The gradual upward mobility of some Italian immigrants and their children, their growing accommodation with the Roman Catholic Church, the emergence of a second generation, and the beginnings of political activity all pointed in the direction of acculturation. But like the massive number of Jews who arrived at the same time, Italian New Yorkers remained a tightly knit community on the eve of World War I. Indeed, many were just beginning to abandon the primacy of their provincial identity and to see themselves as Italians, let alone as Italian Americans or as just new Americans. The outbreak of World War I in Europe and the drastic decline in immigration after the restriction acts were passed in the 1920s stimulated the Americanization process for European immigrants and their children. But even then the transition was gradual. Many retained strong ethnic attachments for years.



# 6

## *Ethnic New Yorkers from the Great War to the Great Depression*

In New York City's immigrant neighborhoods World War I was both a cause for anxiety and a generator of pressure for assimilation. The city's German Americans did not want the United States to align itself against their native land, but neither they nor other opponents of war could halt the drift toward involvement on the side of the Allied Powers. Before America entered the conflict, New York's Germans had called upon the government to be even-handed in its treatment of combatant nations. Some raised money for war relief in Germany. A ten day New York bazaar sold 56,000 tickets and raised considerable funds for that purpose.[1] A few German Americans, such as New York's George Sylvester Viereck, a poet and publisher of *The American Week-*

*ly*, continued defending Germany even after the American declaration of war. His cause was considerably injured when the United States government demonstrated that he was on the Kaiser's payroll. The Poetry Society of America then dropped a discredited Viereck from its membership.[2]

Following America's declaration of war in April 1917, the majority of German-American New Yorkers not only repudiated Viereck's views, but were actually strident in their support of the Allied cause. The *Staats-Zeitung* insisted that German Americans were loyal citizens and blamed "the German military party" for the debacle.[3] One association of New York German societies offered its shooting range to the War Department, yet even loyal Germans found themselves under suspicion.[4] Given their traditions of achievements in science, higher education, art, literature, and music, Germans had generally been highly esteemed in the country, but in 1917 many Americans focused on other aspects of German culture such as militarism and imperialism. Once war came, politicians like Theodore Roosevelt insisted that the nation could not tolerate disloyalty and that hyphenated Americans must commit themselves to the American cause without reservation. The most extreme statement from a New Yorker came from the Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, who announced from the pulpit his belief "that Germans were genetically defective," and advocated sterilization of millions of German-American men.[5]

Such strident voices stirred the public and helped create an atmosphere of intolerance. The intense emotions with which many Americans supported the conflict on the home front prompted them to view German Americans as potentially disloyal citizens who might aid the enemy. During the wartime hysteria old German-American New York institutions changed their names. The German Hospital and Dispensary became Lenox Hill Hospital, and the German Polyclinic became Stuyvesant Polyclinic.[6] The Germania Life Insurance Company insisted that it was an American company, loyal to the United States; it was the first insurance company to purchase Liberty Bonds. When that gesture proved inadequate, the managers changed the Germania's name to the Guardian Life Insurance Company and began to withdraw from European operations.[7] German-speaking churches switched to the English language or became bilingual; schools stopped teaching German, and the German language press experienced a sharp decline in readers. Even the Metropolitan Opera Company echoed the spirit of hysterical patriotism and refused to perform the works of German composers like Richard Wagner.[8]





While New York's German Americans experienced the emotionalism of the war more deeply than others, members of other ethnic groups also found their lives disrupted; some even returned to Europe to fight for their native lands. Jewish New Yorkers, however, were understandably not eager to be allied with czarist Russia, whose persecution they had fled. Thus, the Yiddish socialist *Forverts* opposed American involvement until the overthrow of the czarist regime. As the *Forverts* put it at that moment, "it is no longer a capitalistic war. Neither is it imperialistic or nationalistic. It is a war for humanity."[9] But for some socialist purists neither the Allies's cause nor that of the Central Powers was just. In the election for mayor in the fall of 1917 Mayor John Mitchell played the patriot and denounced Socialist candidate Morris Hillquit as a virtual traitor for his criticism of the war.[10]

While most radical New Yorkers eventually supported the war effort, a few strongly opposed both America's involvement and its later participation in the Allied intervention against the Bolsheviks in Russia. A handful of Jewish anarchists living in East Harlem printed circulars denouncing this intervention; in August 1918 the government arrested, then tried and convicted them for violations of the Sedition Act. Ultimately, they were deported to Russia along with other victims of the Palmer Raids of 1919.[11]

At the war's outset the city's Irish Americans had little reason to support the British, especially when Great Britain suppressed Dublin's Easter Rebellion of 1916. Shortly after the Easter uprising, a gathering of 3,000 New York Irish hailed the rebellion and thanked Germany for supporting the cause of the Irish freedom.[12] For the "professional" Irish, those who championed the cause of Irish independence above all else, neither the eventual Allied victory nor the Treaty of Versailles, which ignored Irish freedom, were deemed worthy of praise. John Devoy's *Gaelic American*, Judge Daniel F. Cohalan, and the *Irish World* all severely attacked America's pro-British foreign policy. Nevertheless, the bulk of the city's Irish supported the American war effort as did Irish leadership of the Catholic church.[13] They were, after all, Americans of Irish descent and no longer living in Ireland. The "fighting 69th" regi-

ment, recruited mainly from the city's West Side Irish, won great praise for its military action against Germany.

The war in Europe also disrupted the normal flow of immigration to America, which was so vital for reinforcing ethnic life. In 1914 more than 1.2 million newcomers arrived on American shores, but during the next three years the combined total was under one million. In 1918, while the United States was at war, only 110,330 persons arrived. After hostilities ended, immigration began again. In 1921 800,000 people, many of whom settled in New York City, were admitted. Then Congress passed new and severely restrictive laws that affected European immigration. After previously barring Asians and passing several stopgap anti-immigrant measures, Congress enacted the National Origins Act of 1924, imposing quotas designed to limit immigration from southern and eastern Europe. The bulk of the 150,000 annual visas were reserved for northern and western European nations such as Great Britain, Ireland, and Germany. Most New York Congressmen, including Emanuel Celler and Fiorello La Guardia, strongly opposed this legislation.[14]

During the 1920s, before the law became effective, about 600,000 new immigrants settled in New York. However, the National Origins system drastically reduced the flow. Since it established a quota of less than 6,000 for Italy, about 300 for Greece, and a few thousand for Russia and Poland, the major sources of immigration for New York City for the previous thirty years suddenly were virtually shut off.

