

THE IRISH IN THE MIDWEST NOTES

The states in the Midwest, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. They're often grouped into the East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI) and West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, ND, NE, SD) divisions.

Irish migration to the Midwest peaked during the 1840s-1850s, with immigrants settling in cities like Chicago, St. Louis, and Cleveland, as well as farming communities in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana.

These states had the same problems that existed on the east coast; there were "No Irish Need Apply" signs all over, they competed with African Americans for low-wage, back breaking jobs and the "No Nothing" party had also spread to the Midwest.

ILLINOIS

Besides Chicago, the early 19th century wave of Irish immigrants settled largely in Randolph County, Gallatin County and Cairo. In the 1850s, the number of Irish in Illinois grew from around 20,000, to over 80,000.

Irish immigrants were essential to the construction of the Illinois and Michigan canals and the Illinois Central Railroad. They also made up a large percentage of the work force in steel mills and lumberyards. During the Civil War, over 12,000 Irish fought for Illinois including two infantry units named the Irish Legion and Irish Brigade.

According to the Encyclopedia of Irish History, from a few hundred residents in the 1830s, Chicago emerged as the fourth largest Irish city in America by 1860. Unlike their counterparts in the established cities of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, Chicago's Irish grew up with their city and exerted influence out of proportion to their numbers.

Irish labor—first on the Illinois & Michigan Canal (1836–1848) and later on the railroads, stockyards, and steel mills—contributed to Chicago's phenomenal growth from frontier town to urban metropolis.

The Lawlers from County Kildare made their way down the Ohio River in 1819 and began what would turn into a largely Irish Catholic farming community at Equality, in southeastern Illinois, a few miles northwest of Shawneetown.

The Encyclopedia of Chicago writes "As Chicago became even more ethnically and racially diverse, the Irish continued to be well represented at the highest levels of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese and city government, especially police and fire departments and the public school system."⁵

The Chicago Irish are perhaps best known for their political skills in winning elections and creating a multiethnic Democratic machine. They were not a majority among immigrants in the city, but they enjoyed a distinct advantage thanks to their knowledge of the English language and the British system of government. Chicago's twelve Irish mayors have governed for more than 80 years. Other legendary Irish politicians include "Honest John" Comiskey (father of the White Sox owner Charles Comiskey), "Hinky Dink" Kenna, "Bathhouse John" Coughlin, "Foxy Ed" Cullerton, and Johnny Powers (the nemesis of social reformer Jane Addams).

While politics and nationalism contributed to the high profile of Chicago's Irish, these tended to be male-dominated activities. The Catholic Church though, directly affected and involved the lives of thousands of Irish women and children as well as adult men with its large numbers of parishes, schools, hospitals and charitable institutions, Irish women played a large role in Chicago Catholicism, staffing hundreds of parish schools in the diocese, financing academies, high schools, colleges, hospitals, and schools of nursing. Agatha O'Brien, a working-class immigrant from County Carlow, Ireland, and her Mercy Sisters taught school, operated an employment bureau for Irish women, established Chicago's first orphanage and ran the city's first hospital. They nursed victims of the cholera epidemic of 1849.

Along with St. Xavier's, predominantly Irish female religious orders founded Barat College in Lake Forest, Rosary College in River Forest, and Mundelein College. While these schools operated independently from the Archdiocese, they drew many of their students and faculty from local Irish parishes. The same held true for Chicago's two largest Catholic universities. Loyola University and DePaul University.

INDIANA

The Irish immigrants who settled in southeastern Daviess County and in the western townships of Martin County came from the same three Irish provinces that most Irish Catholics, came to America from in the decades prior to the famine.

Burial records from the cemeteries in Daviess and Martin Counties show that out of the 180 Irish natives whose county of origin is specified, 99 (55%) came from the eastern province of Leinster, 43 (24%) from the northern province of Ulster, and the remaining 38 were from southern Munster Province and western Connaught Province in approximately equal numbers (about 10.5 % each).

Those from Ulster were mainly from Derry/Londonderry and Tyrone, and those from Leinster were mainly from the southern half of the province, especially Wexford and Kilkenny. An interesting note is that the emigrants from Wexford and Kilkenny usually emigrated to and stayed in eastern Canada rather than the US.

Irish immigrants set up well-defined rural communities in Beaver Island, Michigan and other locations in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

They came to Indiana in a number of ways. The local tradition in Daviess County is that they had worked on the Wabash and Erie Canal, (late 1840s and early 1850s in this part of the state), but the historical evidence actually suggests that, even though many did come into the area as canal workers, the earliest Irish arrived well before that period. Those pre-canal Irish joined an already established Catholic settlement that had its inception here early in the nineteenth century when some French Catholic settlers established a small community at Black Oak Ridge on the western fringe of present-day Montgomery. (the French established Saint Peter Church in Montgomery in 1818, making it the second oldest Catholic parish in the state).

They were joined origin by ancestors of families who came from England and settled in Maryland in the seventeenth century. Their descendants crossed the Appalachians in the 1780s and settled in Kentucky, and their children in turn joined the large number of settlers from Kentucky into southern Indiana in the first two decades of the 19th century.

