to profit from the post-war scramble for sporting attractions. The middle-class demand for leisurely entertainment grew from a pre-war peep to a post-war roar, leading several innovative saloon owners to cater to the growing market for middle-class amusements. As Gorn illustrates in *The Manly Art*, "the best known establishment" of this sort "was Harry Hill's saloon."¹⁹ By maintaining order and offering a pantheon of entertainment, Hill successfully attracted all classes of society to his establishment, becoming the first

sporting saloon in America to earn a truly ‘national’ reputation. The old working-class haunts, however, did not die out in this post-war landscape. Kit Burns’ sporting house on Water Street, for example, maintained the old working-class staples of animal sports and sparring benefits.²⁰



Above: Harry Hill's Variety Theatre (Boxers visible on stage), 1878. *New York Public Library*.

In the realm of prizefighting, Pennsylvania was second only to New York as a boxing State, boasting roughly ten percent of the nation's prizefights between 1866 and 1869. During the late 1860s, the sporting subculture's old stomping grounds in Philadelphia proved workable, if risky, locales for prizefights, resulting in a number of bouts in and around the city. With the "Quaker City" falling increasingly under middle-class proscriptions of law and order, however, prizefighters increasingly visited other Pennsylvania localities in search of sport.²¹ The coal and iron town of Pottsville, located

approximately ninety miles northwest of Philadelphia, was the scene of several prizefights in the late 1860s.²² The larger, western Pennsylvania city of Pittsburgh, similarly based on iron and coal production, also hosted a number of prizefights.²³ Although more accommodating than Philadelphia, police interference could still be an issue in Pottsville and Pittsburgh. When two locals engaged in a prizefight at the Bull's Head Tavern in Pittsburgh, for example, the police burst onto the scene, arresting both fighters and several others involved.²⁴ By at least 1869, some Pittsburgh pugilists were chartering boats to West Virginia to contest their prizefights away from local authorities.²⁵ The post-war Pennsylvania fight scene, like its New York counterpart, also endured some violent mishaps. When Harry Hicken gained the upper hand against Billy Carroll at an 1869 prizefight thirty miles northwest of Pittsburgh in Freedom, Pennsylvania, for example, Carroll's crowd of Baltimore ruffians fired their revolvers, attempting to shoot Hicken.²⁶ The latter, however, escaped unscathed. Although prizefights garnered increasingly negative attention, sparring benefits continued to occur in Pennsylvania, becoming particularly popular amongst Pittsburgh's fraternity of local miners.²⁷

Immediately following the Civil War, prizefighting in Massachusetts benefited from an influx of fighters from the British Isles. As Gorn has shown, during the late 1860s, a flood of English prizefighters provided an "infusion of new talent" to the American fight scene, producing "some fine matches."²⁸ Massachusetts' antebellum and Civil War legacy of preventing bouts and punishing fighters was continued by post-war authorities. Although roughly seventeen prizefights were conducted in Massachusetts

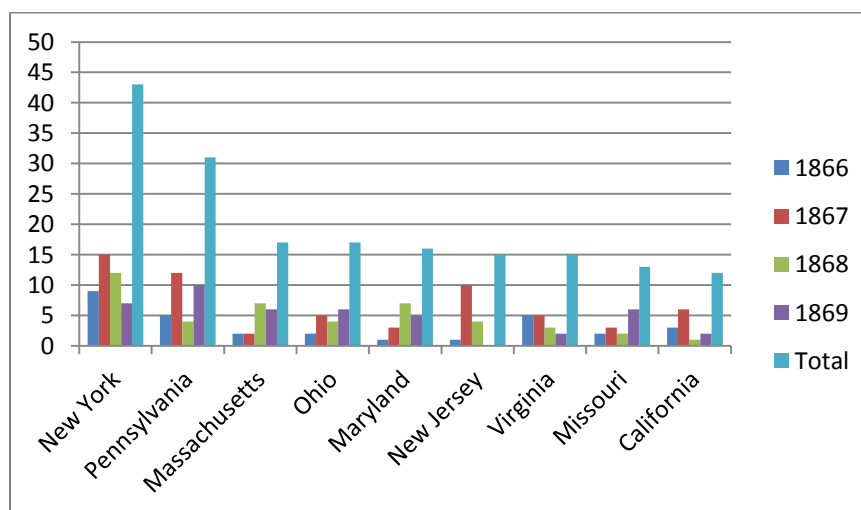
between 1866 and 1869, fighters assumed great risk to their freedom and pocket books by tempting the “Bay State’s” police and politicians. The failure of a highly publicized bout between Irishman Ned O’Baldwin and Englishman Joe Wormald at Lynnfield, Massachusetts, illustrates the legal risks accompanying performances in the State’s post-war prize rings. When O’Baldwin and Wormald consummated their well-laid plans on October 29, 1868, a group of police – hidden in a nearby barn – descended upon the fight, ending matters before the start of the second round, placing O’Baldwin and Wormald in jail at Lynn.²⁹ Other fighters, learning from the misadventures of their forbearers, tried to hold prizefights outside State lines, but this often made little difference to authorities. Patrick Kelser, for example, left Lawrence, Massachusetts, to contest a prizefight in New Hampshire in 1870, only to be arrested upon his return and sentenced to two years in prison. Lamenting the suppression of prizefighting in Massachusetts and New York following Kelser’s sentencing, the *Clipper* concluded that both States display “bigoted antipathy to the natural and very often necessary art of self defence [*sic*], without the use of deadly weapons, preferring we presume that man may shoot another without previous warning.”³⁰ While prizefighting suffered, however, the *Clipper* could take solace in the continued popularity of sparring in Massachusetts, with both Boston and Worcester remaining popular stops for sparring tours through the second half of the 1860s.³¹

