



## Paddy Whacked: The Untold Story of the Irish American Gangster

*T.J. English*

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## **Paddy Whacked: The Untold Story of the Irish American Gangster** T.J. English

Here is the shocking true saga of the Irish American mob. In *Paddy Whacked*, bestselling author and organized crime expert T. J. English brings to life nearly two centuries of Irish American gangsterism, which spawned such unforgettable characters as Mike "King Mike" McDonald, Chicago's subterranean godfather; Big Bill Dwyer, New York's most notorious rumrunner during Prohibition; Mickey Featherstone, troubled Vietnam vet turned Westies gang leader; and James "Whitey" Bulger, the ruthless and untouchable Southie legend. Stretching from the earliest New York and New Orleans street wars through decades of bootlegging scams, union strikes, gang wars, and FBI investigations, *Paddy Whacked* is a riveting tour de force that restores the Irish American gangster to his rightful preeminent place in our criminal history -- and penetrates to the heart of the American experience.

## **Paddy Whacked: The Untold Story of the Irish American Gangster Details**

Date : Published February 21st 2006 by William Morrow Paperbacks (first published February 15th 2005)

ISBN : 9780060590031

Author : T.J. English

Format : Paperback 480 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Crime, True Crime, Mystery



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## **From Reader Review Paddy Whacked: The Untold Story of the Irish American Gangster for online ebook**

### **Jill Hutchinson says**

The sons of Erin depicted in this history of the Irish mob are some pretty nasty boyos. Immigrants flocked to the US to escape the horrible conditions in Ireland brought on by the potato famine and crowded into Boston, New Orleans, and NYC. Those with ambition had three options: politics, police, or crime, all of which were tied together by the close bond of Irish brotherhood. The author traces the careers of some of the most famous and dangerous of these gangsters who controlled the cities, state governments and eventually influenced national politics. It is a bloody and violent history where the wrong look or word usually resulted in a bullet through the head. The rise of the Italian Mafia began to erode the power of the Irish rule and finally brought about its demise. It is a riveting story which reveals the true place the Irish held in American criminal history.

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### **Dan Pepper says**

The Irish being the first of the major immigrant groups to the U.S. whose coming was a horror to the goddamn WASPs were also the first to perfect a criminal underworld as Americans and the first to perfect how to marry that with above ground power and organization to create the 19th century political machine. The great insight to be gained from this book is the fact that the distinctions between politics, organized crime and business were not as hard as we think of them today for most of this country's history. And that people developed and preferred that system for a reason, which was that the straight above ground system didn't take care of the people living under it. Ergo, criminals/politicians/businessmen filled the void.

Being the first, was ultimately not something that would last and the Irish basically became respectable to the extent that the Italians and Jews decided that the Irish had to be pushed out of organized crime because they were so prominent in public service and politics that it wasn't fair for them to get a piece of Prohibition era bootlegging, too. Hence, things like the St. Valentine Day's Massacre and a general sidelining of the Irish mobs, which only held on in a few neighborhoods much after World War II.

This is a book worth reading for the nicknames, from Old Smoke Morrissey, an early New York gangster/politician through Hinky Dink and Mad Dog and Bathhouse John and up to Whitey Bulger and his unholy alliance with the FBI. The story of Joe Kennedy making his lace-curtain Irish fortune into a massive one through becoming an intermediary bootlegging figure is fascinating, as is the speculation as to how that might have played into his son's assassination. (Certain mafia figures apparently claimed they'd had Kennedy killed after he hadn't been friendly to them as promised, but y'know mobsters.) The story of the FBI protecting Whitey Bulger as he murdered his way across South Boston is certainly a fine capper for the saga and a reminder that the FBI has been a baleful force oppressing Americans as often as not.

