

## NEW YORK CITY

Irish American Protestants/Scots Irish/Ulster Scots first came to America before 1776. (colonial years) The largest number of Catholic Irish immigration came after the famine in 1845, although many also immigrated during the colonial period. Most came from Cork, Galway, and Tipperary. Large numbers also originated in counties Cavan, Meath, Dublin, and Laois.

The Irish population in colonial New York was small until the 1720s, when trade with Ireland became more regular. From the mid 1700s there was a large amount of American commerce in flaxseed carried on between New York City and several Irish ports which led to an increase in the number of Irish merchants and skilled indentured servants as well as soldiers in the city. From the nineteenth century into the 1990s the Irish-born population in New York City was larger than that of any other city in the United States.

New York City enforced a rigid penal code against Catholics until 1784, providing for disfranchisement of "papists" and imprisonment or death for "priests and Jesuits." Only a small number of Gaelic-speaking Irish Catholics settled in the city, mainly soldiers and servants. Most concealed their religion or affiliated with established churches until they were granted freedom of worship. Interestingly, an annual St. Patrick's Day parade dates back to 1766.

After the British left the number of Irish arriving in New York City rose, with noticeably more Catholic, unskilled workers. Immigration was particularly heavy in the years following the Napoleonic Wars (there were twelve thousand Irish in the city in 1816) and again during the 1830s, when about 200,000 Irish arrived at the Port of New York. The Catholic church grew at the same pace.

The repeal of the *Alien and Sedition Acts* cleared the way for the emigration of Irish political exiles of the rebellion of 1798. Some of the men who played influential roles in the city were:

Thomas Addis Emmet, attorney general of New York State

Thomas O'Connor, who launched the first American newspaper for Irish and Catholic interests, the *Shamrock*; or, *Hibernian Chronicle* (1810)

William James MacNeven, a physician who also lectured on medicine and chemistry

*Alien and Sedition Act: passed in 1798 by a Federalist-controlled Congress, the Alien and Sedition Acts were four laws aimed at restricting political opposition and strengthening national security. They increased residency requirements for citizenship, allowed the president to deport "dangerous" aliens, and criminalized false or malicious writing against the government. The laws were designed to weaken the Democratic-Republican party and mainly targeted journalists and editors criticizing President John Adams.*

*The acts were intended to protect the young nation, but they are widely remembered for violating free speech and press rights, marking the first major test of First Amendment liberties.*

The city's acceptance of growing numbers of Irish immigrants was eased by these men and by the socially and politically prominent Irish merchants.

The Irish in New York City saw the number of members of the Catholic Church and its clergy grow. From 1825 the leading Irish newspaper in the city was the Catholic *Truth Teller*. The public began to associate Irish nationality and Catholicism even though Protestant Irish emigrants continued to settle in the city.

At different periods during the nineteenth century, nativist swings in popular opinion led to acts against the city's Irish that ranged from discrimination in hiring (as seen by the frequently posted sign "No Irish Need Apply" to attacks by mobs on Catholic property.

In response to incidents of religious persecution such as the burning of St. Mary's Church on Grand Street in 1831, the *Ancient Order of Hibernians* was chartered in May 1836 at a meeting in the parish of St. James on the Lower East Side. An Irish Catholic fraternal organization, the order had as its initial purpose the protection of the Mass, the priest, and the church.

In addition to nativist incidents there were periodic confrontations between Catholic and Protestant Irish, usually termed Orange-Green or the Orange Riots. These riots stemmed from religious, political, and cultural attitudes. The earliest account is of an attack by the Irish Catholics of Greenwich Village, which took place when Protestants marched through their neighborhood in July 1824 to commemorate the Protestant victory at the Battle of the Boyne (1690). Although

no one was killed more than one hundred Catholic Irishmen were arrested, charged with rioting, and imprisoned.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Irish lived all over NYC; based on what was affordable. After 1845 many lived in the cheap crowded tenements in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> wards.

