

The Rise of the

Chicago Police Department

Class and Conflict, 1850-1894

Sam Mitrani

THE WORKING CLASS IN AMERICAN HISTORY



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CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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SAM MITRANI

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS
URBANA, CHICAGO, AND SPRINGFIELD

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C 5 4 3 2 1

∞ This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mitrani, Sam.

The rise of the Chicago Police Department : class and conflict,
1850-1894 / Sam Mitrani.

pages cm. — (Working class in American history)

Summary: "In this book, Sam Mitrani cogently examines the
making of the police department in Chicago, which by the late
1800s had grown into the most violent, turbulent city in America.

Chicago was roiling with political and economic conflict, much
of it rooted in class tensions, and the city's lawmakers and
business elite fostered the growth of a professional municipal
police force to protect capitalism, its assets, and their own
positions in society. Together with city policymakers, the
business elite united behind an ideology of order that would
simultaneously justify the police force's existence and dictate
its functions. Tracing the Chicago police department's growth
through events such as the 1855 Lager Beer riot, the Civil War,
the May Day strikes, the 1877 railroad workers strike and riot,
and the Haymarket violence in 1886, Mitrani demonstrates that
this ideology of order both succeeded and failed in its aims.

Recasting late nineteenth-century Chicago in terms of the
struggle over order, this insightful history uncovers the modern
police department's role in reconciling democracy with industrial
capitalism. "— Provided by publisher.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-252-03806-8 (hardback)

ISBN 978-0-252-09533-7 (ebook)

1. Chicago (Ill.). Police Department—History. 2. Police—
Illinois—Chicago—History. 3. Law enforcement—Illinois—
Chicago. I. Title.

HV8148.C4M58 2013

63.209773'1109034—dc23 2013020895

To All My Parents and Grandparents

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book owes an enormous intellectual debt to those historians who have already written the history of Chicago and its class relations, especially Richard Schneirov and John Jentz. Their excellent work informed the questions and underlying analysis of this book.

I would also like to especially thank Richard John. He provided firm guidance when necessary, and let me find my own way when that was more useful. Leon Fink, Michael Perman, Perry Duis, and Amy Dru Stanley gave necessary insights and crucial support.

A number of colleagues also provided important help along the way, especially John Flores, Joey Lipari, Anne Parsons, John Rosen, Mohan Sing, and Benn Williams.

I also received excellent and timely advice and criticism from Laurie Matheson, James Barrett, and my anonymous readers through the University of Illinois Press. I would like to thank the rest of the University of Illinois Press staff, and also Deborah Oliver for her careful reading of the manuscript.

Finally, this project would not have been possible without the help and support of my wonderful family, especially Karen Swan and Yeti Mitrani, who read the manuscript at critical stages, and Juanita "Sugar" Del Toro and Peanut Del Toro, who loved, supported, and advised me throughout.

INTRODUCTION

On August 26, 1765, a crowd holding him responsible for the Stamp Act attacked the Boston home of Massachusetts lieutenant governor and chief justice Thomas Hutchinson. The attackers spent the entire night sacking Hutchinson's mansion, carrying off his valuables, and using axes to dismantle the wooden portions of the building. Hutchinson and his family fled and survived without bodily harm, but his home was largely destroyed. As the rioters worked throughout the night dismantling Hutchinson's house and looting his possessions, no forces of order arrived to eject them or to protect the property of this powerful and wealthy man. Hutchinson and his family fled to protect their lives, but not to summon police or militia to save their home.¹

This incident from the early stage of the American Revolution might seem a strange opening for a history of the Chicago Police Department, which was not formed until almost ninety years later, but it illustrates a basic fact of colonial and early American life: the police simply did not exist. Armies, courts, sheriffs, and armed militias were common enough, but neither the northern colonies nor the early republic built police departments. In the major disturbances of the revolutionary and early republican period, crowds instead confronted other types of armed forces. A Boston mob confronted the British army during the Boston Massacre. Daniel Shays's compatriots took over courthouses and fought the state militia. Whiskey rebels in the 1790s also stopped court proceedings and confronted federal marshals, state militia, and army units, but no police. By the 1830s and 1840s, various forms of disorder had become the norm in U.S. cities.² Throughout the 1830s, Whigs and Democrats rioted regularly during election seasons.³ Working people took over the streets of Philadelphia at Christmas and reveled in the violent inversion of social norms with no force to stop them.⁴ Abolitionists and free black workers faced riotous mobs throughout the north, let alone the south,

