

Scrutinizes the life and times of Joseph Banigan, one of New England's, and America's, most successful nineteenth-century industrialists

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**LABOR HISTORY / NEW ENGLAND
HISTORY**

Irish Titan, Irish Toilers

Joseph Banigan and Nineteenth-Century New England Labor

Scott Molloy

In 1847 Joseph Banigan, an Irish Potato Famine refugee, established himself in Rhode Island as an entrepreneur. This was a time when “No Irish Need Apply” signs abounded and discrimination against the Irish and other immigrants—institutionalized in the constitution of his adopted state—hindered voting and other human rights. Bucking this trend and belying his humble origins, Banigan succeeded spectacularly in the emerging local rubber footwear industry, becoming the president of the United States Rubber Company—one of the nation’s major cartels, and New England’s first Irish-Catholic millionaire. Backed by primary and secondary research on two continents, Molloy’s inquiry into Bannigan’s notoriety and success singularly codifies and elucidates the Irish-American experience during this critical period in American labor history.

SCOTT MOLLOY is an award-winning Professor at the Labor Research Center, University of Rhode Island. He previously drove a bus, was a union activist, and was Chief of Staff to a United States Congresswoman. A prolific writer, Molloy’s most recent book is *Trolley Wars: Streetcar Workers on the Line* (UNH, 2007).