The Five Points (from Chinatown south) neighborhood in the 6<sup>th</sup> ward and the East River neighborhood in the wards 1 and 4 were densely populated with low-income housing, but close to places of work. These wards had high numbers of immigrants from Co. Kerry working on the waterfront. Immigrants from Donegal lived near the approach to the Brooklyn Bridge. The *Dead Rabbits* gang was a street gang operating in this part of Lower Manhattan and got their name after throwing a dead rabbit into a room during a gang meeting which some members saw as an omen and withdrew, forming their own gang. They usually fought nativist groups who viewed Catholics and criminals as threatening. Their symbol was a dead rabbit on a pike and were aka the *Mulberry Boys/Mulberry Street Boys*. They were known for using brickbats.

An anti-Irish, anti-Catholic, nativist criminal gang known as the *Bowery Boys* operated in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in the Bowery neighborhood; (a little north of Little Italy) a more prosperous, working-class neighborhood. The gang was made up of exclusively of volunteer firemen who fought rival firehouses over who would put out each fire and the Dead Rabbits.

Wards 7, 14 and 17 had a strong presence of immigrants from Co. Cork. Wards 12, 18 and 21 housed a working-class Irish population with wards 18 and 21 housing a large number of Co. Kerry immigrants.

The Irish also established communities in Brooklyn near the Navy Yard and Fulton Ferry.

By 1855 the Irish were 25-50% of the population in 16/22 wards.

Most Irish families took in boarders and needed their children to also work to make ends meet. Families who could move to better quarters did so but 1000's of others didn't escape the effects of long-term poverty; crime, insanity, domestic violence, prostitution, and alcoholism, gradually making the areas in which they lived to some of the city's worst slums.

As early as 1855 the Irish made up a quarter to a half of the total population in sixteen of the city's twenty-two wards, and more than one quarter of the population in both Manhattan and Brooklyn had been born in Ireland.

The construction of bridges and railroads to connect Manhattan and the demand for domestic servants, caused the Irish to scatter throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn, and what is now the Bronx to live near their work.

The Crimmins Construction Company had contracts for both the Croton Aqueduct and the High Bridge, and they employed as many as 12,000 Irish laborers. By 1855 about 86 percent of the city's laborers and 74 percent of its domestic servants were Irish born. Irish women were also well represented among the city's laundresses and nurses, and more than half the city's blacksmiths, weavers, masons, bricklayers, plasterers, stonecutters, and polishers were Irish-born men.

By the middle of the century more than 11,000 Irish men and women were skilled artisans in the city's expanding clothing industry, working as dressmakers, seamstresses, furriers, hatters, shoemakers, and tailors.

Small businesses such as carting concerns, groceries, and saloons created an Irish middle class as early as the 1850s.

New York City became the headquarters for American support of Irish political causes (Irish nationalism). Speaking tours, fund raising, newspaper publishing, military action, and more was all coordinated in the city.

In the 1820s and 1840s various groups such as the *Friends of Ireland* rallied support for Daniel O'Connell's movements in Ireland to emancipate Catholics and repeal the Act of Union. More than \$40,000 in cash was collected in 1848 to support a revolution in Ireland, and in 1854 the Emmet Monument Association relied on Irish militia regiments in the city as the base of its secret revolutionary movement.

*The Act of Union: in effect January 1, 1801, merged the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. abolishing the Irish Parliament in after the 1798 rebellion by abolishing the Irish Parliament and granting Irish representation in Westminster (100 MPs) but still excluding Catholics)*

In 1876 the Clan na Gael successfully orchestrated the rescue of six Fenian prisoners who had been transported to Fremantle, Australia, and brought them into New York Harbor in August.

Newspapers in the city such as the *Irish Citizen*, the *Gaelic American*, and the *United Irishman* were edited by exiled Irish political leaders.

In an alternative form of Irish nationalism, the Orange Order revived the tradition of marching on 12 July, leading to serious disturbances in 1870 and 1871 that resulted in deaths and injuries.

Patrick Ford, who organized the American branch of the Irish Land League, raised more than \$300,000 in 1881 for its land reform campaign through his *Irish World*. The arts, especially the cultivation of the Irish language and the study of Irish literature, history, and music, were the focus of the monthly magazine the *Gael*, published in New York City from 1881 to 1904.

