

Slán Go Deo
Mná as Dún na nGall Ar Imirce
A Long Farewell
The Emigration of Donegal Women
1845-1950



**Músaem Contae Dhún na nGall &
Cartlann Chontae Dhún na nGall**

**Donegal County Museum &
Donegal County Archives**



Fish gutters at Lillapool, Scotland

Ireland - A History of Migration and Emigration



Illustration of Emigration families, c1850. Illustrated London News

Migration has been a feature of Irish society for centuries. Emigration from Ireland peaked during the Great Famine (1845- 1851) and over the following century. It is believed that up to 10 million people left the island of Ireland over the last 200 years. Emigrants and their descendants are known as the Irish Diaspora.

The Women who Emigrated



Courtesy Derry City & Strabane District Council Museum & Heritage Service

Ireland was devastated by the Great Famine. One immediate result was the mass emigration of entire families. Another result was dramatic changes in Irish society, including in farming practices, leading to greater unemployment, a shift to later marriage, and a sustained campaign for land ownership. Many women decided to emigrate to seek employment abroad, usually choosing as their new homes the United States, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Between 1871 and 1891, 55,690 Irish women immigrated to the U.S. compared to 55,215 men for the same time period.

Settled immigrants sent money home and assisted family members to emigrate. This process, known as chain migration, was especially strong among women.



Anchor Line Ticket, Courtesy of Derry Central Library, Libraries NI

Emigration of Women in the 20th Century

Statement of Emigration (19 years and over) of persons returning who emigrated from Northern Ireland to overseas countries in 1914 and 1915

Statement of British Government Emigrants

Destination	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
United Kingdom	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Canada	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
United States	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Other	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Total	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000

Irish Catholic Directory
Courtesy Raphoe Diocesan Archives

Emigration continued from Ireland into the 20th century. During the First World War thousands of women migrated to Britain for employment in the industrial north east and in nursing. Following a US government decision in the 1920s to limit immigration, the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of the 1930s, numbers from Ireland entering the US declined. Immigration to Canada, Australia and New Zealand also declined from this period onwards.

After World War II

From the 1940s on, approximately three out of every four Irish emigrants were destined for Britain, and one out of eight for the United States.

Ireland did not share in the post- War boom enjoyed by most other Western Countries. Economic growth was slow and unemployment rates were very high. There were food shortages and related diseases. Over 400,000 people left Ireland in the 1950s. At home, women had little opportunity to either gain employment or obtain an education. But in post- War America, jobs were again plentiful (although not necessarily high paying) and women were able to take classes to improve their education and skills.



Women onboard transatlantic liner.
Bigger & McDonald Collection, Courtesy of Derry Central Library, Libraries NI

Emigration Schemes

Emigration from Ireland, during the nineteenth century, was often supported by wealthy philanthropists driven to provide financial assistance by the distressing scenes they witnessed both at home and abroad.

Vere Foster



Vere Foster

Vere Foster's father was an absentee landowner of the Louth Glyde estate. During the Famine, Foster began to assist people to immigrate to the US and Canada. In 1850 Foster undertook a transatlantic voyage on the sailing ship *The Washington*. The horrors he witnessed spurred him to successfully lobby for a Passengers' Act in Parliament.

In 1852, Foster established the Irish Female Emigration Fund, later the Irish Pioneer Emigration Fund, to assist

"the emigration to North America of one able-bodied member of each family (in most cases a woman)...with the expectation that she herself will take the remaining members of her family out of poverty."

The fund which continued until 1858 was used to assist both in emigration and in finding suitable employment abroad. Between 1880 and 1887 he assisted 20,000 girls from across the country to emigrate, becoming virtually bankrupt in the process. He died in 1900.



Irish tenant about to emigrate



James Hack Tuke



James Hack Tuke

James Hack Tuke, a Yorkshire man and Quaker, first toured the west of Ireland including Donegal during the Famine years, reporting on conditions and distributing relief. The author of pamphlets including *The Condition of Donegal* (1889), he advocated transfer of land ownership to tenants and assisted emigration. He toured Canada and the US in 1880 and concluded that sponsored family emigration to west Canada was the best option. In the mid 1880s he assisted about 100 emigrants from Arranmore to America.

