

But Fort Dearborn had not been the first "European" settlement in what was to become Chicago. Perhaps symbolic of the city's "embarrassing" origin was the fact that the first "white" settler on the spot, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable (also referred to as Point De Saible), was actually a "black" man, perhaps a fitting start for a city whose "majority" population is now made up of "people of color." Acknowledgment of du Sable's prior claim as founder was periodically resisted by Chicago's later white elite. As late as the Chicago World's Fair of 1933-34, the black community of Chicago had to fight to have a replica of du Sable's cabin included in the exhibition.⁶¹ Although not all the facts are known, the evidence that du Sable was "founder" or at least builder of the first permanent cabin on the site in 1779 comes from "British records from the revolutionary period as well as the bill of sale for De Saible's homestead in 1800, a document completed three years before the U.S. government's Fort Dearborn was erected."⁶² When du Sable left, "the locale was sprinkled with settlers." John Kinzie, the city's putative founder, did not arrive until 1804.⁶³

However, it was members of the Kinzie family who were major forces in the true establishment of the city, involved from the start in the Canal Company, which prepared the site for development in the early 1830s, and in enticing the rail lines to locate their terminals at Chicago in the 1840s. John Kinzie's biography throws significant light not only on the development of Chicago in the decades to come but on the intimate connections between that history and the role New Yorkers played in creating the "Second City." Kinzie actually came to the area as the representative of the New York firm of John Jacob Astor, and his family never lost that affiliation, because one of his sons succeeded him in the post. While serving in that capacity, the son also became the "first president of the Village of Chicago, registrar of public lands, canal collector of tolls, receiver of public moneys, a large landowner," and was, as well, the founder of a savings association. Another son became "sheriff, an insurance agent, the president of the Chicago Board of Underwriters, a real estate speculator and Chicago's first auctioneer."⁶⁴

The Kinzie family was soon joined by other leading self-made men, such as Ogden (first president of the "city" of Chicago) and McCormick (inventor of the famous reaper and owner of one of the first industrial establishments in the city); most hailed either from New York or had business connections to the investors from that city. Their story, however, belongs more properly to the next chapter. Equally important were Chicago's roles as creditor for grain and other crops and as "commodifier" for sales of these items at distant points.⁶⁵

CHAPTER 3

Developments between the 1820s and the 1870s

MANHATTAN: AMERICA'S FIRST GLOBAL CITY

Sam Bass Warner Jr. singles out the period between 1820 and 1870 as the acme of urbanity in American cities and identifies New York as the quintessential example: "If the criterion of urbanity is the mixture of classes and ethnic groups . . . along with dense living and crowded streets and the omnipresence of all manner of business near the homes in every quarter, then the cities of the United States in the years between 1820 and 1870 marked the zenith of our national urbanity."¹ In many ways, one can claim that this pattern of urbanity still prevails in New York, at least in large portions of Manhattan, whose physical form was framed during this period.

Paradoxically, however, whereas land uses were mixed and classes and races interspersed, this did not ensure harmony in the nineteenth century—just as it does not in today's New York. A marked bifurcation of the class structure accompanied the remarkable economic advances of the nineteenth century. Warner is correct in claiming that whereas between 1776 and 1820 "America seemed to be moving toward a growing egalitarianism . . . , beginning in the 1820s . . . the benign trends reversed themselves." And as workers organized to protest this growing bifurcation, social unrest grew. "All the big cities suffered epidemics of violence; there were labor riots, race riots, native-foreign riots, Catholic-Protestant riots, rich-poor riots. New York City alone underwent a series of riots, eight major and at least ten minor, between 1834 and 1871."² And, we might add, as elsewhere, increased residential segregation came to be seen as one way to insulate hostile social groups from one another.

It was during the period between 1820 and 1870 that New York surged ahead of all competitors to dominate an American urban system that was spreading westward

and growing more integrated. In this chapter I explore how and why this happened. My explanations are somewhat more complex than Warner's, however. As is conventional among urban geographers and historians, Warner attributes the transformation of the national urban system that occurred during this period to a revolution in the technologies of transport, which expanded the size of markets and, thanks to a shift to steam power, the size and complexity of production units. This narrative tells only part of the story; demographic infusions and social inventions in business and the state must also be seen as facilitating these transformations.³

BECOMING THE CORE OF A WEB OF TRANSPORT AND INFORMATION

There is no question that existing systems of transportation were revolutionized during this second period of American urban development. Between 1815 and the "Panic" of 1837, some two thousand miles of canals were constructed, at first to link the Atlantic port cities with one another and then to connect them with the Midwest. By 1840, another thousand miles of canals had been added, not only integrating markets but substantially reducing the costs of transport. "On the Erie Canal in New York, the most successful of them all, average rates for a ton-mile of goods moving from Buffalo to New York City fell from nineteen cents in 1817 to two cents and finally to one cent after some years of operation."⁴ But of even greater importance were the rail lines that quickly displaced canals as the major means of interregional transport. By 1840 some three thousand lines of track connected New York with St. Louis and with the latter's fast-rising competitor, Chicago, and fifteen years later the Union Pacific and Central Pacific rail companies had completed the transcontinental route to San Francisco.⁵

Along with important English firms and banking families, New York investors played major roles in financing these expansions.

Manorial descendants and members of the [New York] business elite participated in the creation of the new transportation system. . . . In the late 1840s New York's Old Guard and maritime-financial elite became interested in western lines. Their efforts produced the Illinois Central (1851), one of the earliest, soundest, and largest Mid-American roads. *Illinois Central was a wholly eastern creation.*⁶

Cornelius Vanderbilt, a former ferryboat deckhand, started to take over New York lines and by 1867 had gained control over the New York Central. Two years later, Vanderbilt had consolidated that line with the Hudson River Railroad and proposed the construction of Grand Central Station, a project not completed until 1871.⁷

By midcentury, then, New York City "sat like a spider in the web of the American economy, drawing resources into the metropolis, transforming them and sending them to places near and far."⁸ But whereas canals and railroads explain New York's dominance over its interior hinterland, the real key to the city's hegemony remained her international role via the port, on which converged the canal and rail lines and from which radiated the Atlantic ocean trade. This nexus generated the concentration of wealth, productive capacity, business services, power, and economic control that even today define a "world city."⁹

Jackson stresses how dependent such dominance was on the port: "Throughout the first three centuries of Gotham's history, the cornerstone of [New York's] growth was commerce, and the backbone of its economy remained at the water's edge. . . . From 1820 until 1960, when Rotterdam overtook it, the Port of New York ranked as the world's busiest."¹⁰

Jaher concurs, noting that ever since the 1820s, when Boston clippers engaged in the Far Eastern tea trade began to dock in Manhattan, and especially since the 1850s, when the bulk of Boston's wholesale cotton trade was also marketed there, New York was clearly established not only as the nation's shipping and trade center but also as the country's chief money market. By 1860, nearly half of all American foreign commerce went through the city's port,¹¹ and by the 1870s one could say that New York's market influenced pricing even in those commodities in which it did not trade directly. A national economy was coming into existence, organized through an urban hierarchy headed by New York.

