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**Introduction- Irish Discrimination in the United States**

By the end of the 19th century, nearly 483,000 Irish settlers came to New York, of which 190,000 were in New York City. More than 260,000 settled in Massachusetts, largely in Boston. Illinois received 124,000 Irish immigrants, more than half of whom moved to Chicago.

Boston’s population prior to the Irish migration was around 115,000 and was largely Protestant. The flood of Irish Catholic immigrants overwhelmed the city. 37,000 immigrants arrived in 1847 alone. They were housed in poor areas of the city—the North End, Batterymarch, and East Boston—where landlords divided up dwellings so that newcomers were crowded into tiny rooms, lacking water, sanitation, ventilation or fresh air and light. The Boston Health Commission noted that the typical Irish slum in Boston was "a perfect hive of human beings, without comforts and mostly without common necessaries; in many cases huddled together like brutes, without regard to age or sex or sense of decency. Under such circumstances self-respect, forethought, all the high and noble virtues soon die out, and sullen indifference and despair or disorder, intemperance and utter degradation reign supreme." Disease spread through the slums, as did alcoholism and crime. Fights and begging were rampant.

New York was larger and consequently was better equipped to deal with a large wave of immigrants than was Boston. Still the Irish lived in squalid tenements amid high rates of crime and violence.

Violent episodes occurred in many American cities where Irish immigrants had settled. In Boston, a group of Protestants burned a Catholic convent in the Charlestown section of the city.

In Philadelphia, Protestants rioted to protest Irish Catholic newcomers in 1844 and then the Irish fought back with mobs of their own. Catholic churches burned in the city. Armed Irish men protected churches in New York City.

Fears of the Irish surfaced in employment. Moreover, stereotypes reinforced through imagery presented the Irish negatively and fueled greater animosity toward Irish immigrants

The Know-Nothing party emerged in the 1850s in response to growing anti-immigrant, especially anti-Roman Catholic attitudes that surfaced in response to the growing numbers of immigrants to the United States. The group was officially formed in New York in 1849 as the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner and spread to most other American cities. To develop their understanding of Nativist strategies, have students take a look at its “flag” and assess the message that the group was trying to convey:

Members were supposed to say that they knew nothing of this organization, which is why they came to be known as the “Know-Nothings.” It later became the “American Party.” Its chief platform? Restrictions on immigration, excluding the foreign born from voting or holding office, and requiring a 21-year residency requirement before an immigrant could become a citizen.

The protection of American labor that the Know-Nothings promoted was the insistence that it exclude Catholics who were thought to potentially sully the Uncle Sam image of the United States.

**Skibbereen (c. 1880)**

Audio: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VWPzsPqcHQ>

O, Father dear, I oft times here, you speak of Erin's Isle,

Her lofty scenes, her valleys green, her mountains rude and wild

They say it tis a lovely place, wherein in a saint might dwell,

so why did you abandon it, the reason to me tell?

Oh son I loved my native land, with energy and pride

'Til a blight came over on my prats, my sheep and cattle died,

The rent and taxes were so high, I could not them redeem,

And that's the cruel reason why, I left old Skibbereen.

Oh, It's well I do remember, that bleak December day,

The landlord and the sheriff came, to drive us all away

They set my roof on fire, with their cursed English spleen

And that's another reason why, I left old Skibbereen.

Your mother too, God rest her soul, fell on the snowy ground,

She fainted in her anguish, seeing the desolation all round.

She never rose, but passed away, from life to immortal dream,

She found a quiet grave, my boy, in dear old Skibbereen.

And you were only two years old, and feeble was your frame,

I could not leave you with your friends, you bore your father's name,

I wrapped you in my cota mior, in the dead of night unseen

I heaved a sigh, and said goodbye, to dear old Skibbereen

O' father dear, the day will come, when answer to the call

all Irish men of Freedom Stern, will rally one and all

I'll be the man to lead the band, beneath the flag of green

loud and clear, we'll raise a cheer , remember Skibbereen

**NO IRISH NEED APPLY**

**Audio:** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5SiLTPx9jM**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5SiLTPx9jM)

I'm a decent boy just landed

From the town of Ballyfad;

I want a situation, yes,

And want it very bad.