The first members of what would become the Irish Catholic population of Daviess County appear to have arrived in 1821 when three brothers—John, Michael, and Denis Murphy—settled in the small town of Liverpool (later to be renamed Washington). This area was mostly forest and was made up of a cluster of log cabins on the Louisville-Vincennes Road.

Daviess County land records show multiple purchases made by John and Michael Murphy during the 1820s and 1830s, with Michael continuing to buy land into the 1830s and left a considerable amount of money to their heirs.

Other Irish families joined the Murphys in Daviess County during the latter half of the 1820s, establishing themselves among the farming population of the area. One of the first of these was a native of County Wexford named William Molloy (spelled “Meloy” on his headstone). Molloy had taken part in the 1798 Irish Rebellion, as did a number of others who settled on the east coast and the Midwest.

Two other Irish Catholics, John Toy and Phfelix Bradley, both from the province of Ulster, arrived in the Sugar Creek Hills shortly after Molloy. Toy came from County Tyrone and reached the northern part of Harrison Township in 1827. He didn't buy land but eventually purchased a tract about a mile northeast

of Molloy's. Bradley also likely arrived in 1827 and established his family on a farm in southern Barr Township, a few miles south of Saint Peter Church. He was from County Derry/Londonderry, a locale where the Bradley name was common.

Irish families continued to move into the area south and east of Saint Peter in the 1830s at a slow but steadily increasing rate.

The Irish Catholic population in eastern Daviess County was small but noticeable to outside observers by the mid-1830s. One of those outsiders was Bishop Simon Bruté of Vincennes. He decided that the Catholic population living in the eastern fringe of Barr Township was large enough to justify establishing a log church so the settlers in the area wouldn't have to go all the way to Saint Peter on Sundays. (Saint Mary Church in Barr Township).

By the end of the 1830s eastern Daviess County was home to two Catholic churches; Saint Peter (Black Oak Ridge) and Saint Mary.

Irish settlers continued to arrive with the 1840 census records showing at least twenty-two Irish families were living in Barr, Harrison, and Reeve Townships at the time. Land records suggest a surge in Irish Catholic land acquisition in the area in the late 1830s and intensifying in the early 1840s.

Naturalization records suggest the same pattern. Thus, of the ninety-five Irish natives who filed for citizenship in Daviess County between 1817 and 1850, ten had immigrated between 1821 and 1830, and sixty-six had done so between 1831 and 1840. Most of the Irish Catholics who acquired farms in the United States usually worked in various non-farm occupations before settling down to farm, suggesting that many of the Irish of Daviess County likely arrived there in the 1830s or in the early years of the 1840s. This would make the population largely pre-famine and before the peak of the canal-digging project in the area. (1847-1853)

The increase in the Irish farming population in the late 1830s and early 1840s led to the emergence of a largely Irish district in the southern fringes of Barr Township, the northern third or so of Reeve Township, and the northeastern quarter of Harrison Township. In response to this, the Catholic church established a mission chapel at Glencoe in 1840 named after Saint Patrick situated almost in the center of the three townships. This church became the religious center of the Irish living and farming in Sugar Creek Hills for the next thirty years and was also the site of a cemetery and a school.

How did these Irish families find their way to rural Daviess and Martin counties? Most landed in a port on the east coast and made their way directly westward through Pennsylvania and Ohio to Indiana. Of the 151 children born by 1850 to Irish farmers who lived in Daviess and Martin counties, a total of 63 were born in the mid-Atlantic coastal states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Only 9 were born in Canada or New England, 4 in southern states with an Atlantic coastline (Virginia and South Carolina), and 4 in Gulf Coast states (Mississippi and Louisiana).

The other 71 children were born in Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois. "This evidence suggests a relatively direct westward migration path from mid-Atlantic landing points, a pattern consistent with work on major road, canal, and railroad projects at the time."³ (indianahistory.org)

Three families who settled in the vicinity of Saint Mary and Saint Peter were the Nolans, Cunninghams, and Grannans. (the Nolans from or near the town of New Ross in County Wexford in the early 1840s).

Michael Cunningham was from County Roscommon and landed in NYC where he worked digging cellars, then moved to Rhode Island where he worked on a railroad, and then moved back to New York where he worked construction jobs in the city. In 1838, Michael and his siblings went south to Mobile, Alabama, but left because of an outbreak of yellow fever. Next, he headed north again, making his way up the Mississippi River and living for a time in Chicago. He worked on riverboats for seven years, mostly on the

Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. In 1840 he purchased 160 acres in Barr Township, very close to Saint Mary Church; finally settling there in 1843.

The Grannans came to America in 1830 from Lissoy, County Westmeath, and County Longford

The Irish who settled on farms in the area around Glencoe included William Donnelly, a native of County Wexford who left Ireland in 1822, emigrating to Canada where he worked as a laborer and then in 1824 took a ship across Lake Ontario to Oswego, New York, and entered the United States. Over the next twelve years, he worked on canals in upstate New York for a time and was in Kentucky in the mid-1830s. He got to Daviess County in 1836 and acquired land in northern Harrison Township, not far from William Molloy.

Michael Shea, a native of County Kilkenny near the western border of County Tipperary, settled in the area of Glencoe. Shea left Ireland in 1833, at the age of twenty-two and sailed from Liverpool to Philadelphia. After working there for a year, he moved to New York City and made his way west to Indiana in 1838. He bought land and settled in northern Reeve Township in 1840.