Dr Barnado

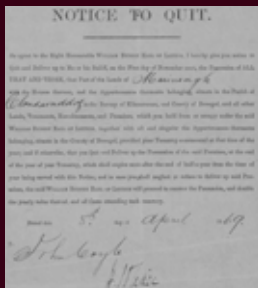


Orphan girls

Bigger & McDonald collection, Courtesy of Derry Central Library, Libraries NI

Dr Thomas Barnardo, an Irish doctor and philanthropist, established homes for orphaned children in late 19th century Britain. In the 1880s his organisation began to send orphaned children from Britain and Ireland to rural Canada to give them a chance of a better life. Between 1869 and the late 1930s, more than 100,000 children were sent to Canada by organisations like Dr. Barnardo's. These children were known as 'home children.' Many children were treated well and thrived but many more were treated as indentured servants, abused and their education neglected. The programme ended in 1939.

The Derryveagh Evictions and the Australian Donegal Relief Fund



Eviction Notice
Courtesy US National Archives

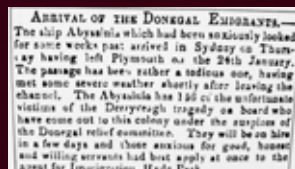
John George Adair purchased 11,500 hectares of land in Donegal in the late 1850s. His decision to enclose open rental land for the grazing of imported 'black-faced' sheep and to hire Scottish shepherds was highly unpopular in Gweedore. Following the murder of one of his Scottish shepherds, Adair decided to clear all the land around Glenveagh. In April 1861, he evicted 47 families- 244 people- with the assistance of 200 militia men and cleared 11,600 acres of mountain and valley land. Neighbours and relatives took in many evicted families, some in Cloughaneely, Creeslough and Churchill. A number were admitted to Letterkenny workhouse.

The Australian Donegal Relief Committee had been established in May 1858 with the purpose of raising funds to alleviate poverty in Donegal. This followed a public appeal by Gweedore/Cloughaneely priests and publicity in Sydney's Freeman's Journal.



Gweedore family after eviction
The Lawrence Photograph Collection
Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

The fund was soon used to assist the destitute to immigrate to Australia. After the Derryveagh evictions, local clergy sought emigration assistance from the Fund's committee. In January 1862, 143 people from Derryveagh along with 130 Gweedore people left Co. Donegal for Australia. Of those who made this long voyage were Patrick Devenny, 24, a labourer, his wife Mary, 26, a housekeeper and their two children, Hannah, 5 and Patrick, 3.



Freeman's Journal (Sydney) 1862

Arranmore and Beaver Island



Derry Journal 1861

In order to support their families and themselves, women managed the household, helped work the farm, raised the children, and helped run businesses. Sophia Boyle was a business owner prior to getting married, and continued to run a store alongside her husband after her marriage.

After the Great Famine many families from Arranmore Island, Co Donegal immigrated to America. By the late 1800s an estimated 280 families on Michigan's Beaver Island could trace their roots back to Arranmore. The island developed into a unique Irish community because of its physical isolation from any major urban areas, and the chain migrations of families and neighbours directly from Arranmore. The Irish who moved to Beaver Island found that they could apply what they knew of fishing and farming to this new



Map showing place names on Beaver Island relating to settlers from Arranmore Island



Beaver Island Memorial in Arranmore Island

From the workhouse to Australia



Letterkenny Workhouse
Donegal County Museum Collection

Guardians who managed the workhouses. Women were particularly in demand in the under-populated colonies of Australia.

THE IMMIGRANTS FROM DONEGAL.—The single women, per the Lady Elma Bruce, have been in the Immigration depot some days, as can be seen by advertisement in another column; they will be for hire on the 25th instant. Due notice by advertisement will be also given when the remainder of the passengers shall be ready to hire.