I have seen employment advertised,

"It's just the thing," says I,

"But the dirty spalpeen ended with

'No Irish Need Apply.' "

"Whoa," says I, "that's an insult,

But to get the place I'll try,"

So I went to see the blackguard

With his "No Irish Need Apply."

Some do count it a misfortune

To be christened Pat or Dan,

But to me it is an honor

To be born an Irishman.

I started out to find the house,

I got it mighty soon;

There I found the old chap seated,

He was reading the Tribune.

I told him what I came for,

When he in a rage did fly,

"No!" he says, "You are a Paddy,

And no Irish need apply."

Then I gets my dander rising

And I'd like to black his eye

To tell an Irish gentleman

"No Irish Need Apply."

Some do count it a misfortune

To be christened Pat or Dan,

But to me it is an honor

To be born an Irishman.

I couldn't stand it longer

So a hold of him I took,

And gave him such a welting

As he'd get at Donnybrook.

He hollered, "Milia murther,"

And to get away did try,

And swore he'd never write again

"No Irish Need Apply."

Well he made a big apology,

I told him then goodbye,

Saying, "When next you want a beating,

Write `No Irish Need Apply.' "

Some do count it a misfortune

To be christened Pat or Dan,

But to me it is an honor

To be born an Irishman.

**“Poor Pat Must Emigrate”**

**A.W. Auner, Song Publisher, Philadelphia, PA, n.d.**

Fare you well poor Erin’s Isle, I now must leave you for awhile;

The rents and taxes are so high I can no longer stay.

From Dublin’s quay I sailed away and landed here but yesterday;

Me shoes, and breeches and shirts now are all that’s in my kit

I have dropped in to tell you now the sights I have seen before I go,

Of the ups and downs in Ireland since the year of ninety-eight;

But if that Nation had its own, her noble sons might stay at home,

But since fortune has it otherwise, poor Pat must emigrate.

The divil a word I would say at all, although our wages are but small,

If they left us in our cabins, where our fathers drew their breath,

When they call upon rent-day, and the divil a cent you have to pay.

They will drive you from your house and home, to beg and starve to death

What kind of treatment, boys, is that, to give an honest Irish Pat?

To drive his family to the road to beg or starve for meat;

But I stood up with heart and hand, and sold my little spot of land;

That is the reason why I left and had to emigrate.

Such sights as that I’ve often seen, but I saw worse in Skibbareen,

In forty-eight (that time is no more when famine it was great,

I saw fathers, boys, and girls with rosy cheeks and silken curls

All a-missing and starving for a mouthful of food to eat.

When they died in Skibbareen, no shroud or coffins were to be seen;

But patiently reconciling themselves to their horrid fate,

They were thrown in graves by wholesale which cause many an Irish heart to wail

And caused many a boy and girl to be most glad to emigrate.

Where is the nation or the land that reared such men as Paddy’s land?

Where is the man more noble than he they call poor Irish Pat?

We have fought for England’s Queen and beat her foes wherever seen;

We have taken the town of Delhi – if ou please come tell me that,

We have pursued the Indian chief, and Nenah Sahib, that cursed thief,

Who skivered babes and mothers, and left them in their gore.

But why should we be so oppressed in the land of St. Patrick blessed.

The land from which we have the best, poor Paddy must emigrate.

There is not a son from Paddy’s land but respects the memory of Dan,

Who fought and struggled hard to part the poor and plundered country

He advocated Ireland’s rights, with all his strength and might,

And was but poorly recompensed for all his toil and pains.

He told us to be in no haste, and in him for to place our trust,

And he would not desert us, or leave us to our fate,

But death to him no favor showed, from the beggar to the throne;

Since they took our liberator poor Pat must emigrate.