and workingmen's strikes and political demonstrations often became riotous by later standards.⁵ Part of the reason that disorder became so prevalent in the 1830s and 1840s was that no U.S. city possessed an institution that modern observers would recognize as a police force. Even as late as 1849, the Astor Place rioters of New York easily overwhelmed the nascent city police and were only put down by the state militia.⁶

In fact, the development of police forces marked something entirely new in human history. Since the first civilizations, the maintenance of order was embedded within the economic and social organizations of society. The modern idea that economics, politics, and family life can be separated did not apply to any society before the development of capitalism. As Moses Finley points out, between Xenophon's *Oikonomikos* in fourth-century BCE Athens and Francis Hutcheson's 1742 work, *Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, Western thinkers considered production, trade, the maintenance of order, and family relations as inextricably bound responsibilities of local elites. In ancient Greece and Rome, the head of the household had power and responsibility over all the objects and people in that household, including children and slaves.⁷ Big slave rebellions like the Spartacus revolt in the 70s BCE faced Roman legions, not local police. Similarly, a feudal lord was not just a rent collector. He was also the local representative of state power. In England this evolved into the system of justices of the peace. King Richard I commissioned knights to maintain order in restive areas in 1195, and by 1361 King Edward III instructed that "good and lawful men" be appointed in each county to keep order. These men were not organized into a bureaucracy commanded by the king. Rather, they were local elites given the authority to keep order as part of their overall position in society. Until the nineteenth century, the justices of the peace had a variety of responsibilities, including fixing wages, building roads and bridges, and administering poor relief. They were not paid because "for centuries most JPs were well-to-do landowners who would not bother about 'expense accounts.'"⁸

The American colonies inherited this system and continued to adapt it until the 1840s. When necessary, locally elected part-time constables raised posses or called on volunteer militias, but these groups did not regularly patrol the streets. These constables were part of a broader paternalistic system of social control inherited from the colonial era. They did not resemble the police departments of a later era, and cities did not distinguish between the authority of these part-time lawmen and other municipal officials, such as the mayor or the aldermen.

Then, between the 1840s and the end of the 1880s, every major northern city built a substantial police force.⁹ These new police departments were dis-

ciplined, bureaucratic, organized on military lines, and capable of patrolling entire cities. They were in many ways the standing armies that the founding fathers feared. Twelve hundred Chicago policemen at the end of the 1880s is a small number compared with big-city police departments in the twentieth century. At the end of 2010, the Chicago Police Department had 13,857 employees for a city less than three times as populous as the Chicago of 1890.¹⁰ In other words, Chicago today has more than four times as many police officers per person as in 1890. Still, the 1890 police department dwarfed any force designed to control the northern population before the Civil War, both in terms of manpower and organizational capabilities. If a mob had assaulted the house of a leading Chicago citizen in 1890, such as had occurred at the house of Thomas Hutchinson in Boston in 1765, a massive armed force of policemen would have immediately set upon it.

Why did cities rush to build police departments in such a short period of time, when they had failed to do so earlier? The most basic answer is that the leading businessmen who dominated both urban economies and their politics pushed city governments to build powerful armed institutions that could defend their property and their interests from the new threats that accompanied the development of a wage labor economy. Chicago built its police department to maintain order while it grew from a minor outpost in the west to the nation's second largest city. But the city did not simply create the police because it became too big. While it grew, Chicago's economy also changed dramatically. In 1850, petty proprietors formed the basis of the city's economy and the wealthiest Chicagoans were merchants and land speculators. By 1890, Chicago had an industrial, wage labor economy.¹¹ This transformation caused a series of crises that forced Chicago's economic and political elite to create the police department. First, it led to a massive immigration of wage workers who settled in the cities instead of moving out into the countryside, as had earlier immigrants. Then workers sought to improve their situation through increasingly threatening strikes and riots. Businessmen responded to these crises in many ways, but the single most important was the creation of powerful armed forces that could protect the constituted order.