John Jones, a native of County Wicklow settled on a farm near Michael Shea in northern Reeve Township. He was born in 1809, immigrated to England in his early twenties, and worked in a soap factory for six months. He emigrated to Quebec in 1832 and worked for a few months on farms in Canada before entering the United States at Oswego, New York. He worked on a farm near Oswego for a short time and then moved west and worked on the Wabash and Erie Canals near Fort Wayne, Indiana. Jones eventually left canal work and became part of the crew on a flatboat on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in the late 1830s. He worked on riverboats of various kinds into the early 1840s, moving frequently between New Orleans, Louisiana; Mobile, Alabama; and Cincinnati, Ohio. During that time, Jones also worked occasionally on railroads. In 1850 he married a recently arrived Irish immigrant girl named Mary Gallagher in Cincinnati, and the couple moved to Daviess County, Indiana, bought land in Reeve Township, and settled down to farm.

In the center of a region where German, Swiss, and French immigrants were numerous, Irish Catholics were settling on farms and building rural Irish Catholic communities. These Irish immigrants came primarily from the provinces of Leinster and Ulster and began to arrive in the area well before the Great Famine and before the canal project in this region was underway. The paths they took across the United States ran mostly from the mid-Atlantic states straight west and they acquired farms in significant numbers in the 1830s and early 1840s, and by the time of the 1850 census, they had created the foundation of an Irish enclave in the heart of the southern Indiana countryside.

IOWA

Irish immigrants in 1800s were the second-largest immigrant group and settled in towns along the Mississippi like Davenport and Dubuque (nicknamed "Dublin") and expanding to areas like Emmetsburg.

Irish immigrants steadily moved further west across the state, including to central Iowa. They found work as laborers, building the extensive railroad network across the state, and working in the lead mines near Dubuque. Others became farmers or worked as tradesmen. Irish labor was essential in laying over 500 miles of railroad track by the end of the 1850s, connecting Iowa's agricultural resources to broader markets.

Bishop Mathias Loras of Dubuque actively encouraged Irish Catholics to settle in Iowa, helping to establish communities in northeastern Iowa. The Church provided essential social and economic support.

By 1846, the south end of Dubuque was known as "Dublin". By 1850, the Irish comprised nearly 25% of the population in Dubuque County, and by 1860, about 1,800 were Irish-born.

Steamships and railroads began making travel safer and easier for those who could afford it, and those companies began promoting immigration to boost the Iowa population. The State of Iowa opened immigration offices and published printed materials in native languages extolling the opportunities in Iowa - low taxes, religious and political freedom, and the promise of healthy living conditions. Most of settlers came from the eastern states and the Upper South, but soon immigrants and their children from western Europe, became a factor in every county in the state.

Iowa's river cities, especially Davenport and Dubuque, allowed people to sail through the Great Lakes and take a train from Chicago or enter through New Orleans.

Burgeoning factories in the East and the need for railroad and canal workers and other unskilled labors opened job opportunities in low-wage occupations. Like other groups, farming was what many immigrant families hoped to do, and many were successful. They too settled in Iowa river towns, especially Dubuque, and also in Emmetsburg in north central Iowa. Their attachment to the Catholic Church, again especially in northeastern Iowa, provided economic and social support. Several convents and monasteries recruited nuns and priests who taught in private Catholic schools, operated orphanages, and medical facilities. The Irish, like the Germans, opposed prohibition and became a major component of the Democratic Party.

KANSAS

Irish immigrants were the first large ethnic group to settle in Kansas City and carved the city skyline by cutting roads into the limestone bluffs at the edge of the Missouri River. Shortly after the Civil War, Irish labor helped build the Kansas Pacific Railroad,

The mascot of the University of Kansas is the Jayhawk. During the 1850s, when pro-slavery forces clashed with abolitionists on the Kansas-Missouri state line, Kansans were given the nickname "Jayhawkers" after a mythical bird in Irish folklore that worried its prey to death.

Kansas communities are filled with Irish names: Chapman and Solomon in Dickinson County, Vesper in Lincoln County and St. Benedict in Nemaha County. Patrick Doyle, an Irish immigrant who settled in Marion County south of Florence, was the inspiration for Doyle Creek, Doyle Township and the Doyle post office. Meade County has Irish Flats. And, in Marshall County, there is Irish Creek.

MICHIGAN

In the book *Irish Immigrants in Michigan: A History in Stories*, by Pat Commins and Elizabeth Rice, they point out that while you might picture Boston or New York when you think of Irish immigrants settling in America, those cities were already crowded in the early 1800s. Michigan was a frontier colony at that point, but the construction of the Erie Canal in the 1830s made it easy to get to.

Detroit had been settled as a frontier and a fur trading community by the French in the 1700s, and had a reputation as a Catholic enclave already. The Irish settlers originally made their home on the east side of Detroit but shifted westward into where Corktown now is. The name comes from these people's origins, which was in County Cork.

Irish immigrants settled all over the state with most of the settlers being wealthy "adventurers" who found a home in the fur trade on Mackinac Island, moving down to Beaver Island when Mackinac grew crowded.

In the mid 1840's Irish was the first language of everyone here and business was conducted in the Irish language.