Banking and wholesale trade in farm staples and some manufactured goods were controlled by the market rates and prices in [what might be termed] . . . national and international trading centers. Wheat, cotton, corn, banknotes, bonds, cloth, iron, books, and all manner of goods for which there were large markets [may have been] traded in regional centers, but *with an eye to New York and ultimately to Atlantic demand and prices.*¹²

THE FIRE SECTOR: FINANCE, INSURANCE, AND REAL ESTATE

In contemporary discussions of the "global city," the growth of one particular economic sector, FIRE, is singled out as the most significant symptom of globalization. It was during the era between 1820 and 1870 that this sector took on a specialized role in Manhattan and generated the consolidation of an upper class that increasingly began to segregate itself from the rest of the city's residents.

Finance

New York established its dominance not only in the arenas of international commerce, shipping, and "pricing," but in the all important area of finance. Originally, before commercial roles became more specialized, merchants had performed many of the functions of bankers, financiers, and insurance agents. However, these roles became more distinctly delineated by the mid-nineteenth century.¹³ Although the Bank of New York had been founded as early as 1784, New York lagged behind other ports until 1824, when its capital of sixteen million dollars in thirteen banks finally surpassed that of other port cities.¹⁴ By 1831 the capital in all New York City banks exceeded eighteen million dollars, compared with Boston's fourteen million and Philadelphia's just under eleven million.¹⁵

One can see dramatic proof of how early this financial centralization became established by tracing the path along which the financial (specie) Panic of 1837 quickly

spread from the West to New York, and then radiated out to other cities from New York banking circles. When specie payments were first suspended on May 4, 1837, the panic spread by May 11 from New York to cities of New England (as far north as Providence) and the Mid-Atlantic (as far south as Baltimore). Between May 12 and 15, the panic had affected Montreal and Boston on the north, as far west as Pittsburgh, and as far south as Richmond and Norfolk, Virginia. By May 22, the effects were reaching Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans in the South, and Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis in the Midwest.¹⁶

Banking operations expanded in the 1850s, thanks in part to the involvement of European capital in financing the railroads, but also due to an infusion of specie from California's "gold rush," another indication of the nascent integration of the national economy. By 1855, more than fifty-five banks were operating in New York City;¹⁷ in only the three years between 1854 and 1857 their deposits had increased by 70 percent.¹⁸ But unhappily, their loans increased even faster than their capital. Overextended, such loans precipitated a financial panic in the country that in 1857 again radiated out from New York. Nevertheless, the rapid recovery of the city's banks from the second panic left New York as the unchallenged financial center of the country.¹⁹

Stock Exchanges

Stock exchanges and insurance and trust companies were also major sources of capital accumulation (and elite jobs) in early New York, and these, too, became more specialized in mid-nineteenth century Manhattan.

Security dealers rapidly branched out from public securities to handling the private issues of banks, canal and insurance companies, and, later, railroads. Their activities became institutionalized through brokerage houses and the New York Stock Exchange (1792). . . . In 1816 the New York stock market overtook Philadelphia's exchange as the busiest in the country. By the 1830s Wall Street[s] . . . market quotations, reproduced in Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and other places, set the standard national values, and its brokers were America's largest traders in state and federal, bank, canal, and insurance company shares, and primary promoters of new issues.²⁰

By 1841, when the New York Merchants Exchange moved to its new quarters on Wall Street, the occupation of stockbroker was fully professionalized.²¹ Improved communications further facilitated the centralization of the market at New York. By the late 1840s, an electromagnetic wire service made possible "almost instant telegraphic communications between New York and other large cities in the northeast."²²

Insurance

Marine insurance, of course, has had a very long history, and so it should be no surprise that the premier port in the United States also hosted the lion's share of insurance companies. Jaher informs us that "by 1824 New York had at least thirty-four

firms providing [insurance] protection against shipping and fire disasters . . . and the total capital of its [insurance] institutions" exceeded that of Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore combined.²³ Because the "great fire" of 1835 destroyed a large portion of downtown Manhattan, many of these firms went bankrupt, but the reformed insurance system set up afterward expanded on a somewhat firmer foundation. As today, insurance companies, along with private investors, were also involved with real estate, albeit sometimes by default.²⁴

Real Estate

New York's traditional elite had always engaged in real estate ventures in both rural and urban areas, and merchants had generally used landownership as a "bank" for idle capital. As the city grew, its land was sought for its potential speculative gains, realizable through a process of quick turnover.²⁵ Such speculation, however, could also make investments in real estate highly volatile. In the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century, risks became greater, although over the long haul profits continued to be made as Manhattan expanded northward.

As population expanded in the 1830s, the value of lands above Canal Street shot up. During the cholera epidemic of 1832, many families had sought refuge in suburban outposts such as Greenwich Village, and in 1835 an uncontrollable fire downtown forced many more residents out of the oldest section of the city, which drove values up in peripheral areas. The properties they abandoned would later be subdivided into slum tenements (as in the Five Points area) or rebuilt for purely commercial uses.

Speculative bubbles in real estate, however, primarily mirrored more general booms and busts. In the aftermath of the 1837 Panic, for example, values temporarily collapsed. Between 1841 and 1843 mortgage foreclosures reached record levels, with lenders like John Jacob Astor foreclosing to become the city's biggest landlord.²⁶ But the greatest impulse toward real estate inflation came in the late 1840s, when an influx of immigrants took over downtown properties that were subdivided to accommodate them. This further encouraged the movement of the wealthy farther uptown. The newer subdivisions above 14th Street became more attractive in 1842, once the Croton aqueduct began pumping fresh water to what was then considered "upper" Manhattan. But it was "only with the recovery of prices—particularly agricultural prices—after 1844, however, [that] trade and real estate rebounded," fortunately before the largest influx of immigrants in the late 1840s.²⁷ Their arrival helped to fuel the pace of industrialization in the ever labor-short United States.

INDUSTRIALIZATION

One of the important ways that nineteenth-century New York diverged from contemporary global cities is that, in contrast to the deindustrialization that is today's hallmark, the city was just beginning to undergo a deep process of industrialization. However, such industries, with the exception of shipbuilding, which peaked by mid-century and then declined, would never be as large in scale, as high in capitalization,

or as "heavy" in production processes as those in Chicago, for example, or even Philadelphia. Nevertheless, by the middle decades of the nineteenth century New York had become the greatest manufacturing city in the country.²⁸ By 1860, three principal manufacturing sectors were already well established in Manhattan: clothing making,²⁹ iron manufacturing, and printing and publishing. By then, almost fifty thousand workers were employed in some twelve hundred establishments in those three industrial sectors alone.³⁰ The number of industrial workers would more than double by 1880, even though the most significant growth period would not come until the last two decades of the century.³¹

However, manufacturing never assumed the dominance over New York's economy that it came to have in other major cities of the Northeast and Mid-Central regions, nor did it ever entirely displace the smaller-scale handwork production that continued to characterize most enterprises well into the twentieth century.³² As Warner notes, "Often the old and new existed side by side," and there was room "in 1870 for the carpenter who followed the ancient custom of bidding on a house or two each year and doing most of the work himself, for the tailor who measured and fitted each suit individually, or for the wood carver who carried his tools from shop to shop." However, by becoming entrepreneurs and expanding the scale of their operations, they could enhance their profits. "Although the city of this period was made up of a multiplicity of small firms . . . the clustering of complementary businesses made expansion easy."³³ This coexistence of large-scale firms and a proliferation of small ones would persist into the twentieth century, as the study conducted by Pratt in 1911 documents so well.³⁴

THE GROWTH OF THE PROLETARIAT FROM IMMIGRATION

Another hallmark of today's "global city" is its ethnic/racial diversity, and thus its tendencies toward an ethnic division of labor and an ethnicity-based class system. It is significant that these elements were also already in place by the 1870s, as was an associated pattern of identity-based local politics. In the period between 1820 and the 1870s, rural-to-urban migration and a massive flow of immigrants from abroad completely reshaped the class structure of New York. And these changes were eventually reflected in the redistribution of space and political power.