Irish social, benevolent, military, and religious organizations met in places like Hibernian Hall and Montgomery Hall, both on Prince Street, which were also the headquarters for several Irish volunteer militia companies, for the 69th Regiment (the Irish Brigade that served with distinction during the Civil War), and for the Convention of Irish Societies, the first coordinating organization for the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

There were also a number of county societies that operated as benevolent societies providing disability and death benefits to members, as well as fostering social and employment networks. Some small counties, like Longford and Westmeath, sent large numbers of emigrants to New York City through these societies.

About 40 Irish and Irish-Americans founded the New York Catholic Library Association in 1856, and in 1860 a branch of the Ossianic Society of Dublin opened in New York City to promote the translation and publication of manuscripts in the Irish language.

Politically the Irish in NYC were influenced by anti-alien, anti-Irish, and anti-Catholic party platforms. Jeffersonian Republicans party was a pro-French (anti-British) and repealed restrictive naturalization laws.

Irish immigrants were courted by politicians associated with Tammany Hall once suffrage was extended in 1827, and soon men like the labor radical Mike Walsh aspired to political careers.

As early as 1844 an estimated 90 percent of Irish Catholics in NYC voted Democratic. They strongly opposed the Republican implementation of the federal draft in 1863 which escalated into a full-scale race riot. But the Irish didn't dominate Tammany Hall until the 1870s, when Honest John Kelly took over as its leader after the Tweed Ring was exposed by Charles O'Connor. The Tweed Ring was a 19th century corrupt organization led by William "Boss" Tweed in the 1860-70's. The ring embezzled millions through rigged city contracts, tax manipulation and voter fraud. Tweed was arrested and imprisoned in 1871.

According to the encyclopedia of NYC, "Despite a reputation for corruption, Tammany Hall was popular with the Irish for very basic reasons. Big Tim Sullivan, a businessman and politician who controlled the Bowery and Lower East Side, ran a political club that offered localized social welfare and organized entertainments in exchange for the loyalty of voters in his district on the Lower East Side."<sup>1</sup>

Tammany Hall was the Democratic party's political machine working to help immigrants become citizens so they could vote in local elections; they aggressively recruited the Irish. They were behind the election of the city's first Irish Catholic mayor in 1880; businessman William R. Grace, and prepared men such as Alfred E. Smith, James A. Farley, and Robert F. Wagner for state and national politics.

By 1900, when 22 percent of the city was still Irish by birth or descent and the membership of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick was dominated by men connected with Tammany Hall.

This organization helped immigrants with jobs on public works projects and made important inroads into the civil service (notably the police and fire departments, the post office, the courts, and the transit system).

In 1908 about 21 percent of schoolteachers in New York City were the daughters of Irish immigrants.

The Irish middle and upper class was growing and the Catholic church dedicated St. Patrick's Cathedral at 5th Avenue and 50th Street. Wealthy Irish-Americans were important supporters of Catholic social welfare organizations, such as the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin (1881), which aided homeless Irish newsboys, and the Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary for the Protection of Irish Immigrant Girls (1883), which was affiliated with Castle Garden.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century efforts were coordinated by the Archdiocese of New York with the support of Catholic Charities. The Friendly Sons of St.

Patrick, the Catholic Club (1871), and the American Irish Historical Society (1896) attracted prominent and professional men such as lawyers, judges, doctors, journalists, and businessmen. The close partnership between Irish and Catholic networks enabled many of these men to influence municipal politics and business; 10 percent of white-collar occupations in the city were held by the Irish in 1900. The clergy and members of the Catholic church were dominated by Irish men and women, both immigrant and second-generation, who served in parishes but also as teachers, social workers, and administrators.

The docks, railroad yards, and factories of Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen provided steady employment for generations, but gradually the Irish moved uptown on both the East and West sides of Manhattan. With the extension of elevated railroad tracks north to Harlem in 1880, the Irish penetrated the Upper East Side, where they became the second dominant element after the Germans until about 1910.