Some moved north to copper country in the Keweenaw Peninsula, as many of the Irish immigrants had worked as copper miners in their home country. When the mines were less plentiful in Michigan, they moved west again were replaced by the Finnish and Italian populations that are the majority of the population there today.

Other areas of settlement included Beaver Island, Grand Rapids, Irish Hills, Saginaw, and the Sault St. Marie Canal.

MINNESOTA

Ann Regan writes in *Irish in Minnesota* that the experience of Irish immigrants in Minnesota “defies generalization....they have created stereotypes and broken them, held to traditions and made new ones.”

Irish immigrants began coming to the Minnesota region in the 1820s as soldiers at Fort Snelling and lumberjacks from Canada. Because of its location on the east bank of the Mississippi River, St. Paul grew quickly in the 1840s and 1850s. The future capital city of Minnesota, St. Paul also served as a launching point for westward migration, first via steamboat and later the railroad.

The most prominent Irish community in the 1880s was Connemara Patch, a shantytown near Dayton’s Bluff on the East Side, St. Paul. The town was formed by Archbishop John Ireland’s attempt to turn 300+ Irish paupers, who arrived in June 1880, from the region of Connemara into Western-Minnesota farmers, settling first in Graceville then moving to St. Paul.

Each family was offered 160 acres of land, a small house and were loaned enough food for 1 year. But things went badly from the beginning. Teens were separated from their families and told to find jobs so they could send money to their families. They arrived too late in the season to plant their first crops, and were completely unprepared for the winter of 1880–1881; one of the worst in Midwestern history.

Ireland expected the families to farm their land and ultimately pay it off. The Connemaras, however, weren’t familiar with large-scale farming techniques, they hardly spoke English and would rather find work as day laborers on the nearby railroad or already established farms.

The idea was that the farmers paid Bishop Ireland, who was supposed to pay the railroads, who were supposed to have gotten the land from Congress. But Congress decided that the railroads had improperly claimed the land and took some of it back.

Like Swede Hollow and other poor neighborhoods built along the river flats, Connemara Patch was a working-class ethnic area. It was close to commercial activity in downtown St. Paul and offered a range of employment opportunities. Residents found work as teamsters, tinsmiths, dressmakers, blacksmiths, and conductors.

A 1902 *St. Paul Globe* article paints one of the most vivid pictures of Connemara Patch, “a little settlement that lies at the foot of Dayton’s Bluff like sediment in the bottom of a big pool.” It was a small, rather hidden neighborhood. The writer visited on a sunny spring day and described the streets as crooked and the houses—or “huts”—as awkwardly built. Children played happily in the mud and sunshine, wearing tattered clothes.

After years of lawsuits, a few were granted Homesteader Rights and they were able to buy their land directly from the government. Dozens of other farms - about 28,000 acres - were bought by Bishop Ireland and the farmers were required to buy the land from him for \$6 per acre - which was 50% more than they were originally promised.

Bishop Ireland wasn’t deterred, and had more success settling other groups of immigrants on over 369,000 acres of Minnesota land through the Catholic Colonization Society. Colonies in Avoca, Fulda, Clontarf, Degraff, Mineota, and Ghent were populated with Irish Catholic immigrants.

For the Catholic Church, the program was a stunning success and John Ireland became the first Archbishop of Saint Paul.

The whole area was cleared out by 1956 during the construction of Interstate 94. In 2005, the City of St. Paul created Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary on the former site of the neighborhood.

In general the Irish came to Minnesota for land. The US government signed the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux with the Dakota tribe in 1851, which opened the territory west of the Mississippi River. This included the Minnesota River Valley, a timber-rich region easy to access from St. Paul by steamboat. With the Treaty of Mendota later in 1851, a total of 24 million acres of land became available for new settlement.

According to Wikipedia, under the treaty, the U.S. government agreed to pay annuities to the Dakota equal to about 7.5 cents per acre. New settlers would pay about \$1.25 per acre.

Patricia Johnston mentions in *Minnesota's Irish* that many of the Irish in Minnesota were "two boat" migrants: One boat brought them across the Atlantic from Ireland, and a second to Minnesota. The second leg of the journey would often involve several modes of transportation, but the steamboat was important for the early arrivals in Minnesota. It wouldn't be until later in the nineteenth century that more Irish would come directly to Minnesota from Ireland, typically joining family already established in the area.

In 1900, the Chief of Police, John O'Connor created the O'Connor System which enabled known criminals to reside in the city so long as they obeyed local laws. This allowance brought more than one famous criminal to Saint Paul, such as notorious Irish gangster Machine Gun Kelly and mob-boss "Dapper" Danny Hogan.

Although Germans made up the majority of the population, between 1932-1972, nine out of ten Saint Paul mayors were Irish.

Hennepin and Ramsay counties state their Irish population at about 10.5 each. The St. Paul neighborhoods of MacGroveland, Highland Park and West Seventh are heavily Irish, with about 1/3 of the residents saying they're Irish.