In his book *The Manly Art*, Elliott Gorn asserts that, during the Civil War, “boxing’s centre of gravity began shifting west.”³² Indeed, a who’s who of northeastern boxing talent made their way west to the young State of California and the tumultuous

Nevada Territory seeking freedom to conduct their sport free of police interference. Yet, as this dissertation has shown, “the free moral atmosphere” of the West proved more than some pugilists bargained for. In many cases, localities conducive for prizefighting were also riddled with gun violence. Although prizefighters in the northeast were notorious for at least flirting with the criminal elements of urban society, their counterparts in the west were far more reckless with human life. After the west’s brief Civil War era boxing boom, therefore, many boxers looked elsewhere for prizefighting opportunities. Throughout the late 1860s, the northeast boasted the most active boxing scenes in the nation, hosting roughly forty-two percent of all prizefights conducted from 1866 to 1869. Prizefights in the west, on the other hand, accounted for just fourteen percent of national contests, with Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Colorado, Montana, California, Kansas, Dakota, New Mexico, Utah, and Texas combining for slightly fewer prizefights than New York State over the same time period. Yet, as Gorn explains, the west did make important contributions to prizefighting, with “saloonkeepers in the western mining territories of Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Dakota, and Colorado” becoming “prizefighting’s primary commercial innovators” for the two decades following the Civil War.³³

When John Conde Orem returned to the west following his prizefighting and sparring tour of the Midwest and Northeast, he effectively offered indoor prizefights for paying customers. Indeed, Orem’s glove fight with Patsy Marley during the Civil War must have filled the “Colorado Champion’s” head with ideas about the future of prizefighting in the west. After settling in Virginia City, Montana Territory, Orem used

various venues for his prizefights, allowing him and his opponent to fight for a stipulated purse and the gate receipts. When Orem fought Jon McArdle in 1868, for example, the bout was conducted in a “close board enclosure” surrounded by “amphitheatre seating,” which spectators paid five dollars each to enter.³⁴ Orem also experimented with other forms of boxing in the west. Rather than batter one’s hands and face in a contest in accordance with the Rules of the London Prize Ring, Orem sold tickets to a gloved prizefight between himself and Billy Dwyer, similar to his glove fight with Marley in New York. To once again generate gate receipts, the Orem-Dwyer fight was held at the People’s Theatre in Virginia City, Montana. Unlike bareknuckle bouts, gloved prizefights were typically conducted with blackened gloves in the late 1860s, allowing the referee to see when each man scored a blow, each counting as a point.³⁵ Although Orem’s style of glove fight was eventually superseded by the Marquis of Queensbury Rules in the 1880s, it nonetheless illustrates an early desire to incorporate gloves and a point system into prizefighting, foreshadowing the popularization of gloved professional boxing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Above: This chart illustrates the distribution of prizefighting from 1866-1869 in the nine most active 'fight states' in the nation. The numbers for this chart were generated using the year end reports of the *New York Clipper*.

