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# Early Irish America and its Enemies: Ethnic Identity Formation in the Era of the Revolution, 1760–1820

Benjamin Bankhurst

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The formation of an independent United States in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the attendant development of a new republican nationalism greatly transformed the character and identity of Irish America. Like all ethnic groups in the new nation, the Irish had to recalibrate their preconceptions and ideas on government, social hierarchy and culture in light of the American Revolution. Not only were the years between 1760 and 1820 a time of cultural and political redefinition across the country, they also marked a period of transition between the largely Protestant Irish America of the eighteenth century and the Catholic/Gaelic model that superseded it by the 1840s. The last major study of the Irish in America during this period, published nearly thirty years ago, was David Noel Doyle's *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America*. In it, Doyle challenged the over-simplistic division between the two Irish Americas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For Doyle, the Irish Diaspora of the revolutionary decades was a distinct entity defined by the fractured social and cultural environment of the era. By abandoning the neat periodisation and accompanying ethno-religious categories established by previous scholars, Doyle reinvigorated the question of what it meant to be Irish in late eighteenth-century America. He noted that the study of ethnic identity during this period was complicated by the social changes brought about by the Revolution itself. 'The revolution' Doyle observed 'was pre-eminently American: in a sense the first collective and decisive definition of American nationality'.<sup>1</sup> Building on Doyle's work this article explores how Irish ethnicity functions during this period of transformation.

The Irish presence in late eighteenth-century America was large. From 1700 to 1820 nearly 30 per cent of all European migrants (estimated between 250,000 to 500,000) to the British North American colonies were Irish.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> David Noel Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America, 1760–1820* (Dublin, 1981), 109.

<sup>2</sup> David Doyle, 'Scots Irish or Scotch-Irish' in J.J. Lee and Marion R. Casey (eds), *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York, 2006), 151.

vast majority of these men and women were Ulster Presbyterians (known in American historiography and referred to throughout this essay as the Scots Irish). The Revolution positively redefined many of the negative characteristics commonly associated with Irish Presbyterians, particularly their supposed historical republicanism. The positive reclamation of the word ‘republican’ had profound consequences for both how the Scots Irish viewed themselves and how they were viewed by society at large. Demographic change also fundamentally altered the makeup of Irish America and, consequently, its relationship with mainstream American society. The closing decade of the eighteenth century, for example, brought a new disproportionately visible type of Irish immigrant to the streets of Philadelphia and New York—the radical republican exile. The early nineteenth century also marked a shift in the religious and geographic character of Irish immigration to the United States. From the 1810s onwards the Ulster Presbyterian majority among Irish migrants became a plurality in the face of increasing numbers of Catholics from both the north and southwest.<sup>3</sup>

Scholars increasingly see the late eighteenth century as a period of relatively strong inter-denominational cohesion within the national Irish community compared to the sectarian tensions that would divide it along religious lines from the late 1820s onward. Recently, Kerby Miller claimed that the Revolution ‘accelerated Ulster Presbyterian immigrants’ tendency to embrace—and of Anglo-Americans to perceive—a generic and positive “Irish” identity.<sup>4</sup> Following in the path laid out by Doyle and Miller, this article examines the rise and fall of this positive Irish identity, or sense of belonging between people of Irish ancestry, in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America. It begins in the closing years of the Seven Years War when Irish-Americans in Pennsylvania increasingly expressed their Irish ethnicity positively in the face of widespread anti-Scottish sentiment. From there the article turns to the revolutionary decades to trace both the rising popular recognition of this inclusive identity (one that could briefly embrace Catholics) within Irish-

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>4</sup> Kerby Miller, “‘Scotch-Irish’ Ethnicity in Early America: Its Regional and Political Origins’ in Kerby A. Miller, *Ireland and Irish America: Culture, Class, and Transatlantic Migration* (Dublin, 2008), 134. For differing meanings of ‘Irishness’ to immigrants to America see chapter 8 in the same volume: “‘Scotch-Irish’, ‘Black Irish’, and ‘Real Irish’: Emigrants and Identities in the Old South’, 142–5. For a discussion on the usefulness of the term ‘Scotch-Irish’ see Miller’s ‘Ulster Presbyterians and the “Two Traditions” in Ireland and America’ in Lee and Casey (eds), *Making the Irish American*, 255–60.

America as well as a persistent ambivalence, if not hostility, to it from outside observers. Finally, this study examines how the arrival of radical refugees from the failed 1798 Irish rising and popular discomfort with increasing Catholic immigration began to dissolve the broad consensus that united Irish America in the revolutionary decades.

Moreover, it is important to remember that Irish-American self-perception was influenced by outside views and opinions. Collective identity construction is not an insular phenomenon negotiated wholly within the communities undergoing the process. Groups define themselves against the supposed cultural and social traits of others while simultaneously reacting to how they believe they are perceived by wider society. Imagined ethnic cohesion in pluralistic societies is often arrived at partially through a community's confrontation with the stereotypes employed by other, usually socially dominant, groups. This article examines both positive expressions of Irish ethnicity as well as anti-Irish prejudice in America from 1760 to 1820 in order to sketch broad trends in Irish-American self-imagining. It argues that periods of social tension forced Irish-Americans to redefine the boundaries of their community. Confrontation with other groups competing to define the boundaries of the national community forced migrants and their progeny to think about what it meant to be Irish in the early national America.

## **I: Irish-American Ethnicity in the late Colonial Period**

Upon arrival in North America during the early stages of Ulster immigration many migrants found it socially beneficial to jettison their Irishness. Shortly after leading a group of Irish Presbyterians across the Atlantic to found the township of Londonderry New Hampshire in 1718, the Rev. James MacGregor wrote to Governor Samuel Shute of Massachusetts. He complained, 'We are surprised to hear ourselves termed *Irish* people, when we so frequently ventured our all, for the British crown and liberties, against the Irish Papists'.<sup>5</sup> On the crest of the 1728 famine migrations an Anglican minister in Delaware observes the arrival of 'great numbers of Irish (who usually call themselves Scotch-Irish) have translated themselves and their families from the north of Ireland into the Province of Pennsylvania.'<sup>6</sup> After 1750, however, the strategy

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Edward L. Parker, *History of Londonderry, Comprising the Towns of Derry and Londonderry, N.H.* (Boston, 1851), 68.