Freeman's Journal (Sydney)

Between 1848 and 1850, over 4,000 girls emigrated from Irish workhouses to the Australian colonies. Their emigration was due to a British Government sponsored assisted emigration scheme, led by Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies. Some of the girls were orphans and all were destitute. They were chosen as suitable by the Boards of

On arrival some were greeted with hostility and were exploited or abused. Others however lived relatively prosperous lives.



List of orphan girls selected for emigration to Australia.
Ballyshannon Board of Guardians, Donegal County Archives Collection

Girls from the workhouses of Donegal



Melbourne Punch 1872

Among those to emigrate under the Earl Grey scheme were the girls who travelled from Ballyshannon workhouse to Sydney on the sailing ship The Inchinnan. The girls had to bring 6 shifts, 2 flannel petticoats, 6 pairs of stockings, 2 pairs of shoes and 2 gowns.

The Inchinnan arrived in Sydney on 13th February 1849 after a journey of 106 days. The girls from Ballyshannon, along with others, were housed at the Female Immigrant Depot. An Orphan Committee were responsible for their welfare, and they acted as a job placement agency.

One of the girls from Ballyshannon workhouse was a 14 year old orphan, Jane Carberry. She got work as a nursemaid, and later married Henry Gibson Kemp, had up to 14 children and died in Tumut, New South Wales, in 1917 aged 84.

Mary Ann McDermott, from Belleek, Co. Fermanagh, was 16 when she arrived with her sister Sarah (Sally). Mary Ann became a house servant and married Matthew Lester on the 10 February 1851. Matthew was frequently before the courts on charges relating to being drunk, causing trouble generally and deserting the family.



Rose McFadden with her grandchildren

Rose McFadden, 16, from Dunfanaghy workhouse, arrived in Melbourne from the Lady Kennaway in 1848. She became a housemaid and married Alexander Poynton in 1852. He was involved in the Eureka Rebellion in 1854 which was instigated by gold miners in Ballarat, Victoria. The couple had 14 children (2 died in infancy).

Her son Alexander was a State and Federal Politician (OBE), and her son John Joseph became Lord Mayor of Perth. Her grandson Sir Alexander Wales was Lord Mayor of Melbourne.

Immigration to Canada



Derry Journal 1842



Courtesy Derry City and Strabane District Council Museum & Heritage Service

Assisted Emigration from County Donegal workhouses continued into the 1880s. Letterkenny Board of Guardians in May 1875 lists a number of inmates who 'had reconsidered the emigration question' and agreed to emigrate.

The 1847 Grosse Île Tragedy



Grosse Île Memorial

Donegal women in Canada, Donegal County Museum Collection

Assisted emigration schemes were used by the Poor Law Commissioners and Boards of Guardians to solve the problem of overcrowded workhouses during the Famine. A number of Poor Relief Acts from 1838 - 1849 empowered the Boards of Guardians to raise sums to finance assisted emigration.

In 1840, the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was established to oversee emigration from Britain and Ireland to British Colonies. They chose suitable workhouse inmates who were offered a free passage, clothing for the journey and a small amount of financial assistance.

Whole families from Co. Donegal were among the assisted emigrants to Canada. The Boards of Guardians of Letterkenny and Dunfanaghy workhouses facilitated the emigration of those who had lived in the workhouses for up to four years. The minutes of Letterkenny Board of Guardians from 11 July 1849 lists 81 people for emigration. This included the Logue family, consisting of James, 34, a (former) weaver, his wife Hannah, 34, and their children, John, 12, Nancy, 9, James Jnr, 6 and Jack, 4 from Gortavern.

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation
James Logue	34	M	Weaver
Hannah Logue	34	F	Wife
John Logue	12	M	Child
Nancy Logue	9	F	Child
James Jnr Logue	6	M	Child
Jack Logue	4	M	Child

List of people for assisted emigration to Canada
Letterkenny Board of Guardians,
May 1875, Donegal County Archives Collection

Grosse Île is located in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Canada. In 1847 hundreds of passenger ships anchored there at the quarantine station for inspection before continuing their journey into Canada. There were up to 400 passengers on each ship, many of them suffering from starvation as well as typhus and other diseases. It is believed that more than 10,000 immigrants died here after arrival. Grosse Île is now an Irish Memorial National Historic Site.