This interpretation has deep implications for our understandings of the development of the American state and the limits of democracy. Over time, police departments developed professional leaderships that removed the crucial aspects of police policy from politics and portrayed their activities as a politically neutral municipal service. By the end of the nineteenth century, electoral influence over the police was largely confined to the margins. Questions like police corruption and whether or not to enforce temperance

regulations dominated political discussions of the police, while the deeper question of whether or not municipalities should maintain massive organizations of armed men to enforce order on the population was effectively removed from the political debate. This allowed police departments, along with allied institutions such as state militias, to use violence to reconcile democratic politics with the deeply exploitative industrial capitalist order that developed in late-nineteenth-century cities, including Chicago. As Richard Bensele has pointed out, the United States was the only country to remain a democracy with a high degree of popular participation in elections while it industrialized.¹² This was possible in large measure because police departments acted outside the immediate control of those elections and protected the extant political and economic system from the real threat posed by the new working class.

The development of police forces also raised the stakes for debates over government policy. The police are, in the last analysis, an organization aimed at forcing people to do things they would not do voluntarily. Once such a force existed, government acquired the possibility of assuming an entirely new role in reshaping society. This first manifested itself in the fight over regulating drinking, but it also opened the possibility for a whole series of progressive reforms. In this way, it made the struggle between parties potentially much more significant, especially on the local level. It also gave the courts a whole new enforcement mechanism. The antilabor injunctions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that played such a big role in limiting the labor movement, for instance, were only relevant because bodies of armed men, police, state militias, and the U.S. Army, enforced them.¹³ Once police departments had been built, the potential power of those directing them increased exponentially.

At the same time, police departments made possible a large expansion of municipal patronage. In this way, their development went hand in hand with the growth of urban political machines based on patronage politics. These machines also helped keep order by integrating a section of the working-class population directly into the order-keeping apparatus. This aspect of police departments ran counter to the desire of reformers to create bureaucratic, efficient forces that could implement unpopular regulations, like temperance. From the very beginning, bureaucratic-style reformers clashed with more pluralistic patronage bosses. Both models of policing, however, relied on the newly built departments to maintain order among wage workers and the unemployed in the vast new cities of the late nineteenth century. They received support from various, often contending, sections of the elite. But these divisions represented, at base, different policies aimed at achieving the same end.

This book is a case study of the Chicago Police Department, but Chicago was not unique. By the late nineteenth century, police were so ubiquitous that even contemporary observers forgot how recent an invention they were. Chicago does not serve as a representative case since it was certainly a unique city in the nineteenth century. But because Chicago grew so spectacularly in so short a time, it illustrates in the most dramatic fashion the process by which a nation historically lacking permanent, specialized armed bodies of men created large bureaucratic military-style institutions aimed at controlling the population in every major city.

During the late nineteenth century, Chicago was the most violent, turbulent city in the country. It was the city in which the crises accompanying industrialization and the development of a wage labor economy reached their most threatening peak. From the Lager Beer riot of 1855, through the Civil War, the 1867 strikes for the eight-hour workday, the 1871 fire, the 1877 strike and riot, the May Day strikes and the Haymarket bombing, and the Pullman strike, Chicago was roiled with political and economic conflict. Other cities faced similar disturbances, but no other city experienced so many crises with such intensity. In his recent environmental history of industrialization, Harold Platt calls Chicago a “shock city,” and this was as true for the social fabric of urban life as for its environment.¹⁴

Chicago’s lawmakers had to overcome many serious obstacles in order to build a force that could protect the constituted economic and political order. The United States had little military precedent for instilling large numbers of men with the necessary discipline, esprit de corps, and physical power. Also, before the late nineteenth century, municipalities had very limited tax resources. Creating a police department was expensive, but creating an adequately paid, professional department cost even more. The less policemen were paid, the greater their incentive for corruption and the less likely they were to feel allegiance to the force. To be effective, the police also needed horses, station houses, telegraph systems, uniforms, and weapons. Wealthy citizens could be convinced to tax themselves and pay for all of these things only if they felt that the police protected their vital interests.

