



# **New York City's Five Points The Most Dangerous and Decadent Neighborhood Ever!**

*Joe Bruno*

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**The Five Points is personal to me. In 1914, my mother, the youngest of 12 children, was born at 104 Bayard Street. When I grew up, I lived around the corner at 134 White Street. During my youth, the area was called Little Italy. But at the time of my mother's birth, it was still called the Five Points.**

**The term "Five Points" was coined in the early part of the nineteenth century because the area had at its center a five-point intersection formed by Orange Street (now Baxter Street), Cross Street (then Park and now Mosco Street - Frank Mosco was my Little League coach), Anthony Street (Now Worth), Little Water Street (which no longer exists), and Mulberry Street.**

**Across the street from the front entrance to my White Street tenement building, and close enough to reach with three or four leaping bounds, was the imposing city prison called the Tombs. The dark and dreary structure was the third incarnation of a major jailhouse in this area, the first two being located one block to the west on Center Street. The Tombs played an integral part of the Five Points' sordid history. Hundreds of dastardly individuals were hung at the Tombs, and hundreds of thousands more had the Tombs as their mailing address, some permanently.**

**In 1896, at the prodding of journalist Jacob Riis, the hideous Mulberry Bend was demolished by the city, and Columbus Park was built in its stead. Before then, the Five Points was predominantly Irish, and it is estimated that 10,000 – 15,000 people, mostly Irish, lived in horrendous squalor in the four square blocks that of “The Bend.” When the Bend’s buildings were razed, the Irish were displaced. Most moved north to Hell’s Kitchen, the area bounded by 42nd Street and 59th Streets, between 7th and 12th Avenues.**

**After the demolition of Mulberry Bend, the Five Points became the domain of Italian immigrants sprinkled with a few hundred Chinese, who claimed parts of Mott, Pell, and Doyers Streets as their turf. In fact, over the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Five Points district evolved into two intertwining ethnic neighborhoods: Little Italy and Chinatown. It wasn’t until the mid-1920s that the term “Five Points” started to fade from the vocabulary of the area’s residents.**

**Most remnants of the original Five Points are long gone. But the names of its former inhabitants still flicker across the lips of many New Yorkers, never in a flattering way.**

**So, fire up your Kindle and read about some of the most distasteful creatures ever to roam the face of the earth. They all inhabited my old Five Points neighborhood in times gone by.**

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