

My grandfather is a storyteller. He enjoys sitting down with all four of his grandchildren and setting off into a world full of stories, some fiction, some not (though those that aren't, tend to still be a bit exaggerated). One of the many stories that my grandfather would tell me when I was younger started off with his father, John P. Tuffey, and how he was the Chief of Police in Albany. He would sit down with me on his lap and say: "Did you know that if you went into Albany right now, and told them that your last name was Tuffey, they would recognize the name and bring up my father, your great grandfather?" I could hear the pride swelling in his voice and the glimmer in his eyes when he talked about his father. It was a common story - many Irish immigrants in the mid 1900s were cops - but this was his history, and he was proud to tell it. I would nod and smile, because I thought it was cool that my family had a legacy in the police force, but as I got older I started to question the all-around goodness of the story. We hear so often about police brutality and middle aged white men taking advantage of the law, that I started to wonder whether I should be proud of having family members in such high ranking roles of the police force. Of course I know that law enforcement is necessary; it was created in our country for a reason, even if that reason has been slightly corrupted in our modern society. In the United States, police officers have always had a major role in culture, whether it was positive or negative. The police badge that you see in front of you has many meanings for my family and I, but the biggest is that it shows overcoming our struggle, and how far our family has come.

My great - great grandparents came to America from Ireland at the turn of the 19th century. They settled in Albany and immediately my great - great grandfather, Patrick Tuffey, got a job in the police force, which was unusually good for an Irishman at the time. My great - great grandparents narrowly escaped all of the prejudice directed at Irish immigrants when an influx of Irish people started immigrating to America due to the potato famine. When my family arrived in America, Irish immigrants were starting to climb the political ladder, and becoming more popular in American society. Since there was not as much prejudice against Irish individuals at this point in time, there were many more opportunities. John P. Tuffey was able to graduate from high school and went to one year of business college. From there, he decided to follow in his father's footsteps and become a police officer. He joined the police force at some point in the early 1930s and met my great grandmother, Bertha Kazlauskas, shortly after. They had three kids. During that time, John was still a police officer but he didn't really start to rise in the ranks until he helped solve the O'Connell kidnapping, a case concerning a young boy who went missing. By being a good cop and taking down some license plate numbers when he thought something seemed fishy, John was able to help trace down the kidnappers. Although it took months before they actually caught the guys, John helped them take the first steps. Soon after, he went from nightwatch cop to Detective, Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief and then the Chief of Police. My grandfather recalls getting the most attention from John because he became the Chief of Police when my grandfather was in the third or fourth grade. My grandfather tells me he remembers visiting his father's office, and how the other cops at the precinct would take them through and show them the jail cells, and fingerprint and photograph them. One of the other memories that stood out to my grandfather was how John would never ask someone to do what he wouldn't do himself. Once, a woman called a crime in and when the cop arrived to check it out he was captured and held at gunpoint. John and seven other cops went to bust down the door, and John was the first one through, even though he could have asked any number of cops to do it.

What makes the badge all the more impactful to our family history is that John's family was Irish, and in the 19th century Irish immigrants were treated very poorly. In 1945 the potato famine began, which

forced many Irish people to immigrate to America so they would have enough food to survive. However, the potato famine wasn't the only reason they left. "British laws had deprived Ireland's Catholics of their rights to worship, vote, speak their language and own land, horses and guns" (Klein 2017)).

Unfortunately, the reason why they left was also the reason they faced such prejudice in America. Irish immigrants were called monkeys, they were kept from having good careers, and most ended up working in dangerous, low paying jobs (Ibid.). In many political cartoons from the 19th century, you will see that Irish people are depicted to have big ears and hairy arms and legs. The main reason for this was that they were Catholic, and many of the people who already lived in America were Protestant. My great great grandparents were lucky enough to come and find a welcoming society but many weren't as lucky. When they came to America at the turn of the century, a big change was happening, and a rather strange one. Many Irish folks were becoming cops. Since there was a big population of Irish immigrants, "Democratic Party leaders quickly found that it was a good idea to seek their votes" (Gershon 2017). Even though many Americans thought that Irish immigrants were the roots of all the crime, they gained power and voice. Along with that power and voice, they got jobs.

Times were changing when John Tuffey became a police officer. "The 1960s saw another wave of widespread organizing for greater economic and social justice: Civil rights, women's rights, ending the Vietnam war, environmental protections, and expanded rights for people with disabilities and for gays and lesbians" (McDermott 2017). Tensions were still high because the Cold War was in the midst of happening. It wasn't an easy time to be a cop. The police force was created so it could enforce the law upon the citizens of America. At times, this job was corrupted because of factors like organized crime and cops wanting the power and influence that came from the job, but not the duty. "By the mid-1960s police officers had responded with an aggressive and widespread police unionization campaign. Aided by court rulings more favorable to the organizing of public employees; fueled by resentment of the authoritarian organization of departments; and united in a common resistance to increasing charges of police brutality, corruption and other forms of misconduct, nearly every large-city police department had been unionized by the early 1970s" (The History of Policing in the United States). Because of cops like John, police precincts were able to have fewer corruption cases and continue the work that they were meant to be doing.

In the process of writing this paper, I researched times in history that I wouldn't have thought to research about. You think that you know everything about the 1900s, and then an opportunity like this project comes up. Whenever my grandfather starts a story about his family history, I listen and take in some of the information, but this assignment really made me think about the stories in a different way. This project also forced me to call up my grandfather which I don't normally do, and it was really nice hearing all this information in a different light. Over the summer, my grandparents were hosting the annual Tuffey Reunion and one of my grandfather's cousins came up to him and handed him a manila envelope. Apparently over the last couple years she had been researching their history, further back than I could ever imagine and had dug up some pretty interesting facts about their history. It's amazing what we can find in our past if we truly look for it.

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