To help solve these difficulties, advocates of the expansion of the police developed a concept of order as a central political ideology. This concept reinforced police legitimacy among the entire population of the city, defined the role of policemen in municipal affairs, and fit with the broader push for order of all types, including moral order, business order, and social order, in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ To maintain order, the police first of all protected property and suppressed street disturbances. They also arrested thousands of people for drunk and disorderly behavior and

attempted to control the behavior of prostitutes. On the margins, groups of immigrants, religious leaders, businessmen, unions, and anarchists hotly contested what counted as “disorderly.” Was drinking on Sunday a threat to order? Were peaceful union meetings? Riots were clearly a threat to order, but were anarchist meetings at which peaceful speakers denounced the behavior of the police? What about picketing to enforce a strike? The slipperiness of the concept of order allowed it to serve as a legitimating ideology for people with radically different political goals and positions in society. By the 1880s, this ideology of order shaped both the behavior of the police and a significant portion of municipal politics to such an extent that the entire history of Chicago in the late nineteenth century can be recast as a struggle over order.

The law was essentially irrelevant to police behavior. The police received no legal training, and they mostly charged those they arrested with broadly defined offenses such as “disorderly conduct.”¹⁶ The police justices who tried most arrestees also received no legal training, and the police ignored many laws on the books. They did enforce city ordinances, but the police superintendent and the mayor decided which ordinances the police would enforce and which they would ignore. In some cases, such as the repression of the anarchists after Haymarket, the police chose its course of action for political reasons and found a legal justification later. In addition, when lawmakers tried to increase their legal reach by regulating such diverse behaviors as wooden construction, skinny-dipping, and roller-skating, the effects of these regulations were determined by the department’s organizational capabilities, rather than the desires of the mayor or city council. For this reason, those who set police policy, including mayors, police commissioners, extralegal organizations of businessmen, and the police leadership itself, had much more power over the department than those who wrote and interpreted the laws, including the city council and judiciary. These policy-making organizations figure much more prominently in the story of police development than the legal system.

Chicago’s business class grew in wealth and power and politically consolidated itself at the same time that it spurred the city to build the police department. From its early days, Chicago possessed a clearly defined elite of native-born “Yankee” Protestants who dominated business, politics, and the major professions and played the leading role in pushing the city to build its police force. This elite came west in the 1830s and 1840s mostly from New York and New England. It retained close ties to the East Coast, both culturally and economically, and its members considered themselves part of the national elite. As numerous nineteenth-century observers pointed out,

Chicago's elite included a disproportionate number of "self-made men" and a small proportion of what British journalist William Stead called the "disreputable" idle rich.¹⁷ The elite tended to adopt the viewpoints that anyone could make it in the modern city and that poverty and disorder resulted from the moral failings of the poor or the cultural baggage of European immigrants. They were particularly concerned with limiting charity to only the "deserving poor." This elite was conscious of itself from the city's beginning, but as it grew in size, wealth, and power, it increasingly organized itself into a clearly defined class with its own organizations and political agenda. Historian Frederick Jaher identifies ninety-three capitalists, lawyers, and politicians who dominated the city in the antebellum period. The early elite included families like the Kinzies, who were regional agents for John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company. The Kinzie family produced the first sheriff of Cook County, James, and the first president of the Village of Chicago, John H. These brothers also worked as real-estate speculators, insurance agents, auctioneers, and bankers. Another example is William Ogden, who became the town's first mayor and was also the foremost investor in real estate, a banker, lumber company owner, director of the Chicago Board of Trade, and a financier of agricultural machinery magnate Cyrus McCormick.¹⁸

Throughout the antebellum period, members of Chicago's elite had diverse business interests and also dominated politics. From 1837 to 1868, seventeen of the nineteen mayors were prominent businessmen. Most had a variety of commercial interests, including Levi Boone, Thomas Dyer, and John Wentworth, all of whom played important roles in the early development of the police department.¹⁹ By 1870, the richest 20 percent of Chicago families controlled about 90 percent of the city's wealth, and almost all of them were native born. The poorest half, meanwhile, possessed less than 1 percent.²⁰