On the Lower East side, the typical buildings were 7 story walk-ups covering 90% of a 25x100 lot. Usually they housed 4 families/floor with dark unventilated middle rooms and shared outdoor toilets. They had a central staircase and later, the minimum size air shafts were added according to law. Some buildings had over 100 people and families of 8 or more sharing tiny 2 room apartments. There was no indoor plumbing; water sources were outside the building. Many of these apartments also served as workplaces.

After 1910 At this point better housing was available in Washington Heights and Inwood, so they continued their move

Brooklyn was close enough to NYC that the Irish began settling there; especially around the Navy Yard, in Greenpoint and Williamsburg, and after 1890 in the 9th ward near Prospect Park, and in Flatbush, Sunset Park, and Bay Ridge. Irish settlements in Queens on the eve of the First World War included Long Island City, Astoria, Woodside, Sunnyside, and Rockaway Beach; in the Bronx Irish parishes were common in Mott Haven, Melrose, Morrisania, Highbridge, Fordham, and Kingsbridge.

Between 1890 – 1920 more than 203,000 residents of NYC were natives of Ireland. Transatlantic travel was becoming easier and increased ties between Ireland and NYC helped the growth of a social network based on Irish customs and cultural activities.

Gaelic sports, particularly football and hurling, became a dominant expression of cultural nationalism after the formation of the Gaelic Athletic Association of New York in 1914.

## **NYC TENEMENTS**

New York City couldn't expand fast enough to safely accommodate the many new arrivals in such a short time and without any legal regulations requiring them to provide safe buildings, property owner-built tenement buildings instead.

In the tenements, landlords crammed as many living spaces as they could into a single building. This meant the spaces often lacked adequate plumbing and ventilation. To make matters worse, many immigrants shared the tiny living spaces with their extended families to save money. Others took in boarders who helped contribute to the cost of the rent. Landlords also neglected the upkeep of the buildings to maximize their profits. Pollution, noise, and disease were constant realities of life in the tenements of New York.

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Life in the tenements was maybe the hardest on women. They spent the majority of their days in cramped spaces without access to fresh air. Whenever illness swept through a building, it was the women who were responsible for nursing their children. And because of their status as newly arrived immigrants, most of the women also had to take on additional work to help support their families.

By the late 19/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Upper West Side of Manhattan had many Irish owned businesses, Upper Manhattan/Inwood has a strong Irish presence today, Woodlawn in the Bronx is often called "Little Ireland" and Maspeth, Woodside, and Sunnyside in Queens are heavily Irish with clusters in Astoria and Floral Park.

Surnames often found in the Woodlawn neighborhood in the Bronx are Byrne, Doyle, Kelly, McCarthy, Murphy, O'Brien, O'Connor, O'Sullivan, and Ryan.



In NYC, the most common are Kelly, Murphy, O'Brien, O'Byrne, O'Connor, O'Neill, O'Reilly, O'Sullivan and Ryan.

## **BOSTON (MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY)**

Irish immigrants (mostly Protestant Irish from Ulster) began arriving in Boston in the 1800s, with a surge of Catholic emigrants coming in later. These first settlers were descendants of English Puritans and felt strongly tied to England and their anti-Irish sentiments. In 1898 Catholics lived with intense discrimination, anti-Catholic sentiments, economic competition, and being portrayed with the usual stereotypes of being lazy, poor, alcoholics, and violent. They were excluded from jobs and when they did find a job, were paid lower wages for their work. These jobs were usually physically taxing like dock workers, factory hands and domestic servants.

The Port of Boston was a major center of immigration during the Famine. (1845–1852). By 1850, the Irish were the largest ethnic group in Boston. Most of the immigrants during this period were poor, unskilled laborers from rural backgrounds who settled in the slums of the North End, South Cove (now Chinatown) and Fort Hill.