<sup>6</sup> Reverend William Becket, quoted in Wayland F. Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish of Colonial*

of playing-up one's Scottish ancestry at the expense of an Irish background as a way of gaining social currency within wider society lost much of its appeal to Scots Irish migrants and their progeny. Throughout the Anglophone colonies, Scotland and Scots became associated with disloyalty, rebellion and naked opportunism following the failed Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745/6. Later events confirmed these common prejudices. The popularity of John Wilkes and the widely accepted belief that the Tory Prime Minister and Scotsman, John Stuart, 3<sup>rd</sup> earl of Bute, exercised undue influence over George III only intensified anti-Scottish feeling in America.<sup>7</sup> In light of these developments, older stereotypes regarding Scottish religious fanaticism and supposed republican sympathies re-emerged in contemporary politics and culture.

Multiple examples of Scots Irish willingness to emphasise their Irish heritage emerged following the Paxton Boy disturbances in western Pennsylvania.<sup>8</sup> In the winter of 1763/4 a mob of predominately Scots Irish settlers viciously murdered two groups of unarmed Conestoga Indians who they accused of participating in Pontiac's rising the previous summer. When the government seemed to favour the rights of the few remaining Conestogas over the interests of white Settlers, the Paxton Boys and their supporters marched on the provincial capital. They were persuaded to disband shortly before reaching their destination by a government delegation headed by Benjamin Franklin, who promised that their grievances would be aired before the legislature. Because these events occurred during an Assembly election year, the issues regarding colonial governance that they brought to the surface resulted in the largest pamphlet debate held in the province since its founding.<sup>9</sup>

Some celebrated Paxton boys as frontier patriots protecting their British liberties from the encroachments of a corrupt Quaker oligarchy in Philadelphia. Emissaries of the Paxton Boys were quick to capitalise on this

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*Pennsylvania* (London, 1962), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Pauline Maier, 'John Wilkes and American Disillusionment with Britain', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., 20 (1973), 376, 382. For more on Wilkes and anti-Scottish feeling see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992), 105–17.

<sup>8</sup> For a closer analysis of anti-Irish rhetoric during the Paxton debate see Benjamin Bankhurst, 'A Looking-Glass for Presbyterians: Recasting a Prejudice in Late Colonial Pennsylvania', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 133 (2009), 317–48.

<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed narrative and analysis of the social ramifications of the Conestoga Massacres and the Paxton Boys' march on Philadelphia see Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (Oxford, 2009); and Brooke Hindle, 'The March of the Paxton Boys', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., 3 (1946), 461–86.

image by calling for greater representation for the western counties in the colonial legislature.<sup>10</sup> Patrick Griffin has convincingly shown that the Paxton Boys justified the Conestoga Massacres and the march on Philadelphia by appealing to a unifying discourse of Britishness. In particular, they claimed they had acted to protect their right to life and property. The experience of Irish settlers in Pennsylvania during periods of frontier conflict, Griffin suggests, ‘revealed both the liberating and frightening implications of rights discourse.’<sup>11</sup> In order to demonstrate that they were indeed freeborn Britons acting in the best interest of the colony, the Paxton Boys and their supporters first had to establish their loyal credentials as Protestant Irishmen.

Pro-Paxton partisans alluded to Irish Presbyterian support for William of Orange in his struggle to secure the throne from James II during the Williamite wars of 1689–91. This allowed them to get around accusations of disloyalty directed at the Paxton Boys on the basis of their Scottish ancestry. Unlike the Scots whose Tory loyalties continually manifested in rebellion throughout the eighteenth century, Paxton pamphleteers spun Irish Protestant support for William as true commitment to the core principles of the Glorious Revolution—namely the Protestant succession and a balanced constitution. Two anti-Quaker pamphlets published in 1764, for example, made specific reference to the Paxton Boys’ forebearers serving at the Williamite garrison of Enniskillen in 1689.<sup>12</sup> By linking the Paxton Boys to Williamite loyalty, these authors located the march on Philadelphia within the larger Whig narrative of progressive British history. These pamphleteers cast Irish Protestants—whether at home or in America—as contentious activists striving to protect their liberties as freeborn British subjects from tyrannical encroachment

The link between Irishness and Whiggish activism did not only apply to Presbyterians, nor were they the only ones to endorse such an association. In at least one instance the adoption of Irish identity temporarily obfuscated deep resentment between Irish Protestant ethnic groups. Rev. Thomas Barton, the Ulster-born Anglican minister in Lancaster Pennsylvania—the site of the second Conestoga massacre—wrote an early defense of the Paxton Boys in which he claimed that they had acted reasonably given the Quakers mismanagement

<sup>10</sup> Matthew Smith, et al., *A Declaration and Remonstrance of the Distressed and Bleeding Frontier Inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1764), 10–11.

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots, America’s Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689–1764* (Princeton, 2001), 157–9.

<sup>12</sup> *An Historical Account, of the late Disturbance, between the Inhabitants of the Back Settlements; of Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphians, &c.* (Philadelphia, 1764), 5; *A Battle! A Battle! A Battle of Squirt; Where no Man is kill’d, And no Man is Hurt!* (Philadelphia, 1764), 8.

of western affairs.<sup>13</sup> Barton's private correspondence, however, reveals that he abhorred the murder of the Conestogas and disliked his Presbyterian neighbours.<sup>14</sup> Given these reservations, the reasons for his taking up his pen in defense of his Presbyterian countrymen and women remain a mystery. Perhaps he was persuaded to do so by the Anglican leadership in Philadelphia who at that time were aligned with the Presbyterians in a political coalition against the Quaker-dominated Assembly.<sup>15</sup> Or he might have done it out of sincere concern for his flock who, like their Presbyterian neighbours, bore the brunt of recent Indian attacks and blamed the Quaker leadership for their suffering. Regardless of why he wrote the document, Barton made it clear that he did so as an Irishman. He concluded the pamphlet with the remark, 'Dated from my Farm-House, March 17, 1764. A Day Dedicated to LIBERTY and St Patrick'.<sup>16</sup>

