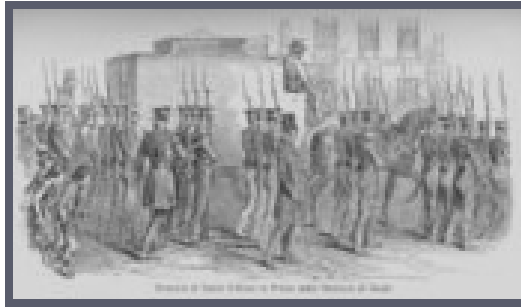


# Irish Emigration



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*“Historians of emigration in Ireland have yet to resolve two central issues of debate. The first is the extent to which emigrants from Ireland were selected. That is, did the best leave, or the dregs, and what does that answer mean for understanding the Irish society which the immigrants left behind? The second is whether the large scale migration hurt Ireland economically?”*<sup>1</sup>

Did the mass emigrations of the famine and post famine years leave Ireland with a lack of laborers, or did it clear the land of those most likely to tax the resources of the country with educational needs as well as subsistence? This debate is likely never to be solved, for Irish of all walks of life left and remained.

One of the truths of Irish emigration is that most immigrants did not want to leave. They loved their country and throughout life longed to return. Families scattered to the winds. You might find one family member in New York and another in Sydney while a third stayed on the family homeland. Finding family members can be a challenge.

Migration - geographical movements of individuals or groups for the purpose of permanently resettling  
Emigration - [out] migration; leaving a country of origin to settle in a new land  
Immigration - [in] migration; entrance into a new country for the purpose of establishing permanent residence  
Diaspora - dispersal - widespread [out] migration  
Scotch-Irish - originated in mid 18<sup>th</sup> century America to distinguish the Ulster Presbyterian emigrants of Scottish ancestry from other Irish

## A short history of Irish Emigration

Emigration from Ireland began before Christianity reached its shores. However, widespread emigration did not begin until the first English Empire [17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> Centuries] when considerable, but uncounted numbers left for the “New World” or for the continent. Mass emigration did not occur until after the revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The era of mass emigration is generally considered to be the time period from 1815 to World War I.

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<sup>1</sup> Connolly, S.J. [ed], The Oxford Companion to Irish History, Oxford University Press 1998 p. 170

Between 1815 and 1921 nearly eight-million people left their homes in Ireland. Prior to the great famine of 1845-1849/52 the most common destination of emigrants was Canada. From the famine through World War I the destination of preference was the United States and after the Great War emigrants were more likely to go to England.

One unusual aspect of emigration from Ireland was that there were equal numbers of women leaving the country. This meant that there was no surplus of single women in Ireland itself and the male immigrants had Irish women available to marry.

## Pre-famine Emigration

Prior to 1820 it was not required to keep passenger lists and many have not survived. Look for other related records to find your immigrant ancestors.

### ▶ Foreign Military starting in 1580s with Spanish war



- ▶ Fight of the Earls 1607
- ▶ Irish Prisoners of War to Bermuda in Cromwellian times for seven year indentures
- ▶ In 1631 Irish Catholics forcibly moved and many transported to Montserrat & Antigua. After defeat by Cromwell in 1649 many others were transported.
- ▶ 1691 Flight of the Wild Geese [Jacobite Army to France]
- ▶ 1717-1776 abt. 250,000 Ulstermen to America [mainly economic]; some estimates say 1/3 of the population of Ulster Presbyterians. Most emigrated through Philadelphia. Many took the Great Wagon Road down to Virginia and eventually into North Carolina.
- ▶ Famines - 1740-1741; 1815/16; 1821; 1825-30
- ▶ 1745 Foreign Military Service Outlawed but not before over 120,000 were injured or dead. Many who left never returned.
- ▶ 1791-1867 500,000 transported to Australia
- ▶ 1812+ Drop in prices after war of 1812 left many unable to pay rents

▶

## Emigration Schemes

In the nineteenth century, most Irish emigrants received emigration aid from relatives who had already emigrated. In fact between 1848 and 1854 it is estimated that £7,520,000 was sent home to in cash or in prepaid passage tickets. However, as many as 300,000 individuals, between 5% & 10% of immigrants, had their fares to North America paid by Irish landlords, by the British treasury, by the Irish poor law unions, or by private philanthropists. Among the emigration schemes was that of Peter Robinson who brought settlers to Ontario in the 1820s, and Earl Greys Female Orphan Emigration to Australia.