Following the Civil War, prizefighting also flourished in portions of the Midwest. From 1866 to 1869, Ohio was one of the nation's leading boxing centres, joining Massachusetts as the third most active fight State in America. Prizefighting and sparring also continued to exist in a sporadic way in Illinois and Indiana and spread to other Midwestern States including Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. In Missouri, the wartime pugilistic recession – prompted by the implementation of martial law – ultimately gave way in 1869 when Tom Allen arrived on the scene from England for several controversial fights. Allen started off the year with a victory over Bill Davis, before arranging a bout with Michael McCoolle for the latter's claim to the heavyweight championship of America. When Allen started getting the better of their man in exchanges, however, McCoolle's supporters "cut the ropes," claiming Allen was indulging in gouging. The referee ultimately agreed, disqualifying Allen for the alleged foul, awarding the fight to McCoolle. Allen's subsequent fight with Charley Gallagher also proved suspicious, albeit for different reasons. After their man was badly punished by Allen for eleven rounds, Gallagher's corner threw up the sponge, admitting defeat. Gallagher, however, did not see his corner's capitulation. Thus, when Allen crossed the ring to shake his hand, Gallagher resumed fighting, punching Allen in the face. Shocked by his opponent's behavior, Allen left the ring. The referee, like Gallagher, claimed he

did not see the latter's corner throw up the sponge but, given the bizarre circumstances of the fight, ruled the contest a draw.³⁶ Unfortunately, the suspicious outcomes of Allen's fights with McCooles and Gallagher were part of the broader disintegration of prizefighting in America. As Elliott Gorn aptly concludes in *The Manly Art*: "By the seventies...the ideal of a fair fight to the finish had given way to the presumption of corruption."³⁷

Although the corrupt, violent nature of prizefighting made the sport its own worst enemy in the late 1860s, the self-destructive non-ring activities of many prizefighters helped expedite prizefighting's demise. In the northeast, Harry Jennings – the retired prizefighter and active sparring and dogfighting aficionado – was arrested in Boston for robbery and sentenced to four years in prison in April, 1869.³⁸ New York prizefighter Jimmy Elliott, likewise, was arrested for robbery in Canada West in November.³⁹ In McKeesport, Pennsylvania, prizefighter Barney Duffy was arrested for arson in 1868, but was a free man the following year.⁴⁰ In the fall of the following year, Duffy was killed by fellow pugilist Tom Sullivan in Pittsburgh.⁴¹ According to the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, Sullivan stabbed Duffy after an argument in a saloon, following the wounded man outside as he attempted to seek help. Beyond the confines of the saloon, Sullivan knocked Duffy to the ground, killing the latter by striking him with a rock and slashing at his head with a knife.⁴² In another Pittsburgh incident, English prizefighter Bob Brettle was arrested for "selling liquor without license and keeping a disorderly house."⁴³ Across the State in the former prizefighting hotbed of Philadelphia, Tim Heenan – well-known as a sparrer and brother to heavyweight John C. Heenan – was

shot and killed by Jerry Eaton in 1868. In a more mysterious turn of events, prizefighter Aaron Jones was allegedly poisoned during a trip to New Orleans, passing away in Indiana in February, 1869.⁴⁴ Not even the sport's champions could avoid run-ins with the law. In St. Louis, for example, American heavyweight champion Michael McCooles was arrested in December, 1869, for "committing a brutal assault upon a newspaper correspondent."⁴⁵

Prizefighters were also getting into some desperate affrays on the other side of the continent. In San Francisco, for example, heavyweight prizefighter Billy Dwyer was shot in October, 1869, but recovered sufficiently to pursue bouts the following year.⁴⁶ Johnny "Shanghai Chicken" Devine, San Francisco's most infamous pugilist in the post-war years, became an increasingly volatile individual following the Civil War. After wandering about San Francisco fighting sailors in 1868, Devine and his friend Johnny Newland attacked a group of men inside a saloon. Outnumbered, but thoroughly enjoying themselves, Devine flung punches at the unsuspecting sailors while Newland slashed away with a chef's knife. When a man name Maitland, the operator of the saloon, arrived on the scene, things took a gruesome turn. Infuriated with Devine and Newland, Maitland tussled with the intruders, ultimately cutting off Devine's left hand.⁴⁷ With one wing already 'clipped,' the "Shanghai Chicken" continued to cause headaches for police, ultimately killing August Kamp in 1871. After two trials, Devine was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. When news of Devine's impending hanging reached the public, demand for police permission to see Devine's death was overwhelming. "Between 1,500 and 2,000 citizens," explained San Francisco's *Daily*