Many of the new immigrants were not only poor but had been but weakened by typhus contracted on the ships that had brought them. To contain the health risk, a quarantine hospital and an almshouse was built on Deer Island where hundreds of immigrants died and were buried in unmarked graves. A cholera epidemic came through Boston in 1849 and the North End's poor, who lived in crowded, unsanitary conditions on the waterfront, were the hardest hit, with over 500 dead.

They lived mainly in the waterfront and crowded North End and East Boston slums. They worked low-wage jobs as laborers or servants, The Irish became the dominant immigrant group in Boston and built many of the infrastructure and institutions and began building churches, communities and a political power base. They built townhouses on Beacon Hill, cleared land for the North Station, filled in the South End, and built up the business district behind Faneuil Hall.

Although Boston was one of America's principal cities and ports, its physical growth had always been hampered by its location on the Shawmut peninsula. In the early 19th century, architect Charles Bulfinch proposed addressing the problem by filling in the marshes around Boston to accommodate new urban development. His first project became known as the Bulfinch triangle, and was a grid of new

streets arranged on the former Mill Pond in today's West End neighborhood. By the second half of the 19th century, all railroads connecting Boston to points north and west of the city crossed the Charles River, and four of these eight railroads erected depots in the Bulfinch Triangle.

Over the next forty years, the Boston and Marine railroad (B&M) became the predominant railway company in the Northeast. In 1842 it gained the charters in New Hampshire and Maine, later purchasing 47 competing regional short lines. By 1887 the B&M had sole control of the Boston-Portland route and access into Vermont and Quebec through lease agreements with the Eastern and the B&L railroads.

The B&M began construction of a new North Union Station in 1893, just south of the current North Station structure. North Union Station was opened in stages from 1893 to 1894, and by the time it was fully completed, the station had become popularly known as "North Station."

These neighborhoods kept them close to family, friends, and the (limited) job opportunities on the wharves. "Tenement houses in these Irish slums were extremely crowded, with a very low standard of living and high rents. The communal sinks and bathrooms had insufficient drainage and sanitation and facilitated the spread of disease through the communities. When the cholera epidemic of 1849 reached Boston, the North End Irish neighborhood was hit the hardest, causing the deaths of over 500 Irish immigrants, the majority of whom were children."<sup>3</sup> (nps.gov – national park service)

Most Irish were illiterate and earned just enough to pay their rent. Work was unsafe and living conditions being so poor meant that many of the men died in middle age, leaving their wife and children with no money or support. Women worked wherever and whenever they could as servants, children peddled newspapers, shined shoes until they were 12 and old enough to work on the piers and other construction sites.

Many others, though, just passed through Boston and continued west in search of jobs and acceptance.

When English puritans arrived (1631) they declared Boston to be a "city upon a hill" and a beacon of hope and morality for the rest of the world. Although they too

left England in search of religious freedom, they didn't extend the same courtesy to Catholics, who they saw as "blasphemous". They were known as the Boston "Brahmins" and became influential leaders in Massachusetts politics and business. Because they saw the Irish Catholics as a threat (political mobilization and growing influence) they started to form anti-immigrant political parties.

One of the parties, "The Know Nothings" began in the 1850s and solidified anti-Irish, anti-Catholic political power. This was a secret society with passwords, hand-signs, and a sworn pledge never to betray the order. Qualifications to join were to be from pureblooded Protestant Anglo-Saxon stock and to reject all Catholics. If members were asked anything about the society their response was always "I know nothing".

"This secret fraternity rose to prominence in 1853 and transformed into the powerful political party known as the Know Nothings. At its height in the 1850s, the Know Nothing party, originally called the American Party, included more than 100 elected congressmen, eight governors, a controlling share of half-a-dozen state legislatures from Massachusetts to California, and thousands of local politicians."

Party members supported deportation of foreign beggars and criminals; a 21 year naturalization period for immigrants; mandatory Bible reading in schools; and the elimination of all Catholics from public office. They wanted to restore their vision of what America should look like with temperance, Protestantism, self-reliance, with American nationality and work ethic enshrined as the nation's highest values."<sup>2</sup> (Smithsonian magazine)

They were America's first major third party and the first party to leverage economic concerns over immigration as a major part of their platform.