Among Germans, already reeling under World War I's hysteria, few new immigrants arrived to buttress German-American life. The heyday of *Kleindeutschland* and of German culture in New York had passed before 1910, and during the 1920s the Yorkville section of Manhattan and German districts in Brooklyn and Queens lost much of their German flavor. Readership of *Staats-Zeitung* (which merged with another German language newspaper, the *Herold*) declined as did the population of German neighborhoods and the number of their organizations and German-speaking churches.[15] A Works Progress Administration (WPA) survey of *Kleindeutschland* in 1936 reported, "While most of the old landmarks of German activities in New York during the last Century have disappeared in the course of years, enough of them are left to give a fairly good picture of their former extent."[16]

Other immigrant and ethnic groups began to follow the path of *Kleindeutschland*'s residents after 1910 as they moved from their immigrant ghettoes to newer developing neighborhoods. The movement of people from lower Manhattan to other boroughs was made possible by the ever-expanding city subway system. From the time Mayor George McClellan threw the switch on the first subway in October 1904, until 1940, the city built more than 800 miles of underground track. Over 200 miles of rapid transit were built between 1914 and 1921 alone, helping to stimulate postwar urban decentralization.[17] In spite of the decline in immigration, the city had a plentiful supply of construction workers and real estate entrepreneurs on hand to create housing for its citizens in newer neighborhoods. One historian has noted that the prosperity of the 1920s produced 658,789 new one- and two-family houses and apartments, "a volume of new housing which has never again been equaled, quantitatively or qualitatively."[18] About one third of the new buildings were one- or two-family units, but most were multifamily dwellings. New laws enabled buildings with self-operated elevators to replace the old walk-up tenement, and a surge of construction in the outer boroughs produced tens of thousands of four and especially six story apartment buildings.[19]

Queens and Bronx farmlands gave way to garden apartments as mass transportation made getting to work anywhere in the city much easier. As new apartments and transit routes were constructed, amenities like schools, sewers, stores, and libraries followed. The administration of John Hylan (1918–1925) proved willing to embark on major public improvements so vital for neighborhood expansion. The construction of dozens of new public schools relieved overcrowding in the city's classrooms. Many of these newer facilities were built in the outer boroughs.

Private entrepreneurs also constructed stores, recreational amenities, and hotels. When the baseball New York Giants refused to permit the Yankees to play in their park because the latter drew larger crowds, owner Jacob Ruppert built Yankee Stadium directly across the Harlem River, in the south Bronx. Opening day of the 1923 season drew a large crowd and many celebrities to the stadium, including baseball commissioner Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis and New York's Governor Alfred E. Smith. Babe Ruth completed the festivities by hitting the first of his many home runs at the ball park, soon dubbed the "House that Ruth Built." That same year, only a few blocks away, the luxurious Concourse Plaza Hotel had its grand opening, during which the gov-

ernor told an avid audience that the "Bronx is a great city. . . . After seeing this new structure, I am convinced that anything will go in the Bronx."[20]

Smith's Bronx prophecy bore fruit, as the borough's population nearly doubled from 1920 to 1940. Queens went from 469,000 to 1,297,129; and some of its neighborhoods like Jackson Heights more than tripled. Brooklyn's rate of growth, which had been substantial before 1920 was considerably less between World War I and World War II, but that borough's population nonetheless increased. Coney Island, for example, exploded from a quiet Brooklyn resort of 33,000 in 1910 to 280,000 residents by 1930. Manhattan's population reached its peak about the time of World War I and then began to decline; Brooklyn replaced it as the most populous of Greater New York City's boroughs after 1920.[21]

New York's developing neighborhoods after World War I, like the old immigrant "ghettos," usually contained mixtures of people: Irish, Italians, Greeks, Poles, Jews, Germans, and Czechs among others. Yet many districts maintained a distinctly ethnic character. For example, a researcher in 1920 reported that Jews and Italians made up the largest numbers in East Harlem and were culturally dominant.[22] Neighborhoods were constantly in flux, with older settlers moving on to more prosperous sections as the new arrivals from abroad or Manhattan moved in.

While both German and Irish emigration to America had declined after 1900, a surge in the 1920s helped revitalize old Irish neighborhoods. More than 40 percent of America's Irish immigrants settled in New York City during the 1920s, and like the great nineteenth century migration, these newcomers were usually young people in search of a better life.[23]

Overall, however, the larger Irish community was increasingly on the move to more desirable neighborhoods. Middle class Irish had begun to leave Manhattan's slum districts and migrate across the Harlem and East rivers into Brooklyn and the West Bronx before the turn of the century. Alexander Avenue in the Bronx became known as the "Irish Fifth Avenue," because so many Irish doctors lived there.[24] During the early years of the twentieth century some Irish neighborhoods in the outer boroughs were established by laborers employed by the railroad lines or as bridge builders who settled where they worked. Both work-





ing and middle class Irish developed the Inwood section of northern Manhattan, Woodlawn in the Bronx, and Woodside in Queens as ethnic enclaves.[25]

Marion Casey has traced the movement of Irish workers into Mott Haven and other sections of the Bronx once they discovered that they could afford the new apartments. As she put it, the "most striking conclusions about the Bronx Irish community in the period 1920–1930 is its relative youth, and the shift to working-class apartment dwellers from the middle-class home owners typical of the [borough's] nineteenth-century Irish."[26] Frank Hanrahan was typical of these movers. He was born in 1915 to Irish parents in a cold water tenement on 101st Street in Manhattan, an overwhelmingly Irish neighborhood. A few years later the family relocated to West 147th Street, another mostly Irish neighborhood. In 1921 his family moved to the Bronx from upper Manhattan because the "father's credit rating was good as a result of his obtaining a job with New York City. Frank's father had entered the city fire department in 1917." The move was also possible because the IRT subway "opened what had been an area of large estates and summer retreats to the common man. . . . Wherever a subway was built, people followed." After World War II Hanrahan moved again, as did so many white New Yorkers, to Queens. In time blacks and Hispanics would replace the Irish Hanrahans in the Bronx.[27]

During the 1920s the exodus to the Bronx was reinforced by new Irish immigrants who settled there initially rather than in Manhattan. For example, immigrant William O'Dwyer, later district attorney of Brooklyn and mayor of New York from 1946 to 1951, went directly from the boat by subway to an Irish saloon in the Bronx, where he made arrangements to find a room and job. His first subway ride was "smooth as silk." His contact told him, "There are several Irish men who have been successful in the grocery business. I talked to a manager of one of them. If you mind your business and work hard, there is no reason why you should not succeed."[28]