Wabasha, Dakota, Washington, Cook and LaSueur counties are the most Irish with 12% or more residents claiming Irish heritage. (Wabasha is over 14%)

MISSOURI

By 1850, Irish and German immigrants made up 43% of St. Louis's population, with even more Irish immigrants in the 1870-80's. Immigrants from Kerry settled in areas north of St. Louis named the "Kerry Patch" and Cheltenham, Dogtown and Kansas City. Kansas City had the second highest Irish population during the 19th century and by the 1870s the Irish had gained quite a bit of political influence.

St. Louis had two separate mass migrations of Irish descendants. The first arrivals settled in the 5th Ward establishing boarding/rooming houses on Morgan Street (now Laclede's Landing) while they looked for work. Many Irish men took jobs that were dangerous, dirty and socially frowned upon; servants, bricklayers, in the clay mines and breweries and other unskilled laborer jobs. Some joined the priesthood and some women became nuns. Many were able to get hired on the city's police and fire departments, where they were often paid less than a dollar a week.

The Erie, Hudson, and Delaware canals brought the Irish into the backcountry, where they often worked digging coal. In Kansas City they worked in the stockyards, manufacturing plants, warehouses, meat packing plants, and on the Mississippi as boatmen and dockmen.

In Ireland they formed gangs to help them survive; they did the same here. The Kerry Patch was ruled by the Clabber Alley, Poverty Pocket, Wild Cat Chute, Castle Thunder and Battle Row gangs.

Close to the river, the "Kerry Patch" grew notorious for prostitution, dog fighting and numbers rackets. The average life expectancy of someone in these areas was fourteen years old.

Prohibition in 1920, actually helped the Irish. Their homegrown brewing skills allowed them to fight for control of the black market for liquor. Some of these people would be involved in bootlegging and make their own product in home breweries.

As the city grew, some Irish were able to move away from the city by obtaining higher paying jobs like Wagner Electric until the start of the second world war. By the 1900s, they were moving West to neighborhoods near Cote Brilliante. Census records show this area was filled with Irish families, many of them doing well.

Railways in the area were:

the Pacific Railroad of Missouri (due west from St. Louis to Kansas City)

Northwest Missouri Railroad. (St. Louis to Omaha)

Southwest branch of the Pacific Railroad (southwest from St. Louis)

St Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad (due south from St. Louis)

Hannibal and St Joseph Railroad (1859) first to cross the state

The invention of the steamboat helped with immigration efforts because it was easy now to transport people as well as goods up the Missouri River. Before the steamboat, the only way people could reach the settlement was by slowly traveling overland against grueling wilderness. A natural stone wharf allowed steamers to unload near where the Kaw River connects into the Missouri River.

According to an article by Jennifer Silvey in 2019, “Irish workers hauled stones to build foundations, and they carried buckets of water to extinguish fires. The workers killed millions of cattle, they laid down miles of bricks and rails, and they also drove streetcars. The Irish kept and disturbed the peace, they organized the working poor, and they kicked down barriers at City Hall and the courthouse. They literally carved out the skyline for the city that we’ve built upon today. ... The upward expansion of homes and roads earned Kansas City the nickname Gully Town – a name that stuck for more than 30 years”.

“....jobs were rough and often came with low wages. A large portion of the community lived in shanty-towns across the bluffs – in one particular spot the living conditions were considered so horrible that people called it “Hell’s Half-Acre.” 4 (an very small but troublesome area in the West Bottoms neighborhood) (fox4kc.com)

According to police records, no resident of Hell’s Half Acre was as well-known as an old Irish woman they called “Mother Duff.” Her shack was considered the resort of the most notorious thieves of the city, and where police generally went to catch them. She was said to know, personally, every criminal of reputation known to the police.

Police Capt. Thomas Flahive, who would later serve as Kansas City’s police chief, recalled that the woman “was the bane of a policeman’s life in those days. She kept an old den near the river and harbored the worst kind of thugs and crooks. The pickpocket ‘Nosey’ O’Brien has been hidden from the police by her many a time and so has Andy Martin, a notorious burglar. She had a secret passageway, a kind of chute, leading from her hovel to the riverbank, and when the police trail became too hot the men went through the chute to the river and escape.

In 1871 about 100,000 animals were shipped from Kansas to what would become the Kansas City Stockyards and packinghouse. In 1874 Philip Armour would open a small packing house that would grow to one of the most productive in the world and where 1000’s or workers would work round the clock shifts.

NEBRASKA

The Irish were the third largest ethnic group in South Omaha with 1,073 out of 26,001 residents claiming Irish ancestry in 1900. By 1909 that area of the city claimed 2,250 out of their 30,000 residents were of Irish descent. The first church of any denomination in Nebraska was a Catholic church built in Omaha by Irish immigrants in 1856. Around this time a community of Irish settlers inhabited an area (not an actual town) known as Gophertown; named for the dugout homes the immigrants had made in the wide-open plains of present-day North Omaha.

The Irish came to Omaha in the 1860's to build the Union Pacific Railroad which started in 1864, and many stayed to work in the railroads, took jobs as laborers or worked in the wholesaling district downtown for companies like Kellogg, Campbell Soup Co., John Deere, and Omaha Steaks.

As many as 10,000 Irish laborers worked out of Omaha along the Union Pacific coming from NYC, Boston or other cities in the east.

In the 1890s the American Protective Association targeted Omaha's Irish population in a campaign to drive immigrants out of the Midwestern United States and the Irish out of public office. By then Irish Americans lived throughout the city, and were involved in all levels of Omaha society, including politics and city government.

