

Irish in New Hampshire

Century of Immigration to America (1820-1924)

- Political oppression by the British government, religious persecution of Catholic Irish encouraged emigrants; because of this history, Irish particularly sensitive to issues of freedom and rights
- Most *not* victims of the famine: of some 4.6 million Irish to America during the Century of Immigration, about 1.7 million of them came between 1841-60, decades that encompassed the famine and its aftermath
- Most stayed; only about one in twelve returned to Ireland

Irish Immigrants

- Most unskilled when arrived at Canadian ports or in Boston or New York
- Many penniless upon arrival, so sometimes trapped in already crowded, non-industrialized cities due to lack of funds to move on; for the same reason, immigrants insistent on getting away from British territory sometimes walked from Canada to America
- If sufficient funds, migrated to New England cities and mill towns where there was a need for labor
- In Portsmouth, significant presence; most were laborers; good number worked in sea-related jobs
- To survive, took any job for any wage; contributed to stereotyping and ridiculing of Irish as menial laborers
- Did hard labor on infrastructure such as railways, streets, sewers, water works; residential, commercial, public buildings; single women often worked in mills, replacing discontented mill girls; many female Irish worked as domestic servants in the homes of the growing wealthy middle class
- All able family members needed to support family unit at home and back in Ireland
- Volunteers fought in Mexican War (1846-1848) and Civil War (1861-1865); sacrifices did much to prove their loyalty and bravery
- As numbers, neighborhoods, parishes grew, used ballot to elect politicians to represent interests

Irish-American Church

- By 1850, leaders of American Catholic Church mostly Irish
- With heavy immigration due to famine, leaders pushed for parishes, churches, schools to teach Catholic faith
- In Portsmouth, Immaculate Conception church and parish since 1851
- Catholic doctrine, such as governments should be subordinate to church, aggravated and intimidated Protestant majority
- Catholics easy targets for discrimination disguised as patriotic, political objection to Catholic teachings; American Party, a.k.a. Know-Nothing Party, arose during 1840s-50s, singled out Irish Catholics; issue of slavery ultimately eclipsed American Party's issues

FYI

- English ruled Ireland from mid-12th century until 1921, when Ireland was split into (1) what is now the independent Republic of Ireland, and (2) Northern Ireland, today still part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- In 1534 King Henry VIII split from the Catholic Church in Rome; established the Protestant Church of England (Anglican Church); no sympathy among Irish, who remained Catholic
- State of feud ensued; in 1690 Irish lost autonomy; English Parliament established Church of Ireland; laws passed that made life and work harder for Catholics
- Great numbers of Irish to America from 1820s until Great Depression of 1930s
- In the U.S., 40 million people claim Irish descent

Early History of Irish in America

- 1,000 Scotch Protestants from Londonderry, Ireland, to New Hampshire in 1719; settled Londonderry, N.H.; brought the potato, grew flax, started linen manufacturing, New England's first major textile industry
- Most descendants of Scottish people, recruited by English in the 17th century to establish Protestant colonies in Ulster (northern Ireland); wished to escape hostile Irish
- Most poor, indentured servants; belonged to Irish Protestant (Presbyterian) church; greatly prejudiced against Catholics
- Prominent Catholics in early American history: Charles Carroll III of Carrollton, Md., only Catholic to sign Declaration of Independence; Thomas Fitzsimmons of Philadelphia, only Catholic to sign U.S. Constitution

History of Irish in New Hampshire Communities

- Irish to Nashua in early 1800s; construction of Wilton Railroad and famine in Ireland brought many in mid-1840s; permanent pastor, Father John O'Donnell, assigned; Church of the Immaculate Conception dedicated in 1857
- About 50 Irish in Dover by 1830; different from Irish in other towns because had brought industrial skills to cotton factories; lived in houses near Catholic Church, area called "Dublin"; by 1840 many left factories, opened businesses, bought land; after 1850, mostly unskilled and poor Irish immigrants in the mills
- In Manchester, July 3, 4, 1854, Irish youths and Protestants rioted following arraignment of a Protestant stable owner for an Irishman's death that resulted from a fight over a rental of a horse and buggy; Catholics destroyed private property, Protestants stoned new St. Anne's Catholic church, personal injuries sustained in both camps, before fire chief and mayor able to disperse rioters

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