Rosenwaike estimates that in 1825 only "11.3 percent of the city's [Manhattan's] residents were counted as aliens, [although] as much as 20 percent of the population may have been of foreign birth."³⁵ By 1845, a year for which we have firmer figures, the proportion of foreign-born had risen to more than one-third, with most of the newcomers hailing from poverty-stricken Ireland.

The story of New York's population growth in the nineteenth century is inseparable from the saga of mass migration from Europe. . . . Only eight thousand immigrants were reported to have arrived in the United States in the fiscal year ending September 30, 1820, the first for which statistics were published by the Department of State; but by 1860 some four million aliens had reached American shores.³⁶

Most entered the country at New York City, and most remained there.³⁷

Between 1845 and 1860 (after which there was a temporary hiatus in immigration due to the Civil War), the foreign-born population of New York almost tripled—increasing from some 135,000 to close to 384,000. And although the native-born population increased as well, the proportion of foreign-born increased from 36 percent in the earlier year to 47 percent by 1860. If we add to the foreign-born population their offspring born in the city, it is likely that two-thirds of New York's "natives" were stained with the stigmata of "ethnicity" in the 1870s, even before the next wave of immigrants arrived. In the first wave, the Irish clearly predominated. By 1845, close to 100,000 residents had been born in Ireland, and their numbers more than doubled in the subsequent fifteen years. Second in importance were persons born in the various German states (Germany was not yet "unified"). Although there were only 24,400 in 1845, their total rose rapidly thereafter, to about 57,000 by 1850, 98,000 by 1855, and more than 118,000 by 1860.³⁸

Just as today, when the immigration of Mexicans to Los Angeles is eliciting an excessively defensive response among that city's "older settlers," so the enormous influx of Irish and German immigrants in the 1840s and 1850s called forth virulent nativistic reactions in the United States. Despite the facts that the country suffered from a labor shortage and the new industrialization and the accompanying ambitious public works programs undertaken would never have been possible without their contributions, immigrants were blamed for any and all troubles. The Irish in particular were stigmatized as drunkards and feared as unruly; what is worse, their Catholicism, called "Papacy," was suspected of undermining the Protestant character of American society. The Know-Nothing Party was a rallying point for these "nativist" sentiments.³⁹

Repelled by the newcomers and expelled by the rising demand for older downtown housing, which was being occupied at very high densities and was consequently deteriorating rapidly, the wealthier residents of New York City were already moving northward on the island, commissioning elegant houses on high ridge lands along Fifth Avenue and its flanking streets, converting their country estates into permanent quarters and subdivisions, and starting to "commute" to their offices, still concentrated below Canal Street.

In the neighborhoods they vacated, tenement houses began to be constructed for the newly arriving working-class immigrants.⁴⁰ But still, the built-up portion of the island did not extend much beyond about 40th Street.⁴¹ North of there were scattered small, unregulated, and low-density settlements—some like the long-standing and predominantly black "suburb" of Seneca Village, largely owner occupied and inhabited by service workers who supplemented their wages downtown through subsistence farming; others better described as noxious squatter camps where pig raising, bone boiling, and wood foraging were the sources of a marginal livelihood for recent Irish and German immigrants not yet integrated into the city's economy.⁴²

Such settlements were "threatening" to the establishment in two ways: they reduced the social attractiveness of the northern parts of the island that had already been subdivided into building lots but still lacked infrastructure, not to mention permanent structures; and they inhibited rising land values based on speculative interest.

Furthermore, much of the "uptown" land in the center of the island—which would eventually be selected as the site of Central Park—was very rough, even rugged, terrain that would be prohibitively expensive to develop with roads and to install sewerage and water systems (see Figure 3.1).

This land did lend itself, however, to development as a public park, which could achieve three important goals: it would "remove" the undesirable residents who stood in the way of northern expansion; it would enhance the land values of all abutting lots, encouraging speculation on their development for "higher" uses; and it would provide New York with a public amenity it hitherto lacked—a large park suitable for bucolic retreat and fashionable promenades.

The construction of Central Park, from 1857 onward, which was the single most important development in shaping the physical form of Manhattan, cannot be understood outside the context of the growing gap between elite and proletariat, between native and foreign immigrant. Although its effects on the ecological structure of Manhattan would not be fully felt until the building boom of the 1880s and 1890 (to be treated in greater detail in Chapter 4), it is important to grasp the class divisions that partially motivated this wondrous achievement in city planning.

THE GROWTH OF THE ELITE AND THE CONCENTRATION OF WEALTH

Analysts of the contemporary global city stress the bifurcation of the urban class structure into rich and poor, with a relative decline of the middle classes. In a later section of this book I explore to what extent and why this has happened and whether considering the entire metropolitan area makes a difference to the conclusions. Here I wish only to establish the fact that one of the major characteristics of nineteenth-century New York City was the appearance of an income gap even wider than the one that prevails today. The concentrations of both wealth and poverty were extreme, and the gap between them was growing larger, even though the opportunities for social mobility at that time were more open to "self-made" fortunes than they are today.

The number of superrich was remarkably small. In 1842, Moses Yale Beach compiled a list of New Yorkers who had assets of \$100,000 or more, then considered a fortune; he enumerated fewer than five hundred, including John Jacob Astor, who led the pack with \$10 million.⁴³ According to historian Edward Pessen, in 1845 the richest 1 percent of New York's families controlled almost half (47 percent) of its non-corporate wealth, with the next three percent controlling an additional third (32 percent).⁴⁴ By 1856, about nine thousand New York families "controlled a significant share of the city's and nation's resources."⁴⁵ Who were these wealthy New Yorkers?

Merchants were by far the most important group of the city's [mid-nineteenth century] bourgeoisie. . . . by 1855 approximately forty-one percent of all taxpayers assessed on personal and real wealth above \$10,000 were engaged in mercantile undertakings. Not only were they the largest group in numbers but also among the wealthiest: An estimated seventy percent of the richest one percent of New Yorkers in 1854 were merchants, auctioneers, brokers and agents.⁴⁶

By midcentury merchants were finally being joined by industrialists whose initial capital, amassed in trade or smaller artisan activities, was being reinvested in production. "Twenty percent of all bourgeois New Yorkers in 1856 were producing goods in one way or another."⁴⁷ This new elite was not as inbred as in earlier times, and indeed, some of the industrialists had actually risen from the ranks of artisans. Nevertheless, funds for manufacturing also came from the investment of "old" merchant capital, and both the established merchants and the newly rich families invested at least some of their money in the newer ventures of industry and railroads.⁴⁸

By the 1850s, a new diversification within the elite was becoming evident, a fact that made it difficult to consolidate and maintain patriciate power in the city. Jahe's information on where members of the 1856 elite had been born indicates the roles that industrialization and immigration were playing in allowing "outsiders" into the top of the class structure. By then, about half of New York's wealthiest men had been born in New York City or State (down from 62 percent in 1828), whereas 30 percent had come from other states (primarily New England); one-fifth had been born abroad, primarily in Great Britain.⁴⁹ As before, intermarriage between the nouveau riche and old landed and mercantile families helped to consolidate the upper class, but there remained relatively unbridgeable fissures related to ethnicity—especially those that set off the newer German-Jewish moneyed elite from the WASP and Dutch subsets.⁵⁰

The Civil War further fragmented class solidarity at the top, as New York City hosted both abolitionists who sought an end to slavery and cotton brokers whose fortunes were based upon it. Nevertheless, the net gains the war brought to New York merchants and industrialists greatly outweighed their losses, regardless of their ideological positions. Newer fortunes were generated in the early 1860s, when wartime profiteering and bond investments yielded windfall returns. These stimulated, *inter alia*, a renewed real estate boom that greatly expanded the urban fabric of Manhattan—at least until markets collapsed in the depression of 1874.