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### **Ken Avin says**

I really liked this book as it went through the history of how the Irish came to America to escape the Potato Famine and were treated as inferiors, even more so than blacks, and how this led to the formation of Irish

gangs in some of the Larger ports and cities in America. This book touches on Irish relations with Cosa Nostra and Jewish gangs, and also delves into the Irish involvement in the labour movements. The book ends with Whitey Bulger still being "at large", which now he has been captured; but its a great history on how events led to the end of the Irish mob in America.

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### **Rick says**

For all the acclaim it's received, I was very disappointed with this book. The general background on the Irish gangster seems well researched but when you get down to specifics the whole effort falls way short. Errors abound throughout (Bugs Moran was actually not Irish but the son of French-Canadian immigrants and Chicago's North Side mob could hardly be considered an Irish gang), fictional dialogue is employed throughout (thankfully sparingly), and the supposed long rivalry between Irish gangsters and Italian and Jewish mobs seems largely speculative and overblown. Where is the evidence for Owney Madden (English-born and far removed from his Irish ancestry) being pressured by the Italians and Jews to turn on his Irish mob brethren? The supposed alliance between Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll and Jack "Legs" Diamond was more newspaper speculation than anything else and English's theory that it constituted a possible Irish combine to rival the Italian-Jewish syndicate falls flat when one realizes that Coll's mob were mostly Italians and Diamond's was also ethnically mixed. And it's really a stretch connecting Joe Kennedy's early bootlegging ties to the JFK assassination which may or may not have been a Mob hit. All in all, it's an ambitious effort that still leaves a lot to be desired.

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### **Harry says**

Fascinating subject, tons of historically significant information (JFK, immigration, labor/unions, etc), and great insight into how several great US cities were formed or grew. Was written somewhat strangely, with a mix of straightforward reporting, contemporary slang, and ethnic slurs making it hard to determine when the author was editorializing and when they were just trying to mimic the speech patterns of the book's subject, and more spelling/grammatical errors than a published book should have, but otherwise, a really great, entertaining read.

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### **victor harris says**

Although it is the Italians who are typically associated with powerful organized crime syndicates in American urban areas, it was actually the Irish who established the template for such organizations. As early as the pre-Civil War, it was Irish gangsters who infiltrated the power structures in New York City. Among the earliest hailed from the infamous Five Points area as depicted in film. By later in the century they would be associated with the Tammany Hall political machine. Similar networks would become entrenched in other cities, most prominently Chicago and New Orleans. Later they would ally with then become rivals with high profile Italian gangster operations.

The historical narrative although somewhat uneven is reasonably well done, and there are many interesting biographical sketches of prominent figures like Mike McConnell. Unfortunately it also at times gets lost in the muddle of characters, names, and groups. Probably closer to a 3 1/2 rating but certainly worthwhile for those interested in both the roots of organized crime and a strand of the Irish political and social heritage.

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### **Michael Cullen says**

This was a well researched and well written book that follows what the author calls the "Irish Mob" in the United States from its beginnings in New York City's Five Points section. English follows it all the way through Prohibition to the demise of what were, arguably, the last two real "Irish Mobs" in America; The Westies of NYC and the Winter Hill Gang of Boston, eventually led by the still fugitive James "Whitey" Bulger.

He describes how Irish gangs came into being as a response to anti-Irish and anti-Catholic sentiment in the last half of the 19th and first few decades of the 20th Century, how they operated, grew and expanded into the famed political Tammany Hall-like political machines of the early 20th Century.

A very interesting book, particularly to those who, like me, are of Irish descent.

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### **Rho says**

Learned a lot especially about Joe Kennedy and his long time relationship with the Italian mob

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### **Mike says**

Some great tales in here, but the narration is deeply handicapped by grammatical errors, and worse than that, a ton of horseshit, recreated dialogue on the part of the author. This book could lose 70 pages easily, and be all the better for it.

