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*Factories as Levelers*

THE ONE CLEAR hierarchical division for manual workers traditionally had been between craftsmen and less skilled workers. Artisans had been set apart by their superior opportunities for independence and prosperity as well as by the nature of their work and training. Increase in specialization within the crafts lessened these differences as we have seen, but the expansion of factories blurred traditional distinctions most as this chapter will show. In Poughkeepsie the growing number of operatives trained to limited tasks rather than to trades received higher wages than ordinary laborers and sometimes as much as those paid journeymen in trades injured by skill dilution. Longevity in employment at one factory for many of these operatives blurred another traditional distinction between the artisan and the laborer, the usual irregularity of the laborer's jobs.

This chapter compares the opportunities of native whites and of first and second generation newcomers, especially the Irish, in factory employment. Although immigrants never came close to monopolizing factory work in Poughkeepsie as they did in some American cities, it provided an important means of improvement for the