CLASS CONFLICT

Given the growing gap between rich and poor and the volatile booms that brought disastrous busts in their wake (in 1837, 1857, and again in 1874), it should not be surprising that the era was characterized by considerable labor unrest. The growing and primarily immigrant proletariat that depended upon wages was tragically affected by these cycles. When times were good, they struck for higher wages, a shorter working day, and better conditions of employment, but during periods of crisis they marched on city hall or rallied in parks to demand employment and relief. Often, their demonstrations were met with police brutality, as this was the period in which a more formalized and uniformed police force had been established to combat threats to law and order. Public works employment (including the construction of Central Park and the building of New York's infrastructure) increasingly responded to their demands for work,⁵¹ and charitable efforts at housing reform began the long struggle against the insalubrious tenement housing that had been adapted or hastily thrown up to accommodate the new immigrants.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, when Manhattan's population exceeded half a million, the tenement house was just beginning to appear as the dominant form of new construction for the poor.⁵² Philip Hone, a famous if somewhat snobbish commentator on the New York scene, had already noted with alarm that "our good city of New York has arrived at the state of society found in the large cities of Europe; overburdened with population, and where the two extremes of costly luxury . . . are presented in daily and hourly contrast with squalid misery and destitution."⁵³ He was particularly concerned with the proliferation of multifamily housing and overcrowding, because, as was being argued, poor housing bred both physical diseases and moral degeneracy. These concerns attracted the attention of tenement house reformers and charitable institutions such as the New York Association for the Improvement of the Conditions of the Poor (AICP), which was organized as early as 1843.⁵⁴ But such charitable impulses often masked self-interest, because the wealthy would be best served by a healthy and quiescent labor force.

Members of the immigrant working class of New York seem not to have been so ambivalent over the reforms they needed in the workplace and at home, nor so conflicted over how to respond to issues raised by the Civil War. Throughout the contentious period of the 1850s, there were various mobilizations of the working class, primarily focused on employment and relief demands. But in 1863 such conflicts came to a head over another issue of conspicuous inequality.

A lottery had been organized to determine who would be conscripted into the Union army; it was implemented in New York City in July 1863. The selection process blatantly favored the rich, given that those whose numbers were drawn were permitted to "buy" exemption from military service by paying three hundred dollars for an alternate to fight on their behalf. As this sum represented the annual salary of an ordinary workman, it was scarcely an option open to the poor. Furthermore, recent (primarily Irish) immigrants were distinctly unenthusiastic about serving in a war to which they were ideologically uncommitted and that so poorly served their interests. The gross unfairness of the plan triggered five days of rioting, during which not only were the lottery headquarters, civic buildings, and homes of the wealthy attacked, but, tragically, some of the targets of the violence proved to be black residents of the city, who were viewed as the "cause" of the war.⁵⁵ Attempts by the authorities to control the marauding bands of malcontents only served to escalate the violence.

THE INCREASE IN CLASS SEGREGATION AND DENSITIES

The ability of the crowds to mobilize and to target specific areas testifies to the fact that residential segregation by class and race had begun to take clearer shape in the city, although the relatively close juxtapositioning of wealthy and poor areas made access between the two easier than it would later be. Although land uses continued to be quite mixed, and industrial plants, with the exception of the shipyards, were still scattered at many relatively small sites, residential segregation on the basis of class and ethnicity was becoming more pronounced.

By the 1850s, the separation of workplace and home had largely been accomplished for elite New Yorkers. . . . Beginning in the 1820s, New York's wealthy citizens moved north. . . . In 1856, the area around Washington and Union Square[s] was the most bourgeois neighborhood in Manhattan. In the four adjacent wards to this area . . . fifty-seven percent of all taxpayers assessed over \$10,000 made their homes, and . . . between Fourteenth and Twenty-third Street east of Fifth Avenue—fully one quarter of all the city's merchants, industrialists and bankers lived. . . . By 1856 very few bourgeois lived south of Houston Street—a sort of social boundary between the "respectable" and working-class neighborhoods.⁵⁶

Not only was segregation increasing, but residential densities were also, the inevitable result of the fact that by 1870 the population of Manhattan approached one million. Although horse cars had been introduced by the 1850s, no revolution had yet occurred in transportation that would have permitted an opening of vast peripheral areas for convenient settlement. While the rich continued to build lavish mansions along Fifth Avenue and the poor were resigned to living in crowded tenements, the middle class had gradually to be weaned from the assumption that single-family brownstone houses (which many could no longer afford) were the only respectable way to live.

Before this could occur, the apartment house had to be socially distinguished from the *déclassé* tenement, and privacy had to be redefined. A new form of multifamily housing first made its appearance in Manhattan in the late 1860s and early 1870s. These multifamily dwellings were euphemistically called French flats, in an effort to legitimate them by reference to high-status Parisian prototypes.⁵⁷ Richard Morris Hunt is credited with designing the first one, Stuyvesant Apartments, located on 18th Street near Third Avenue, and in 1871 David Haight remodeled a nearby mansion into apartments.⁵⁸ It took some time before this innovation was accepted, but eventually apartment houses, of necessity, became the most popular form of new construction. It was not until

the end of the first decade of the twentieth century [that] apartment houses were fully established as a successful building type in New York. Whereas in 1890, 835 plans for single-family dwellings had been filed with the Buildings Department, in 1901 barely 100 were filed. Meanwhile the prices had skyrocketed from an average cost per dwelling of \$16,700 in 1889 to \$64,000 in 1902. Single-family houses had become so expensive in Manhattan that they had nearly ceased being built, while apartments became the kind of dwelling every middle-class Manhattanite would expect to live in.⁵⁹

The land and building boom of the post-Civil War expansion lasted from 1865 to 1873, fueled by fortunes made in the war. More than 11,000 building plans were filed with the city between 1868 and 1872, as the built-up area pressed northward above 42nd Street. Construction peaked in 1871, when some 2,800 buildings were constructed, a thousand of them "first-class residences." (In contrast, only two apartment buildings went up between 1868 and 1872.) Construction declined in the

depression years between 1873 and 1877, when fewer than 7,000 plans were filed. In the recovery year of 1880, however, 2,252 buildings were erected, 900 of them first-class (single-family) residences. But 516 were apartment houses, which indicated a growing dependence upon this type of housing arrangement.⁶⁰ Clearly, the "middle-class buyer . . . was being driven out of Manhattan by the speculation of the 1860s, leaving the city to the millionaire and the pauper."⁶¹

THE EVOLUTION OF A POLITICAL CULTURE

Between the 1820s and the 1870s, local politics underwent as dramatic a shift as did the physical form of the city. As we have seen in Chapter 2, during the earlier period there was very little conflict between the interests of rural patricians who dominated the state government and those of the interrelated urban patriciate of New York City. Politics and economics meshed well. Jaher tells us that in the early nineteenth century, as before, "the upper order manipulated government policy by entering public office or by associating with politicians. . . . Merchant-bankers were particularly active in public life because of the relationship between government and finance. The early presidents of the Bank of New York almost invariably had political backgrounds."⁶² But changes gradually appeared as the monopoly over power was undermined.