With spirits bright and purses light, my boys we can no longer stay,

For the shamrock is immediately bound for America,

For there is bread and work, which I cannot get in Donegal,

I told the truth, by great St. Ruth, believe me what I say,

Good-night my boys, with hand and heart, all you who take Ireland’s part,

I can no longer stay at home, for fear of being too late,

If ever again I see this land, I hope it will be with a Fenian band;

So God be with old Ireland, poor Pat must emigrate.

**THE KNOW-NOTHING: AN AMERICAN CRUSADER**

**29 July 1854**

**The Anti-Catholic Press, 1854**

**BOUND TO SERVE THE CHURCH BEFORE THE COUNTRY**

We must not let this fact go-by—the Roman Catholics are bound to serve their Church before their Country.

What is the practical and inevitable result of such a system in this country? Why, that every Catholic stands committed as an enemy to the Republic. In such a character, base as it is—reeking all over, soaked all through with a religion that countenance crime; with principals that are shocked at no extremity of corruption—their whole effect is to pull down Republicanism and bolster up Romanism. This it does. It is seen. The thing is plain. It can't be otherwise. A man who is a Roman Catholic is not a Republican. He can't be. Calling fish, flesh, don't make it so. Hence whatever is told you of Catholicism as favorable to all that is American, put no faith in it. The Pope of Rome says America must be crushed—and all political economists of any note or weight, agree that if it is ever crushed, it will be by Romanism.

Let us remember these matters. Let us regard every Roman Catholic as an enemy to the country—and so treat him. He is nothing else.

NONE BUT AMERICANS FOR OFFICE

Such is one of the planks of our platform. It involved a great principle—and one which the Americans accept heartily. It is sound. It is just. It is what should be the fact. America, we take it, is the land of Americans. It is theirs. Its offices, its destiny, its genius, its laws, institutions, should all be in their hands and keeping. Not an office in this whole land should be filled by any but Americans. There is a full supply. They are all capable. They are intelligent, patriotic and all that. Then where is the logic, justice, even decency, of permitting foreigners to hold these places.

It is painful to look at affairs in Washington. Many of the best offices there,—in the very heart of the nation—there where for example, word, action, foes forth all over the land—are filled by foreigners. And two-thirds of those are IRISH.

Let the cry go forth—NONE BUT NATIVE AMERICANS FOR OFFICE!

**THIS, THAT AND THE OTHER**

• The Roman Catholic Priest is a queer institution. He makes people commit crime, then pay for it, and then goes and commits it himself. Nothing like the Priest. Exploring Diversity in Pennsylvania History www.hsp.org

• The Fourth July was celebrated in London, in fine style. Uncle Sam and Victoria were toasted, and Hail Columbia, God Save the Queen, Yankee Doodle and other luxuries enjoyed. Some country, that England.

• The New Bedford Mercury, after several columns of abuse of the new organization known as the "Know-Nothings." Has taken the back track, and expresses itself highly delighted with it, in several very pretty little items.

• About fifty Irishmen set upon half dozen of the Portland police, the other night, with a view of giving them a most unmerciful beating. The police were too smart for the scoundrels, and jugged them all.

• The Pope of Rome weighs 300. The size and weight of his body, is in striking contrast with that of his mind.

**WHAT YOU SEE IF YOU LOOK SHARP**

1—A very excited state of mind among foreigners.

2—Roman Catholic priests cutting up all sorts of disgraceful didos.

3—The American party rolling up its forces for the coming political warfare.

4—Old politicians shaking in their breeches, as though they had a double and twisted fever and ague.

5—Eleven prominent cities electing pure Native American officers.

6—By looking very sharp, on tip-toe, a Native American President taking his seat in the White House in 1856, March 4th.

Not bad to look at, these things—not a bit.