The positive Irish image propagated in pro-Paxton pamphlets was further developed in one of the most detailed caricatures printed in Philadelphia at the height of the debate. *The German Bleeds & Bears the Furs*, created by Henry Dawkins, was a striking piece of propaganda illustrating the consequences of supposed Quaker indifference towards, and exploitation of, western whites (see Image 1). In the print, Dawkins depicts a nightmarish landscape in the aftermath of an Indian raid on a frontier settlement. The foreground is strewn with corpses, including a woman with her eyes gauged from their sockets and a scalped child, while in the background the viewer can make out a burning farmhouse. The print depicts two men riding upon the back and shoulders of western settlers identified by their ethnic background as a 'German' and 'Hibernian' in the script below the image.<sup>17</sup> The second figure—the German—appears to be carrying his burden, a smiling Indian, with great difficulty. He is pictured blindfolded and bloodied, with a rope tied around his neck that is held at the other end by the rider in front of

<sup>13</sup> See [Thomas Barton], *The Conduct of the Paxton-Men, Impartially Represented* (Philadelphia, 1764). For more detail regarding Barton's reasons for writing the pamphlet see James P. Myers, Jr., 'The Rev. Thomas Barton's Authorship of *The Conduct of the Paxton Men, Impartially Represented* (1764)', *Pennsylvania History*, 61 (1994), 155–84.

<sup>14</sup> See Kerby A. Miller, Arnold Schrier, Bruce D. Boling, and David N. Doyle (eds), *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675–1815* (Oxford, 2003), 487–8.

<sup>15</sup> This is the view expressed in *ibid.*, 496–7.

<sup>16</sup> [Barton], *The Conduct of the Paxton-Men*, 34.

<sup>17</sup> For more detail on this print see, Alison Olson, 'The Pamphlet War over the Paxton Boys', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 123 (1999), 45–6; Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2008), 213–15.

him. Fatigued, he has accepted his situation and walks groaning with his arms dangling limply in front of him. Dawkins' intent here, as observed by Peter Silver, was to help cement a western anti-Assembly coalition, and sunder the German community from their previous alliance with the Quakers.<sup>18</sup> The German's blindfold, therefore, not only further reinforces his helplessness, but also suggests that his current suffering is the result of his past 'blindness'



**Image 1:** The Irish and Germans Ridden by Quakers and Indians' engraved, James Claypoole, Jr. *The German Bleeds & Bears the Furs*, Hugh Williamson: © Library Company of Philadelphia

to Quaker mismanagement of the province.

In contrast to the German, the other oppressed figure, identified as a 'Hibernian', is shown actively attempting to throw his Quaker master from his shoulders. His posture and deportment could not be more contrary to those exhibited by his German comrade. Perhaps the most important distinction between the two figures is that the Hibernian is armed. The musket he clutches suggests a willingness to protect his liberty and property from the unified Quaker and Indian threat. He is also pictured rearing his body forward and

<sup>18</sup> Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*, 215.

kicking his left leg defiantly behind him in an attempt to buck his rider. The script below the image reads, ‘The Hibernian frets with new Disaster/ And kicks to fling his broad brim’d Master.’ Here, as in the pro-Paxton pamphlet literature, the Irishman is a vigilant protector of liberty and property. This positive stereotype would find increasing acceptance as the imperial crisis with Great Britain intensified in the late 1760s. In Pennsylvania at least, the figure of the Irish patriot that emerged during the Paxton debates presaged later Scots Irish willingness to self-identify with their Irish heritage during the Revolution.

Those who opposed the Paxton Boys had their own preconceptions about the Irish, and nothing seemed to confirm their suspicions more succinctly than the march on Philadelphia. Studies of American nativism often begin in the 1830s with the rise of anti-foreign/immigrant political parties in New York and Philadelphia. Yet examples of xenophobic reaction to immigration in America certainly have a long history predating the creation of the American Republic. To get at the early history of the phenomenon we must first ascertain what is meant by ‘nativism’ when applied to nineteenth- and twentieth-century contexts. Pre-eminent immigration historian, John Higham, defined it as ‘intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e. “un-American”) connections.’<sup>19</sup> Higham goes on to say that while specific nativist antagonisms vary dramatically across time and in reaction to different minority irritants, yet they are united by one common thread because ‘through each separate hostility runs the connecting, energising force of modern nationalism.’<sup>20</sup> Can we apply this understanding of nativism to pre-national outpourings of anti-immigrant sentiment in colonial America? In his introduction, Higham briefly outlined precedents, or ‘patterns’, crucial to the development of nineteenth-century nativism, namely post-Reformation anti-Catholicism, mythologised Anglo-Saxon tradition, and 1790s anti-radicalism. Work done on national identity by recent British historians suggests that the defining characteristics of the concept as laid out by Higham preexisted the revolutionary movements of the late eighteenth century.<sup>21</sup> In the colonial period nativist attitudes arose in reaction to immigration from groups deemed to threaten the ‘British’ values of American society: specifically, its representative institutions and Protestant religion. In practice, nativist religious ideology was

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<sup>19</sup> John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New Brunswick, 1988), 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> See especially Colley, *Britons* and Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003).

more complicated than simple anti-Catholicism. Irish migrants of all religious backgrounds, even the Ulster Presbyterian majority, suffered at the hands of nativist antagonists representing different denominations within the spectrum of British Protestantism. Historical prejudice and the close knit framework of trans-Atlantic Presbyterianism led many in the colonies to conclude that Ulster arrivals were the emissaries of a dangerously subversive faith. Scots Irish migrants to New England in the 1720s and Philadelphia in the early 1760s found a cold reception from many quarters partially because they were the 'wrong' kind of Protestant.

