

0. 1863 DRAFT RIOTS - Story Preface

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The North needed more soldiers to fight in America's Civil War, so Congress passed a Conscription Law in the summer of 1863. Riots erupted in New York City, protesting the law. This image, from an 1863 issue of *The Illustrated London News*, depicts a scene during those riots. Online via Wikimedia Commons.

New York City rioters rebelled against the Conscription Law in the summer of 1863. For nearly a week in July, lawlessness ruled the streets as draft opposition quickly gave way to gangs who joined forces to fight the establishment.

The "Dead Rabbits" united with their enemies, the "Bowery Boys," and other criminal elements to destroy buildings, defy the government, lynch blacks, burn bodies, take over the Second Avenue Armory, and generally sack the city. It is estimated that nearly three-quarters of the rioters were young men under the age of 20 who were not even eligible to be drafted.

Horace Greeley, who would run for President against U.S. Grant in 1872 and had initially supported draft opponents, was shocked when rioters attacked his Tribune newspaper building.

Even the militia could not stop the riots as the mob built barricades and refused to stand down:

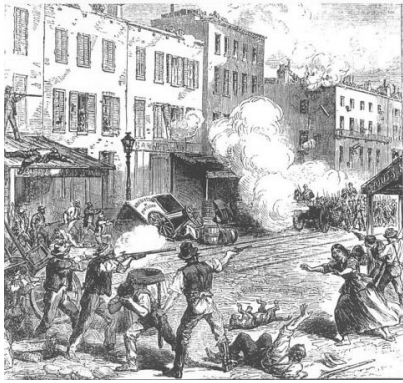
- Rioters dragged Colonel O'Brien's body through the streets.
- Dead bodies were sent to the morgue.
- Innocent children were not spared as the mob deliberately destroyed the "Colored Orphan Asylum" and murdered a hiding child.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/1863-DRAFT-RIOTS-Gangs-of-New-York>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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