One of those who had arrived to start a new life in Canada was Eliza Farren from Donegal. She died on the island on 22 May, 1847 aged 19.



Emigrating from Moville and Derry

The city of Derry thrived as a port for people departing North West Ireland to 'the New World' in the nineteenth century. Moville too became a major port of embarkation for emigrants destined for America and Canada. The passenger ships anchored in Lough Foyle as they prepared to take passengers across the Atlantic.



American Liners at Moville, Donegal County Museum Collection



The Minnehaha, Mc Corkell Line.
Courtesy of Derry Central Library, Libraries NI

Emigration to Canada and in particular to New Brunswick grew throughout this period. By the 1850's the passenger trade was dominated by two firms, J & J Cooke and William McCorkell & Co. When the J. J. Cooke sailing ship *Marchioness of Clydesdale* left Derry for St John in 1847, 168 of her passengers were from Inishowen. Among them were Hugh and Mary Doherty from Malin and their seven children. Also on board were Philip and Susey McCallion from Carndonagh, and their five children.

By the 1870s sailing ships were replaced by large transatlantic passenger steamers, which anchored in the Foyle and were boarded by way of small local tenders leaving from Moville pier. The Anchor Line, operating out of Glasgow, started taking on passengers in Moville from 1860. The Allan Line, operating out of Liverpool, also called at Moville to pick up passengers bound for America.

The night before departure, the traditional farewell gathering know as an "American wake" or a "bottling" took place. People sang and danced throughout the night while they mourned the person who was due to leave home, almost certainly forever. The next day:

"The person who would be about to set out on the long road would be drowned with tears and dried with kisses and the whole gathering would accompany him three or four miles."

Mici MaGabhann, Rotha Mór an tSaol

By 1871 the Irish-born and their descendants made up 24.3% of Canada's population. This figure rose to up to 35% in the provinces of Ontario and New Brunswick. Emigrants to Canada tended to settle on large farms while those who travelled to the US were normally employed in towns and cities.