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### **Jennifer says**

I read this book at the urging of a friend, who knows that i love all things irish... PaddyWhacked covers Irish gangs in America, from the 1800's mass immigration and the height of the Five Points (think "Gangs of New York"-- the book clarifies many of those characters), to the formation of the unions, the irish in local politics and how "the machine" worked, bootlegging and moonshining, interactions with the italian mafia, the rise of the Kennedys, the foundation of the FDNY, and all the way up to Jimmy Coonan and the Westies... which is a gang that still exists, depending on who you ask... I was fascinated...

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### **BAM The Bibliomaniac says**

True Crime Commemoration # 27

Setting:

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## Steve says

The focus of most true crime books is usually narrow, centering on a particular criminal and/or crime(s). *Paddy Whacked* is a different beast, much more ambitious, taking a healthy swipe at being something larger: a criminal history of a people and culture, starting in the mid-1800s, and coming up to the near present (2003). In this period, author T.J. English provides you with quite a few colorful characters, and mayhem galore. Given the nature of the subject, there's a healthy (but understandable) dose of hyperbole. Some of these guys escape any real history, because their activities are done largely in the shadows. English pretty much has to rely on stories and hunches. Still, the range is impressive, and often surprising. (For example, I was unaware that there was such a large Irish presence in New Orleans.) But basically the book focuses on the cities -- and the crimes, of New York, Chicago, Boston, and Cleveland (which was another surprise). The "hit list" is for the most part obvious: Owney Madden, Dean (not Dion) O'Banion, Legs Diamond, Bugs Moran, Whitey Bulger, etc. And that's all cool, but blood soaked stuff. However, the fascinating layering English adds to this Irish stew are the various characters that operate in a gray area where politics, law enforcement and crime sort of bleed into each other. Political fixers like Thomas Pendergrast (Kanas City), New York City mayor Jimmy Walker, union president Joe Ryan (See *On the Waterfront*), dirty FBI agent and Whitey Bulger enabler, John Connolly, and more, show a level of corruption that reaches well beyond the mean streets. It also often gave the Irish strength beyond their numbers.

Toward the end, I was more than a little put off by English's overly sympathetic portrayal of Mickey Featherstone, a psycho killer for the New York Irish gang called the "Westies." Featherstone, who is probably insane, had killed 3 people before he even joined a gang. But the courts kept putting him back on the street. By then he was ready for a criminal career that involved murder, cutting up bodies in bathtubs, drug dealing, etc. English however likes him, because Featherstone would eventually rat out the Westies. Take comfort knowing that Featherstone is out there somewhere in the Witness Protection Program.

On the other hand, and on the wild and crazy side, there's Cleveland mobster Danny Greene. In the 1970s, Greene, who liked to drive around in a big green car, and who fancied himself as some sort of mystical Celtic warrior, conducted a car bombing war with the Italian mob that was straight out of Beirut. They eventually got him, but not before he got a number of them. There's something almost comical (in a Coen brothers sort of way) about a gangster and his girlfriend picking their way out of his blown up house, unharmed, while on the back door, there's still an unexploded bomb that's even more powerful. The luck of the Irish -- on that day at least.

But the real bad guy is, and it does seem odd that I could single one out, given the large cast, is Whitey Bulger. Bulger was the model for Nicholson's character in *The Departed*, and who is still on the loose (at age 81). There's something about a guy strangling a young woman with his bare hands that moves Bulger beyond the other lunatics and crazy micks in English's book. Bulger, and his killing buddy, Steve Flemmi, reminded me more of the Hillside Stranglers. A couple of cold lizards. I hope they eventually catch this guy. He probably has some tales to tell about how the FBI (he was a confidential informant) enabled his years of carnage. All in all, a great read, and highly recommended.