The American Civil War became a way to show loyalty to their new country. Most Irish immigrants seemed to oppose Lincoln, but they believed in the Constitution and many joined the Union Army. After the war they were looked on a little differently, having shown their loyalty to the country, and restrictions began to relax. They were allowed to hold municipal government positions, and regulations pledging equal treatment for people of all religions in city hospitals and public schools were enacted.

"By 1870, it was estimated that 2/3 of the city's laborers were of Irish descent. and there was greater mobility for the second generation of Boston Irish, who were

coming of age and beginning to move into semi-skilled occupations. During this time, there was a demographic expansion of Boston and the surrounding area, which resulted in an increased number of infrastructure jobs for immigrants and social and economic benefits. New forms of transportation and increasing status allowed the Irish to begin to move out of the waterfront tenements into nearby towns and suburbs, and their steadily increasing population meant that they formed a more influential political constituency. By the end of the 1880s, the new generation of Boston Irish was moving upward in society; they had found a place in the working of the city and could now call themselves native sons of Boston”.<sup>3</sup> (nps)

Ward bosses emerged in Irish neighborhoods in the mid-1880's. If you supported the ward boss you could be lent money, have credit extended to you or favors granted. One of these bosses was John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, JFK's maternal grandfather who became boss of the North End ward. In 1884 the first Irish Catholic mayor was elected and the Irish began moving into positions from the ward level, to city, state and national politics. Fitzgerald was elected to the US House of Representatives and later became the first Irish-born mayor of Boston 1906-1908 and again in 1910.

In the North End neighborhood of East Boston, Patrick Kennedy, paternal grandfather to JFK, was the ward boss. He was later elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives and became a State Senator in 1889.

Joseph P Kennedy's (JFK's father) political family elevated his Irish Catholic family, and he was able to attend a prep school where many of the Brahmin family children attended. He attended Harvard earning a degree in banking. But he found that being Catholic still didn't allow him to start at the same level as his classmates; prejudices still remained.

He married and moved his family to Brookline, NY. When asked why he left Boston he said, “it was no place to bring up Irish Catholic children” and that he “didn't want them to go through what I had to go through when I was growing up there.”<sup>5</sup> (nps)

In Boston the most common surnames are Byrne, Kelly, Murphy, O'Brien, O'Sullivan/Sullivan, Ryan and Walsh.

## PHILADELPHIA

Protestant Scots-Irish and Quakers were living in Philadelphia long before the American revolution. (since the 1700s) At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were 5,000 Irish immigrants in Philadelphia; a number of who were veterans of the Irish Volunteers who took part in the 1798 Rebellion.

*1798 Rebellion: an uprising that began with the society of United Irishmen who were inspired by the American and French revolutions. They wanted parliamentary reform, Catholics emancipation and the elimination of British rule in Ireland.*

The Irish, like in other cities, were mainly servants, freemen and runaways fleeing prejudice, oppression, religious hatred, unemployment, and often, landlords to whom they owed back rent, according to Dennis Clark in his book, *The Irish in Pennsylvania*.

The Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick was founded in 1771 with both Catholic and Protestant members.

The Friendly Sons was one of the benevolent organizations to extend aid to the thousands who made the perilous trip in “*coffin ships*,” to the port of Philadelphia. Nearly one out of five died during their journey. Their first stop after arriving was the Lazaretto, a quarantine station built in 1799 where the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers meet.

In the summer and fall of 1832 railroad tracks were built by Irish laborers about 30 miles west of Philadelphia originally built for the Philadelphia and Columbia RR. (later part of the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Main Line)

Railroad contractor Philip Duffy hired 57 Irish immigrants to lay this line through the area's densely wooded hills and ravines. The workers came to Philadelphia from Donegal, Tyrone and Londonderry. Less than two months after their arrival, all 57 died during this 2<sup>nd</sup> pandemic. While most died of the disease, forensic evidence suggests that some may have been murdered, perhaps due to fear of contagion as the pandemic spanned several continents and many years.

