

OUR FOREIGNERS

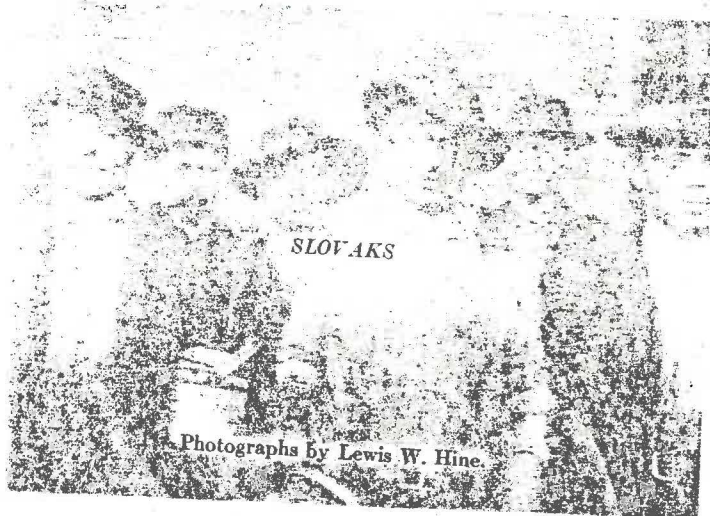
A CHRONICLE OF
AMERICANS IN THE MAKING
BY SAMUEL P. ORTH



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frustrated; invaders from Vermont spent a night over the Canadian border before they were driven back; and for several days Fort Erie on Niagara River was held by about 1500 Fenians.¹ General Meade was thereupon sent by the Federal authorities to put an end to these ridiculous breaches of neutrality.

Neither Meade nor any other authority, however, could stop the flow of Fenian adjectives that now issued from a hundred indignation meetings all over the land when Canada, after due trial, proceeded to sentence the guilty culprits captured in the "Battle of Limestone Ridge," as the tussle with Canadian regulars near Fort Erie was called. Newspapers abounded with tales of the most startling designs upon Canada and Britain. There then occurred a strong reaction to the Fenian movement, and the American people were led to wonder how much of truth there was in a statement made by Thomas D'Arcy McGee.² "This very Fenian organization in the United States," he said, "what does it really

¹ Oberholtzer, *History of the United States since the Civil War*, vol. 1, p. 526 ff.

² Thomas D'Arcy McGee (1825-1868), one of the leaders of the "Young Ireland" party, fled for political reasons to the United States in 1848, where he established the *New York Nation* and the *American Celt*. When he changed his former attitude of opposition to British rule in Ireland he was attacked by the extreme

prove but that the Irish are still an alien population, camped but not settled in America, with foreign hopes and aspirations, unshared by the people among whom they live?"

The Irishman today is an integral part of every large American community. Although the restrictive legislation of two centuries ago has long been repealed and a new land system has brought great prosperity to his island home, the Irishman has not abated one whit in his temperamental attitude towards England and as a consequence some 40,000 or 50,000 of his fellow countrymen come to the United States every year. Here he has been dispossessed of his monopoly of shovel and pick by the French Canadian in New England and by the

Irish patriots in the United States and in consequence moved to Canada, where he founded the *New Era* and began to practice law. Subsequently, with the support of the Irish Canadians, he represented Montreal in the Parliament of United Canada (1858) and was President of the Council (1862) in the John Sandfield Macdonald Administration. When the Irish were left unrepresented in the reorganized Cabinet in the following year, McGee became an adherent of Sir John A. Macdonald, and in 1864 he was made Minister of Agriculture in the Taché-Macdonald Administration. An ardent supporter of the progressive policies of his adopted country, he was one of the Fathers of Confederation and was a member of the first Dominion Parliament in 1867. His denunciations, both in Ireland (1865) and in Canada, of the policies and activities of the Fenians led to his assassination at Ottawa on April 7, 1868.

Italian, Syrian, and Armenian in other parts of the country. He finds work in factories, for he still shuns the soil, much as he professes to love the "old sod." A great change has come over the economic condition of the second and third generation of Irish immigrants. Their remarkable buoyancy of temperament is everywhere displayed. Bridget's daughter has left the kitchen and is a school teacher, a stenographer, a saleswoman, a milliner, or a dress-maker; her son is a clerk, a bookkeeper, a traveling salesman, or a foreman. Wherever the human touch is the essential of success, there you find the Irish. That is why in some cities one-half the teachers are Irish; why salesmanship lures them; why they are the most successful walking delegates, solicitors, agents, foremen, and contractors. In the higher walks of life you find them where dash, brilliance, cleverness, and emotion are demanded. The law and the priesthood utilize their eloquence, journalism their keen insight into the human side of news, and literature their imagination and humor. They possess a positive genius for organization and management. The labor unions are led by them; and what would municipal politics be without them? The list of eminent names which they have contributed to these callings will increase

as their generations multiply in the favorable American environment. But remote indeed is the day and complex must be the experience that will erase the memory of the ancient Erse proverb, which their racial temperament evoked: "Contention is better than loneliness."