The American Protective Association (APA) was an American ant-Catholic secret society established in 1887 by Protestants. The organization was the largest anti-Catholic movement in the United States during the later part of the 19th century, showing particular regional strength in the Midwest. Midwest. The group grew rapidly during the early 1890s before collapsing just as abruptly in the aftermath of the election of 1896.

They didn't establish their own independent political party like the "No Nothings" did but tried exerting influence by boosting its supporters in campaigns and at political conventions, particularly those of the Republican party. They were very concerned about Roman Catholic influence in the public school system, Catholic immigration and growing Catholic control of the political establishments of major American cities.

By 1898 the organization had collapsed and was finally terminated in 1911 with the death of its founder.

The Irish, who once comprised over one-sixth of the city's population, have transitioned from laborers and settlers to leaders in religion, politics, and culture.

NORTH DAKOTA

American settlement of the Northern Plains began after 1861, when Dakota Territory was organized by Congress. Significant immigration commenced when the westbound Northern Pacific Railway was built to the Missouri River in 1872 and 1873. Along and near its line, new towns sprang up to serve the settlers, the tracklaying crews and others. Fargo and Bismarck, for example, both began as rough-and-tumble railroad communities. Spurred by the 1862 Federal Homestead Law, farming settlement developed gradually after the first claim west of the Red River was filed in 1868.

Early settlers were fur traders with later arrivals working on farms and railways. A great settlement "boom" in northern Dakota occurred between 1879 and 1886. During those years, over 100,000 people entered the territory; the majority of which were homesteaders.

Many of the Irish settlers came from the Selkirk/Red River Colony in Canada, while others arrived via eastern U.S. cities, often moving to North Dakota during the late 19th-century land boom. Settlement was particularly prominent in the northeast, including counties like Cavalier, Pembina, Walsh, and Grand Forks.

OHIO

Immigration peaked in 1840, but by 1900, the Irish were the second largest immigrant group, behind the Germans.

As early as the late 1700s Irish were arriving in large numbers on the East Coast, making their way inland, through Pennsylvania along Zane's Trace, one of the first roadways through the Northwest Territory, and into Ohio.

Most of the Irish arriving in Ohio planned to become farmers, but their job prospects weren't promising mainly due to the amount of discrimination Irish immigrants faced, so they survived by working jobs that were considered less desirable.

Those jobs involved long hours and back-breaking labor to construct Ohio's canal system, including the Ohio & Erie Canal and the Miami & Erie Canal.

When railroads came to the state, it was again Irish laborers who laid the tracks that modernized Ohio's transportation system, allowing coal, timber, and iron ore to be moved around the country.

Zane's Trace is a frontier road constructed under the direction of Col. Ebenezer Zane through the Northwest Territory in what is now the state of Ohio. Many portions were based on traditional Native American trails. Constructed during 1796 and 1797 with large parts of it based on Native American trails. It ran from Wheeling, Virginia (now Wheeling, West VA) to Maysville, Kentucky through the part of the Northwest Territory that eventually became the southeastern quarter of the state of Ohio.

The Northwest Territory (aka the Old Northwest) and was formed from part of the unorganized western territory of the United States after the American Revolution.

SOUTH DAKOTA

The Irish, Welsh, Cornish, Scottish, and British all came to South Dakota.

The first Irish immigrants to come to Yankton were brought by John Pope Hodnett of Chicago in 1869. He was from Cork and had been appointed assessor of internal revenue for Dakota Territory by President Ulysses S. Grant. Mr. Hodnett had been a leader of a political element in the United States known as "Irish Republicans". Along with many Irishmen after their service in the Civil War, he joined the Fenians and was dedicated to the establishment of an independent Irish Republic, finally emancipated from England.

He worked hard to encourage immigration from the eastern states to South Dakota. He dreamed of establishing an Irish colony seven miles north of Yankton, which didn't happen though.

St. Brigid's parish in Walshtown was organized in 1880 by Irish born Father George Sheehan. Father Sheehan organized so-called orphan trains to bring Irish children from Boston to be placed with Irish Catholic farm families in Yankton and southeastern Dakota. The orphan trains transported over 200,000 children between 1854 and 1929 mostly to farm families in the Midwestern states. Some descendants of the "orphan trains" live in South Dakota today.

The British settled mostly in urban areas where they worked as shopkeepers, craftsmen, and various laborers. They were farmers and ranchers, too. Some British immigrants got their start in South Dakota with help from the Close Colony in La Mars, Iowa. In the 1870s, William Close and his brothers had established the Colony to help the younger sons of the British upper class establish themselves as gentlemen farmers in America. The brothers placed immigrants with locals who could tutor them in farming techniques. Later, the Close brothers helped the immigrants purchase land.

The Irish, Cornish, and Scottish in South Dakota didn't generally settle in large groups like the Germans and Norwegians. They usually came as single families or individuals, striking out on their own.

Irish and Cornish miners also flocked to the Black Hills during the gold rush. As English speakers and experienced miners, they often held top jobs underground in the mines.

Several hundred soldiers stationed at Fort Randall when it was established in 1855 were Irish born. After their military service, some stayed as settlers. One small Irish settlement called Emmet formed in 1868 in Union County. By 1873, Emmet had 27 families.