While the pro-Paxton pamphleteers attempted to build a credible case for Scots Irish 'Britishness' their opponents diligently strove to tear it down. Scots Irish participation in the Paxton disturbances allowed many authors to vent their fears that the colony was being 'swarmed' by Presbyterian migrants.<sup>22</sup> Like many nativist drives before and since, the anti-Paxton campaign was based partially upon the fear that immigrants did not share the social values of their host society, that they held native institutions in disregard, and that they were intent on recreating their home country in America. Isaac Hunt, the principal 'American-born' anti-Paxton/Irish pamphleteer, scoured the annals of recent British history to prove that Presbyterians, wherever country or region they hailed from, were inherently disloyal, intolerant and republican.<sup>23</sup> Referencing the politico-religious Covenanter movement that arose in opposition to the religious policies of Charles I and Charles II in Scotland, Hunt stated: 'not only Covenanters, but the whole Body of Presbyterians are actuated by the same Principles since the *Revolution*, they were before; and that not even the Establishment of their Profession in *Scotland* can make them in Love with *Monarchy*.'<sup>24</sup> Drawing on the same historical antagonisms as Hunt, anti-Paxton authors often levied the charge of religious fanaticism at the feet of Pennsylvanian Presbyterians. Benjamin Franklin claimed that the Paxton Boys attacked the Conestogas 'with the Scripture in their hands and mouths.' He further decried their actions, exclaiming: 'Horrid Perversion of Scripture and of Religion! to father the worst of Crimes on the God of Peace and Love!'<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> [Anonymous] *Remarks on The Quaker Unmask'd; Or Plain Truth found to be Plain Falshood* [sic.] (Philadelphia, 1764), 5–6.

<sup>23</sup> Isaac Hunt, *Looking-Glass for Presbyterians* (collected edition, Philadelphia, 1764), 14.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 22. For a detailed analysis of anti-Presbyterian and anti-Irish themes in the Paxton literature see Bankhurst, 'A Looking-Glass for Presbyterians'; Peter A. Butzin, 'Politics, Presbyterians and the Paxton Riots, 1763–64', *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 51 (1973), 70–84 and Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, 191–226.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *A Narrative of the Late Massacres in Lancaster County, of a Number of*

Other authors countered their opponents' positive references to Ulster Protestant history by attacking the Paxton Boys' Irish heritage. Two pamphlets written in demeaning mock-Irish dialects—one between two Pennsylvanian Jacobites attempted to deflate positive connotations of Irish ethnicity by resurrecting the popular stereotype of the slovenly Paddy.<sup>26</sup> Both pamphlets suggested the presence of Catholics among the Paxton Boys—a nightmare scenario for many Philadelphians. Such insinuations allowed the city's Anglicans and Quakers to imagine that they had barely escaped destruction at the hands of an unholy alliance between levelling Presbyterian republicans and popish Irishmen. Anti-Paxton criticism shows that the Scots Irish men and women were prisoners of their dual ancestry. If they projected their Scottish cultural heritage they were attacked as republican zealots, while if they championed their Irishness their opponents cast them as crypto-Catholic savages.

## II: Irish Ethnicity and the American Revolution

Ironically, Scottish loyalty in the late 1760s and 1770s only intensified Scots Irish willingness to identify with their Irish roots. Thomas Jefferson attacked the British government in what is perhaps the most famous example of anti-Scottish hyperbole to emerge during the American Revolution, the first draft of the Declaration of Independence. He claimed that the British had sent, 'not only soldiers of our common blood, but Scotch and foreign mercenaries to invade and destroy us.'<sup>27</sup> Sharing Jefferson's sentiment, Ulster migrant James Caldwell wrote to his brother John in Ballymoney, County Antrim, complaining about Scottish loyalists: 'The Scotch with very few exceptions are advocates for and friendly to those principles [i.e. the divine right of kings] for which so many of them fought in 1715 & 1745'.<sup>28</sup>

In contrast, many American observers noted the predisposition of the Irish to support the patriot agenda. Philadelphian Irish Protestants, it seems,

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*Indians, Friends of this Province, By Persons Unknnown, With some Observations on the Same* (Philadelphia, 1764), 13.

<sup>26</sup> *A Dialogue, Between Andrew Trueman, And Thomas Zealot; About the Killing the Indians at Cannestogoe and Lancaster* (Philadelphia, 1764); and *A Scene in the First Act of the New Farce. Published as a Specimen* (Philadelphia, 1764).

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: How America Declared its Independence from Britain* (London, 1999), 240.

<sup>28</sup> James Caldwell, Philadelphia, to John Caldwell, Ballymoney, County Antrim, 1774 in Miller, et al., *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan*, 543.

were also increasingly willing to identify with their Catholic brethren. Ethno-cultural associations established throughout the period, including the Friendly Sons of St Patrick (1771) and the Hibernian Society (1792) flourished in the capital. Maurice Bric has recently demonstrated that these societies, especially the Hibernians, celebrated an inclusive ethnic identity that embraced Catholic and Protestant alike.<sup>29</sup> Caldwell, a member of the Sons of St Patrick, noted the positive traits of his Catholic countrymen and women while commenting on the patriotism of the Scots Irish. He observed that, ‘among the Irish, nine tenths espouse the American Cause, and our Countrymen of the North add the sagacity and calmness of the calculating Scotch Lowlander, to the enthusiastic chivalry of the native of the Emerald Isle.’<sup>30</sup> Caldwell’s comment regarding the political loyalties of the Irish in Pennsylvania largely holds true—though his figure of 90 per cent Irish support for the American position was obviously conjectural.<sup>31</sup> In 1775 and 1776 committees formed throughout the largely Presbyterian counties of western Pennsylvania in support of patriot agitation in New England. A month before the Battle of Lexington and Concord, a county committee meeting in Carlisle Pennsylvania ordered that subscriptions be taken for their ‘suffering Brethren in Boston’. The committee immediately forwarded their resolutions to a neighboring corresponding committee in the predominately Scots Irish township of Antrim.<sup>32</sup> Units from these areas later heavily contributed to the Pennsylvania line, dubbed the ‘line of Ireland’ by Colonel Henry Lee, in the Continental Army.<sup>33</sup>

Irish Americans also played a central role in the debate over whether or not to install an Anglican bishop in the colonies. Presbyterian ministers at the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) and the College and Academy of Philadelphia (later the University of Pennsylvania) were thoroughly opposed to such a measure, arguing that it was the first step towards the establishment of the Church of England as the official church in America. Presbyterians feared that, as in Ireland, Anglican Establishment might lead to the introduction of tithes for the support of a church to which they did not belong. It might also lead to legislation akin to the Test Act, where Presbyterians and other

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<sup>29</sup> Maurice Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-Invention of America, 1760–1800* (Dublin, 2008), 153–62, 172–3.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 544.

