Illustration and the Visual-Material Politics of Slum Tourism, 1860-1890

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Jacob Riis. The “Slide” that was the Children’s only playground once, circa 1894 (Museum of the City of New York)
“Lower East Side tenement rear with wooden sheds,”
Tenement House Department photograph, 1936
(New York Public Library)

Domestic interior exhibit, Orchard Street apartment, Tenement
House Museum, New York City, 2017 (author’s photograph)
“THE ASYLUM, FROM ROAD TO STEAMBOAT LANDING,”  
*Harper’s New Monthly*, 1866  (Museum of the City of New York)

Eastern-facing façade of Octagon Building, a National Historical Landmark (1972), now a luxury apartment complex, on Roosevelt (Blackwell’s) Island, July 2017 (author’s photograph)

Jacob Riis, Richard Hoe Lawrence, and Henry G. Piffard. *Bandits’ Roost, 1887–1888* (Museum of the City of New York)


“Our Exposure of the Swill Milk Trade,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, May 1858 (Newberry Library)
Cover, Volume 9 of Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 1860 (Newberry Library)

ENTRANCE TO THE PORT OF HAVANA, FROM FUERTE DEL PRINCIPE
Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 1858 (Newberry Library)

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“OUTDOOR SPORTS OF NEW YORK—SCENE IN CENTRAL PARK ON MONDAY, DEC. 24 (CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY)—THOUSANDS OF SKATERS ON THE POND—CROWDS OF SPECTATORS ON FOOT AND IN CARRIAGES—From a sketch made by our artist on the spot,”

Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, January 1860 (Newberry Library)
“AT THE WINTER CARNIVAL AT ST. LOUIS—THE MISSISSIPPI FROZEN OVER,” and “THE SPORTS OF THE SEASON AT THE CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK,” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, January 1864 (Newberry Library)
"THE MUSIC STAND AT CENTRAL PARK, NEW YORK—SATURDAY AFTERNOON, 5 O'CLOCK,"

*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, August 1866 (Newberry Library)
“HOW NEW YORK WAS SUPPLIED WITH WATER PREVIOUS TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CROTON,”
Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, August 1866 (Newberry Library)
“NEW YORK CITY—ITS MISFORTUNES AND ITS LITERATURE.” Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly, 1885 (Newberry Library)
“THE TOMBS—FRONT ON CENTER STREET.” “INTERIORS OF THE PRISON YARD.” and “GROUND FLOOR, FIRST CORRIDOR ABOVE CLERK RECEIVING PRISONERS.” From “A Visit to the Tombs Prison, New York City,” Frank Leslie’s New York Journal, 1857 (Newberry Library)
“A TENEMENT-HOUSE IN MULBERRY STREET.” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 1869 (Wallach Division, New York Public Library).
“THE STORY OF A PAUPER,” Harper’s Weekly, February 1868 (Newberry Library)
DISTRESS AMONG THE POOR.

It is hardly necessary, we presume, to say to any of our readers that the distress among the poor people of our great cities has been, and is still, unusually great this present winter. We are glad to know, however, that the efforts which have been made to relieve the poor have been in due proportion to the increased destitution. An appropriation by the State Legislature of $250,000 has been proposed for the relief of the poor of New York and Brooklyn. Several establishments for the relief of the poor have been opened in this city, one of which, located at No. 1 Bond Street, we illustrate on page 100. The number of applicants daily at this house alone amounts to about 1000 persons. Every day before the opening hour, 10 o'clock A.M., a line of several hundred men, women, and children are to be found waiting for assistance. Among these are bookbinders, carpenters, tailors, shoemakers, and other tradesmen, all out of employment and all suffering. So many persons, and especially mechanics, have not applied in the same time since the “bread or blood” processions in this city.

In two instances whole families of children have been taken into the institutions in order that the parents may go to work and save sufficient to support themselves. The plan of relief is, when fuel is required, to send a quarter of a ton at the outset, and two more up to March 1, to such applicants as have filled up an application, which is furnished in blank, and have sworn to the truth of the statement made therein, and after its truth has been verified by a visit to their houses. Those who need money, if worthy, receive a dollar, and are desired to call again in two weeks. This, of course, is their relief.

“RELIEVING THE POOR AT NO. 1 BOND STREET, NEW YORK.—SKETCHED BY STANLEY FOX,” Harper’s Weekly, February 1868 (Newberry Library)
Left: "LODGING-HOUSE and JUNK-SHOP" Right: "STAGE OF THE OLD CHATHAM STREET THEATRE, NOW USED AS A STABLE." from “TENEMENT LIFE IN NEW YORK,” Harper’s Weekly, March 1879 (Newberry Library)
"SKETCHES IN BOTTLE ALLEY.—DRAWN BY WILLIAM A. ROGERS."

"TENEMENT LIFE IN NEW YORK." Harper’s Weekly, March, 1879 (Newberry Library)
Left” “RAGPICKER’S COURT, MULBERRY STREET, DRAWN by WILLIAM A. ROGERS.”

Above: “LANDLORD AND TENANT—DRAWN BY S.G. McCUTCHEON.” “TENEMENT LIFE IN NEW YORK,” Harper’s Weekly, April 1879 (Newberry Library)
"THE FLOWER MISSION—VISITING THE SICK. TWO EXCELLENT MISSIONS—DRAWN BY C.A. KEETLE." and "HOUSE OF THE BIBLE, FRUIT, AND FLOWER MISSION." "TENEMENT LIFE IN NEW YORK" Harper's Weekly, August 1879 (Newberry Library)
“HOME FROM THE OLD WORLD—EXAMINATION OF BAGGAGE BY CUSTOM OFFICERS ON A NEW YORK STEAM-SHIP WHARF.
—DRAWN BY IVAN PRANISHNIKOFF.” “TENEMENT LIFE IN NEW YORK,” Harper’s Weekly, March 1879 (Newberry Library)
“NEW YORK CITY. — "DOING THE SLUMS" - A SCENE IN THE FIVE POINTS. FROM A SKETCH BY A STAFF ARTIST.”
Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, December 1885 (Library of Congress)
“View from School House in 42nd Street Between 2nd & 3rd Avs. Looking North”
(shantytown in Dutch Hill area, circa 1863) (New York Historical Society)
“View from School House in 42nd Street Between 2nd & 3rd Avs. Looking North” (shantytown in Dutch Hill area, circa 1863) (New York Historical Society)

“ON THE BORDER OF CENTRAL PARK” (squatters’ village), Harper’s Magazine, September 1880 (New York Public Library)
“A TENEMENT-HOUSE IN MULBERRY STREET.” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 1869 (Wallach Division, New York Public Library).

Jacob Riis. *New York, Old house (torn down) in Bleeker Street, on a back lot between Mercer and Greene Streets, 1890* (Museum of the City of New York)
Jacob Riis. *Flat in Hell’s Kitchen, “Ruin,”* 1887–1889 (Museum of the City of New York)

Jacob Riis. “Five Cents a Spot,” 1888-1889. (Museum of the City of New York)

“LODGETORS IN A CROWDED BAYARD STREET TENEMENT—‘FIVE CENTS A SPOT.’” How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890) (Museum of the City of New York)

“LODGING-HOUSE and JUNK-SHOP,” “TENEMENT LIFE IN NEW YORK,” Harper’s Weekly, March 1879 (Newberry Library)

Jacob Riis. The “Slide” That Was the Children’s Only Playground Once, circa 1894 (Museum of the City of New York)
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