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## Bill reilly says

Savage City is one of the best books that I've ever read. T.J. English's "Paddy Whacked" is just as good. The Irish-American writer begins with a brief history lesson, including the potato famine, which brought millions of Irish to America from 1845-1855. One million people starved to death in that ten year period. The anti-Catholic atmosphere resulted in clannishness necessary for survival. The Irish gangster was a natural outcome. The groups who were fighting the Brits in Ireland formed gangs in New York City and often fought each other. They also battled Native Americans who called them "nigger Irish." The first gangster profiled is John Morrissey, a bare fisted boxer and saloon owner. John took on the Know Nothings, a band of anti-Catholics who burned down churches. Their leader, Bill "the butcher" Poole was gunned down in 1865 by Morrissey's henchmen. Morrissey rose to political power in Tammany Hall and brought gambling and a race track to Saratoga Springs, NY. In New Orleans, canals were being dug by Irish men. Thousands died from yellow fever and cholera. Many Irish women ended up working in bordellos. It was better than starvation in Ireland. By the late 1800's, the police force was predominantly Irish-Catholic. Italian immigrants arrived in the city and Mafia factions battled for control of the shipping ports. The police were, like their counterparts in New York, mostly corrupt. Chicago had a similar story, with the Irish representing a large portion of both politics and law enforcement. In all the major cities, bars and bordellos flourished. The Volstead Act, in 1920, also known as Prohibition, led to a surge in home brewing of beer and bathtub gin. The first major bootlegger was Jim Dwyer, a New Yorker of Irish descent. He developed a sophisticated system of importing liquor from Canada and England and distributing it throughout the country. After a few high jackings, Dwyer hired the man responsible, an outlaw named Owney Madden, for protection. Madden grew up in NYC's Hell's Kitchen. The Big Apple alone had 32,000 speakeasies. The law was a joke, as almost everyone, from cops to judges, were on the take. Chicago's bootlegging operation was led by Dean O'Bannion. A rivalry with Italian mobsters over control of the lucrative underground industry resulted in a civil war between the two immigrant groups. Al Capone ordered a hit on O'Bannion. About 200 gangsters were killed between 1925 and 1929 during the Capone-O'Bannion wars. Ironically, Scarface's wife was an Irish girl from Brooklyn. Mad Dog Coll, Legs Diamond, and several other Irish gangsters were killed, mostly on orders from Luck Luciano. By the early 1930's, the Italians had taken over. Art imitated life in 1931, with the release of "Public Enemy." The movie was a hit and it made James Cagney a star. The actor had met Owney Madden at the Stork Club in the 1920's and absorbed his mannerisms to portray a criminal on the screen. Prohibition ended in 1933, and mobsters turned more towards gambling and drug distribution. The shipping ports were also controlled by organized crime. Joe Ryan was in charge of the longshoreman's union from 1927 to 1953. Father John Corridan fought against the mob at the NY and NJ piers. On The Waterfront was based on the waterfront priest. Karl Malden played him and Marlon Brando's name made the financing possible. And it is on to the most famous Irish American family, the Kennedy's. Joseph P had inherited some money and made even more through banking and the stock market. The Volstead Act provided the opportunity to expand his empire. After graduating from Harvard, Joe worked as a stock broker. He made deals with Al Capone and Owney Madden to sell whiskey imported from Canada. The author left out the name Bronfman (Seagram's). Kennedy made another fortune by insider trading in Hollywood. He left the movie business to help FDR in 1931. JFK was elected President in 1960, and Joe had used his connections in Chicago to deny Richard Nixon the White House. Bobby was named attorney general, against his father's wishes. RFK continued with his vendetta against organized crime. Payback was a bitch. Sam Giancana and Carlos Marcello had their revenge on November 22, 1963. Bobby blamed the guy from New Orleans, Marcello. The 1960's were a period of unending bloodshed between various Irish gangs in Boston. The most famous of the gangsters was Whitey Bulger. Several books have been written about him. Hell's Kitchen, in NYC, proved to be another breeding ground for Irish-American hoodlums. Mickey Spillane (not the author) and Mickey Featherstone were two of the better known ones. The latter Mickey returned from Vietnam completely psychotic. The neighborhood had a long history, dating back to the Civil War, of sending young Irish immigrants off to war. Adapting to civilian life was difficult for some of them. Featherstone worked for another crazy mick named Jimmy Coonan. Jimmy liked to cut up his murder victims into pieces and dump them into the river off Ward's Island. Oh my, when Irish eyes are smilin'! A short chapter on Danny Greene