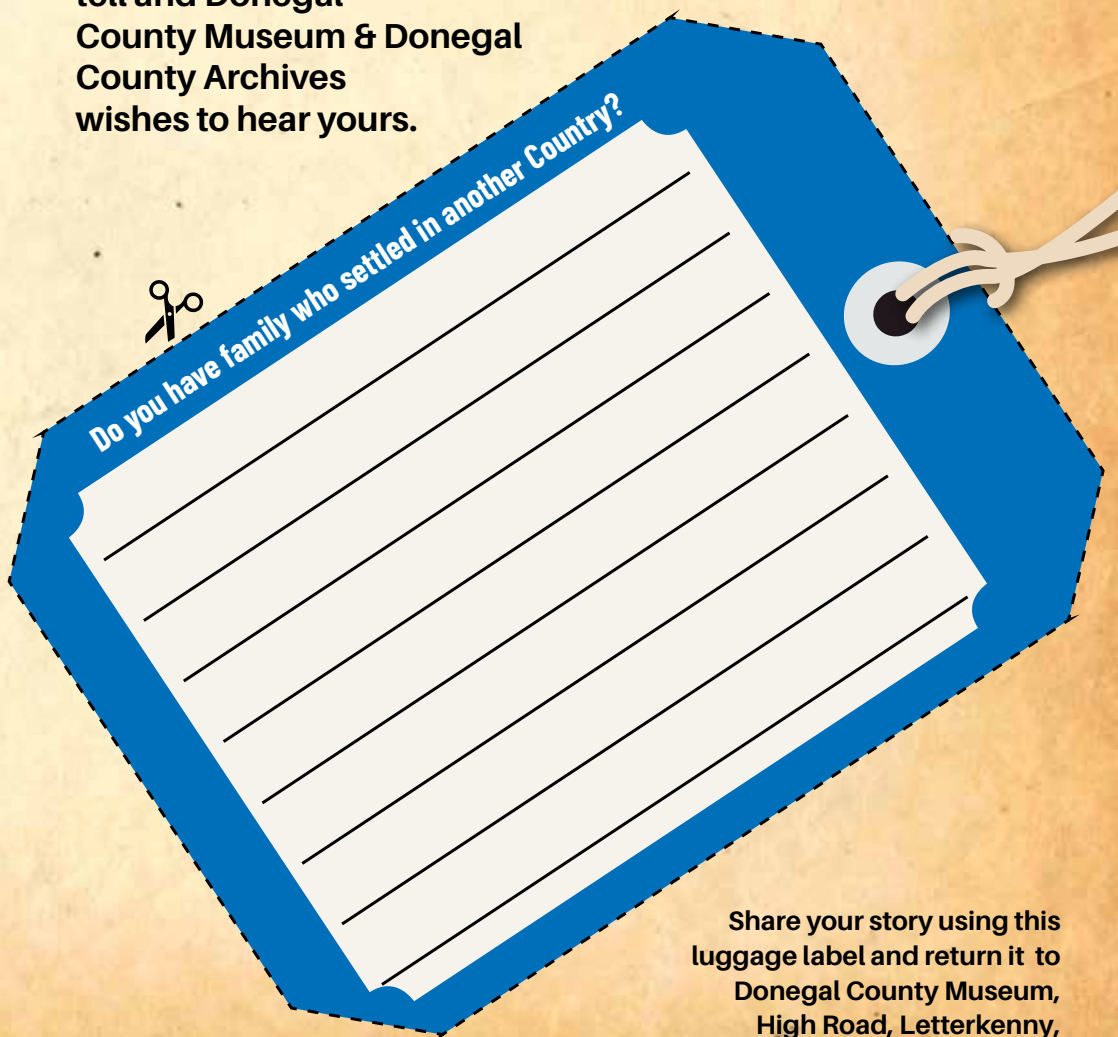
Emigrants embarking
at Derry port, 1930's
Courtesy Derry City and
Strabane District Council
Museum & Heritage Service.



A Long Farewell - The Emigration of Donegal Women 1845 - 1950

Share Your Story

Everyone has a story to tell and Donegal County Museum & Donegal County Archives wishes to hear yours.



Do you have family who settled in another Country?

Share your story using this luggage label and return it to Donegal County Museum, High Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal, Ireland

A Long Farewell - The Emigration of Donegal Women 1845 - 1950

Women leaving for New York from Derry.
Bigger & McDonald Collection, Courtesy of Derry Central Library, Libraries NI