WISCONSIN

While some immigrants from Ireland slowly traveled into what's now Wisconsin as early as the 1600s to take part in the fur trade, the biggest influx of Irish settlers took place in the first half of the 19th century. According to wisconsinhistory.org, almost 4.5 million Irish settled in the US between 1830 and 1920, second only to the Germans. Most came to Wisconsin between 1840 and 1860 and were the largest English-speaking group to settle in the state.

Unlike other immigrant groups, the Irish didn't move immediately west after arriving in the United States; they were more likely than other groups to move from county to county and from state to state in search of available land for farming. The average Irish immigrant spent seven years in the US before moving to Wisconsin.

Though Irish families are documented in town histories and census reports throughout Wisconsin, the largest numbers of Irish immigrants settled in southern Wisconsin, especially in Milwaukee and its surrounding area and in the areas west of Madison.

Mineral Point was one of the southwest Wisconsin towns that attracted Irish immigrants, along with settlers from Wales and Cornwall. Many found work in local mines or industries that supported mining, such as railroad work, smelting and lumbering. Others settled in the southeastern counties and in the city of Milwaukee working as laborers, domestics, and artisans. Others established rural farming communities in Dodge, Columbia, Iowa, and La Crosse counties.

How did people get from place to place?

One of the first ways was the construction of long canal systems in the east; the first being completed in 1793 to bypass rapids near Montreal. By the mid 19th century a network of canals provided trade and transportation routes; the most famous being the Erie Canal. These canals provided direct routes that bypassed winding rivers, making them a faster way to travel.

A big development in river travel was the steamboat as they could travel both up and downstream. The first boat was tested on the Hudson River in NY and by the mid 1800's these boats were carrying people and goods up and down the Mississippi.

Steamboats on the Ohio River helped farmers get their products to market. The Ohio River Valley had more than 50,000 miles of tributaries and streams in the Mississippi watershed used to ship goods to New Orleans.

Early westward expansion depended on rivers and towns/cities were usually built next to the waterways. (Pittsburgh, Columbus and Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis and Kansas City MO, Omaha, Nebraska and St. Paul.

The introduction of the canals shortened travel times – from Buffalo, NY you could get to Detroit in 10 days instead of a month and Chicago in less than three weeks instead of six.

The canals also cut shipping costs by more than 90%. Between 1829-1841 the amount of wheat delivered using the Erie Canal went from 3640 bushels to 1 million.

Women no longer had to spin wool and weave their own fabric for clothes because they could buy it at a general store now thanks to the canals. This left them time to take on work for extra income, help with the crops, or keep cows to make butter that they could sell.

Roads were also used in the early 19th century for local and long distance travel. These roads were usually hard-packed dirt which weren't great in rain and ice. Cities began paving their streets with cobblestones and for long distances, travelers people used wagon trails like the Oregon trail.

There were a few major roads; The National Road (aka the Cumberland Trail or the National Turnpike) was the first road to be funded by the federal government. By 1833 it linked Cumberland, Maryland and

Columbus Ohio. In the mid 1800s it was extended to St. Louis and was most popular in the 1840's as a wagon route.

In the mid 1820's the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was the first public rail line. Within a short period of time steam railroads were being constructed in a few spots across the country and dominated travel by the 1850's. By 1860 the US had about 31,000 miles of track; mostly in the northeast although it was also being added in the Midwest and the South. A transcontinental railroad link was completed in 1869.

The National Road wasn't used much anymore until the national highway system incorporated it into Interstate 40.

THE IRISH IN THE MIDWEST SOURCES

1. <https://indianahistory.org/stories/irish-immigrants-in-the-hoosier-hills/>
2. <https://indianahistory.org/stories/irish-immigrants-in-the-hoosier-hills/>
3. <https://indianahistory.org/stories/irish-immigrants-in-the-hoosier-hills/>
4. <https://fox4kc.com/news/a-timeline-of-irish-history-in-kansas-city-to-celebrate-st-patricks-day/>
5. <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/652.html>
6. <https://ontheworldmap.com>

GENERAL LINKS

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Americans

https://ethnicity.lib.mtu.edu/groups_Irish_print.html

<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/transportation-early-america>

ILLINOIS

<https://ilikeillinois.com/living/1653-from-dublin-to-chicago-the-history-of-irish-heritage-in-illinois>

<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/652.html>

INDIANA

<https://indianahistory.org/stories/irish-immigrants-in-the-hoosier-hills/>

IOWA

<https://www.teachingiowahistory.org/iowa-stories/19th-century-immigration-iowa>

<https://www.axios.com/local/des-moines/2024/03/15/history-of-iowa-irish-heritage-catholic-st-patricks-day>

<https://pubs.lib.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/article/id/12524/download/pdf/>

KANSAS

<https://www.travelks.com/blog/stories/post/st-patricks-day-events-learn-about-irish-roots-in-kansas/>

<https://kclibrary.org/events/bottom-story-irish-kansas-city>

<https://www.kansas.com/news/local/article14934134.html>

MICHIGAN

<https://www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan/public/family-history>

<https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/doing-business/vitalrecords>

<https://mimgc.org/research-tools/> (Michiga Genealogical Council)