Many Irish found housing in the older neighborhoods like Mott Haven, but for the more affluent, new apartments in University Heights and Fordham were readily available. Only 5 percent of New York's Irish-born population lived the Bronx in 1900, but by 1920 the figure was 9 percent, and by end of the Great Depression it was 24 percent.[29]

Historian Deborah Dash Moore has chronicled the life style changes of New York Jews during this era. At the turn of the century the majority of the city's eastern European Jews lived in the Lower East Side and in other crowded tenement districts. With jobs and education, they began to move, and in the twenties alone 160,000 abandoned their old neighborhoods. In the mid-1920s statisticians announced the "startling fact" that Brooklyn had about as many Jews as Manhattan and the Bronx together and that the trend was toward Brooklyn and the Bronx and away from Manhattan.[30]

These upwardly mobile Jews were following the paths of Germans and Irish before them. The Bronx's Grand Concourse, lined with new apartments, was a destination so attractive that it drew Jews not only from the Lower East Side but also from Harlem and from Brooklyn's Williamsburg and Brownsville. Indeed, Brownsville, before World War I considered to be a slightly better neighborhood than the Lower East Side, began to lose whatever attraction it had. Its population peaked in the mid-1920s as residents began to seek better housing. The exodus slowed during the Great Depression but rose rapidly after World War II.[31]

Boro Park in Brooklyn was also typical of neighborhood growth. Rows upon rows of modest semi-attached single family homes and multi-family apartments were built during the 1920s. Novelist Michael Gold told of his visit to the "suburb" of Boro Park: "Real estate signs were stuck everywhere. In the midst of some rusty cans and muck would be a sign, 'Why Pay Rent? Build your House in God's Country.' "[32] While Jews had moved to Boro Park before World I, their numbers greatly increased during the postwar years; by 1930 they accounted for half of the neighborhood.[33]

The persistence of anti-Semitic restrictions closed some neighborhoods to Jews, among them Fieldston and Riverside in the Bronx and Brooklyn's Park Slope and Brooklyn Heights.[34] But Jewish builders and real estate entrepreneurs filled the residential gap by providing housing and the networks that coordinated Jewish relocation. Changes in taxes and the easy availability of loans completed the requirements for the 1920s expansion. "The tax abatements, strong demands for new housing, amortizing mortgages, available real estate, reasonable construction costs and timetables ignited a tremendous building boom in New York City."[35]





While the growth of outer boroughs was spectacular after World War I, some upwardly mobile, second-generation New Yorkers sought better housing in Manhattan. An attractive neighborhood for rising Jews was the Upper West Side along Central Park West, Riverside Drive, and West End Avenue.[36] That section had originally been developed with the expansion of the horse-drawn omnibus, but after the 1870s the steam-powered elevated trains arrived and infrastructural improvements led to rapid development. Among the first inhabitants were Irish and German Catholics who rented dumbbell flats along the El of Columbus Avenue, but apartment houses, including the legendary "Dakota," on Central Park West and 72d Street, rapidly followed. While the Depression of the 1890s set back construction, a second boom beginning after 1901 saw the erection of many large apartment structures on West End Avenue. Some Jews moved there before World War I, but the big surge came during the 1920s. As Harlem became increasingly black, thousands of Jewish families fled to Brooklyn or the Bronx; but many, usually the most affluent, also found Manhattan's West Side congenial.[37]

Successful eastern European Jews followed the German Jews to the West Side. Some of the newcomers owned elegant brownstones, but most lived in the recently constructed large apartment buildings. New Jewish organizations and congregations appeared alongside those that relocated from Harlem. After the Great Depression and until the 1950s the West Side remained predominantly an established and affluent Jewish neighborhood. Even in the 1990s, by which time a new, more diverse upper West Side had emerged, an important Jewish community remained.

New York City's Italian inhabitants also began to move from congested slums in the early twentieth century. Yet Italians were not as upwardly mobile as Jews or as financially successful as the Irish. The first Italians to settle in upper Manhattan in the 1870s were construction workers seeking housing away from the congested Mulberry Bend. By the end of the century East Harlem contained an established Italian community, which grew substantially during the 1920s and 1930s as Jews and Irish left for greener pastures. Although less crowded than Mulberry Bend, East Harlem was still a working class community with dirty and congested streets and inadequate housing.[38] Brooklyn increasingly became attractive for Italian workers, and by 1930 it

claimed nearly half of the city's Italian stock.[39] Many dockworkers located along the waterfront in close proximity to their jobs.[40]

While European migration to New York City declined following the outbreak of World War I, that of southern blacks continued to increase. During the "Great Migration" (1910 to 1920) about one half million headed to northern cities, including New York. In 1910 the five-borough city claimed more than 90,000 black residents. By 1920 the total was 152,407; in 1930 it reached 327,706, about 4.7 percent of the city's total population.[41]

In 1900 Manhattan's San Juan Hill and Tenderloin districts contained sizeable black populations, and individual blocks and tenements in the city were exclusively black, but no racial ghetto existed in either Manhattan or Brooklyn. Within two decades this situation had changed.

At the turn of the century, Harlem was practically an all-white residential community with a rural quality. Annexed to the city in 1873, Harlem had experienced a building boom tied to improved transportation. Many German and Jewish middle and upper middle class families sought its "genteel" quality.[42] Harlem's fringes contained some Italians in the east and a handful of Irish and black families. A number of the blacks worked as domestics in the homes of the affluent white residents, but few expected their numbers to increase.[43]

A Harlem building boom in the first years of the new century suddenly collapsed in 1904–1905, leaving many houses vacant and builders and landlords eager to find tenants. When the Lenox Avenue Subway Line was completed, connecting Harlem to lower Manhattan, the stage was set for Harlem's metamorphosis. A black realtor, Philip Payton, Jr., organized the Afro-American Realty Company to serve blacks interested in renting or buying in Harlem. Many blacks, jammed into overcrowded housing in San Juan Hill and other run down neighborhoods, welcomed the opportunity to move.[44] Unlike second-generation whites, black New Yorkers could not obtain housing in the rapidly expanding boroughs, even if they had the money.

Whites continued to move to Harlem between 1910 and 1920, but many became anxious at the black influx into "their" neighborhood. John Taylor, founder of the Harlem Property Owners' Improvement Corporation, shouted, "Drive them [the blacks] out, and send them to the slums where they belong."[45] However, landlords failed to prevent whites from moving out, and rather than face ruin with vacant





buildings, they rented to black newcomers. By 1914 50,000 blacks called Harlem home, and they were quickly served by black churches and YMCAs.[46] White flight was apparent during the interwar years, but some white-owned businesses remained along with white property owners who rented to blacks. Both proved to be sources of future difficulties.