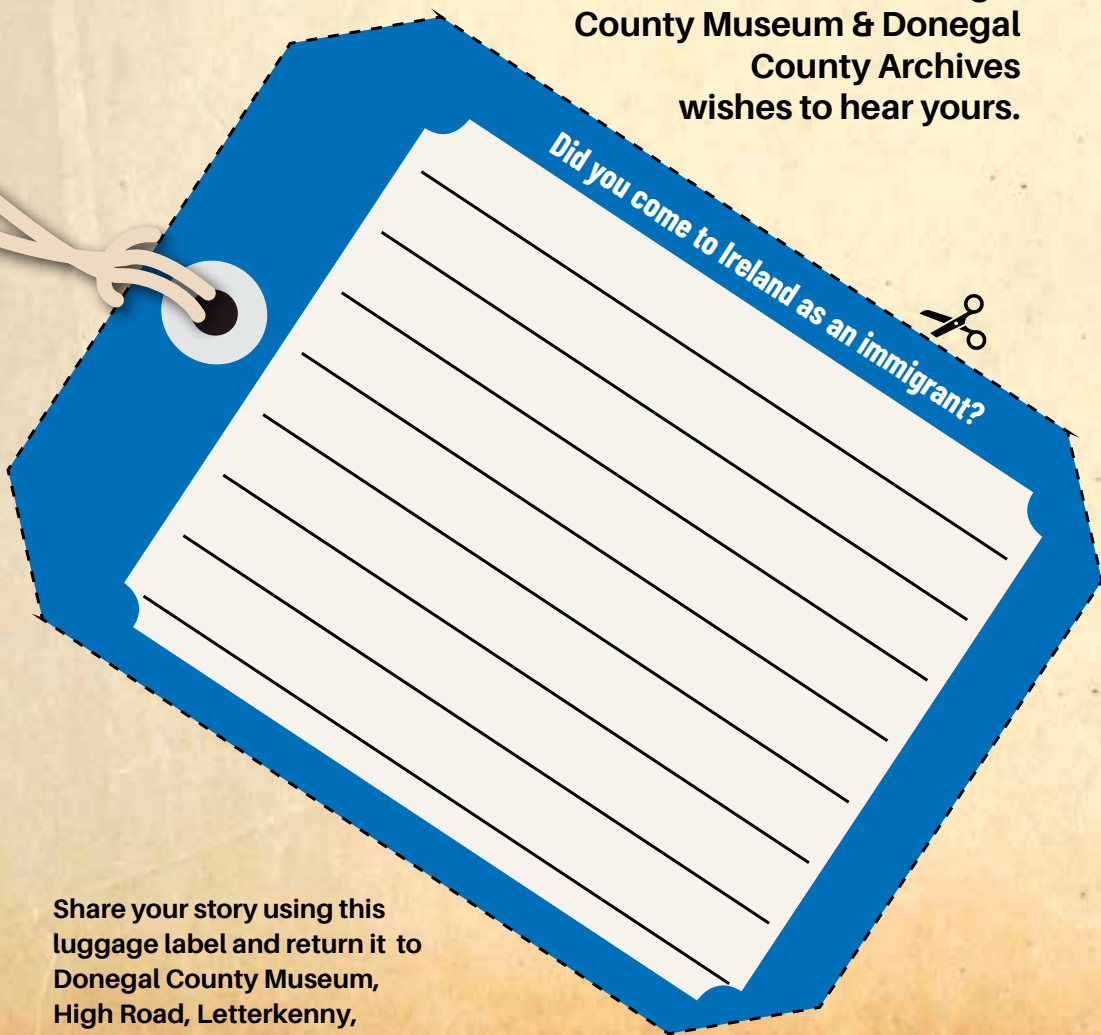




A Long Farewell - The Emigration of Donegal Women 1845 - 1950

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The Journey



The McCorkell Line passenger ship Erin, built in 1835
Courtesy of Derry Central Library, Libraries NI

In the early nineteenth century, immigrants travelled to America and Australia in wooden sailing ships which were fire prone and leaked badly. In 1848 a ship called The Ocean Monarch travelling from Liverpool to Boston caught fire and 176 lives were lost. The crossing to America or Canada could take from 6 to 12 weeks with the journey to Australia taking 3 to 4 months. In 1851 there were often as many as fifteen ships a day sailing to America.

Emigrants were housed far below decks in cramped, dark, conditions with little ventilation. Most ships had no proper toilets or washing facilities. Infectious diseases spread rapidly and burials at sea were normal. During the Famine the death rates were as high as 30% on some of the notorious “coffin ships”.

The Carriages of Passengers Act of 1855 helped to improve conditions, laying down minimum standards for rations, space and sanitation for ships arriving in the United States. By the 1870s steamships had cut travel time to two weeks to America and 50 days to Australia.



Steerage Passengers (Illustrated London News May 10 1851)



Ticket for Allen Line passenger
steamship to Canada
Donegal County Archives Collection

There were three types of accommodations on the ships that brought immigrants to America: first class, second class and steerage. In the nineteenth century about 98% of emigrants travelled as steerage passengers. They had to cook and fend for themselves, crammed together on the lower decks. Steerage fares between 1880 and 1914 were £4-£5 which was equal to half the annual income of a labourer. The pre-paid ticket therefore was an essential feature of the continuing exodus from Ireland.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, the Irish journey to Australia was largely made under governmental supervision, either in a convict transport or in a vessel chartered for Assisted Emigration Schemes. In general the assisted emigrants were better fed, clothed and medically cared for than those who paid their own fares to America.