<sup>31</sup> For Irish Presbyterian support for the Revolution in the middle colonies see, Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America*, 119–33.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Resolutions of the Cumberland County Committee, 24 March 1775.’ Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Lamberton Scotch-Irish Collection, 2:17.

<sup>33</sup> Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish*, 157.

dissenters would be barred from government service unless they conformed to the established church. Donegal-born minister Francis Alison wrote his friend Ezra Stiles, then the President of Yale, bragging of the anti-episcopate stance of Irish students at the College of New Jersey: ‘Our Jersey College is now talking as if she was soon to be the bulwark against Episcopacy: I should rejoice to her Pistols, like honest Teagues, grown up into great Guns.’<sup>34</sup> Alison’s positive use of the term ‘Teague’—a derogatory insult for Irish Catholics—to describe Presbyterian ministerial candidates is striking and warrants closer examination. Significantly, professors at the University of Glasgow—an institution where Alison himself probably studied divinity—employed similar jibes to describe their rebellious Ulster students.<sup>35</sup> Alison clearly appropriated this popular slur, and here deployed it in the context of a celebratory remark. This was a clear declaration of his positive ethnic identity. It also illustrates the hallmark of this positive self-identification seems to be a commitment to patriot activism.

Outside patriot circles, opinion on the Irish, while slightly more positive, remained at times apprehensive if not outright condemnatory. Ancient prejudices continued to thrive even while popular antipathy for Britain during the Revolution translated into a reexamination of popular attitudes toward Ireland. It might be assumed that the image of Hunt’s fiendish Presbyterian would fade from relevance in light of the social and cultural changes brought about by the Revolution. Seemingly, both widespread opposition to British Imperial policy from 1765 onward and the wholesale positive transformation of the term ‘republican’ following the publication of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* in 1776 should have taken some of the sting and relevance out of the popular stereotype of the ungovernable Irish fanatic. Yet anti-Irish feeling ran deep among many patriots unsettled by the more democratic impulses unleashed by revolutionary rhetoric and discomfited by the ‘new men’ invading the political arena as a result of mass politicisation. English-born Major General Charles Lee was shocked by the transformation of popular politics in Virginia. He complained to James Monroe that the ‘power of ev’ry State’ had fallen ‘into the very worst hands’ and that the state assemblies did

<sup>34</sup> Francis Alison to Ezra Stiles, 1 August 1769 in Franklin Bowditch Dexter (ed.) *Extracts from the Itineraries and Other Miscellanies of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D* (New Haven, 1916), 435.

<sup>35</sup> In 1760 Professor Thomas Reid called his Ulster students ‘stupid Irish teagues’, see Leyburn, *Scotch-Irish*, 329; Ian McBride, ‘The School of Virtue: Francis Hutcheson, Irish Presbyterians and the Scottish Enlightenment’ in D. George Boyce, et al. (eds), *Political Thought in Ireland Since the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1993), 84–5.

not resemble any form of government with which he was familiar. It appeared that these new representatives had created a new system of rule:

it is neither a Monarchy, Aristocracy—nor Democracy, it has indeed some of the worst features of Theocracy, that is a few inspired Persons without the aid of human sense immediately by God from what they pretend dictate every measure—but it is rather a Mac-ocracy by which I mean that a banditti of low Scotch-Irish whose names generally begin with Mac—and who are either the sons of Imported Servants, or themselves imported Servants are the Lords Paramount, and in such wild beastly hands as these are republica diutius stare not potest [sic].<sup>36</sup>

Lee's comments reveal that many facets of Hunt's Irish Presbyterian caricature—namely its unthinking religious zeal and self-interested political aspirations—still found social currency among some American patriots during the transformative year immediately following independence.

To British observers and Loyalists, widespread Scots Irish support for the Revolution seemed to confirm their long-held suspicions regarding both Presbyterian and Irish disloyalty. Various British officials, including the king himself, held that Presbyterianism and Calvinist teaching played an influential part in bringing about the rebellion.<sup>37</sup> Writing in 1778, one Hessian officer jotted down his thoughts and experiences while on campaign with the British Army. One of his observations has since become a staple in the celebratory mythology of the Scots Irish. He wrote, 'Call this war by whatever name you may, only call it not an American rebellion; it is nothing more or less than a Scotch Irish Presbyterian rebellion'.<sup>38</sup>

This popular view of the Irish held by many pro-American partisans and British sympathisers alike, overshadows the reality of Irish loyalism, specifically in the south.<sup>39</sup> Many first- and second-generation Irish immigrants

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<sup>36</sup> Charles Lee to James Munroe undated letter [summer 1780?], *The Lee Papers*, Vol. III (New York, 1873), 431.

<sup>37</sup> James G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill, 1962), 305–6; Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America*, 111–12.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish*, 305.

<sup>39</sup> For an interesting examination of one family's loyalist experiences in America during the War of Independence and Ireland during the 1798 Rising see: Eugene Coyle and John J. Duffy, 'Loyalty and its Rewards in Eighteenth-Century New England and County Down: The Cousins Crane Brush', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 16 (2001), 118–34.