As Harlem held two thirds of black New York's 300,000 residents in 1930, it became a must on the itineraries of foreign visitors. Black writer James Weldon Johnson romanticized Harlem by calling it "the recognized Negro capital" of the world, and he described the extraordinary black renaissance of the 1920s that centered there.[47] During that decade a group of Harlem's writers, musicians, actors, artists, and journalists produced an astounding artistic output stressing racial consciousness and a unique black culture. Harlem's nightclubs attracted whites eager to hear the nation's most famous black jazz bands and blues singers.[48]

The African-American cultural and business elite bought homes along 139th Street, called "Strivers' Row," whose buildings had been designed by the noted architect Stanford White. A few blocks away was Sugar Hill, which had the reputation of being the center of Harlem's cafe society.[49]

One of the most popular black nationalists of the period was Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. A native of Jamaica, Garvey had lived in Harlem since 1916. His message of racial pride, freedom for African colonies, and black economic development found a ready audience among many poor and working class black New Yorkers. Although Garvey's economic schemes failed and he was eventually convicted of mail fraud and deported, he left his mark on black consciousness. Later black leaders echoed his emphasis on black pride and the need for African Americans to build and control their own institutions.[50]

Across the East River, Brooklyn contained New York City's second largest black population. As in Manhattan, Brooklyn's blacks had lived mostly in scattered neighborhoods until 1900. Yet by 1930 the outline of another black ghetto had emerged. Like Harlem, the Bedford-Stuyvesant section had been a middle class white neighborhood of "mansions" which housed a "cultured and church-going population," one of the "most attractive home sections of the entire borough."[51] As

rapid transit routes bypassed the area and as the large homes (more suitable for an era when cheap immigrant servant help was readily available) became obsolete, Bedford-Stuyvesant became fertile ground for a black influx.[52] Indeed, whites sold or rented houses to blacks, and black congregations purchased white churches.[53] A few white groups like the Gates Avenue Association tried to stem the black influx, but to no avail.

Brooklyn's emerging ghetto never shared the glamour of the Harlem Renaissance, but both neighborhoods experienced the slow process that makes a slum. The housing stock of both sections contained solid and large homes, but because of high prices it became necessary for families to double up or take in boarders to make ends meet. Historian Gilbert Osofsky concluded that Harlemites paid $8 monthly more per three room apartment than did New York whites, and the National Urban League found in 1927 that the typical New York white family paid $6.67 per month per room while Harlem blacks were charged $9.50. And landlords rarely exhibited much interest in the maintenance of ghetto buildings.[54]

Along with expanding transportation networks and new housing construction. the movement of European immigrants and their children to better neighborhoods was made possible by rising incomes. By the time of World War I, most Germans had moved into skilled laboring positions or middle class occupations.[55] And the Irish were not far behind. Politics had given the Irish jobs on the city payroll, especially as policemen and firemen. For Irish women, school teaching had beckoned. In 1910 three quarters of the public school pupils were foreign born, but the majority of teachers had been born in New York City. Among these pedagogues the Irish predominated, constituting some 20 percent of the total.[56] As Deborah Dash Moore informs us, immigrants before World War I learned from "teachers named Jones, O'Reilly, Smith and Kennedy." Irish women still entered public school teaching in the 1920s, but Jewish women were rapidly overtaking them.[57]

Many Irish employed in the private sector held working class jobs. For example, Irish made up the lion's share of the employees in the private transit system of the 1930s, so that the Interborough Rapid Transit was sometimes referred to as the Irish Rapid Transit.[58] Because many transit positions required dealing with the public, command of English gave them an advantage in getting jobs as guards, conductors, and motormen. Though second-or-third-generation Germans usually held





a majority of the skilled craft positions on the lines, Irish men also could be found in skilled jobs as well as in a few managerial and supervisory positions.[59] The Irish domination of transit jobs was hardly surprising because prior to 1940 these were obtained through "political connections"; Tammany clubs undoubtedly took care of their own.[60]

As in the nineteenth century a few Irish women working in the private sector found jobs as domestic servants, but this low paid occupation was increasingly being taken over by African Americans. Irish accents could also be heard in the Schrafft's and Stouffer's restaurant chains where many Irish women found jobs. Still other Irish women went into nursing, a field they ultimately dominated. In addition, they found white collar jobs in the phone company, so much so, that one woman recalled that those positions seemed "part of the Catholic Church."[61]

New York's Irish and the Tammany Hall machine they dominated reached the peak of their power in politics during this era. Mayor John Purroy Mitchell, elected on a reform ticket in 1913, promptly alienated a number of interest groups, and consequently suffered defeat in 1917.[62] The reign of John Hylan for eight years (1918–1925) was followed by that of Jimmy Walker for nearly six (1927–1932); both were Tammany stalwarts. In 1926, at the beginning of Walker's administration, the Board of Estimate, the city's main governing body, consisted of six Irish Catholics, a German, and a Jew. Nor did it hurt that Al Smith, another Irish Tammany man from the streets of New York City, was governor of the state.[63]

Changes in naturalization procedures after 1900 made it more difficult to obtain citizenship, but Jews and Italians were still voting in growing numbers in the 1920s. In Brooklyn, as the Jewish and Italian population increased and as the immigrants naturalized and their children came of age, Irish politicians saw power beginning to slip from their hands. In 1919, Hyman Schorenstein became the first Democratic Jewish district leader in Brownsville. And in that borough's Crown Heights section, Irwin Steingut became a Democratic party leader in the early 1930s.[64]

Yet Italian and Jewish attempts at either significantly influencing or controlling city hall or the Democratic party were frustrated. Jews and Italians did not fare too well in the Walker administration when it came to appointments. Jews, with one quarter of the city's population, won

only 9 percent of Walker's cabinet appointments, while Italians, with 17 percent of the population, received only 1 percent.[65] Fiorello La Guardia, a liberal Republican, represented predominately Italian East Harlem in Congress when he made his first race for mayor. In 1929 he suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of "Beau James," Jimmy Walker, the candidate of Tammany Hall.