MINNESOTA

<https://mspmag.com/arts-and-culture/minnesota-goes-green/>

<https://www.startribune.com/irish-immigration-to-minnesota-and-where-their-descendants-live-today/371323261>

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/955162>

<https://www.mnhs.org/mnopedia/search/index/place/connemara-patch>

<https://www.joyinminnesota.com/home/connemara-patch>

MISSOURI

<https://www.stlpr.org/show/st-louis-on-the-air/2022-03-17/how-the-irish-found-their-place-in-st-louis-and-helped-shape-the-city>

<https://shsmo.org/research/guides/immigrant>

<https://stlgs.org/media/pdf/missouri-irish-immigrants-weber-2021.pdf>

<https://fox4kc.com/news/a-timeline-of-irish-history-in-kansas-city-to-celebrate-st-patricks-day/>

<https://www.ourstlouishistory.com/single-post/2017/12/04/irish-luck-or-holy-trinity>

<https://www.jchs.org/jchs-e-journal/2024/9/17/hells-half-acre-the-violent-west-bottoms-ghetto-where-the-other-half-lived>

<https://www.jchs.org/jchs-e-journal/2024/9/17/hells-half-acre-the-violent-west-bottoms-ghetto-where-the-other-half-lived>

NEBRASKA

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_in_Omaha,_Nebraska

<https://broncoburgers.com/history-of-the-irish-in-omaha/>

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5d9ddfdaf90d45418a2d0e361de8b186>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Protective_Association

NORTH DAKOTA

<https://www.history.nd.gov/ndhistory/settlement.html>

<https://www.ndtourism.com/articles/north-dakota-history>

<https://www.yourstoryandmore.ie/emigration-from-connemara-to-minnesota-1880-an-historiographic-and-genealogical-approach-the-gallagher-family/>

OHIO

<https://libapps.libraries.uc.edu/exhibits/irish-cincinnati/timeline/>

<https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p16007coll33/id/229489/>

<https://case.edu/ech/articles/i/irish>

<https://ohiohillcountry.org/2018/03/17/the-irish-in-ohio/>

SOUTH DAKOTA

<https://history.sd.gov/museum/docs/Immigrants.pdf>

<https://williammarylyons.com/assets/docs/irishyanktonPDJulypdf.202121714.pdf>

https://www.yankton.net/river_city/article_bb6e9d80-4d33-11e5-b5f8-27a474b025b3.html

<https://jmarkpowell.com/when-the-orphan-train-came-to-town/>

WISCONSIN

<https://wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS1817>

AVAILABLE RECORDS

Family Search, Ancestry and Find My past have immigration records.

ILLINOIS

NARA – ship manifests, naturalization papers, Cook County 1906-1929 Declarations of Intent, local county records (<https://www.archives.gov/chicago/finding-aids/naturalization-records.html>)

Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court – over 400,000 Declarations of Intention (1906-1929)

USCIS FOIA Program – to request immigration records after May 1, 1951 and naturalization records after April 1, 1956.

<https://dnrhistoric.illinois.gov/research/sitepages/timeline.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Illinois

<https://digital.lib.niu.edu/illinois/lincoln/frontier>

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Illinois, United States Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Illinois,_United_States_Genealogy)

INDIANA

IARA – Indiana State Archives (<https://www.in.gov/iara/>)

<https://www.historymuseumsb.org/pioneer-settlement-in-indiana-1790-1849/>

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Indiana, United States Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Indiana,_United_States_Genealogy)

<https://www.daviess.org/1245/Recorders-Office> land records

IOWA

<https://statearchives.us/iowa.htm>, links to archives, libraries, LDS Family History Centers, public records, genealogy

<https://history.iowa.gov/research/collections/state-archives>

<https://specialcollections.lib.iastate.edu>

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Iowa, United States Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Iowa,_United_States_Genealogy)

MICHIGAN

<https://www.michigan.gov/mhc/archives>

<https://lib.msu.edu/ua>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Michigan/Settlement-patterns>

<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/history-michigan>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Michigan

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Michigan, United States Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Michigan,United_States_Genealogy)

NEBRASKA

<https://statearchives.us/nebraska.htm>

<https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/government-records/>

https://history.nebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/doc_publications_NH1943Communities.pdf

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Nebraska

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Nebraska, United States Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Nebraska,United_States_Genealogy)

NORTH DAKOTA

<https://www.history.nd.gov/archives/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_North_Dakota

<https://familyhistory.lib.byu.edu/00000191-2f8e-d7af-a59f-3f8e80160000/northdakota-pdf>

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/North Dakota, United States Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/North_Dakota,United_States_Genealogy)

OHIO

<https://statearchives.us/ohio.htm>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/rc01002223/>

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Ohio, United States Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Ohio,United_States_Genealogy)

SOUTH DAKOTA

<https://history.sd.gov/archives/>

<https://sddigitalarchives.contentdm.oclc.org>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Dakota/History>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_South_Dakota

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/South Dakota, United States Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/South_Dakota,United_States_Genealogy)

WISCONSIN

<https://statearchives.us/wisconsin.htm>

<https://wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS15324>

https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lrb/blue_book/2017_2018/160_timeline.pdf

[https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Wisconsin, United States Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Wisconsin,United_States_Genealogy)