The site is located near Malvern, Pennsylvania near the intersection of King Road and Sugartown Road, where a Pennsylvania state historical marker has been placed.

Philadelphia was undergoing rapid industrialization and needed skilled and unskilled laborers. Between 1845 and 1851, 750,000 Irish refugees came to America; mainly rural dwellers who crammed into the large cities on the Eastern seaboard.

By 1860, more than 95,000 Irish men and women were living in Philadelphia, making the Irish the largest single immigrant population in the city. They worked as laborers in foundries, forges, rolling mills and brick works, as well as in wealthier homes as servants.

The Lombard Street Riot was a three-day race riot in 1842. The riot was the last in a 13-year period marked by frequent racial attacks in the city. During the years immediately before the riots, there were periodic outbreaks of racial, ethnic and religious violence among Irish Catholics, German Protestants, African Americans and even pacifist Quakers. These were the result of social and economic competition, especially between Irish Catholics and African Americans, who were both at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Many Irish refused to work on labor teams with African Americans

Irish Catholics, often competitors for the lowest-paying, unskilled and menial jobs, perceived the city's more successful African-American residents as flaunting their success, setting the stage for blacks to become targets for the immigrants' frustrations.

The most violent of the riots at this time occurred in 1844, (Philadelphia Nativist Riots/Bible Riots) when Nativists—Protestant Irish and American-born residents alarmed by the influx of Catholic foreigners—held a meeting in the predominantly Irish Catholic neighborhood of Kensington. Angry words turned to gunshots and by the time the riot was over, nativists had attacked *the Seminary of the Sisters of Charity*, burned St. Augustine's Church in Old City and St. Michael's Church in Kensington. The military was brought in to subdue an attack by thousands of

nativists on *St. Philip Neri Church* in Southwark, where the parish priest had applied for weapons and a protective force after being forewarned of impending trouble. At one point, cannon fire from the mob damaged part of the building. By the time the riot was brought under control, at least 15 people were dead and another 50 wounded.

Many of these new immigrants were Catholic and, as local author Ken Milano writes in his book *The Philadelphia Nativist Riots*, “the red carpet was not exactly waiting for the Irish Catholics when they immigrated to Philadelphia.” The same anti-Irish, anti-Catholic prejudice they experienced at home was also part of their new community: anti-immigrant sentiment had erupted several times in major riots in Kensington between 1828 and 1843.

But, as historian Dennis Clark notes, “the Irish were in Philadelphia to stay”.

By 1854, almost all the paving and construction firms in Port Richmond were owned by Irish. And there were Irish millionaires, like Colonel Thomas Fitzgerald, the son on immigrants and publisher of a weekly newspaper who left \$3 million at his death.

By 1857, 22 percent of the city’s grocers, 12 percent of its dry goods dealers, and 11 percent of its real estate agents had Irish last names.

Philadelphia's Police and Fire Department have always had a large number of Irish Americans as members. Many neighborhoods including Kensington (NE), Fishtown (NE), and Pennsport (So) are still heavily Irish. Today, Kensington has fairly low rents and is home to an active brewery scene. Formerly a working-class neighborhood it’s evolved into a town with bars, galleries and performance spaces. Fishtown is known for its culinary, art and music scene. Pennsport is an emerging

neighborhood along the Delaware River with historic buildings, boutiques and restaurants.

The Irish were also responsible for establishing many Catholic institutions, such as the universities of St. Joseph's, La Salle and Villanova.

Philadelphia's most common Irish surnames are Boyle, Byrne, Gallagher, Kelly, Murphy, O'Neill and Walsh.

## **BALTIMORE**

Baltimore's beginning is different from the others we've looked at. George Calvert, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Baltimore was an English politician under King James I and a member of Parliament.

George first petitioned the king for land in Newfoundland, but he didn't like the climate. He tried settling in Virginia but couldn't because of his religion, which was Catholic. So, he looked further north on the eastern seaboard and asked for a grant of land north of the Potomac River, which was granted in June 1632, not long after his death. His son received the grant and carried out his wishes that this land would be a refuge for English and Irish Catholics.