By 1825 the franchise had been extended to non-property-holding males, and by midcentury, the electorate, swelled by new immigrants, grew more powerful as various officials, including the governor and the mayor, who had formerly been appointed, were now to be elected. The concerns of the elite, who deplored and feared the new immigrants and their rising power, were certainly well founded. Tammany (an old, secret "gentlemen's club" organized after the Revolutionary War by the "better classes"), which had traditionally served as local "kingmaker" for appointed offices, was gradually taken over by a new class of politicians whose power base derived from the enfranchisement of the "new ethnics." Their rise to power in the city went hand in hand with and was greatly facilitated by the expansion of government-sponsored projects and services. The hard-won "home rule" wrested from Albany conferred on these elected officers the power to borrow money in the name of the city, which enhanced their leverage with bankers and financiers and also afforded the powerful "bosses" virtually unlimited opportunities for graft. Because they controlled public jobs and could distribute them through patronage, they commanded enormous resources, which they used to consolidate their control over votes.

By the 1870s, the new form of city governance was well established. Reform movements would periodically dislodge incumbents (such as in 1871, when "Boss" Tweed was arrested for corruption),⁶³ and Fusion and even socialist candidates might surface from time to time, but the lock that the bosses gained over the Democratic Party and the "machine's" power not only in city but in state and even federal elections, would remain significant elements in the civic culture of the city.⁶⁴

Although the old aristocracy and the new politically organizing "lower classes" were often at odds over the goals and functions of city government and about how public resources should be allocated, there was one project in which their aims came

sympiotically together, and that was over the construction of Central Park, the nineteenth century's most significant contribution to the urban form of Manhattan.

THE PLANNING OF CENTRAL PARK

A number of upper-class New Yorkers had been traveling to Europe, where they admired the great parks of London and Paris and felt ashamed that their community, despite its world city pretensions, had almost no public spaces at all, and none suitable for those with "higher" tastes.⁶⁵ Although the original proposals by the city's movers and shakers favored an off-center park site (on land conveniently owned by some of them), by the early 1850s a decision was reached to locate this ambitiously planned embellishment to the city on the more than seven hundred acres of inhospitable wild terrain between 59th Street and 106th Street and between Eighth and Fifth Avenues. In the following year the northern limit was extended to 110th Street to encompass the marshy declivity of the Harlem Meer.

Support for the construction of a park came not only from the wealthy, who viewed the potential product as a much-needed "playground" for themselves, but from laborers, who saw it as a source of employment during the disastrous depression of 1857. However, the same depression made it difficult to sell the public bonds that were intended to finance the work. Although surveys had already been completed and the design by the team of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux accepted, albeit duly modified after they won the competition, it was not until 1858 that construction actually began.⁶⁶

Central Park was soon turned into a vast construction area with blasting teams, stone breakers, road-building gangs, masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, stonemasons, gardeners, wagon teams, and cart and wheelbarrow gangs working side-by-side. At the peak of construction in 1859 and 1860, the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park was one of the city's largest employers, hiring an average of four thousand workers each year, with as many as thirty-six hundred laborers working on a single day at the peak of construction in early 1859.⁶⁷

As is often the case with public projects, the original estimates proved much too low. Assembling the land; grading, draining, and landscaping it; and meeting the exacting demands of Olmsted, who was put in charge—all were incredibly costly, and more and more money had to be borrowed to finance the project. It must also be acknowledged that some of the excess costs came from kickbacks and graft, as contractors raised their bids to cover payoffs to officials. Matters reached a peak with the election of William Tweed, who engaged in even greater graft than his predecessors. (He was indicted and convicted in 1871.) The leading citizens were disgusted enough to organize "a tax and investment strike," as the political scientist Martin Shefter describes it, "one that paralleled later fiscal crises in the city when expansive public spending was curtailed, but later bailed out, by the 'watchdogs' from the investment community."⁶⁸

Thus the basic lines of New York's special "civic culture" seem to have become



Figure 3.1. The raw land of Central Park in 1858. View in Central Park, southward from the Arsenal, Fifth Avenue, and 64th Street. Photo by George Hayward. Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society, with thanks to M. Christine Boyer; copyright Collection of The New-York Historical Society.

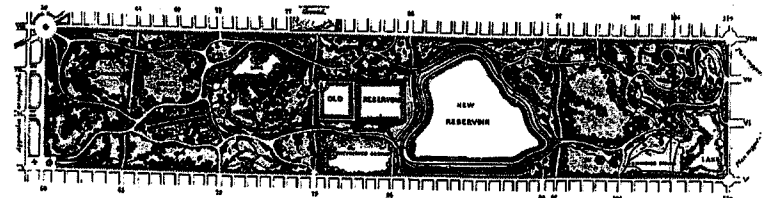
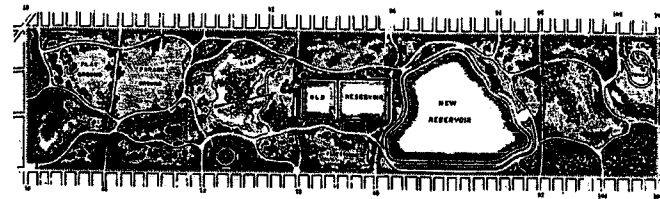
established in general outline by the 1870s, although newer immigrant groups and, even later, the African American community would be co-opted into the system of public employment. This seems a good note on which to end the discussion of New York, for as we shall see in subsequent chapters, many of the themes raised here will appear with regularity in the periods that followed.

CHICAGO BETWEEN 1820 AND 1871

Although in 1820 Chicago did not even *exist* as a city, by 1870 it stood on the threshold of becoming a "world city," having experienced the fastest rate of growth of any city in the United States, if not the world. And yet everything before the Great Fire of 1871 must be viewed as prolegomenon. In Chapter 5 I focus on the creation and maturation of this industrial giant, but it is important to note here that the groundwork for that achievement was laid in the preceding half century.

Perhaps the best book ever written about Chicago in the nineteenth century is William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. His thesis is a simple one—namely, the intimate and mutually dependent nature of urban and rural development. He could hardly have reached any different conclusion, given that he had decided to study Chicago, which became

*"urban," spawning belching smokestacks and crowded streets, at the same time that the lands around it became "rural," yielding not grass and red-winged blackbirds but wheat, corn, and hogs. Chicago's merchants and workers had built their warehouses and factories in the same decades that farmers had plowed up the prairie sod and lumberjacks had cut the great pine trees of the north woods. City and country shared a common past, and had fundamentally reshaped each other.*⁶⁹



Maps 3.1 and 3.2. Two diagrams of Central Park from the pamphlet by Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted, "Description of a Plan for the Improvement of Central Park," circa 1858, showing the northern extension of the park from 106th to 110th Streets. Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society, with thanks to M. Christine Boyer; copyright Collection of The New-York Historical Society.