Evening Bulletin, “representing all classes of society, have applied to Sheriff Adams for permission to witness the execution of Johnny Devine.”⁴⁸ Only about two hundred people, however, were admitted to the hanging by Adams. Surrounded by a small crowd of onlookers, Devine cried out “Oh my sweet Jesus, in thy hands I commend my spirit, Amen,” kissed a crucifix, and embraced his end at the gallows on May 13, 1873. During his thirty-three years of life, Devine was arrested an astounding seventy-nine times.⁴⁹

Seven years after Johnny Devine’s execution in 1880, an aspiring pugilist named John L. Sullivan declared his intention to “fight any man breathing from one thousand to ten thousand dollars at catch weights.”⁵⁰ In 1882 Sullivan announced his intention to never fight with bareknuckles again, preferring gloved varieties of boxing over illegal bareknuckle prizefighting. Like Joe Coburn, Billy Clarke, John Condle Orem, and his other Civil War era predecessors, Sullivan realized the economic potential of gloved boxing. Indeed, by holding bouts in accordance with the increasingly popular Marquis of Queensbury Rules, using gloves, timed rounds, and a ten count for downed opponents, Sullivan was permitted to advertise prizefights like never before, travelling across America to face ‘all comers.’ Rather than preventing Sullivan’s gloved prizefights, police typically treated these affairs as an extension of sparring; a legal sport, practiced within virtually all echelons of the social hierarchy. Yet, as Gorn has shown, Sullivan drew the ‘color line’ – common in post-civil war boxing circles – refusing to fight black boxers. Sullivan’s behavior towards his African-American counterparts, Gorn explains, was: “a phenomena increasingly common in American social life as vicious new segregation practices emerged from the federal government’s failure to enforce Reconstruction

policies.”⁵¹ As during the Civil War years, black boxers fought a losing battle for inclusion and equality during Sullivan’s reign, marginalized by persistent racist policies throughout the nineteenth century. Finally, in 1891, a black Canadian boxer named George Dixon, broke the colour line in championship boxing, by winning the bantamweight championship of the world. The heavyweight championship, considered the pinnacle of sporting accomplishment by at least the end of Sullivan’s reign, was controlled by white fighters and managers for much longer, with the color line ultimately falling when African American heavyweight Jack Johnson fought for, and won, the title against reigning champion Tommy Burns in 1908.

Although few historians recognize the American Civil War as a significant era in boxing’s sordid development, this dissertation has shown that – far from going dormant – boxing, like many other civilian activities, continued in the shadow of war. In some cases, boxing gained traction in new segments of the social hierarchy, providing an important source of distraction for soldiers and civilians alike. This dissertation has also shown, however, that boxing was not enjoyed equally across the Union. In some locations, such as Boston and Worcester, public sparring events proved an important source of entertainment, while prizefighting was prohibited or punished as a social nuisance. In Philadelphia, bareknuckle prizefighting and sparring momentarily coexisted amidst the chaos of wartime, before the former was pushed away from the city in the wake of assaults and robberies aboard a train carrying fight fans. The Border State of Missouri, torn by conflict between Confederate sympathizers and Union loyalists, placed prizefighting and sparring on hiatus by instituting martial law. Further west still,

northeastern prizefighters tested the sporting waters of California and the territories, only to find themselves longing for the law and order of home. By looking beyond the histories of prominent champions and bustling boxing hotbeds, this study has shown that there was no national norm for Civil War era boxing. Instead, Americans made the best of their respective local and regional situations, forging fight scenes rooted in the social and cultural histories of their environs. After completing this dissertation, it is my sincere hope that other boxing historians will also look beyond the dominant trends in the sport's historiography to further explore the diverse meanings of prizefighting and sparring during the Civil War era, prompting increased popular and academic engagement with this often overlooked segment of sport history. Future, related studies could include analyses of the presence/absence of prizefighting and sparring in the wartime South; the evolution of boxing as a spectator sport during the Reconstruction Era; the history of sport and entertainment in the Border States; and the place of boxing in the broader sporting practices of Civil War era civilian populations, both North and South.

Endnotes

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³ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 2-3.

⁴ There is some evidence that black boxers, at the very least, visited Chicago in the antebellum era. See, *New York Clipper*, June 13, 1857.

