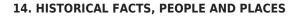
# HISTORICAL FACTS, PEOPLE AND PLACES



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New York City once had a lovely fresh-water pond, known as "The Collect," in what is now Lower Manhattan. This illustration depicts a wood engraving (created in 1913, by Philip Meeder) of an original work of art created by Charles E.H. Bonwill (sometime after 1836). The caption, of "The Collect, or Fresh-Water Pond," includes these words: "This beautiful pond, occupying the site of the present great gloomy pile of prison buildings known as The Tombs, was the scene in the summer of 1796 of the first trial of a steamboat with a screw propeller." It was reported that this small vessel, measuring 18 feet long and 6 feet wide, could reach the speed of six miles per hour. Online via New York Public Library's Photograph and Art Collection.

Other miscellaneous but important historical facts, highlighted hereafter, will help to put mid-19th century New York in context with the rest of the story.

#### 1863 FASHIONS

- <u>Fall fashions</u> for the wealthy worn a few months after the draft riots demonstrated the great divide between rich and poor.
- Wealthy women and their children wore much different "street" clothes than their poorer counterparts.

#### **NEW YORK SCENES IN THE 1860s**

- A lone <u>hay wagon</u> made its way through the city at the junction of Canal and Walker (near Centre Street).
- "Paisley Place," on 17th Street between 6th and 7th Avenues.
- Soldiers, fighting in the Civil War as volunteers, returned to the city for a rest.
- <u>Leaders</u> of Tammany Hall congregated at the Democratic Club Cafe.
- "The Tombs" 19th century New York's <u>Hall of Justice</u>, police <u>courts</u> and <u>infamous</u>, <u>foreboding</u>, "great <u>gloomy</u> <u>pile</u> of <u>prison</u> buildings" <u>located</u> at the edge of Five Points was <u>once</u> the lovely site of Collect Pond.

- The Court of Special Sessions, in "The Tombs," was a busy place.
- Chamber of New York's Board of Councilmen.
- The *Commodore Barney*, formerly a New York City <u>ferryboat</u> (commissioned in 1861), made her way on the James River in 1863.
- The Fulton Ferry was "built of iron in 1863."
- Opening night at Brougham's Theatre.
- Tammany Hotel, headquarters of the Democratic Party.
- Recruiting for the Civil War (as reported in the March 19, 1864 edition of Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper*), took place in New York City Hall Park in 1864, the year after the draft riots.

### ADDITIONAL GANGS FROM FIVE POINTS

### FORTY THIEVES

It is said that New York City's first gang was formed in the back room of <u>Rosanna Peers' grocery store</u> on Center Street, just south of what was then called Anthony Street. Because Rosanna sold liquor for less money than local saloons, her store became a gathering place for murderers, thieves, thugs and pickpockets (who often fought in their undershirts). Meeting in the store's back room, the Forty Thieves became the city's first organized gang in about 1825. Other gangs (like the Dead Rabbits - which was slang, at the time, for very rowdy and athletic young men) also had their roots in the grocery stores of Five Points.

#### THE PLUG UGLIES

To be a member of this <u>Five Points gang</u> - named for plug hats stuffed with rags, leather and wool - one had to be of Irish descent and at least six feet tall. During fights, the men wore their hats over their ears to protect themselves.

#### • EASTMAN GANG

As the 19th century neared its end, Jewish gangs - like <u>the Eastmans</u> - became dominant in Five Points. Hired as enforcers, these men bullied both labor unions and management during unrest in the early 1900s.

#### • THE FIVE POINTERS

As more Italian families immigrated to New York City, during the early 1900s, the nature of American gangs changed. <u>Paul Kelly</u> (Paolo Antonio Vacarelli) formed "The Five Pointers," a mixed-ethnic gang. Some of the most infamous American gangsters eventually came from The Five Pointers (or its affiliates, like the James Street Gang).

### • FAMOUS FIVE POINTERS

Some Five Pointers remain part of popular culture. <u>Johnny Torrio</u>, <u>Al Capone</u> and <u>Lucky Luciano</u> (the "<u>organizer</u>" of "<u>organized crime</u>" whose influence, and exploits, caused *TIME* to include him in the magazine's top 100

people of the 20th century) are featured characters in "Boardwalk Empire." So is <u>Meyer Lansky</u> (Luciano's friend who was <u>born in Russia</u> - as <u>Meyer Suchowljanski</u> - long <u>known as a genius</u> with <u>numbers</u>). Lansky's childhood friend, Bugsy Siegel, is remembered (among other things) for his role in Las Vegas casinos.

Today, a federal courthouse sits atop the old Five Points neighborhood. It is an ironic tribute to this small corner of the city which birthed so many Gangs of New York.

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

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HISTORICAL-FACTS-PEOPLE-AND-PLACES-Gangs-of-New-York

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HISTORICAL-FACTS-PEOPLE-AND-PLACES-Gangs-of-New-York

## Media Stream



## Johnny Torrio, Notorious Five Pointer

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons website.

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Johnny-Torrio-Notorious-Five-Pointer



### Meyer Lansky, Notorious Five Pointer

Mug shot of Lansky, Public Domain.

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### Lucky Luciano - Early Life

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## Lucky Luciano - Gang Member

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## Meyer Lansky - Friend of Lucky Luciano

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### Meyer Lansky - Chairman of the Board

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