Although they did not move to the top of urban politics, of all immigrant groups New York's Jews made the most rapid economic progress. Most German Jews of the "Old Immigration" had attained middle class status or higher before World War I. Some of the eastern European Jews, who began their New World careers in the city's fast growing garment industry, within a short time owned their own shops. Others, who had begun as peddlers, gradually opened more stable retail businesses and prospered modestly as did real estate entrepreneurs during the building boom of the 1920s. The stage and entertainment industry offered another avenue for "making it" in New York City. The ethnic Yiddish theater reached its zenith about the time of World War I when 20 theaters were in operation. But it was vaudeville and the movies that launched the careers of such Jewish Eastsiders as George Burns, Al Jolson, the Marx Brothers, and Eddie Cantor. As movies, the radio, and finally the depression ended vaudeville, many of the performers moved to Hollywood to seek wider fame.[66]

Athletics opened doors for a few young men. Before World War I practically no immigrants became professional baseball players, but during the interwar years a handful of Jews and Italians played in the big leagues. Jewish and Italian youths of New York City lacked access to facilities necessary to develop baseball skills. Comedian George Burns recalled that: "Our playground was the middle of Rivington Street. We played games that needed very little equipment. . . . When we played baseball we used a broom handle and a rubber ball. A manhole cover was home plate, a fire hydrant was first base, second base was a lamp post, and Mr. Gitletz, who used to bring a kitchen chair down to sit and watch us play, was third base. One time I slid into Mr. Gitletz; he caught the ball and tagged me out."[67] Among Jewish second generation boys another barrier existed, opposition from parents. Eddie Cantor recalled of his youth, "To the pious people of the ghetto a baseball player was king of loafers." And Irving Howe remembered his father's opposition to his playing baseball was so intense that his





mother would sneak out my baseball gear and put it in the candy store downstairs."[68]

However, not all Jewish parents objected to their sons' ball playing. Some enjoyed sports themselves, while others realized that their children might achieve American-style success through sports. Of the few Jewish athletes who would emerge from the city streets and make the major leagues, the most famous was Hank Greenberg, who played for Detroit in the 1930s and 1940s. Here was a son of the Bronx who was idolized by millions.[69]

Among the most famous Italian big leaguers who learned the basics of the game in Little Italys during the 1920s were the Brooklyn Dodgers' Ernie Lombardi and, of course, the great Joe DiMaggio of the New York Yankees. Although DiMaggio came from California, New York Italians quickly claimed him as one of their own.

Men now in their sixties and seventies who lived in the Italian enclaves remember the pride they felt that one of their own became the great "DiMage." In the evenings they would walk to the newsstands beneath the elevated lines in Brooklyn or the Bronx to buy the night edition of the *Daily News* or *Daily Mirror* to see how "DiMage" or Mancuso or Cuccinello had done that day. And the next weekend they imitated DiMaggio's open stance at the plate or Lazzeri's catlike play at second during the sandlot games.[70]

For Jewish youngsters it was basketball even more than baseball that they loved. Although few could make a living playing professional basketball before World War II, New York's Jewish youth played in recreational centers, boys clubs, YMHAs, public schools, and colleges, especially the City College of New York. The latter produced a national championship during the 1949–1950 season with a predominately Jewish team.[71]

While Italian and Jewish boys played baseball, basketball, and street games, it was through boxing that they achieved their greatest fame and fortune. Like poor Irish immigrants before them, Jewish and Italian youth facing hostile neighborhood toughs quickly learned to defend themselves. For the best, the next move was from the street to the ring. Professional victories and paychecks brought prestige and even parental acceptance for Jewish boxers. As one historian noted, "They were regarded as race heroes who defended the honor of the Jewish people and proved to the world that the Jewish man had athletic ability and

was not meek and cowardly but rugged, brave and courageous."[72] In the 1920s Irish, Italians, and Jews topped the boxing championship lists but during the 1930s, Italians were first and Jews second in producing winners. One observer recalled, "During the '20s and '30s, New York became a figurative ethnic battleground between the Irish and Jews over the exploits of three fighters: McLarnin, Leonard, and Ross."[73]

Using the city's public schools and colleges, Jews began to pursue professional careers. Jewish graduates of Hunter College and the City College of New York, especially women, made their appearance as teachers as early as 1910, and, as noted, after World War I they rapidly moved into positions as public school faculty.[74] Others who received professional educations opened offices as physicians, dentists, and lawyers. However, the growing number of applications from Jews during the 1920s prompted both Columbia and New York universities to restrict Jewish enrollment.[75] Jewish educational quotas were part of a growing anti-Semitism of post-World War I America, and New York City was not exempt from this ugly trend. The immigration restriction acts of the 1920s, for example, were partly motivated by a desire to curtail Jewish immigration.

More important than the professions for Jewish mobility was business. While most Jews remained employees, a growing number were owners and operators of small establishments. By 1937, reports Henry Feingold, Jews owned two-thirds of the city's 34,000 factories and 104,000 wholesale and retail enterprises.[76]

Except for "mom" and "pop" businesses most Jewish-run enterprises were managed by men. However, within them young Jewish women found employment. While larger white Protestant-dominated firms refused to hire Jews (or other new ethnics for that matter) before World War II, Jewish-run businesses needed clerks to keep their books, manage their records, act as secretaries, and wait on customers. Here was an opportunity for Jewish women, who, in increasing numbers were earning high school diplomas required for such jobs. As early as 1914 one commentator compared Italian and Jewish women, "It is interesting to note that the Jewish girl is to be found in office work and stenography while the Italian girl is found in factories."[77] Around the time of World War I, the same observer summarized data about Jewish girls age 14 to 16: 5 percent were working in factories, 10 percent in office work, and 75 percent still in public and trade schools.





Those still pursuing their educations represented the highest percentage of any ethnic group.[78]

Jewish women also found jobs in the city's department stores. By 1932 they reportedly represented about half of their employees. One journal commented that department stores had to hire many gentile young women to fill in during the Jewish holidays.[79]

For many first-generation Jews opportunities for upward mobility were limited. They remained toilers in the garment trade and other working class occupations. Irving Howe recalled about his boyhood in the 1920s that the streets of the East Bronx were "crammed with Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, almost all of them poor. We lived in narrow five-story tenements, wall flush against wall, and with slate-colored stoops rising sharply in front." If they were not as bad as tenements on the Lower East Side or Brownsville, "they were bad enough." The modern apartments for the middle class were in the "West Bronx."[80]

As a group, the upward mobility of Italians was less rapid than it was for Jews. We have seen that Italian men and women began work at the bottom, making flowers, taking in boarders, building subways, unloading ships, sewing garments, and doing day labor. Although many improved their lot, New York's Italians remained a predominately working-class population. A 1916 survey of Italian-born men revealed that half were laborers; by 1931 in another survey laborers constituted only 31 percent but still represented the largest single group.[81] Some of the better jobs were on the docks, but dockworkers faced a harsh world of corrupt labor practices.