**THINGS WHICH ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND ALL TRUE ROMAN CATHOLICS HATE**

Providence, July 22, 1854

1. They HATE our Republic, and are trying to overthrow it.

2. They HATE the American Eagle, and it offends them beyond endurance to see it worn as an ornament by Americans.

3. They HATE our Flag, as it manifest by their grossly insulting it.

4. They HATE the liberty of conscience.

5. They HATE the liberty of the Press.

6. They HATE the liberty of speech.

7. They HATE our Common School system.

8. They HATE the Bible, and would blot it out of existence if they could!

9. The Priests HATE married life, and yet by them is fulfilled the Scripture, to wit: 'more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife.'

10. They HATE Protestants, and are sworn to exterminate them from our country and the earth.

11. They HATE the name of WASHINGTON, because he was a Republican and Protestant.

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12. They HATE all rulers that do not swear allegiance to the Pope of Rome.

13. They HATE to be ruled by Americans, and say 'WE WILL NOT BE RULED BY THEM!'

14. They HATE to support their own paupers and they are left to be supported by the tax paying Americans.

15. They HATE, above all, the 'Know-Nothings,' who are determined to rid this country from their accursed power.

—UNCLE SAM

**Account of an Irish Traveler (1847)**

**Web version:** [**http://vassun.vassar.edu/~sttaylor/FAMINE/Journey/Narrative.html**](http://vassun.vassar.edu/~sttaylor/FAMINE/ILN/Evictions/Evictions.html)

We have just returned from a visit to Ireland, whither we had gone in order to ascertain with our own eyes the truth of the reports daily publishing of the misery existing there. We have found everything but too true; the accounts are not exaggerated--they cannot be exaggerated-- nothing more frightful can be conceived. The scenes we have witnessed during our short stay at Skibbereen, equal any thing that has been recorded by history, or could be conceived by the imagination. Famine, typhus fever, dysentery, and a disease hitherto unknown, are sweeping away the whole population. The poor are not the only sufferers: fever is spreading to every class, and even the rich are becoming involved in the same destruction.

A detailed account of our expedition will probably afford you some satisfaction. We left Oxford on Friday evening, and reached Dublin late on Saturday night. Our time being limited, we had originally determined to go no farther than to some of the counties near the capital; but upon mentioning our intention to an Irish friend, we were advised to proceed at once to Skibbereen, in the county of Cork, which was reported to be the very nucleus of famine and disease. Finding, however, that the Cork coach did not start till eleven o'clock on Monday, we thought it would be as well to run down early in the morning to a village about 45 miles distant from Dublin, where the coach would overtake us later in the day. The name of this village was Athy(a). Upon our arrival there, we proceeded through the principal streets, and learning that a Soup kitchen had been recently established, we determined to visit it. Here we ascertained that the population of Athy has been divided into districts, to the poor of which tickets are issued, entitling them to two meals of Soup in the week. Above a thousand poor persons mainly look to this kitchen for support. Had we stopped at Athy, one would have brought back to England sorrowful intelligence enough, but not so bad as is usually represented in the newspapers. There were misery and hunger it is true, some deaths too had occurred, but still the village seemed brisk and lively, more distressed than famished. Perhaps the tenfold deeper misery which succeeded, has thrown a more cheerful aspect over this spot. By the time we had finished our enquiries and visited the different districts, the coach had arrived; and at two o'clock we were crossing the bridge out of Athy. It was six on Tuesday morning, before we reached Cork; nothing very particular had occurred during the journey; we had passed several places where the roads were very much cut up, and gaunt, sickly men were languidly hammering stones by the way-side; these were the public works. At the end of every stage, the coach was surrounded by crowds of wretched creatures begging for something to eat, wan little faces thrusting themselves in at the window, praying "the kind gentleman just for one ha'penny to buy a penn'orth of bread."

We had not a moment to stop in Cork, for the Bantry Mail calling at Skibbereen started directly after the arrival of the Dublin coach. The only stranger in the coach was a Roman Catholic Priest, from whom we learnt many particulars of the state and prospects of the country. He fully corroborated all that we had previously heard, adding that he scarcely saw how the population could survive the next three months, unless the most effective measures were taken for their relief. . . .

