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McCaffrey, Lawrence J.; Skerrett, Ellen; Funchion, Michael F.; and Fanning, Charles. *The Irish In Chicago*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987. Pp. xi, 171. Maps, table, black and white plates, index. \$19.95 (U.S.)

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[See table of contents](#)

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is already "known." In short, *The Paddy Camps* may not be asking the right questions of the urban ethnic past in order to offer new insights into this historical phenomenon. Collective histories are indeed important, but, unless Irish pre-famine migration is seen as many individual "migration projects" (each carefully contemplated and planned), the historian of urban ethnicity must be content with writing a merely broad descriptive narrative. Moreover, Mitchell's work provides little insight into the Irish-American rural/urban dichotomy. The differences between Irishmen who chose to be urban and their rural counterparts cannot be approached in a study of this nature. In the end, the scope of *The Paddy Camps* permits it to provide needed detail, but at the same time the limited conceptual framework diminishes its analytical potential for new, challenging questions and directions for the study of urban ethnicity.

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**McCaffrey, Lawrence J.; Skerrett, Ellen; Funchion, Michael F.; and Fanning, Charles.** *The Irish In Chicago*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987. Pp. xi, 171. Maps, table, black and white plates, index. \$19.95 (U.S.)

The configurations of Irish-American urban history have become somewhat clearer in recent times as two distinct patterns have emerged. Ideographic studies have sought to identify the peculiarities of the Irish-American experience in various locales, while other more general studies have documented the common themes from this group's past. *The Irish in Chicago*, a collaborative work, is a curious combination of these two approaches. Although the essays contained within this book carefully point out things both Irish and particular to Chicago, so too do they attempt to relate these aspects to a broader urban, Irish, and American overview.

Though never explicitly stated, the purpose of this collection is quite clear: the 1980s signal the end of an era for the Irish in Chicago. In terms of political control, strict Catholic observance, and indeed, ethnic cohesiveness, Irish Chicago is in decline.

This book trods the well-worn path of Irish-American urban historiography. It retraces the familiar narrative of this ethnic group's past: economic pauperism, the presence of the Roman Catholic Church, and Irish-American political prowess. These themes are emphasized in the book's individual essays. In Professor McCaffrey's "The Irish-American Dimension," the economic position of the Irish in the social structure of Chicago in the 19th and 20th centuries is the focus. Two themes emerge in his analysis. The first is the characterization of the Chicago Irish as conscious seekers of social mobility. Lacking sufficient agricultural skills, he claims, the Irish settled in cities as "proletarian pioneers of the ghetto" — they were "the paradigm of the American ethnic experience." After fighting nativism and economic subordination, the Irish in Chicago eventually succeeded in their quest for "respectability." By the end of the 19th century their social mobility was manifest. Literacy and political footholds gave the Irish opportunities in Chicago that had been denied them in business. By 1900 the "lace-curtain" Irish had appeared with their standing firmly planted in middle-class circles. McCaffrey's second theme derives from his first. As the Irish increased their affluence and social position, they also moved away from the city core. Geographic mobility, in part due to the encroachment of blacks upon Irish neighbourhoods, accompanied Irish social mobility.

Ellen Skerrett's "The Catholic Dimension" explores the role of the church in the lives of Chicago's Irish. The city never had one central Irish settlement, but rather a series of Irish-dominated enclaves. In each of these a Roman Catholic parish occupied a central position. "At its best," Skerrett writes, "the

parish filled important religious and social needs and became the heart of Irish-American community life." The parish symbolized ethnic space. The large amounts of money donated by the Irish community in Chicago are evidence of the church's honoured role. Charitable societies and parochial schools accompanied the growth of these neighbourhoods. By 1920, however, an Irish-Catholic identity had given way to a strictly Catholic identity.

Other traditional Irish themes fill "The Political and Nationalist Dimensions," in which M. F. Funchion documents the Irish-American affinity for Democratic civic "machine" politics in Chicago. From the close of the Civil War to 1976 the Irish had a dominant role in local authority. This capacity was rooted in Irish adeptness at operating a civic "spoils" system. Ward bosses such as "Hinky Dink" Kenna and "Bathhouse John" Coughlin controlled areas of the city through patronage and payoff. While many Irish saw personal gain in city politics, an identifiable communitarian aspect existed among politicians as well. Funchion also describes Irish nationalist politics and notes that Chicago supported a branch of O'Connell's Repeal Association in 1842, a Fenian brotherhood in the 1860s, a Clan Na Gael chapter in the 1870s and 1880s, and a United Irish League of America group in the early 1900s. While nationalist fervour grew after the Easter Rising of 1916, it has steadily declined since the end of the Anglo-Irish War.