Italian women in the labor force were also working class. Around World War I, while 43 percent of Italian girls age 14 to 16 were still in school, 40 percent worked in factories and only 1 percent found jobs as white collar workers. By age 18 most had dropped out of school and gone to work in manufacturing.[82]

After World War I more Italians stayed in school longer, and a growing number of both men and women found white collar employment.[83] Yet the situation did not change significantly until the end of the 1930s. Compared to some other groups, progress was slow. Vito Marcantonio, Congressman from East Harlem in the 1930s and 1940s, grew up in that Italian neighborhood at a time when practically no child went beyond elementary school. East Harlem did not even have a high school before 1934. Because his father was a skilled worker and

the family had relatives to help, Marcantonio became an exception that proved the rule; he and one other neighborhood youngster attended De Witt Clinton High School, four miles away. When he returned home at night, other youths taunted him with the nickname "The Professor." His companion dropped out of high school after one year.[84]

Italians did run a number of small businesses. The WPA survey of New York's Italians during the 1930s found 10,000 grocery stores, 673 drug stores, and 757 restaurants owned and operated by Italians. Like the Irish, Italians were also prominent in the building trades and real estate.[85] Of city agencies, Italians dominated the sanitation department.[86]

Of course some immigrants and their American-born offspring engaged in illegal activities to make money. As we have seen, crime often flourished amid the poverty of immigrant neighborhoods. For some Irish connected to the city's politics and Tammany Hall, graft and bribery were common and periodically aroused the public. The enactment of national Prohibition opened the door for ethnic bootleggers. One such entrepreneur later bragged "we had a bigger company than Henry Ford . . . and we had lawyers by the carload, and they was on call twenty-four hours at day."[87] Most immigrants did not consider drinking of alcohol a crime or a sign of moral laxity. Jewish gangsters like Waxy Gordon and Dopey Benny were two of the many city bootleggers providing thirsty New Yorkers with their booze. Benny also branched out into labor racketeering, and became involved with the garment unions. His thugs became adept at shooting scabs for a reported $60 cost and wrecking nonunion shops for up to $500.[88]

From Brownsville emerged Murder Inc., a combination of mostly Jewish but some Italian criminals who specialized in the killing of rival gang members.[89] The most notorious Jewish criminal, however, was not a member of Murder Inc. The gambler Arnold Rothstein, best known as the alleged fixer of the thrown 1919 World Series, bankrolled a number of illegal activities; one wag called him the "Morgan of the underworld, its banker and master of economic strategy."[90] He was a member of cafe society, living in a plush west side neighborhood of Manhattan. When he was murdered in 1928, the New York police were unable, or unwilling critics said, to solve the crime. How closely Rothstein was connected to Tammany Hall and New York political leaders was never revealed, but his murder served to provoke cries about city corruption.[91]





Italian mobsters also flourished during Prohibition. According to historian Mark Haller, New York City bootlegging was dominated by Jews, Italians, and to lesser extent Irish and Poles.[92] As did Jewish criminals, Italians became involved in labor racketeering, especially along the Brooklyn waterfront, which had turned from being heavily Irish to Italian after 1910.[93] Like Murder Inc., these gangsters engaged in a variety of criminal activities and were known to kill criminal rivals and others who would not do their bidding.[94] In return for favors, Italian criminals also worked with Tammany leaders to win elections.[95]

The prosperity of the twenties had little impact on African Americans, Puerto Ricans (a relatively new group), and Asians. Blacks remained by and large poor.[96] Study after study found low black family incomes, racial discrimination in employment, inadequate health standards, and poor schooling.[97] Even when blacks obtained jobs generally reserved for whites, they often were paid less. Black women were mostly domestics and black males unskilled workers, although of the latter a few had found factory jobs opening during the war when the demand for labor was high. The small black middle class, as before, was limited to serving the ghetto population as teachers, small shop owners, preachers, doctors, and lawyers. Black doctors were virtually barred from public hospitals, and in 1919 Harlem blacks ran only 20 percent of the businesses in their neighborhood.[98] J. Raymond Jones, a prominent black political leader, recalled that African Americans prized a red cap's job in Pennsylvania Station. "For anyone unfamiliar with the economic history of Black people, it will come as a surprise that in the Jazz Age, a Red Cap's job was a very good one in any northern city. In fact, a Red Cap was ranked with a Pullman porter, who was just a shade beneath the professionals such as medical doctors, and such." The job of red cap, he concluded, provided security and a "good income."[99] In short, opportunities were limited and economic conditions were indeed bad in Harlem. As journalist George Schuyler said, "The reason why the Depression did not have the impact on the Negroes that it had on the whites was that the Negroes had been in the Depression all the time."[100]

The appearance and expansion of an all-black community in Harlem (and later Bedford-Stuyvesant) offered the potential for a greater political role. For many years after the Civil War blacks remained faithful to the Republican party but received few rewards for their loy-

alty. Whereas in earlier days the scattered black population had little hope of influencing white politicians (let alone electing black officials), now the concentrated black community was capable of putting a black in office.

In 1913 Harlem's blacks, frustrated with both political parties, organized the independent United Civic League to pressure white politicians and eventually elect black office holders. In 1917 the League succeeded when Edward Johnson became the first black elected to New York State's Assembly.[101] In the 1920s several other blacks won election. In addition black Harlemites took over the Republican party in that district. This victory proved to be pyrrhic, as blacks began moving into the Democratic party during the 1920s, and Tammany only reluctantly gave black Harlemites much say in party affairs.[102]

African Americans also tried to use their votes to influence white politicians to improve conditions in Harlem. John Hylan, mayor from 1918 to 1925, was the first New York chief executive to hold conferences with blacks. He responded with political appointments, although blacks remained underrepresented on the public payroll. As in the past, the jobs granted blacks were low level. As late as 1930 the city employed only five black firemen and ninety blacks in the city's 17,700 man police force.[103]

Mayor Hylan was also responsible for a few governmental improvements in Harlem, but the most vexing municipal racial problem, that of segregation and discrimination at Harlem Hospital, was not resolved satisfactorily. In the early 1920s this hospital served a predominately African-American clientele, yet its medical staff remained nearly all-white. Nor could black nurses and doctors find employment in the city's other hospitals. In 1925 Mayor Hylan agreed to appoint several black doctors to the Harlem staff and promised that "visiting" black physicians would be given preference as interns at the next examination, a change that did not fully satisfy black demands. Under Mayor Jimmy Walker in 1929, the city moved to bring Harlem Hospital under closer supervision as part of the newly established Department of Hospitals and to expand black medical participation at that facility.[104] Little progress was made in achieving the latter goal until after Walker's departure from City Hall, but, to his credit, the flamboyant mayor did increase the number of blacks on the city payroll to a high of 2,275.[105]