And if the appropriate trope for New York is an island in the sea, and the most often invoked image of approach is that of the foreigner, sailing into the harbor and sighting (as appropriate to the time) either Indians on the shore or gathered curiously or hostilely in approaching canoes, or the torch of the Statue of Liberty beckoning him into an incomprehensible immigrant reception center, to be poked and probed and herded, the trope for Chicago is the rail terminal. At this entry point the rural hick or the perplexed Polish peasant, after a noisy train ride, enters the gates of hell, replete with fires and belching smoke, jostling crowds, and the dangers and excitement of "the big city."⁷⁰ The "docks and wharves" of Chicago were its multiple railway stations, and the seas that bordered the city were surfaced by waves of wheat and corn. One *could* approach Chicago by water, but few did, once there were trains.

Early Physical and Demographic Changes

In 1833, when Chicago was incorporated as a town, it covered less than half a square mile on either side of the main channel of the Chicago River and contained only 350 adventurous inhabitants, mostly male. There was little to recommend the settlement, for the site was still essentially uninhabitable. However, in 1833, "Congress appropriated \$25,000 for major improvements in the harbor. In 1834, a channel was opened through the sand bar at the mouth of the river." Patrick Shirref, a Scottish traveler, described the city as containing "about 150 wood houses," although he also reported

that "speculators have already bought up, at high prices, all the building-ground in the neighborhood."⁷¹ By the time the city was incorporated in 1837, it was ten square miles in area; these borders were successively expanded as the city grew. According to John Lewis Peyton, although the population had risen to twenty thousand by 1848, the city still had neither paved streets nor sidewalks, and its three thousand houses were "almost entirely small timber buildings."⁷²

Nevertheless, brick makers and stonemasons were busy preparing more solid building materials; blacksmiths and wagon makers were producing furiously to meet farmers' demands; and Cyrus McCormick's reaper plant already employed several hundred workers. Future expansion was eagerly anticipated, and "real estate agents were mapping out the surrounding territory for ten and fifteen miles in the interior, giving fancy names to the future avenues, streets, squares, and parks."⁷³

Their preparations were well warranted, for by midcentury the population had grown to thirty thousand, and the city's potential as a transportation nexus and industrial giant was becoming clearer. "The Illinois and Michigan Canal opened in 1848 connecting the Great Lakes with the Mississippi Valley" and, after "a period of vigorous railroad building," trains entered Chicago "from almost every direction. By 1855, Chicago was . . . the focus of ten trunk lines. Ninety-six trains a day arrived or departed from the city; and on a single day the Michigan Central brought 2,000 immigrants into the city."⁷⁴

But "the train did not create the city by itself." Rather, it allowed Chicago to become the "site of a country fair, albeit the grandest, most spectacular country fair the world has ever seen."⁷⁵ Underlying the development of this great city, at least initially, was not the industrial might associated with the "city of the broad shoulders," but the grain, lumber, and meat that farmers produced in the vast and fertile hinterland that expanded exponentially as rail lines cut the time-cost of transporting their products to market.⁷⁶ Out of these rural products would be generated both a growing manufacturing and a booming finance sector.

These sectors, however, did not have to be developed *ex nihilo*. Their technological and institutional arrangements could be imported from the East, together with many of the civic figures who would lead in the city's transformative period. Jaher draws a sharp contrast between the "important" Chicago dynasties and those of the East Coast:

Recent origin, an interior location, and early identification with heavy industry distinguishes Chicago from Boston, New York, or Charleston. The seaboard ports exuded elegance, cosmopolitanism, cultural achievement, and pride in their historical roles and had aristocratic elements in their social structures. The midwestern metropolis epitomized the raw and powerful adolescence of industrial America. Even New York, the nation's *parvenu* capital, had roots in the past and an ascriptive group that influenced its upper class.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, most members of the earliest Chicago elite came from New York and New England, albeit as "self-made men." According to Jaher, this elite "dominated the economy. Its members formed the first banks and insurance, manufacturing, and

utility companies, and pioneered in retail and wholesale trade, transportation ventures, and real estate operations."⁷⁸ Jaher notes that "those with eastern connections naturally took the lead in banking and insurance since capitalists in that region [i.e., the East] constituted the main source of funds for early Chicago enterprise."⁷⁹

Only after the Civil War did Chicago become a true manufacturing town.⁸⁰ As late as 1860, only 5 percent of the city's residents were involved in industry, a proportion that had doubled by 1870. "But by 1880 Chicago had the largest industrial force . . . west of the Appalachians."⁸¹ Because the maximum economic growth took place during the postbellum period, I discuss this subject further in Chapter 5.

The Role of Catastrophe: The Chicago Fire of October 8, 1871

The city of Chicago, whose economic base had evolved considerably by 1870, had already taken on a physical structure that might have exercised a limiting constraint on the future had it not been "fortuitously" destroyed. It had become an overgrown, sprawling "village" whose population was expanding rapidly and whose transformation into a major industrial metropolis and midwestern center for an expanding region was beginning to occur. Mrs. O'Leary's cow was the *deus ex machina* that, at this turning point in the city's development, suddenly "cleared space" for the rebuilding of an urban structure more appropriate to Chicago's role as "Queen of the North and the West," as she was called in the hyperbolic words of a local poet-booster, Will Carleton:

This is the rich and voluptuous city,
The beauty-thronged, mansion-decked city,
The golden-crowned, glorious Chicago.
The Queen of the North and the West!⁸²

Just before the fire, Chicago's population had reached 334,000, living in an area of some eighteen square miles around the central nexus where thirteen major rail lines met. Physically, the half-circular city "was divided into three divisions by its river, which was spanned by a dozen wooden bridges."⁸³ The western segment was industrial, especially along the two branches of the river. Along the lakefront south of the central business district, later to be called "the Loop," were areas of fine homes, but as one moved inland from the lake, the buildings became more ramshackle and the population poorer.

The basic building material for the city, as noted above, was still flammable wood, making it a tinderbox. There were raised wooden-planked sidewalks to keep pedestrians from rain accumulations of mud, streets were paved with wood blocks, and all the bridges over the river were also made of timber. Only recently had construction in brick and stone begun to displace wood within the central business district, and the architecture of these new structures looked exactly like the beaux arts commercial structures and residential row houses of New York, on which they were modeled. The crazy stone and crenelated water tower had just been built in 1867 in the northern division to bring Lake Michigan water to city areas that had previously depended mostly on wells.⁸⁴

And yet there had been a serious drought for several years, and fires had become more frequent; in 1870 alone, the city experienced some six hundred fires. The drought continued into 1871, when “only five inches of rain fell between July and October. . . . The rainfall in the month preceding October 8 had been less than one inch . . . [and] some twenty-seven fires struck during the first week of that month.”⁸⁵ The city was therefore highly vulnerable when, on Sunday evening, October 8, a fire started at O’Leary’s barn on De Koven Street, in the southern division of the city, just southwest of the central business district.⁸⁶