Maryland's status as a safe-haven played an instrumental role in the early forced immigration of the Irish to the colonies. In the 17th century, many Irish brought to the colonies were either indentured servants or prisoners-of-war from Oliver Cromwell's conquering of Ireland. Because they were typically Catholic, the more tolerant Chesapeake colonies were often their initial destination.

*Chesapeake colonies: Virginia and Maryland; established for profit from tobacco whose labor force consisted of indentured servants until 1676 when slave labor was used instead.*

Canals were being built in Baltimore which meant jobs for skilled laborers. The practicing of the Catholic faith was tolerated.

In 1828, the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad site in West Baltimore became a nexus for European immigrants recruited by the company. As the railroad expanded so too did West Baltimore. Pastures and farmland transformed into an urban center in 1830.



Because of the large number of Catholics living in Baltimore, the Archdiocese decided to create a new parish with a new church. St Peter the Apostle Church was built in the early 1840's.

When construction began there were so many volunteers from the surrounding Irish community that they had to turn some away, and construction time was shortened considerably. It was consecrated in 1844 and would become a focal point for those fleeing the famine. About 70,000 immigrants settled here in the 1850/60's.

A number of the stained glass windows in the church were purchased by or dedicated to Irish immigrants or those with Irish heritage. St. Peter's cemetery has been neglected over the years, but many of the gravestones show the birthdate and county; some in Irish.

In 1848, homes were built specifically for immigrant families so they could live close to their church, schools and workplaces. By 1849 all of these homes were sold to people of Irish descent, with most working for the Baltimore & Ohio RR.

In 1850 Baltimore was the second largest city, after NYC. It was farther from Ireland than Canada, Boston, NYC or Philadelphia, but there were a lot of job opportunities and a large Catholic community that was thriving. Many stayed but many traveled west by the railroad to Pittsburgh and Wheeling West Virginia , Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Missouri to find work.

Baltimore had its own chapter of the Gaelic League, known as the Irish Historical Society.

*Gaelic League: founded in Dublin in 1893 to revive the Irish language*

While Catholics might have had it easier here there was still anti-Irish sentiment as seen in the typical 'No Irish Need Apply' ads seen in the Baltimore Sun, 1857,

By 1880 the Irish were about 25% of the population.

In 1940, 2,159 immigrants from Ireland lived in Baltimore. 4,077 people of Irish birth or descent lived in the city, comprising 4.6% of the foreign-stock white population.

In the 1940 US Census, Irish Americans were 22% of the foreign-born population in Highlandtown. In Hamden, 7% of foreign-born residents were Irish American.

The Irish American community in the Baltimore metropolitan area was 341,683 in 2000, making up 13.4% of the area's population. This made them the second largest European ethnic group in the Baltimore area after the Germans. In the same year, 32,755 people in the Baltimore metropolitan area were of Scots Irish descent, or 1.3% of the metropolitan area's population

In 2011, Irish immigrants were the sixty-sixth largest foreign-born population in Baltimore.

In 2013, an estimated 37,359 Irish Americans resided in Baltimore city, 6% of the population.

Today Baltimore houses the first US Guinness Brewery (2018) in 64 years and is home to Guinness Blonde, created for the American Market. The second (2023) opened in Chicago's West Loop.

Baltimore Irish surnames include Byrne, Carroll, Doyle, Kelly, McCarthy, Murphy, O'Brien, Ryan, Quinn, Riley, and Walsh.

According to *A Letter from Ireland* the most common in the 1850-60s included: Brady, Brennan, Burke, Cahill, Cassidy, Connelly, Corcoran, Curran, Daly, Devine, Doherty, Doyle, Egan, Flanagan, Flynn, Gorman, Higgins, Kelly, Lynch, Maguire, Martin, McCabe, McCormack, McDermott, Molloy, Monaghan, Moran, Murphy, Murray, Quinn, Riley, Walsh, Ward.

O'Driscolls from Co. Cork settled in Baltimore..

Burke, Cullen/Collins, and McGurn from Donegal or Mayo worked on the B&O RR

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