Between the Civil War and 1890, Chicago experienced the most rapid population and economic growth of any city in the history of the world to that point, which produced a new, more powerful elite as well as extreme strains on the preexisting political system. The city quickly became the second largest in the United States and the center of the transportation system. It became the second center of commerce in the country with the development of an extensive wholesale commodity trade as well as dry-goods retailing. It also grew to have an enormous and diversified manufacturing economy that produced everything from meat to railcars. This growth was dominated by a larger elite dominated by a few men with enormous fortunes. By 1892, Chicago was home to 278 millionaires, but a small number stood above the rest. Stead identified meatpacking magnate Philip Armour, department store

merchant Marshall Field, and railroad car manufacturer George Pullman as “the Chicagoan trinity” of millionaires in 1893.²¹ To this group must be added real-estate tycoon Potter Palmer, dry-goods merchant John V. Farwell (at least in the early period), Marshall Field’s partner Levi Leiter, agricultural implements manufacturer Cyrus McCormick, and iron pipe and machine manufacturer Richard Teller Crane. These were only the most prominent among a large group of extremely wealthy men who dominated business and politics in Chicago. They knew one another; worked together on the boards of Chicago banks, brokerage houses, and insurance firms; speculated together in real estate and grain; and ran the city’s charitable organizations, including the Relief and Aid Society, the Chicago Historical Society, and the YMCA.²²

The city’s middle-class, working-class, and poor populations are much harder to delineate clearly, though the economic, political, and cultural definitions of these groups were key to the development of the police. This is partially because the nature of the working population changed dramatically over the period of this study. On one side, Chicago always possessed a large number of very small businessmen who operated stores, saloons, small workshops, and other establishments. This traditional middle class generally wanted to protect order, but some of its members, especially saloonkeepers in the immigrant neighborhoods, were also closely tied to the wage workers they served. As the city became a business center, it also experienced a consequent growth in white-collar workers who were more likely to identify with their employers. The number of wage workers grew steadily, first in the primary goods processing industries and transport, then increasingly in the various branches of manufacturing. As the city was constantly expanding, many people also worked in construction and in the brickyards. Over time, the proportion of wage workers employed by large firms such as the railroads, factories, and lumberyards increased, while that employed by small firms or individuals declined, though the number continued to grow in absolute terms. On the other side of the working class, Chicago possessed an ever-present layer of people who worked occasionally, worked in the illicit economy, or did not work at all: prostitutes, hustlers, gambling operators, and the chronically unemployed.²³

Equally important, Chicagoans’ perception of class changed dramatically over this period, and this changing perception helped create the fear of disorder among the elite that drove police development. Before the Civil War, Chicagoans generally shared the free-labor ideology of much of the rest of the north, though they did not agree on exactly what “free labor” meant. This ideology drew no hard line between wage workers and small proprietors,

and it lauded labor as the means to acquire wealth. The free-labor ideology assumed that young men might work for wages during part of their lives, but would eventually acquire their own farm or shop. U.S. senator Zachariah Chandler described this cycle thus: "A young man goes out to service—to labor if you please to call it so—for compensation until he acquires money enough to buy a farm . . . and soon he becomes himself the employer of labor."²⁴ In the antebellum period, this ideology reflected one aspect of the social and economic reality of an economy dominated by very small producers and with a large degree of upward mobility, particularly in the west. But from the 1850s on, and at an accelerating pace after the Civil War, this ideology did not capture the social reality of cities, including Chicago. Increasing numbers of young people found themselves stuck as wage laborers, with little possibility of securing the economic independence so central to antebellum free labor ideology. This caused an ideological crisis along with a material one.²⁵

