

New Orleans

May 02, 2013 9:00 AM Chase Vicenzi
newwave@tulane.edu

While most seniors prepare for the real world and the workplace, Perry Faulkner, a senior in the Tulane 4 + 1 master's program in history, is delving into New Orleans' past. Faulkner is completing an independent study project on masculinity of men of the Irish Channel in New Orleans between 1880 and 1920.



Men in the Irish Channel of New Orleans in the early 20th century settled their differences in fistfight duels in the street. (Photo illustration by iStockphoto and Melinda Viles)

“I was introduced to the project by [Laura Kelley](#), an adjunct professor of history at Tulane, when I was a service-learning fellow in her Irish New Orleans TIDES course,” he says.

Combing through records of President Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration, Faulkner found “interviews of men in the Irish Channel at the time who described themselves as rough and tough individuals,” he says, who “settled

their differences in fistfight duels in the street. This is how bare-knuckle boxing fights in the streets came about in New Orleans.”

Faulkner describes these Irishmen as honest and respectable men who defined themselves “through sport and defending their neighborhood, not through crime.”

One such sporting event was the annual Turkey Bowl, a football game played every Thanksgiving in City Park between an Irish Channel team and a team from one of the suburbs.

People who lived in the neighborhood “felt strongly about their heritage,” he says.

The Irish Channel, located in the Lower Garden District, ran from around Felicity Street to Louisiana Avenue and from Magazine Street to the Mississippi River.

After the 1920s, however, Faulkner notes that many of the Irish families began to move into the New Orleans suburbs. But even now, he says, “One can see these remnants of Irish history by walking around the city, seeing landmarks and monuments.”

Faulkner spends time helping [St. Alphonsus Art and Cultural Center](#), formerly an Irish Channel church, create a digital archive of photos and baptismal records of the Irish population.

Chase Vicenzi is a junior at Tulane who is studying communication and political science.