**“Suffer for About the First Six Months After Leaving Home”: John Doyle Writes Home to Ireland, 1818**

**by John Doyle**

[**http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5798/**](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5798/)

*In the years after the Revolution many immigrants to the United States were political radicals, including John Doyle’s father, who participated in the Irish Republican revolt against Great Britain in 1798 and later emigrated to Philadelphia. Like John Doyle, the author of this letter, many migrants brought craft skills and looked for work in the workshops and manufacturies of the new nation. When Doyle crossed the Atlantic in 1818 he quickly learned that small-scale entrepreneurship was more lucrative than sticking with his printing trade. Later immigration swelled as some two million Irish came to the United States between 1820 and 1860. The catastrophic Irish Potato Famine of 1845–49 sent hundreds of thousands (250,000 in 1851 alone) to disembark in cities where they faced economic hardships and ethnic discrimination.*

We were safely landed in Philadelphia on the 7th of October and I had not so much as would pay my passage in a boat to take me ashore. My distress and confusion for the want of three or four pence was very great, and such was the jealousy and miserableness of the passengers that there was not one who would lend another even that sum. I, however, contrived to get over, and God is my witness that at that moment, I would as soon the ground would open and swallow me up. It was not long till I made out my father, whom I instantly knew, and no one could describe our feelings when I made myself known to him, and received his embraces, after an absence of seventeen years. The old man was quite distracted about me. He done nothing that entire day but bringing me about to his friends. Their manner of receiving me was quite amusing; one would say you are welcome, sir, from the old country; another, you are welcome to this free country; you are welcome to this wooden country; you are welcome to this free country—you are welcome to this land of liberty. Pray sir, are you not happy to have escaped from the tyranny of the old country? When you would deny the tyranny and give the preference to home, they would look amazed and say, “What sir, would you not rather live in a free country than in slavery?” In short they imagine here that we can not act or speak in Ireland but as the authorities please. Their ignorance and presumption are disgusting, their manners worse. As to politeness and good nature, they are totally unknown and though they all pretend to be well acquainted with the affairs of Europe they are utterly ignorant of all transactions there, or at the best know them imperfectly. If my father’s love could do me any good I did not want it, for it amounted to jealousy.

The morning after landing I went to work to the printing and to my great surprise I found that my hand was very little out. There is an immensity of printing done in America, still it is not as good as other businesses, and I think a journeyman printer’s wages might be averaged at 71/2 dollars a week all the year round. In New York it may not be so much as they are often out of work. The bookbinding may be put upon a footing with the printing; they execute their work here remarkably well.

I worked in Philadelphia for five and one-half weeks and saved 6 [pounds], that is counting four dollars to the pound (in the currency) of the United States the dollar is worth five shillings Irish at all times. They give the name of shillings to one-eighth of a dollar which are common here, but which is only equal to our 7 \_ d. This name is what blinds many immigrants to the value of their money here and about the price of dollars and flatters them with the idea of such enormous wages.

I wrote to poor Lewis who gave me the most pressing invitation to come to New York where I now am, and where I every day experience from them some fresh kindness. My father put every obstacle he could in my way to prevent my going to New York but when he found that all he could do would not change my mind and that his entreaties to stay with him were in vain, he parted with me drowned in tears to such a pitch that he was unable to speak and since my arrival here he is every week writing to me to go back.

I found the printing and bookbinding overpowered with hands in New York. I remained idle for twelve days in consequence; when finding there was many out of employment like myself I determined to turn myself to something else, seeing that there was nothing to be got by idleness. The trifle which I had saved was going from me fast. I drove about accordingly and was engaged by a bookseller to hawk maps for him at 7 dollars a week. This I done much to his satisfaction but when the town was well supplied he discharged me and instead of paying me my entire bill he stopped 9 dollars for maps which he said I made him no return for. I had to look for justice but was defeated for want of a person to prove my account. I lost the 9 dollars which I reckon to be 45 shillings. However I got such an insight into the manners and customs of the natives whilst going among them with the maps as served me extremely. I now had about 60 dollars of my own saved, above every expense. These I laid out in the purchase of pictures on New Year’s Day, which I sell ever since. I am doing astonishingly well, thanks be to God and was able on the 16th of this month to make a deposit of 100 dollars in the bank of the United States.