Chicagoans seeking to explain these phenomena came up with a variety of answers. Wealthy and many middle-class residents blamed the poor for their inability to follow in the footsteps of their betters: they drank too much, failed to work industriously enough, or lacked the proper morals for success. Wealthy Chicagoans often blamed immigrants for failing to adapt to American ways.²⁶ This response to the failure of free-labor ideology drove much of the elite's attempt to regulate working-class behavior. On the other side, many trade unionists, Knights of Labor activists, socialists, and anarchists blamed the monopoly of wealth and power exercised by the elite for the fate of the working class.²⁷ Their increasingly strident critique of industrial capitalism and the wage system also pushed the elite to turn toward the police to protect the established order. A whole range of intermediate positions flourished, with many skilled workers and small businesspeople clinging to some version of the older conception of free labor.²⁸ The increasing perception of permanent class divisions and the variety of political reactions to those divisions drove the development of the police department as much as the abstract conception of order.

The development of a wage labor economy and widening class divisions were accompanied by a dramatic change in the ethnic makeup of large northern cities, among them Chicago, which possessed a majority immigrant population for most of the nineteenth century. Chicago's class divisions correlated with the city's ethnic makeup, but not precisely. The native born comprised the bulk of the city's elite, but as time went on, some immigrants and their children joined it. Many native-born Chicagoans also worked as skilled laborers, and some fell into poverty. Notable among immigrants were

Germans, who fanned across the socioeconomic classes: by the late 1870s, there were prominent German businessmen active in the main civic organizations of the elite, large numbers of German small-property owners, many German wage workers, and some extremely poor Germans. Many Germans also served on the police force in all ranks from superintendent to patrolman. The German population also became increasingly divided politically as nativism declined and class questions came to the fore.²⁹ The Irish population was generally poorer than the German and formed a larger share of the city's unskilled wage workers and a smaller share of its businessmen, but it was also divided along class lines. The Irish figured especially prominently in arrest records, especially in the early years of the department, out of all proportion to their share of the city's population. Throughout this period, the Irish never accounted for more than 20 percent of the city's population, but they accounted for as many as two-thirds of all arrests.³⁰ The Irish share of arrests declined throughout the nineteenth century, as their share in the police department increased. In fact, integration into the ranks of the police department through patronage politics was probably one of the most important ways that Irish immigrants were turned away from radical politics.

Irish and German Chicagoans also brought their own political ideas to the city, though in both cases immigrants arrived with a range of ideas that led to clashes among people sharing the same ethnic backgrounds.³¹ A large portion of the city's Germans tended to vote Republican, while the Irish tended to vote Democrat, but those generalities do not hold well throughout the late nineteenth century. Germans became important businessmen and members of the Republican Party, but they also brought anarchist and socialist ideas to the city. Irish immigrants eventually became prominent within the Democratic Party machine, formed their own state militia, and joined the police force in large numbers, but some Irish nationalists in Chicago echoed the violent rhetoric of German anarchists, and planned invasions of Canada and dynamite attacks on London from Chicago.³²

The police department was also internally divided along class and ethnic lines. In its early years, native-born Protestants dominated the ranks of the department, but this made controlling a working class composed largely of Irish Catholics and Catholic and Protestant Germans even more difficult. In part because the elite of all shades recognized this difficulty, and also because the Irish in particular organized politically and secured employment from all branches of the city government through patronage, the police department became increasingly composed of immigrants. Nonetheless, it was always commanded by men with close ties to the city's leading businessmen and poli-

ticians, who often had considerable experience within the department and, after the Civil War, in the army. Patrolmen, on the other hand, were largely drawn from the city's working class. They were poorly paid and expected to work long, dangerous hours, like other workers in the city. They also faced considerable pressures from their commanders to carry out unenviable or in some cases impossible tasks and to accept reduced compensation in times of economic crisis.