⁵ Louis Moore, "Fine Specimens of Manhood: The Black Boxer's Body and the Avenue to Equality, Racial Advancement, and Manhood in the Nineteenth Century," *MELUS* 35, no. 4 (2010), 59-84; Louis Moore, "Fit for Citizenship: Black Sparring Masters, Gymnasium Owners, and the White Body, 1825-1886," *Journal of African American History* 96, no. 4 (2011), 448-473.

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⁷ *BGU*, 222.

⁸ Elliott Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 98.

⁹ *New York Times*, January 4, 1865.

¹⁰ *New York Clipper*, January 14, 1865.

¹¹ *New York Clipper*, January 14, 1865.

¹² *New York Times*, August 18, 1866.

¹³ *New York Clipper*, August 25, 1866.

¹⁴ Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 174.

¹⁵ *National Police Gazette*, May 14, 1881.

¹⁶ *New York Clipper*, January 5, 1867.

¹⁷ Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 3.

¹⁸ *New York Clipper*, March 23, 1867.

¹⁹ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 183.

²⁰ *New York Clipper*, December 1, 1866; *New York Clipper*, January 19, 1867. Burns died in 1870. See, *New York Clipper*, December 31, 1870.

²¹ Police tried to prevent the Jim Turner-Jack Turner fight in 1865, arresting one of the fighters to stop the fight from occurring as scheduled. The fighters, however, simply rescheduled the fight for another date, successfully completing the bout, albeit with a controversial referee's interference. See, *New York Clipper*, October 7, 1865. For example, when Bob Porter and Jim Sweeney organized a prizefight in Philadelphia, fighting at Port Penn, they were intercepted by police and detained for a short time. See, *Philadelphia Press*, September 30, 1865; *New York Clipper*, October 7, 1865. For more failed prizefights in Philadelphia see, *Philadelphia Press*, September 20, 1867; *Philadelphia Press*, October 7, 1867

²² *National Police Gazette*, May 14, 1881; *National Police Gazette*, May 21, 1881.

²³ For prizefights in and near Pittsburgh see, *New York Clipper*, August 24, 1867. December 18, 1869

²⁴ *New York Clipper*, April 28, 1868.

²⁵ *New York Clipper*, September 18, 1869; *New York Clipper*, October 2, 1869

²⁶ *National Police Gazette*, June 4, 1881.

²⁷ *New York Clipper*, March 9, 1867; *New York Clipper*, October 19, 1867; *New York Clipper*, September 11, 1869; *New York Clipper*, November 13, 1869.

²⁸ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 169.

²⁹ *National Police Gazette*, May 21, 1881.

³⁰ *New York Clipper*, November 5, 1870. For another example of a Massachusetts pugilist being arrested for leaving the State to engage in a prizefight see, *New York Clipper*, June 11, 1870.

³¹ *New York Clipper*, April 24, 1869; *New York Clipper*, May 15, 1869.

³² Gorn, *Manly Art*, 165.

³³ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 165.

³⁴ *New York Clipper*, September 26, 1868.

³⁵ *National Police Gazette*, May 14, 1881.

³⁶ *New York Clipper*, January 1, 1870.

³⁷ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 173.

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⁴⁰ *New York Clipper*, January 2, 1869.

⁴¹ *New York Clipper*, January 1, 1870.

⁴² *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, as quoted by *New York Clipper*, September 11, 1869.

⁴³ *New York Clipper*, January 1, 1870.

⁴⁴ *New York Clipper*, January 1, 1870.

⁴⁵ *New York Clipper*, January 1, 1870.

⁴⁶ For Dwyer seeking prizefights in 1870 see, *The Golden Era* [San Francisco], October 9, 1870; *Sacramento Daily Union*, July 2, 1870.

⁴⁷ *Daily Evening Bulletin* [San Francisco], June 13, 1868.

⁴⁸ *Daily Evening Bulletin* [San Francisco], May 13, 1873.

⁴⁹ *Daily Evening Bulletin* [San Francisco], May 14, 1873.

⁵⁰ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 210.

⁵¹ Gorn, *Manly Art*, 218.