Thus you see, my dearest Fanny, God has at length done something for us; every penny of it is my own hard earnings and I am no convinced that it is only by deserving His blessing that we can hope or expect to merit His favors; apropos, I must inform you that I made a solemn promise to God while at sea that if it was His goodness to spare my life till I get ashore I would make a hearty confession of my sins, which I thank Him for having granted me time and grace to perform, and this I mention, my love, because I know that it will be a source of pleasure to you; though living happy in the midst of my brother’s family whom you know that I always loved and being as yet very successful in dealing in the pictures and indeed I may say in everything I have taken in hand since I came to America, I feel, particularly in the evenings, when I return home, a lonesomeness and lowness of spirits which oppress me almost to fainting.

...

There are poor houses charity schools and even soup houses here which shows that there are a number of destitute poor; of course there is misery in every part of the world, but none of the real actual poverty and distress which is in all parts of Ireland.

...

One thing I think is certain that if the emigrants knew before hand what they have to suffer for about the first six months after leaving home in every respect they would never come here. However, an enterprising man, desirous of advancing himself in the world will despise everything for coming to this free country, where a man is allowed to thrive and flourish, without having a penny taken out by government; no visits from tax gatherers, constables or soldiers, every one at liberty to act and speak as he likes, provided it does not hurt another, to slander and damn government, abuse public men in their office to their faces, wear your hat in court and smoke a cigar while speaking to the judge as familiarly as if he was a common mechanic, hundreds go unpunished for crimes for which they would be surely hung in Ireland; in fact, they are so tender of life in this country that a person should have a very great interest to get himself hanged for anything!

It is I think an observation of your own that there is no love without jealousy, thus I often think my dearest love that you should not have parted with me with dry eyes or giving me some token of your love, which of our faults was it, my forgetting even to get the little gold heart which hung so long on my neck placed there by your own hands or your neglecting to restore it on that breast from which for its safety it was taken. Oh my dear fanny what would I not now give for that precious little heart which would constantly remind me of my first ardent affection for you, and which you hung on my neck in token of your purest love for me. Thus my dearest jewel my whole life is employed in thinking of you and I suppose I may now say of my little angels, kiss them a thousand times for me, keep my name familiar with Ned. If anything should happen [to] him I could never after do any good.

I can not say any more but for ever and ever your loving husband.

John.



Pope: "My friend we have concluded to take charge of your spiritual welfare, and your temporal estate, so that you need not be troubled with the care of them in future; we will say your prayers and spend your money, while you live, and bury you in the Potters Field, when you die. Kneel then! and kiss our big toe in token of submission."

Brother Jonathan: "No you dont, Mr. Pope! you're altogether too willing; but you cant put 'the mark of the Beast' on Americans."

Young America: "You can neither coax, nor frighten our boys, Sir! we can take care of our own worldly affairs, and are determind to "Know nothing" but this book, to guide us in spiritual things." ("Know nothing" is a "double entendre," alluding also to the nativist political party of the same name.)

First bishop: "I cannot bear to see that boy, with that horrible book."

Second bishop: "Only let us get a good foot hold on the soil, and we'll burn up those Books and elevate this Country to the Same degree of happiness and prosperity, to which we have brought Italy, Spain, Ireland and many other lands."

Third bishop: "Sovereign Pontiff! say that if his friends, have any money, when he dies; they may purchase a hole, for him in my cemetery, at a fair price."

Fourth bishop: "Go ahead Reverend Father; I'll hold our boat by this sprig of shamrock."