in the South Carolinian piedmont and backcountry actively supported the Crown throughout the war. There were several reasons for this. First, the recent suppression of the Regulator movement, a western drive against higher taxes imposed by coastal officials, and the hardship endured by many settlers in its aftermath, left many Scots Irish settlers in northwestern South Carolina hesitant to join in yet another popular rebellion. Second, the eastern gentry and Charleston merchant class largely supported the patriot cause, a fact that may have informed many western farmers' decision to take up arms on the side of the British. Alexander Chesney was one such loyalist. Chesney migrated from Dunclug, near Ballymena, County Antrim, to South Carolina in 1772. Like most Irish immigrants to arrive through the port of Charleston, Chesney immediately headed inland, eventually establishing a farm with his father in the vicinity of other kinfolk near the north-western settlement of Pacolet.<sup>40</sup> He sided with the British in 1775 and remained a committed loyalist—despite being drafted into the patriot militia for a small period before deserting in 1776—until he sailed to Ireland after the British evacuation of Charleston in 1782.<sup>41</sup> It is clear that by the time Chesney returned to Ireland, he identified himself as 'British' and not 'Irish' or, unsurprisingly given his experience, 'American'. But his journal from the period reveals that this may not always have been the case. At the beginning of the conflict, it was still possible for Chesney to view the two sides as opposing parties bound by a unifying sense of Britishness. At that point, loyalism and attachment to his adopted homeland were not mutually exclusive. Thus, Chesney employed the terms 'loyalites' and 'Congress Party' to describe each group in the opening stages of the war. By the time Chesney evacuated Charleston, however, he was regularly using the words 'American' and 'loyalites/loyalist' in reference to the two opposing sides, thereby insinuating that loyalty to Britain precluded personal identification with America.

Many Irish refugees from South Carolina gave statements and testimonials to the Loyalist Claims Commission in London in which they appeared to favour British, rather than Irish or American, self-identification. The reasons for their doing so are rather straightforward and reveal an obvious shortcoming in the Loyalist depositions as a source for the purpose of uncovering ethnic or national identity. Each person that went before the

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<sup>40</sup> 'Alexander Chesney Loyalist Journal', Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI) D.2260.

<sup>41</sup> Chesney Journal, PRONI D.2260; 'The Memorial of Alexander Chesney', Loyalist Claims Commission Papers for South Carolina, National Archives, London (hereafter NA): Audit Office (hereafter AO)/12/46/p.96.

Claims Commission attempted to sell their story in order to receive financial compensation for financial losses resulting from their loyalty to the British government.<sup>42</sup> Deponents, therefore, had to play-up their commitment to the British cause and the degree to which they suffered for it. As a result, most of the immigrant deponents buried any private attachments they may have had to South Carolina or Ireland underneath declarations of loyalty to Britain and, more commonly, their personal attachment to their sovereign. These memorials were also mediated through the pen of the claims commissioner, making it difficult to ascertain the exact voice and motive of the deponent. Despite all this, Irish ethnicity, and arguably Irish self-identification, can be gleaned from these short testimonials.

There were moments when more concrete statements of Irish self-identification emerge in the depositions. Redmund Burke, an Irish immigrant briefly employed as a surgeon in Washington's army, claimed that he abandoned his post 'when the dispute changed from redress of Grievances to arrival of Independence and he perceived from the Interference of other European Powers that serious civil consequence was likely to ensue to his native Country and perhaps to America'.<sup>43</sup> Burke's statement reveals that, like many Irishmen and women—especially constitutional reformers within the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy—he supported the colonies' position against British imperial policy, but could not fathom backing the dissolution of the Empire.<sup>44</sup> Significantly, he shared the pervasive Irish Protestant concern that French 'Interference' in this British imperial squabble might lead to 'civil consequences'—or Catholic insurrection—in Ireland. Despite their shortcomings, the Loyalist depositions reveal much useful information about the Irish-American revolutionary experience. The documents destroy the myth of unanimous Scots Irish support for revolutionary agitation and force us to confront the more nuanced reality that regional factors partially determined Irish-American positions regarding the issue of independence. But perhaps the most interesting revelation that emerges from depositions

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<sup>42</sup> For the Loyalist Claims Commission see Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774–1789* (London, 1974), 192–6, 200–28.

<sup>43</sup> 'The Memorial of Redmund Burke to the Loyalist Claims Commission', NA, AO 12/46/p.1.

<sup>44</sup> For the ebbing of Irish Protestant support for America after the Declaration of Independence and war with France, see Vincent Morley, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760–1783* (Oxford, 2002), 123–5, 171–7, 189–92; Neil Longley York, *Neither Kingdom Nor Nation: The Irish Quest for Constitutional Rights 1698–1800* (Washington D.C., 1994), 1–2, 101–2, 261–4.

such as Redmund Burke's is that the domestic stability of Ireland remained a concern for Irish immigrants in America and may have even informed their political allegiance after 1776.

### III: Irish-America in the Early Republican Period

Irish migration to the new United States reconvened as soon as peace with Britain was established. Largely, the immigrants that arrived in the 1780s resembled those who came before the Revolution. They were mostly Protestants from the north who moved through the large coastal cities in search of cheap land in the west. All of this changed in the 1790s, when a wave of republican refugees influenced by French revolutionary rhetoric fled government restrictions at home for a new life in the America.<sup>45</sup> Upon arrival, many of these exiles became drawn into the partisan politics of the day on the side of the Jeffersonian republicans whom many saw as best representing their own radical political outlook. This tendency to support the Jeffersonian agenda earned them the scorn of the Federalists during Adams' presidency, and led, in part, to the introduction of nativist legislation in the form of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798.<sup>46</sup>

On 1 July 1798 Federalist Harrison Gray Otis made an infamous speech before Congress in which he outlined the necessity of restricting immigration. He targeted the 'Wild Irish' specifically, claiming that legislation was necessary to discourage 'the mass of vicious and disorganizing characters who can not live peaceably at home, and who, after unfurling the standard of rebellion in their own countries, may come hither to revolutionise ours.'<sup>47</sup> The exiled Presbyterian Minister and United Irishman Thomas Ledlie Birch was shocked by his frosty reception upon arrival in New York. He dreamt that the situation would be different if the situation of the two countries were reversed: 'When

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<sup>45</sup> Kerby Miller notes that the exiled United Irishmen's preference for the United States over Europe positively affected Irish Catholics' views regarding emigration to America. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 188.

<sup>46</sup> For more on Irish radicals and the Alien and Sedition Acts see Michael Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic* (Lawrence Kansas, 1997), 248–51. For the intense debates over Irish immigration in early nineteenth-century America see David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early Republic* (Dublin, 1998), 77–95.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Edward C. Carter II, 'A "Wild Irishman" under Every Federalist's Bed: Naturalization in Philadelphia, 1789–1806', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 94 (1970), 334.