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Education:

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BA (Hons)	Mount Allison	History	2007
MA	Saint Mary's	History	2008
PhD	Western	Kinesiology	2014

Teaching Experience:

Year	Position	Lectures (L)/Credits (Cr)
2013	Sport and Gender, Saint Francis Xavier University (STFX)	3Cr
2013	Sport and the Law, STFX	3Cr
2013	Canadian Sport History, STFX	3Cr
2012	Sport and the Law, STFX	3Cr
2012	Canadian Sport History, STFX	3Cr
2012	Gender and Sport, STFX	3Cr
2012	Sport and the Law, University of Western Ontario (UWO)	3Cr
2012	TA – Sport and the Law, UWO	5L
2012	Guest Lecturer – Canadian Sport History, UWO	3L
2010	TA – Sport and the Law, UWO	3L
2009	TA – Sport and the Law, UWO	1L
2008	Tutor – Indigenous Services, University of Western Ontario (UWO)	N/A
2008	Guest Lecturer – Philosophy of Sport, UWO	1L
2007	Tutor – Meighen Centre for Learning Assistance and Research, Mount Allison University	N/A

Academic Positions

Institution	Position	Years Employed	Credits Taught
Saint Francis Xavier University	Sessional	2012-2013	18
University of Western Ontario	Sessional	2012	3

Peer Reviewed Articles:

- 2013 "Rules from Above, Resistance from Below: The MPAAA, NS AHL and Nova Scotia's Amateur Hockey Crisis, 1902-1910," at *Putting it on Ice III: Constructing the Hockey Family: Home, Community, Bureaucracy and Marketplace*. Online Publication: <http://www.smu.ca/campus-life/putting-it-on-ice-proceedings.html>
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- 2012 "Rules from Above, Resistance from Below: The MPAAA, NS AHL and Nova Scotia's Amateur Hockey Crisis, 1902-1910," at *Putting it on Ice III: "Constructing the Hockey Family: Home, Community, Bureaucracy and Marketplace,"* Halifax, Nova Scotia.
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- 2011 "Masculinity and Boxing in the Maritime Provinces, 1900-1930," *An International Symposium Speaks the Unspoken: Masculinities, Bodies and Body Image in Health Education*, Ottawa, Ontario.
- 2011 and Daniel Taradash (1), "Too Much "Magic" for the Average Fan? Paulie 'Magic Man' Malignaggi, Masculinity and the Nature of Internet Fandom," *North American Society for Sport Sociology Conference*, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- 2010 "The Power to Play: Social Qualifications for Membership in the Nova Scotia Amateur Hockey League, 1902-1910," *The Hockey Conference: An International Scholarly Conference*, Buffalo, New York.
- 2009 "'The Loyal Order of Cauliflowers and Pugnoses': Forgotten Club and University Boxers" 37th North American Society for Sport History Convention, Asheville, North Carolina.
- 2008 "Boxing and the Class Question: Nova Scotia and the Northeastern Borderlands in the 'Dirty Thirties'" at 36th North American Society for Sport History Convention, Lake Placid, New York.
- 2005 "The Origins of the First Crusade" at *Spiritual Strife: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Religion, Revolution and Violence*, Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, 2005.

Conference Service

2014	Program Committee	<i>3rd Tri-University Conference</i> , London, Ontario
2013	Moderator	<i>A Symposium on Women's Boxing</i> , Toronto, Ontario
2013	Moderator	<i>The Hockey Conference</i> , Halifax, Nova Scotia

Unpublished Research Experience:

2012	PhD Dissertation – <i>“Fight Like a Gentleman”</i> : A Social History of American Pugilism During Civil War Era, University of Western Ontario. Supervisor: Dr. Kevin Wamsley
2011	RA – Janice Forsyth, School of Kinesiology, University of Western Ontario
2011	RA Supervisor, School of Kinesiology, University of Western Ontario
2009	RA – Kevin Wamsley, School of Kinesiology, University of Western Ontario
2008	MA Thesis (128 pgs)– <i>Beyond the Abysmal Brute: A Social History of Boxing in Interwar Nova Scotia</i> , Saint Mary's University. Supervisor: Dr. Colin Howell
2008	RA – Terrence Murphy, Vice President Academic, Saint Mary's University
2007	BA Honours Thesis (78 pgs) – <i>The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: Conquest, Settlement and Governance</i> . Mount Allison University. Supervisor: Dr. William Lundell

Scholarly Affiliations

2008-2014	Member, North American Society of Sport Historians
2011-2014	Member, Canadian Committee for the History of Sexuality
2011-2012	Member, Canadian Historical Association
2011-2012	Member, International Boxing Research Organization
2011-2012	Member, British Society of Sport Historians
2011-2012	Member, Society for International Hockey Research