Charles Fanning in "The Literary Dimension" explores a cultural area not often available to the urban ethnic historian. Chicago had four main Irish writers whose work focused on the communities from which they came. The depiction by Finley Peter Dunne (1867-1936) of the Bridgeport of publican Martin Dooley marked "the first fully realized ethnic neighbourhood in American literature." In more than 300 columns in *The Evening Tribune*, Dunne described Irish life in Chicago in marvellous "inside" detail. Kate McPhelim

Cleary (1863-1905) and Clara Laughlin (1873-1941) were writers whose magazine short stories also stressed the experiences of "common" Irishmen in the New World. Perhaps the most prolific of Chicago's Irish Literaries was James T. Farrell (1904-79). Farrell's Washington Park novels keenly balanced culture, ethnic space, and time. Fanning notes that "his sympathetic portrayal of Chicago Irish working- and middle-class families established him as a pioneer in the field of urban ethnic literature." All four of these writers stressed the themes of working-class heroism, dignity amid poverty, and second-generation community disintegration.

This book's ability to compare and contrast things Irish-American with those particularly Irish and Chicago is perhaps its greatest attribute. The Irish in this city were active politically and religiously, but in the beginning they were economically subordinated. Unlike their countrymen in some eastern cities, however, the Irish in Chicago, the authors hold, consciously sought and attained social mobility. Here some contradiction arises. No one examines, for example, how the "communal Catholicism" of this group intersected with individual quests for "middle-class respectability." If the Irish "were not rugged individualists," how did their advances in politics, athletics, and entertainment come about? At the end of this volume that question remains unresolved.

Finally, perhaps because the book signals "the end of an era," the authors seem too willing to view the Irish experience in Chicago in a somewhat Whiggish manner. "Irish-America is an urban ethnic success story." The contributors tend to conceptualize this history in three phases: Irish community formation; second-generation "Americanization"; and, finally, "lace-curtain" social mobility. *The Irish in Chicago* provides a good summary of more than 150 years of

Irish experience in an important American city.

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**Squires, Gregory D.; Bennett, Larry; McCourt, Kathleen; and Nyden, Philip.** *Chicago: Race, Class, and the Response to Urban Decline*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987. Pp. xii, 230. Tables, maps, figures, index. \$29.95 (U.S.)

This volume is the first in a series of studies on the dynamics of economic development in major American cities since World War Two. The authors present a highly readable, analytical, incisive and usable text on how the leaders of Chicago's political economy directed the shape of urban development to the present time. This process began even before the political reign of Mayor Richard J. Daley in 1955 and has continued after his death. While the immense power of the economic forces as illustrated through the interests of the banks, the giant retail houses of Field's, Carson's and Sears, the realty associations and the industries such as USX and AMOCO have held sway for over three decades, a new movement is underway which has already seriously challenged their domination over the city's future. The convergence of interests of a new populist, political wave led by blacks and which culminated in the political victory of Harold Washington in 1983 and the populist, neighbourhood thrust of white ethnics and Hispanics has presented the formidable forces that heretofore controlled the political economy with an alternative agenda. In the post-war years, the growth ideology promoted by business interests held centre stage, controlling access to information. Since 1983, the open, responsive city government that is emerging has provided neighbourhood interests with an opportunity to shift economic investment away from the

business districts to the city's Loop and neighbourhoods.

The problems of a public policy that focused only on market growth in the center of the city included misguided diagnoses that the decline in industrialization was caused by high taxes, government regulations, high wages demanded by unions and welfare costs while overlooking the drain that avaricious corporate actions produced. One such example is USX's disinvestment that resulted in large scale unemployment with its attendant ills of loss of self-esteem, financial deprivation, family breakups, and neighbourhood disruption. Also, ignoring or accepting as inevitable certain social problems such as unemployment, crime and undereducation merely exacerbated social disruption. For over three decades, business growth in the corporate sector when coupled with political inaction on pressing social issues diminished the quality of life for those in the lower quarter of Chicago's social structure. Most important, the alternatives that allowed for an economic growth that complemented social progress were deliberately overlooked. Quoting economist Robert Reich of Harvard, "a social organization premised on equity, security, and participation will generate greater productivity than one premised on greed and fear."

The answer from Chicago's neighbourhood organizations to the challenge from corporate-municipal greed has come from citizen groups that to a remarkable extent are overcoming racial and ethnic differences to achieve some successes in eliminating "redlining," which restricted mortgages, home improvement loans and insurance, as well as in promoting crime prevention and control. Reinvestment is beginning to follow lines that stimulate rather than stymie citizens in their quest for a better life. The municipal leadership offered by Harold Washington before his untimely death in November 1987 was steering the city in a direction that challenged the partnership of self-interest