God in his providence restores us back to our country, we hope he will dispose us to act to others as becomes freemen, we will not meet you upon our shores in hostile array, armed with an Alien Bill and a naturalization law'.<sup>48</sup> Shortly after the Alien and Sedition Acts became law, Matthew Lyon, Republican congressman from Vermont and Revolutionary War colonel, was sentenced to four months imprisonment for slandering the Adams' administration. Lyon was born in Dublin and became known in Federalist circles as 'Wild' or 'Irish Mat'.<sup>49</sup> Other Federalists, most famously Roger Griswold of Connecticut, publicly attacked his war record, thus illustrating that for many Federalists Lyon's ethnicity trumped his past glories in service to the United States.<sup>50</sup> In a way, his Irish birth barred him from being fully accepted as truly American in the tense political atmosphere preceding Jefferson's election of 1800. This spike in anti-Irish sentiment, occurring during a period when the Catholic proportion of immigrants was increasing, shattered the inclusive, yet fragile, multicultural Irish identity established during the Revolution. Protestant flight from the revolutionary consensus, in turn, paved the way for the hegemonic Gaelic/Catholic model of Irish-America that rose to prominence in 1830s before the Famine migrations established its unquestionable dominance.

A half-century after the Paxton Mob electrified Pennsylvania politics, conservative elements within American society feared that local elections were again jeopardised by the self-interested ambition of swarming 'Whiteboys' 'United Irishmen' and 'Irish convicts'.<sup>51</sup> Federalists throughout the north unleashed a barrage of anti-Irish propaganda in the face of widespread Irish support for their rivals. Boston's *Columbian Centinel* fumed: 'These *alien* locusts not only have the impudence to busy themselves in elections; but are

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas Ledlie Birch, *A Letter from an Irish Emigrant: A Vindication of the United Irish Rebellion in The North*, Kenneth Robinson (ed.) (Belfast, 1998), 62.

<sup>49</sup> For one such example see, *The Medley, or the Newbedford Marine Journal*, 8 March 1799.

<sup>50</sup> Griswold and Lyon had a physical altercation on the floor of the House after Lyon spit at Griswold in retaliation for a jibe deriding Lyon's service in New York during the Burgoyne campaign. One Connecticut paper stated that the 'Yankee' Griswold 'gave the bog-trotter a notable threshing.' *Middlesex Gazette*, Middlesex Connecticut, 23 March 1798. For more on the incident see Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven, 2001), 173–5.

<sup>51</sup> In 1799 governor of Pennsylvania Thomas McKean was also dubbed a Presbyterian 'Paddy' in the Federalist press. See Kevin Whelan, 'The Green Atlantic: Radical Reciprocities between Ireland and America in the Long Eighteenth Century' in Kathleen Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840* (Cambridge, 2004), 229. For more on rising anti-Irish sentiment in America following 1798 see Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-Invention of America*, 230–1.

permitted to erect pressers all over the country; and to abuse every *American* they chuse!<sup>52</sup> Like those Scots Irish Presbyterians in Pennsylvania fifty years earlier, they were the agents of ‘some foreign power, to effect some diabolical purposes’.<sup>53</sup> And like the unruly ‘Mac-ocracy’ Charles Lee despised, they were too wild and intemperate to be trusted with government. Federalists were enraged by the Jeffersonian activism of the exiled United Irishman Thomas Addis Emmet; particularly his personal attacks on the character of Rufus King during the 1807 New York state Assembly election. In retaliation, the same Boston paper took aim at Irish-American adulation for the memory of Thomas’s brother Robert Emmet, the martyr of the failed 1803 Irish rising:

They have the effrontery to set up the character of one of their Irish scape-gallowses, as a *counterpart* of our immortal WASHINGTON; and that the Irish convict was no more a *rebel* than WASHINGTON was. Yes, they have had the folly as well as the impudence to assert that the murders, outrages, and treasons perpetrated in *Ireland*, were only such as the *Americans* committed in 1774, 5, &c. and that therefore they have a right to all the privileges of Americans!<sup>54</sup>

By the turn of the century nativists had co-opted the memory of the Revolution, interpreting it as a distinctly American event in order to marginalise foreigners who might mistakenly assume that they too were entitled to the fruits of 1776.

By 1819, pervasive anti-Irish Catholic sentiment in America led Mathew Carey, a radical Dublin exile, Catholic and prominent printer in Philadelphia, to take up his pen in defense of the Catholics of his native country.<sup>55</sup> On

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<sup>52</sup> *The Columbian Centinel*, Boston, Massachusetts, 6 May 1807.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Mathew Carey was a prominent figure in the political and literary worlds of Dublin and Philadelphia. Before establishing himself as a premier printer and economist in Philadelphia, Carey had been an editor of the short-lived radical Dublin newspaper, *The Volunteer’s Journal* in 1783. He fled Ireland for the USA in 1784 in order to avoid prosecution for seditious libel. Throughout his life in America, Carey maintained an interest in the affairs of his native country. Throughout the 1790s, for example, he was the secretary of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland. For more on the life of Mathew Carey see Kenneth Wyer Rowe, *Mathew Carey: A Study in American Economic Development* (Baltimore, 1933); Earl L. Bradsher, *Mathew Carey, Editor, Author and Publisher: A Study in American Literary Development* (New York, 1912); and Edward C. Carter II, ‘The Political Activities of Mathew Carey, Nationalist, 1760–1814’, Ph.D. dissertation (Bryn Mawr College, 1962). For a comprehensive list of Carey’s publications see William Clarkin, *Mathew Carey: A*