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In Brooklyn some political appointments of African Americans had been made in the late nineteenth century, and a black Republican, Fred Moore, had once been nominated for the New York State Assembly, a seat he had no chance of winning.[106] But Bedford-Stuyvesant developed as a black community more slowly than did Harlem; consequently, Brooklyn blacks lacked a geographic base to influence politics. Both parties in Brooklyn gave blacks a few patronage jobs, but little else. Brooklyn blacks had to wait until the 1940s for a greater say in that borough's political life; black politics in Kings County remained the "politics of invisibility."[107]

Like blacks, Puerto Ricans, who after 1917 as American citizens had the right of unrestricted migration to the United States, did not find much opportunity for advancement in New York City. They became a ghettoized population laboring largely in unskilled jobs. Only a few Puerto Ricans had settled in the city in the late nineteenth century, but it was there that political exiles had formed the first Puerto Rican organizations dedicated to the overthrown of Spanish rule.[108] Puerto Rican migration increased when the United States annexed the island after defeating Spain in the Spanish-America War. A Puerto Rican *barrio* emerged in East Harlem, which had listed its first Puerto Ricans as early as 1890; the 1920 census counted 7,364 persons of Puerto Rican birth in the city. During the 1920s thousands of other islanders left for New York, and in 1930 the New York Health Department reported nearly 45,000 Puerto Ricans in the city. Migration slowed during the Great Depression, and it practically stopped during World War II.[109]

Among the first Puerto Rican migrants were cigar makers, most of whom were literate and attracted to left wing politics. During World War I many Puerto Ricans found employment in the Brooklyn Navy Yard and filtered into the nearby Fort Greene area of the borough. Migration of the 1920s was primarily of skilled or semiskilled urban workers who took the often run down apartments of Jews and later Italians who were leaving East Harlem for newer housing. Many worked outside of the neighborhood, but East Harlem's *El Barrio* soon contained a number of Puerto Rican theaters, fraternal orders, political clubs, and churches. Holy Agony, the first Roman Catholic Church catering to them, opened there in 1930.[110] Although the total number of Puerto Ricans was relatively small at the outset of the Great Depression, the foundations for the large post-World War II migration had been laid.

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New York's Asian population remained largely insulated from the city's other ethnic groups and scarcely felt the prosperity of the 1920s. Chinatown had been shaped by the racist immigration restriction acts, and only a few merchants could bring their wives or "paper sons," to America. Chinatown remained a lonely and isolated bachelor society, with six men for every woman. After 1900 the area did attract tourists, whose guides told lurid tales of "opium dens," prostitutes and tong murders by "hatchet men." Chinatown, dominated by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, did have tong wars, prostitution, gambling, and gang fighting, but their impact was overdramatized and the violence generally ended by the 1930s.[111]

Because of the immigration laws, the city's Chinese population numbered only 12,000 in 1940, although a WPA survey insisted its true size was several times the official figure.[112] About half of the Chinese lived and worked in Chinatown with the others scattered throughout the city. The latter mostly ran the ubiquitous Chinese hand laundries, estimated to number from 7,000 to 8,000 by 1930. The hand laundry was one of the few occupations open to Chinese settlers, but it required long, lonely hours for its workers to eke out a living. Most Chinese males in New York were not involved in tong wars but in a struggle to make a living running shops, restaurants, and hand laundries.[113]

Other Asians were present in minuscule numbers. Japanese immigration was unrestricted until the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 and the National Origins Act of 1924, which contained a provision totally barring further Asian immigration. But most Japanese immigrants had settled in the West or in Hawaii, and New York claimed only a few thousand, mostly males, on the eve of the Great Depression. In the 1890s the Japanese New Yorkers had generally settled in Brooklyn near the Navy Yard, where they found employment as kitchen workers, stewards, mess-boys, or cooks in the yard or on battleships. A number of Manhattan's Japanese were also in food service, but a few others worked for the Japanese government or businesses or ran their own independent small enterprises. Among the latter were operators of amusement concessions at Brooklyn's Coney Island. On the whole these jobs did not pay high wages, and the Japanese community thus lived a marginal existence. Although the city contained no Japan Town, it did support several Japanese churches, and many Japanese workers congregated in boarding houses.[114]





Korea, as a possession of Japan, was also affected by the immigration restrictions imposed on the latter. The WPA study found about 200 Koreans in the city during the 1930s, most of whom were domestic or restaurant workers.[115] A small number of Filipinos and Asian Indians had also settled in New York, either in Manhattan or Brooklyn. Indian immigrants formed a Pan Aryan Association and an Indo-American Association, both of which focused on ending British rule in the homeland.[116] Filipinos apparently worked as sailors or as nonskilled laborers and lived by the docks of South Brooklyn.[117] The WPA study even located a colony of Indonesians in Brooklyn, commenting that other Brooklynites did not "even know of their existence."[118] Like many other Asians they worked at domestic service jobs, washing dishes in restaurants or employed as "pin boys" in local bowling alleys.[119]

The social mobility of European immigrants and their children and their movement into more upscale neighborhoods undoubtedly weakened the cohesiveness of the city's ethnic communities. Many of the immigrants themselves became citizens during the periodic "Americanization" drives, and growing numbers participated in the city politics. The second and third generations began to take on American customs and to speak only English. The WPA guide believed that

> whatever may separate the Italian-American from the rest of his fellow citizens disappears in the third generation. There are now growing up in New York's schools alone 300 thousand "Italian" children, most of them the offspring of second-generation Italian-Americans. To them the country of their grandparents will be a distant, almost unreal memory. . . . They will no longer be bi-lingual like their parents or their more advanced grandparents, and they will disappear in that countless mass of native Americans whose origin it is as difficult to establish as it is to trace the streams whose waters have flowed into the ocean.[120]

Yet the old neighborhoods, while losing population, still held onto many and received some new immigrants during the 1920s. The Lower East Side continued to house a large Jewish population and many Jewish institutions. The Yiddish *Forverts* was published there; fraternal and mutual benefit societies catered to their members' needs, and the immigrant theater, shops, synagogues, and restaurants served their clientele. Irving Howe's East Bronx "was still a self-contained little world," in which "Yiddish was spoken everywhere. The English of the young, if

unmarred by accent, had its own intonation, the stumbling melody of immigrant speech. . . . At the corner newsstands . . . the *Forward*, sold about as well as the *News* and *Mirror*, the two-cent tabloids with crime stories, pictures, gossip."[121]