is good. Danny boy was at war with Italians in Cleveland in the 1970's, where scores of bombings took place. He lived by the bomb and died by the bomb. A few years after this book was published, a great movie based on Greene's life was released, "Kill the Irishman." Mickey Featherstone and the Westies continued to fight with each other and the Italians. Mickey was convicted of murder and given a 25 to life sentence. The irony was that although he had killed several men, he was set up by fellow Westies for one he didn't commit. Mickey turned informer, and by 1988, it was the end of the Westies. John Gotti and the Italians gained control. Whitey Bulger also played both sides of the fence as an FBI informant and mob boss simultaneously. At least 19 hits were credited to Whitey. After 16 years on the run, Bulger was captured and is in prison. At 88, he is a true survivor. The book ends with a bang. Francis "the Irishman" Sheeran was filled with Catholic guilt and confessed several murders to a monsignor. A book was released a few months after Francis' death. The hit man admitted to killing both Joey Gallo and Jimmy Hoffa; awesome. "I heard you Paint Houses" is on my to-read list. T.J. English is one hell of a writer and Paddy Whacked is most definitely a good read.

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### **Scott Pomfret says**

Paddy Whacked is a superficial, somewhat sensationalized account of certain gangsters of Irish descent primarily in Chicago, New York and Boston. It covers (in virtually identical words) much of the material in another TJ English book called "Westies" which focuses on Irish mobsters on the West Side of New York (primarily Hell's Kitchen).

While English writes in an engaging style that moves the narrative along at a good clip, these chapters have the feel of smaller articles sewn together to create a book-length piece. There is much repetition, as if English doesn't expect his readers to retain what came before, and the focus is not so much on analysis of why as repeating gangland lore and quick retorts. English also lapses into awkward colloquialisms that sound pretty silly in an otherwise straightforward, grammatically correct account.

English is not out to glorify; in fact, he attacks the "Godfather" series as being responsible for a resurgence of organized crime. He is particularly focused on the 20th century, presumably because it was easier to find source material from that era, as opposed to the 19th century. Lastly, the book is really about organized crime and the unholy trinity of corrupt politicians, law men on the take, and brutal thugs. He spends less time on other colorful Irish crooks who were not part of gangs but operated more independently, like certain brothel owners in New Orleans.

In any event, this was a breezy read without much depth that desperately needs updating for the capture and death of Whitey Bulger (it was published while he was still on the lam). If you are looking for an understanding of the social forces that drove Irish crime generally or the Irish mob specifically, or the psychological drivers of any of the main gangsters, this book is not going to satisfy.

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### **Carmaletta Hilton says**

The actual content was very interesting, but the manner in which it was given was lacking. In the first half of the book, English proved that he was definitely not a biased journalist. He wasn't just giving us a history. He was telling us the story of his heroes. English looked up to these guys so much that he even tried to make Mad Dog Coll look sympathetic. When he wasn't extolling the greatness of these early Irish criminals, he

was making sure to tell us how much greater they really were than the Italians. It was like he was writing the Irish answer to The Godfather, except Puzo's fare was fiction, and English's book is biased reality. It wasn't until he reached more current Irish mobsters that English lost his tone of hero worship. Instead, there was a sense of disgust at what the Irish gangster had turned into.

The actual stories of the mobsters was enough to push it up to a 3 stars, but deep down, I really feel like it only deserved 2.5 stars. This definitely wasn't a quick read for me. Every time English felt the need to throw in a big "Ha! This is why the Irish mobsters were better than the Italian mobsters," I put the book down for at least a day. I still find the Irish mob interesting, so I may go looking for a book a little less biased. If you want to read a romanticized tale of the early Irish mob, then this book is for you. If you just want to know what happened without the author trying to make you feel sympathetic toward them, then find something else.

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