this occasion he attempted to do so by deflating the Protestant mythology surrounding the Irish rebellion of 1641, a topic of great contemporary interest due to the publication of William Godwin's 1817 historical novel set in the period, *Mandeville*. Carey's primary targets were those authors and works, most notably John Temple's *History of the Irish Rebellion* (1646), that placed culpability for the rising and the subsequent massacre of Protestants squarely at the feet of Irish Catholics. Carey admitted that some observers might question the contemporary relevance of 1641. To this he claimed his investigation was both pertinent and timely because bigoted accounts written after the rebellion to justify the oppression of Catholics 'sowed, and still continue to sow, a copious seed of the most vulgar and rancorous prejudices in the mind of man against his fellow man.'<sup>56</sup> While perhaps not immediately obvious, Americans continued to harbor the anti-Irish chauvinism instilled in their European ancestors by Temple and other pro-British authors. 'Many of these prejudices', he claimed, 'have been transplanted from their native soil by emigrants, and have taken root in this country'.<sup>57</sup> In this way then, misinformation regarding the rebellion continued to haunt Irish immigrants in the New World just as it had done in their native country. This was evident in reports about the Irish rising of 1798 printed in the Federalist press. The *Farmer's Museum, or Lay Preacher's Gazette* reported that 'amongst the papers of the United Irish Directory, detected in Ireland, were minutes of the receipt of money from Societies in the United States, for the purpose of carrying on rebellion and massacre'.<sup>58</sup> This report hinted that, in the context of Ireland, the words 'rebellion' and 'massacre' remained intertwined in popular American imagination even into the nineteenth century.

Carey attempted to reposition the rebellion beyond a parochial historical debate over the ethno-religious settlement and governance of Ireland. Instead, he claimed that the rising was a battle to preserve the liberties of the people of Ireland from foreign encroachment. The insurgents acted to defend their property from 'rapacious individuals' who at the time of the

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*Bibliography of His Publications, 1785–1824* (New York, 1984).

<sup>56</sup> Mathew Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae: or, Ireland Vindicated: An Attempt to Develop and Expose a Few of the Multifarious Errors and Falsehoods Respecting Ireland* (Philadelphia, 1819), x. For Carey's consistent interest in both Irish immigrant relief and Irish politics while resident in the United States see Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-Invention of America*, 159–61, 230–31; Miller, et al., *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan*, 102–05, 299–301, 588–93; and Rowe, *Mathew Carey*, 27–8.

<sup>57</sup> Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae*, xi.

<sup>58</sup> *Farmer's Museum, or Lay Preacher's Gazette*, Walpole, New Hampshire, 29 April 1799.

rebellion had already plundered ‘nearly a million of acres of land’ from the native population.<sup>59</sup> Carey therefore concluded, ‘That if the Irish insurgents of 1641 deserved to be stigmatised as traitors and rebels, then were the English revolutionists of 1688, the American of 1776, and the French of 1789, traitors and rebels of the very worst possible kind’.<sup>60</sup> By placing the rising of 1641 in a timeline alongside such honored events as the American and French Revolutions, Carey employed a similar tactic to one used by pro-Paxton pamphleteers who claimed that the mob that marched on Philadelphia in 1764 acted in the spirit of their Williamite forefathers. Like those earlier authors, Carey was attempting to demonstrate that Irish patriots (whether in 1641, 1688 or 1798) and the thousands of migrants arriving annually in New York and Philadelphia possessed qualities dear to freeborn Americans. Like their hosts, the Irish detested tyranny and possessed the manly countenance necessary to protect their liberties from those who would intrude upon them.

The fact that the *Vindiciae Hibernicae* struck a cord with many Irish Americans is evident in the subscription registry included at the beginning of the 1822 edition. Unsurprisingly, even a cursory glimpse at the names on the list reveals an overwhelming Irish majority among the subscribers. Of the 472 people who paid for the work to be reprinted, a minimum of 340, or roughly 72 per cent, had Irish surnames. The subscribers did not, however, represent an accurate cross section of Irish society.<sup>61</sup> Protestants, Irish or otherwise, were grossly underrepresented. Of the thirteen listed clergymen, for instance, only one, the Swedish Lutheran minister, Nicholas Collin, can be definitively identified as a Protestant. At least eight of the remaining twelve were prominent Catholics, including three bishops, two of them Irish-born (Henry Conwill, second bishop of Philadelphia, and John Connolly, second bishop of New York). Catholic immigrants clearly saw the utility of Carey’s mission and proudly added their names to the document. In a way, the subscription list attached to the *Vindiciae* served the same function as a petition or public declaration. It testified, for all who cared to see, that those who paid for the reprint supported the restoration of Catholic Ireland’s good reputation. For the Irish among them, the presence of their name on the list also served as a statement of national pride and a marker of their ethnic identity.

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<sup>59</sup> Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae*, xiv.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

<sup>61</sup> Mathew Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae: or, Ireland Vindicated: An Attempt to Develop and Expose a Few of the Multijarious Errors and Falsehoods Respecting Ireland* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Philadelphia, 1822), v–vii.

Irish Protestants, however, did not respond to Carey's rallying cry with the same enthusiasm. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the *Vindiciae* struck at the heart of their own martyrlogical tradition that remembered the 1641 rebellion as the arch-example of Catholic treachery and fanaticism. More likely, it was because, as Maldwyn Jones has pointed out, the Scots Irish had undergone a 'cultural synthesis' with other dominant Anglo-American groups since the end of the Revolution.<sup>62</sup> The adoption of an 'Irish' designation was therefore less appealing to recent Scots Irish migrants looking to establish themselves in a new country now largely suspicious of the Irish. Second or third generation Presbyterian immigrants, many of whom had been directly involved in the contest to create the nation and had since been swept-up in the tide of American nationalism, also saw little practical benefit in the Irish moniker.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, Irish-American ethnicity—or what it meant to be Irish and who could define themselves as such positively and why—was perhaps more fluid and unstable than at any point since. Irishness in this period was both exclusionary and inclusive. The Presbyterian Paxton Boys relied on Irish Protestant history to gain popular favour at the expense of Irish Catholics, while the coming of the Revolution made pan-Irish ethnicity acceptable, even fashionable, to both Catholic and Protestant alike. Yet as varied as Irish-American experiences in these decades were, the tropes employed by nativists to discredit and marginalise recent migrants were remarkably similar. A closer examination of early Irish identity formation as a struggle between both internal and external forces suggest further commonality between the Scots Irish and later Irish Catholic experience in America.

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<sup>62</sup> Maldwyn A. Jones, 'The Scotch-Irish in British America' in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (eds), *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill, 1991), 313.