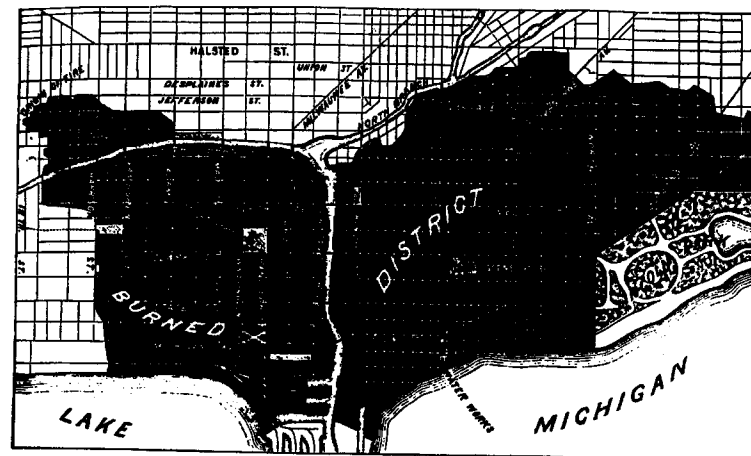
The fire spread northeastward, fanned by high winds, and raged for twenty-nine hours before the flames finally subsided to smoldering embers. It leaped northward across the Chicago River, defied the firebreaks created by firefighters using dynamite, and destroyed virtually everything in its path. “\$192,000,000 worth of property was wiped out. . . . Seventy-three miles of streets were swept by the flames, which destroyed 17,500 buildings, and made 100,000 Chicagoans homeless.”⁸⁷ In the aftermath between October 11 and 23, the city was placed under martial law to restore some semblance of order, and a massive national charity campaign was organized to bring relief to the homeless and provisionless citizens, most of whom had taken refuge, without any possessions, in the shallow edges of the lake itself to avoid being engulfed by flames.

Although the downtown and near north were drastically razed, much of Chicago’s transportation and industrial infrastructure remained unscathed. The shipping docks were intact, although the wooden grain elevators along the northern shore burned down. Most of the trunk rail lines were unharmed. And the stockyards and most of the factories in the western and southwestern quarters continued to function without interruption. The McCormick Reaper works, however, was completely destroyed.

Recovery began almost immediately.⁸⁸ Transportation was restored, with horse cars functioning in downtown only two days after the fire. Temporary wooden shacks were thrown up as an interim measure, but permanent frame buildings were outlawed and standards for new structures built of brick, stone, or stucco were established. Although property ownership lines did not change, the entire architectural appearance of the areas later known as “the Loop” and the Near North—which had borne the brunt of the destruction—was altered in one fell swoop. The heavy demand for rebuilding drove a countercyclical economic expansion in the city throughout the rest of the 1870s, even when the country’s and New York’s economy was depressed in a worldwide recession.

Ross Miller (a professor of comparative literature and not an urbanist) has written a remarkable evaluation of the way that the apocalypse myth of the Chicago fire insinuated itself immediately into the city’s image of itself—an image that persists and that, it must be confessed, continues to infuse the “can do” (city’s motto) spirit, even in the face of other less flattering images held by outsiders.⁸⁹ Some of Miller’s insights are worth reproducing. He points out that the image of the phoenix rising from the ashes pervades all of the postconflagration literature:

Chicago . . . became the only American city whose myth of founding and development was absolutely contemporaneous with its modern condition. . . . Through



Map 3.3. The extent of the downtown area of Chicago that burned down in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society.

one dramatic act, the present was no longer necessarily subordinate to the past. What separates Chicago’s history of emerging modernity from that of other nineteenth-century cities is the clarity of its imagery. While others suffered the modern through a host of neurasthenic symptoms . . . Chicagoans felt its freeing possibilities. Their initial view of the modern was positive. From the omnipresent engravings of the phoenix rising from the ashes to the apocalyptic talk of preachers and reporters, Chicagoans had a way to picture the way they felt.⁹⁰

Miller also suggests a theme that I find very compelling because it resonates so completely with my own analysis of the “personality” of Chicago. He speaks of Chicago’s “double identity—as both queen of the inland lakes and gritty frontier city on the make. . . . it is precisely this doubleness, even in the face of the postfire city’s ever more dissonant realities, that provides modern Chicago with its character—a doubleness observed and systematically denied, that is as old as the city.”⁹¹ The *dual city*, at least with reference to Chicago, is no contemporary product of globalization. The bifurcation was there from the start.

J. W. Sheahan, a Chicagoan who published an account of the fire in 1875 in *Scribner’s Monthly*, invoked the idea of a divided Chicago, but not on the basis of class:

Sheahan noticed none of the cultural anxiety expressed in earlier accounts. Something had happened that changed the way Chicagoans presented and perceived themselves. Not that the facts were different; only the attitudes toward development had changed. *Chicago had found a way to see itself. Instead of trying to resolve its divisions like the cities of the East Coast and Europe, it would make its conflicts the basis of its identity.*

... Divisions that might paralyze other places provided the very condition for Chicago's existence.⁹²

I return to this theme in later chapters, where I note how the massive class and racial bifurcations of the city and the confrontational character of its political culture surface time and time again. These divisions are indeed the condition of its existence.

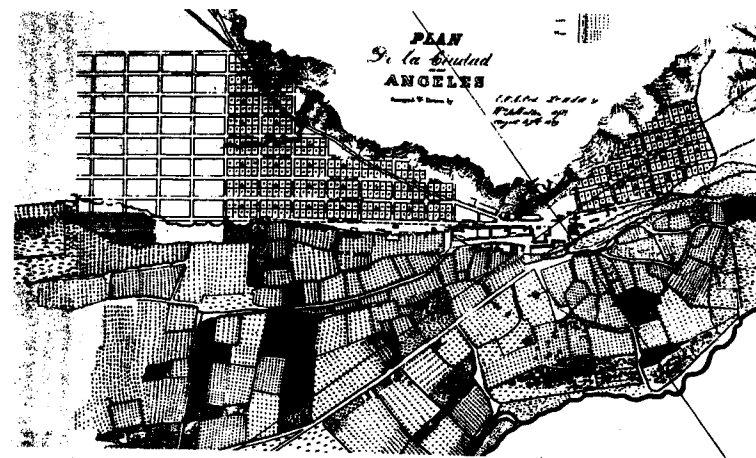
LOS ANGELES: DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN THE 1820S AND 1870S

Although few Americans would consider Los Angeles a significant urban center during this period, the fifty years in question were particularly transformative in preparing the ground for its future development. Unlike the cases of New York and Chicago, where fairly steady trend lines can be identified, however, the dominant theme for Los Angeles was its political *discontinuity* during this period.

There were three distinct marker events: the success of the Mexican war of independence from Spain, which culminated in 1822, when California became a Mexican province; the gold rush of the late 1840s, which was directly responsible not only for a local boomlet but, of far more lasting significance, for motivating the conquest of southern California by the United States and the admission of that state to the Union in 1850; and (perhaps not as political, but certainly as transformative) the subsequent arrival of rail connections from other parts of the United States—at first to San Francisco in 1870 and then extended from San Francisco to Los Angeles by 1876. Direct connections from the East would not be in place until a decade later. If the half century covered in this chapter consolidated New York's lead as hegemonic city in the nation and established Chicago as a nascent industrial power, the same period was clearly only the "planting" season for a Los Angeles to come.