## The Great Famine 1845-1849

- ▶ From 1800 to 1841 the population of Ireland had grown from 4.5 million to 8.2 million.
  - ▶ Relative prosperity after Napoleonic Wars
  - ▶ Early marriages
  - ▶ Subdivisions of land
- ▶ Small Farms [24% less than 4 acres, 40% less than 15 acres] only potatoes could feed families.
- ▶ Before famine 1/3 of all small farmers worked as seasonal migrants in England and Scotland to support families
- ▶ Landowners continued to export produce to England even at the height of the famine. Through the famine there were more exports than imports.
- ▶ Half a million people were evicted during famine years.
- ▶ Approximately one million died
- ▶ Approximately one million immigrated to Great Britain, Canada, Scotland, Australia and the United States.
- ▶ Younger family members emigrated
- ▶ Between 1856 and 1906 the Irish poor Law boards of guardians financed the emigration of about 25,000 paupers, primarily to the United States and Canada. In 1882-83 Parliament passed legislation which subsidized transportation for more than 54,000 more. Passage money also came from landlords, charitable institutions and private philanthropists such as Vere Foster and James Hack Tuke who together financed about 30,000 departures in the 1880s.



**Ports of Embarkation** Londonderry, Limerick, Belfast and other ports throughout Ireland, however, most Irish first went to England and sailed from Liverpool. You might also find they have emigrated from Canada, Australia or other earlier immigration points.

**Ports of Entry** in US Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore. New York [South Street Pier, Castle Garden opens 1856, Ellis Island], San Francisco, New Orleans, Galveston. If you don't find them check other smaller ports of entry.

### Finding Records that pinpoint a townland of Origin

**Death records:** Certificates, Obituaries, Mortuary Records, Cemetery Records Tombstones

**Birth records:** Children's birth certificates and christening records might list a parents birth place. While it might not be a townland, you might at least get the right county.

**Marriage records:** Both civil and church records might ask for a place of birth. Also look for marriage and anniversary articles in the newspapers. Answer sometimes are very specific.

**Other records that might give a place of origin include:** Census, County Histories and other biographical resources, newspaper articles, passenger lists, naturalizations, military records, poor house records, police blotters.

**Aid Societies:** Irish Emigrant Society, British Protective Emigrant Society, Children's Aid society of New York, NY Magdalen Female Benevolent Society, NY Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor.

**Where the Irish Live today** [2000/2001 Census figures]

United States - 44 Million list Irish Descent  
Canada - 12.9% of population  
England - over 10% of population or 6 million of Irish Descent, over 850,000 born in Ireland  
Australia - 9% of population  
Argentina - 250,000

**A Short Bibliography** – This is just a sampling of the different types of resources and websites that might help you find your Irish ancestors. Use online library catalogs [WorldCat, Library of Congress] and online Search Engines [Google, Yahoo, etc.] to search for resources specific to the area where your Irish settled.

- Adams, Raymond D., **Ulster Emigrants to Philadelphia, 1803-1850**; GPC 1998  
Akenson, Donald A., **The Irish Diaspora**, Belfast: Queens University 1996  
DeGrazia, Laura Murphy & Diane Fitzpatrick Haberstroth, **Irish Relatives and Friends - From "Information Wanted" Ads in the Irish-American, 1850-1871**, GPC 2001  
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Ellis, Eilish, **Emigrants from Ireland, 1847-1852 - State-Aided Emigration Schemes from Crown Estates in Ireland**, GPC 1960/1993  
Hackett, J. Dominick and Charles M. Early, **Passenger Lists from Ireland** (Excerpted from Journal of the American Irish Historical Society, Volumes 28 and 29); GPC  
Leyburn, James G., **The Scotch Irish: A Social History**, Chapel Hill 1962: University of North Carolina Press [Good discussion of Scotch Irish in Ireland and in the United States]  
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Myers, Albert C., **Immigration of the Irish Quakers into Pennsylvania, 1682-1750, with their Early History in Ireland**, Swarthmore, PA: The author, 1902  
CD - **The Search for Missing Friends: Irish Immigrant Advertisements Placed in the Boston Pilot, 1831-1920** NEHGS

Irish Passenger Lists Research Guide - <http://www.genealogybranches.com/irishpassengerlists/>

Irish History on the Web - [www.vms.utexas.edu/~jdana.irehist.html](http://www.vms.utexas.edu/~jdana.irehist.html)

Emile [Early Emigrant Letter Stories] Ireland - <http://www.emigrantletters.com/IE/>

Irish Emigration [rootsweb] - <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~dicummings/EmigrationIrish.htm>

Emigration Schemes and Links - <http://www.hotkey.net.au/~jwilliams4/migrate.htm>

Robinson Immigration to Canada - <http://www.pcma.ca/robinson.htm>

Center for Heritage Resource Studies - <http://www.heritage.umd.edu/CHRSWeb/Ireland/ireland.htm>

Merseyside Maritime Museum Archives <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/archive>

Animated Map of Irish Immigration [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/immig/irish\\_map.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/immig/irish_map.html)