The ordinary policemen, however, were not ordinary workers. Their relationship with the rest of the city's working class was contradictory. On the one hand, as historian Erik Monkkonen points out, a large portion of what he calls "class control" carried out by the police force consisted of activities that social service organizations would later assume.³³ The police lodged "tramps" in station houses, returned lost children to their parents, controlled stray dogs, enforced health and building codes, picked up dead horses, and even provided first aid to injured people. The police were never very effective at controlling crime, but they provided other useful services. More importantly, however, they were charged with maintaining order among the rest of the working class, and with deploying force to do so. They did this daily, largely by arresting people for drunkenness, disorderly conduct, or prostitution. Most of those they arrested worked for wages and came from the poorer layers of society. At other times, the police intervened in large numbers to put down riots or break strikes. While these were not daily occurrences, they took place often enough throughout the late nineteenth century to remain in the forefront of the popular perception of the role of the police. Both of these types of activity set policemen off from the rest of the city's population. They engendered resentment among the policed and disdain for ordinary people among the police. Thus, while the police were wage workers themselves in the sense that they were largely drawn from the working class and were paid wages to carry out often difficult work, they were separated from the rest of the working population because they regularly deployed violence against that population. The social separation between the police and the rest of the city encouraged the development of a specific police ideology that included many of the free-labor ideas of the elite, but also included a deeply pessimistic view of human nature.³⁴

The police department was also a distinctly male institution. Throughout the nineteenth century, every member of the police department was male, as was every city councilman or mayor who directly influenced police policy. The elite institutions built starting in the 1870s were also exclusively male. Some working-class organizations included women, notably the Knights of

Labor and the International Working People's Association, but they were still generally led by men.³⁵ Men also constituted the overwhelming majority of those the police arrested. Prostitutes were by far the largest category of women facing arrest, but their numbers were dwarfed by the numbers of men arrested for drunkenness or disorderly conduct.³⁶ This is not to say that women did not play an important role in police development, both in the highly gendered language of the family used by politicians of all stripes when discussing policing, and in the temperance and moral activism of middle- and upper-class women that helped push police policy, especially from the 1870s. Women's lives were also dramatically affected by the growth of police departments, as the new, male-dominated institution increasingly policed unwanted pregnancy, prostitution, and female political activism. However, it is crucial to recognize that, ultimately, police departments were created by men in order to control the behavior of other men.

This project illustrates the crucial role of state institutions in the development of capitalism. Even as the free-labor ideology of the antebellum period morphed into its caricature, the *laissez faire* ideology of the Gilded Age, the state apparatus grew at a remarkable pace. In fact, the role eventually played by the police departments of every city could not be played by private organizations, such as the Pinkerton Detective Agency. Private forces lacked the manpower, the legitimacy, and the will to replace the police. They could track down items stolen from an express company, spy on unions or the Molly Maguires, but they could not consistently break strikes. The Pinkertons, unlike the police, actually lost many armed conflicts with strikers throughout this period, most famously at Homestead. More crucially, private organizations such as the Pinkertons could not enforce order over entire cities because they could not turn a profit by doing so. Only municipalities, states, and nations had the resources and will to create legitimate, permanent, professional, armed organizations dedicated to the maintenance of order, broadly defined. Armed public institutions like the police, then, played an integral role in the nation's economic development well before the growth of the welfare state.

This book also illuminates how businessmen shaped these state institutions to meet their needs. Chicago's business elite disagreed on many important political questions and was never able to get exactly what it wanted even when it did agree. Nonetheless, the city's elite reached a sufficient consensus and possessed enough power to create radically new, powerful, armed institutions that could protect their economic interests, even as the city's development was turning them into an increasingly isolated minority within a sprawling

multiethnic, working class metropolis. This insight illustrates the limits of American democracy in the second half of the nineteenth century.

At the same time, the elite did not get exactly what it wanted. Elite projects for social control failed more often than they succeeded. Chicago built a police force that could break strikes, destroy anarchist organizations, and protect property, but that police force never succeeded in controlling daily life in the working-class neighborhoods. Sunday drinking, prostitution, gambling, and petty crime continued unabated by the growth of the police department, however much elements of the elite would have liked to check them. Ordinary Chicagoans thus set severe limits on the power of coercive state institutions from the beginning.

This book examines the development of the Chicago Police Department from the 1850s through the 1880s. It does so by exploring how the various political and economic groups in Chicago shaped this institution, as well as how the police shaped the relations between those groups. But in another way the subject is broader, for the police became the central arm of state power aimed at the domestic population. Answering how and why this institution developed in the nineteenth century will help explain the nature of state power and capitalism into the twenty-first.

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