Nelson calls Los Angeles in the period between 1822 and 1840 still an "embryo town . . . [that was] developing an urban form typical of Mexican cities everywhere." It had a central plaza focused on the church and surrounded by the homes of the large landholders, and with agricultural land and vast dry ranches on the periphery.⁹³ And even though the port at San Pedro was, after Mexican independence, newly allowed to import foreign goods and ships docked there more frequently, the population of the town remained minuscule. The pueblo contained only 770 inhabitants in 1830, 1,110 in 1840, and 1,250 by 1845, with equal numbers living on ranches in the hinterlands. A primitive division of labor had barely begun to occur. The town contained a few stores, some craftsmen, and even some home manufacturing, but the economy continued to be based on cattle raising and its by-products (hides and tallow), the only objects that entered international trade.

Nevertheless, the Mexican revolution did make a difference. By 1835 the town's status was raised to that of *ciudad* (city) and Los Angeles was declared the capital of the territory, even though the government was not moved there until ten years later. Far more definitive in shaping the characteristic of the settlement, however, were the *ranchos*, because in the 1830s the Mexican government had distributed large amounts of land to its supporters, who formed a glittering, albeit rough, "elite."⁹⁴

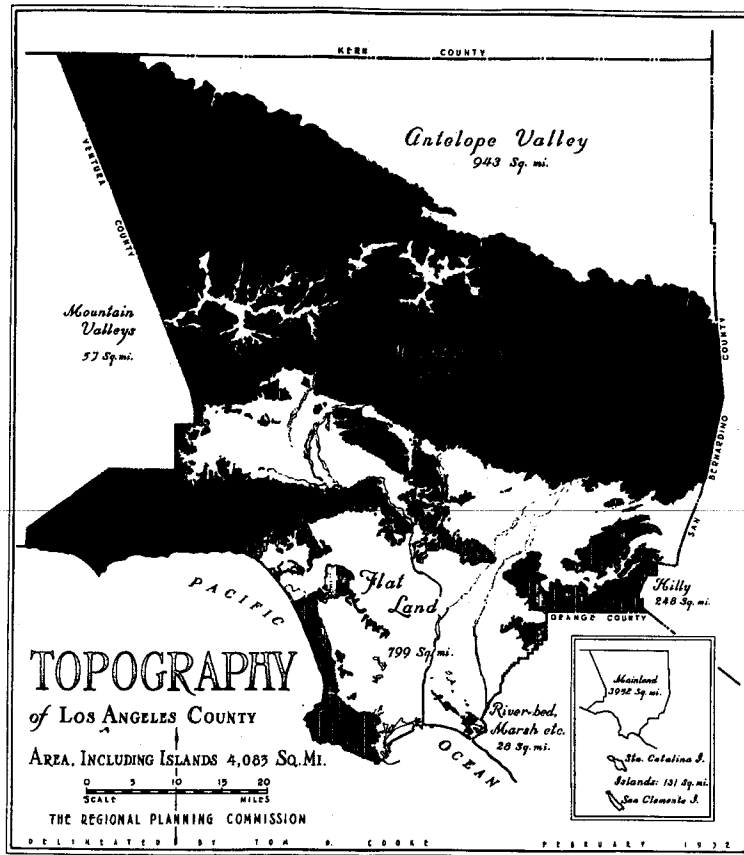


Map 3.4. In 1849, after the U.S. conquest was regularized, E. O. C. Ord made the first American survey of Los Angeles, preparatory to reorganizing ownership. His survey shows a primitive gridiron frontier town.

The California gold rush, although concentrated mostly in northern California, also scattered some fallout glitter on Los Angeles. Not only was some gold found in the town's vicinity as early as 1843, but the demand for southern California's meat and other food products increased significantly during the northern gold rush. Formerly useful only for their hides and tallow, cattle on the hoof were being herded northward and sold for outrageous prices paid by gold miners. The gold rush also redoubled the urgency to add California to the United States. In 1846, the United States had already declared war on Mexico, and after seesaw battles in which Los Angeles changed hands several times, the city came under the control of American forces by 1847. In 1849, after conquest was "regularized,"⁹⁵ E. O. C. Ord made the first American survey of Los Angeles preparatory to revamping ownership patterns. His plan showed a primitive frontier town.

The U.S. Census taken in 1850 revealed the preponderance of the town's Mexican residents; only some three hundred of the Los Angeles population were of "American ancestry," with men outnumbering women three to one.⁹⁶ Southern California was to lag considerably behind the rest of the state in Anglofication. This had long-lasting effects on the city, as Carey McWilliams so astutely recognized:

For three decades after 1849, while thousands of Americans were invading Northern California, taking possession of the land and establishing their institutions, Southern California remained virtually unchanged. Spanish continued to be used as the language of instruction in most communities throughout the 'sixties and 'seventies. Twenty years after the discovery of gold, Los Angeles was still a



Map 3.5. Topography rules: the lay of the land in Los Angeles County. Source: Regional Planning Commission. Reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library.

small Mexican town in which Spanish was spoken almost universally, with all official documents . . . being published both in Spanish and in English. . . . As a result of this time-lag in social change, Spanish-Mexican influences struck deeper roots in Southern California than elsewhere in the state . . . [It] was not until the great influx of the 'eighties that the Spanish influence began to decline.⁹⁷

The term *Mexican*, however, concealed a complex social hierarchy, in which "race," social privilege, and economic class were all invoked to distinguish the self-styled "Spanish" elite (consisting of large landholders, government officials, and mili-



Map 3.6. The old Spanish and Mexican ranches of Los Angeles County. Reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library.

tary officers, as well as Franciscans) from ordinary Mexicans (troops, artisans, and colonists) who were mostly "mestizo."⁹⁸ Charles Dwight Willard describes the pre-American social structure as "not unlike that of the Deep South: the Indians were the slaves, the *gente de razón* were the plantation owners or 'whites,' and the Mexicans were the 'poor whites.'"⁹⁹

Landownership was a fundamental object of dispute in the wake of the conquest. The Land Grant Act of 1851 required confirmation of titles by the Mexican owners of *ranchos*, which proved disastrous for them. "At least 40% of the land owned

under Mexican grants was sold, by the owners, to meet the costs . . . involved in complying with the Act."¹⁰⁰ Once the land surveys were completed by 1860, parcels changed hands rapidly, with "Anglo" individuals and companies investing in extensive holdings. Within a few decades, ranching "gave way before agricultural and town-founding activities."¹⁰¹ Although the censuses of 1860 and 1870 showed vintners as dominating the small "industrial" sector, some manufacturing had appeared, and entrepreneurs and businessmen arrived by sea from New England, Texas, and even Europe to take advantage of opportunities in the "new" settlement. However, they were still outnumbered by native Californians, who, because they had lost their lands, were increasingly proletarianized into wage and farm laborers.¹⁰²

But Los Angeles still remained outside the rail network of the country and continued to be dwarfed by San Francisco, itself far behind New York and Chicago. Not until the next period, when rail lines opened—at first via San Francisco but then with direct connections to the East—would the history of modern Los Angeles begin. And when it started, it ran counter to national trends. The economic difficulties that New York experienced in the 1870s were counteracted in Chicago by the building boom engendered by the Great Fire and in Los Angeles by the migration of new settlers, who fueled its first expansionary phase. The details of the next period are the subject of Part II of this book.