Studies of New York's Jewish population during the interwar years describe a changing but persistent Jewish culture. The city's Orthodox represented only a minority of its Jews, but the 1920s and 1930s marked the "heyday of New York's Orthodox," according to Jenna Joselit.[122] As the more prosperous Orthodox Jews left the Lower East Side after 1900 and settled in middle class neighborhoods, they established Orthodox centers in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, in Boro Park and Williamsburg in Brooklyn, and in the Bronx, which combined ancient ritual with modern middle class trappings. Synagogues grew larger and more elaborate as did the *mikvahs*, the ritual baths. Before World War I the forty *mikvahs* on the Lower East Side had been condemned by city officials as a "menace" to health. Most were nothing more than "rusty tanks located in the basements of immigrant Jewish neighborhoods." But the modern Orthodox built model *mikvahs* that combined sanitation with ritual.[123]

English-language sermons became standard after World War I, and English prayers often supplemented Hebrew in Orthodox as well as in Conservative and Reform synagogues. Since organizational life was built around men's and women's clubs, rabbis encouraged women to participate more actively in the life of the community as well as to make a proper Orthodox home. Finally, Orthodox communities began to emphasize Jewish day schools and afternoon Hebrew schools. The day school, or yeshiva, "bore little resemblance to its predecessor" since it emphasized secular as much as religious education.[124]

All of these aspects of modern orthodoxy sought an accommodation with secular, middle class American culture. After World War II that accommodation would come under attack, this time from the refugees of the 1930s and survivors of the Holocaust who tended to be hostile toward modernity. Indeed, one European rabbi would declare in 1956 that there were three dangers to the development of a "pure and enduring orthodoxy." They were Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism, and the modern Orthodox.[125]

In a second study, Deborah Dash Moore notes that the Bronx's Grand Concourse "did not forget its Jewishness in the pursuit of middle-





class security."[126] Intense synagogue building among all the major branches of Judaism occurred during the 1920s, along with expansion of other Jewish organizations, such as the Jewish community centers and YMHAs. But the new synagogue centers became the main expression of the second generation. They contained athletic facilities and schools as well as sanctuaries for prayer. Jewish philanthropy, which had been the preserve of the wealthy German Jews, was reconstructed after the war into a modern communal-wide endeavor.[127]

The Italians of Mulberry Bend, Greenwich Village, and East Harlem also maintained a strong ethnic culture. Robert Orsi has described the *festa* of the Madonna of 115th Street in Italian East Harlem during these years as an intense expression of popular religion, a *festa* that was a "sacred theater of a community like Italian Harlem." After weeks of preparation, each July 16th the *festa* began in front of the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Thousands jammed the streets of this already overcrowded neighborhood to find security and meaning in the immigrant drama.[128]

Often Italian-American dramas were played out on the stage. During the interwar years dozens of Italian theater groups performed before thousands of their countrymen. One of the most famous was the Gennaro Gardenia Company, which lasted for more than forty years. These troupes offered Italian actors roles not available in the mainline Broadway theaters. Vincent Sardi, of the family that founded the famous Sardi's Restaurant in 1921, recalled that when he played a street urchin in a Broadway show in 1925, he was billed as the "Little Wop."[129]

In the years following World War I the Catholic church, though still dominated by Irish clergy under Patrick Cardinal Hayes, had some success in recruiting Italian women as nuns and employing them as teachers in Italian parish schools. It also recruited more Italian priests both from Italy and New York and built a number churches and schools in Italian neighborhoods.[130]

A surge of Irish immigration in the 1920s, numbering about 17,000, helped to invigorate the New York Irish community. Newcomers with musical talent had no trouble finding jobs in flourishing Irish bars, restaurants, and clubs. The development of radio gave them opportunities to perform before even larger Irish-American audiences. Irish sports were also popular; in 1928 the Gaelic Athletic Association began to build a stadium in the Bronx for Irish football and hurling.[131]

Among smaller groups ethnic culture also remained strong. The Norwegians of Brooklyn, originally part of a seamen's community, had declined in numbers, but during the 1920s a substantial Norwegian immigration provided reinforcements. Most Brooklyn Norwegians remained employed in the shipping and building trades. The tie to maritime industry held the community together as did Lutheran churches and *Nordisk Tidende* (Norse News), the leading Norwegian newspaper on the East Coast.[132] The Finns, who had followed Norwegians to Brooklyn and congregated in the Sunset Park section, also published a newspaper, *New York Utiset* (New York News). The small Finnish community maintained several women's organizations, a Finnish Aid Society, and several co-ops.[133]

The immigration restriction acts of the 1920s drastically cut southern and eastern European immigration, yet the WPA's *New York Panorama* of 1938 located many thriving neighborhoods of southern and eastern European background. It found about 80,000 Ukrainians, including 5,000 exiles from the Communist revolution in the Soviet Union who had settled in upper Manhattan in the early 1920s.[134]

New York City also contained the nation's largest number of Greeks, who lived in three different Manhattan neighborhoods. The city's Greeks operated a day school and supported several Greek Orthodox churches. Greeks, like Jews and Italians, maintained theatrical troupes and a variety of fraternal organizations.[135]

Among the other eastern Europeans were Romanians, Hungarians, Czechoslovaks, Slavs from Yugoslavia, Estonians, Lithuanians, and Letts. These groups supported restaurants, churches, day schools, bookstores, importing shops, and newspapers. Some newspapers like the Hungarian *Amerikai Magyar Nepszava* were published daily, while others appeared weekly. The Elore Hungarian Players provided a taste of Budapest theater in New York City.[136]

The continuity of strong ethnic neighborhoods and organizational life made the era appear one of contrasts. On the one hand greater opportunity for European immigrants gave them the chance to leave their ghettos and become ethnic Americans rather than immigrants. On the other hand, they did not feel totally American or wish to totally cut free from their roots, even if their children often did. The children especially looked forward to continued prosperity and a chance to achieve the American dream. After all, they lived in the town of Jimmy





Walker, who rose from the streets to dominate city hall. His world was, in biographer Tom Kessner's words, "the sparkling mecca of the polished rich."[137] It was the glittering world of the 1920s, with its high spending, titillating night life and wild speculation. Walker, the writer of the popular song "Will You Love Me In September as You Do in May?," was a stylish dresser with a show girl mistress, who in the eyes of many symbolized the times. That world died with the Great Depression. When the crash came in 1929, Walker quickly seemed sadly in over his head, unable to cope or reassure New Yorkers faced with a deteriorating economy.