Years ago when New Bedford was still a whaling port a group of Portuguese sailors from the Azores settled there. This formed the nucleus of the Portuguese immigration which, in the last decade, included over 80,000 persons. Two-thirds of these live in New England factory towns, the remaining third, strange to say, have found their way to the other side of the continent, where they work in the gardens and fruit orchards of California. New Bedford is still the center of their activity. They are a hard-working people whose standard of living, according to official investigations "is much lower than that of any other race," of whom scarcely one in twenty become citizens, and who evince no interest in learning or in manual skill.

Finally, American cities are extending the radius of their magnetism and are drawing ambitious tradesmen and workers from the Levant. Over 100,000 have come from Arabia, Syria, Armenia, and Turkey. The Armenians and Syrians, forming the bulk of this influx, came as refugees from the brutalities of the Mohammedan régime. The Levantine is first and always a bargainer. His little bazaars and oriental rug shops are bits of Cairo and Constantinople, where you are privileged to haggle over every purchase in true oriental

style. Even the peddlers of lace and drawn-work find it hard to accustom themselves to the occidental idea of a market price. With all their cunning as traders, they respect learning, prize manual skill, possess a fine artistic sense, and are law-abiding. The Armenians especially are eager to become American citizens. Since the settlement of the Northwestern lands, many thousands of Scandinavians and Finns have flocked to the cities, where they are usually employed as skilled craftsmen.¹

Thus the United States, in a quarter of a century, has assumed a cosmopolitanism in which the early German and Irish immigrants appear as veteran

¹ The Census of 1910 gives the following distribution of the American white population by percentages:

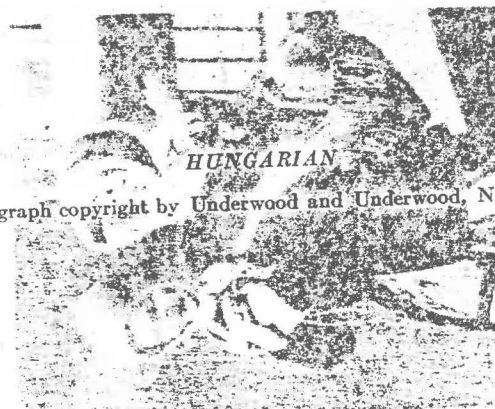
<i>Location</i>	<i>Native stock</i>	<i>Native born of Foreign or mixed parentage</i>	<i>Foreign born</i>
Rural districts	64.1	19.3	7.5
Cities 2,500-10,000	57.5	20.6	19.9
" 10,000-25,000	50.4	24.6	17.4
" 25,000-100,000	45.9	26.5	20.2
" 100,000-500,000	38.9	31.3	22.1
" 500,000 and over	25.6	37.2	33.6

The native white element predominates in the country but is only a fraction of the population in the larger cities.

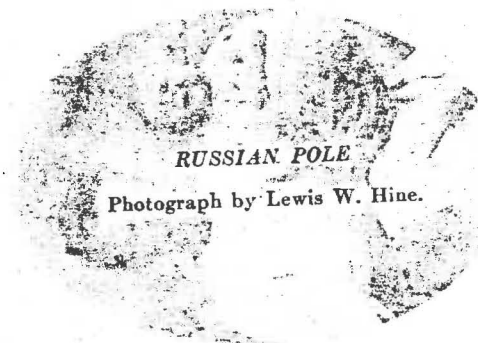
typical of this change. In 1848 it had 5923 inhabitants, of whom 63.3 per cent were Americans, 36 per cent were Irish, and about forty white persons belonged to other nationalities. In 1910 the same city had 85,000 inhabitants, of whom only about 14 per cent were Americans, and the rest foreigners, two-thirds of the old and one-third of the new immigration.

A like transformation has taken place in the manufacturing towns of New York, New Jersey, and Delaware and in the iron and steel towns of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and the Middle West. For forty years after the establishment of the first iron furnace in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in 1842, the mills were manned exclusively by Americans, English, Welsh, Irish, and Germans. In 1880 Slavic names began to appear on the pay rolls. Soon thereafter Italians and Syrians were brought into the town, and today sixty per cent of the population is of foreign birth, largely from southeastern Europe. The native Americans and Welsh live in two wards, and clustered around them are settlements of Italians, Slovaks, and Croatians.

The new manufacturing towns which are dependent upon some single industry are almost wholly composed of recent immigrants. Gary, Indiana,



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Photograph by Lewis W. Hine.

built by the United States Steel Corporation, and Whiting, Indiana, established by the Standard Oil Company for its refining industry, are examples of new American towns of exotic populations. At a glass factory built in 1890 in the village of Charleroi, Pennsylvania, over ten thousand Belgians, French, Slavs, and Italians now labor. An example of lightning-like displacement of population is afforded by the steel and iron center at Granite City and Madison, Illinois. The two towns are practically one industrial community, although they have separate municipal organizations. A steel mill was erected in 1892 upon the open prairies, and in it American, Welsh, Irish, English, German, and Polish workmen were employed. In 1900 Slovaks were brought in, and two years later there came large numbers of Magyars, followed by Croatians. In 1905 Bulgarians began to arrive, and within two years over eight thousand had assembled. Armenians, Servians, Greeks, Magyars, every ethnic faction found in the racial welter of southeastern Europe, is represented among the twenty thousand inhabitants that dwell in this new industrial town. In "Hungary Hollow" these race fragments isolate themselves, effectively insulated against the currents of American influence.

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