Emigrants on board tender ship at Derry Quay.
Bigger & McDonald Collection, Courtesy of Derry
Central Library, Libraries NI

Captains were sometimes accused of using rations to control the behaviour of their female passengers. In 1860 the New York Commissioners of Emigration reported that there were “frequent complaints made by female emigrants arriving in New York of ill-treatment and abuse from the captains and other officers.”

Congress passed a law that enabled captains and officers to be sent to prison for committing sexual offences against female passengers.

Arrival in America



Waiting for Immigrants at Ellis Island,
Library of Congress

On arrival in the United States passengers who were not met by relatives or friends usually made their way to the city to find boarding houses. Emigrants faced many dishonest practices and conmen. From December 1848 the Irish Emigrant Society boarded ships to offer advice to the new arrivals. To protect emigrants from fraud, various measures were introduced in New York in 1848, including the construction of reception centres and the licensing of steam boats to take emigrants after quarantine to the landing piers.

Ellis Island



Immigrants at Ellis Island, George Grantham
Bain Collection, Library of Congress

In 1891 immigration was placed under federal control. 12 million immigrants passed through the doors of the centre at Ellis Island, New York.

When a ship docked in New York, those who had travelled in cabin class were released, but steerage passengers were subjected to endless delays. Immigrants entered the main building in groups of 30 and were met by medical inspectors. "Eye men", using buttonhooks, flipped back people's eyelids looking for trachoma which meant

automatic deportation. If the doctor cleared them, people were sent to the huge Registry Room. Thousands of people queued to meet the immigration inspectors.



Eye Inspection at Ellis Island Ellis Island Museum Collection

Four out of five immigrants passed inspection and were allowed to enter the country. Some of the rest received a white badge indicating that they were temporarily detained while awaiting relatives or money. Those suffering from contagious diseases were denied entry altogether and were sent home. Detainees called Ellis Island the "Isle of Tears."

Some immigrants passed into America with their names intact. Names however were often misspelled or altered on the manifests. Immigrants sometimes shortened their names or Americanised them.



Boarding House, New York. Courtesy of the Esther Bubley Photo Archive, New York

Fanny McCafferty, 21, a shop assistant from Milford, Co Donegal, arrived on the SS California on 13th June 1916 with Margaret Gallagher, 24, a housekeeper also from Milford. In the arrival records for Ellis Island, Fanny states that she was travelling to meet her sister Mary, in New York. Margaret was journeying to Philadelphia to meet her brother Anthony who had been in America since 1911.

Some of the questions asked by immigration inspectors: What is your name? Where are you from? Where are you going? Do you have any relatives in the United States? How much money did you bring? Do you have any physical or mental health problems? Are you an anarchist? Are you a polygamist?

Life in America



New York Tenement District, Library of Congress

Irish immigrants settled predominantly in urban centres such as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston, in dirty overcrowded tenements. The Irish were stereotyped as drunks, criminals, poor, diseased, stupid, and lazy. Many help ads in the newspapers included the phrase "Irish need not apply." However, as time passed the immigrants slowly became assimilated into American society.

The Irish were the only immigrant group in which women outnumbered men. Women worked in

laundries, light manufacturing, and retail businesses. Many worked as domestics, nurses, chambermaids, laundresses and cooks. Although work was hard and the hours were long, they were paid relatively well and the immigrants sent money home to Ireland to help support family left behind.

After the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, migration directly from Ireland to the west coast increased, particularly to San Francisco. By 1890 the Irish-born population in America reached its peak at nearly 1.9 million.

The Irish migrated to areas where work was available. There was a large Irish community in Butte, Montana, working in the mining industry. The 1910 census for Butte, reveals, "ninety percent of [single women] worked as maids, domestics, kitchen helpers, seamstresses, or launderers" and the other ten percent "included teachers, nuns, shopkeepers, and boardinghouse managers".

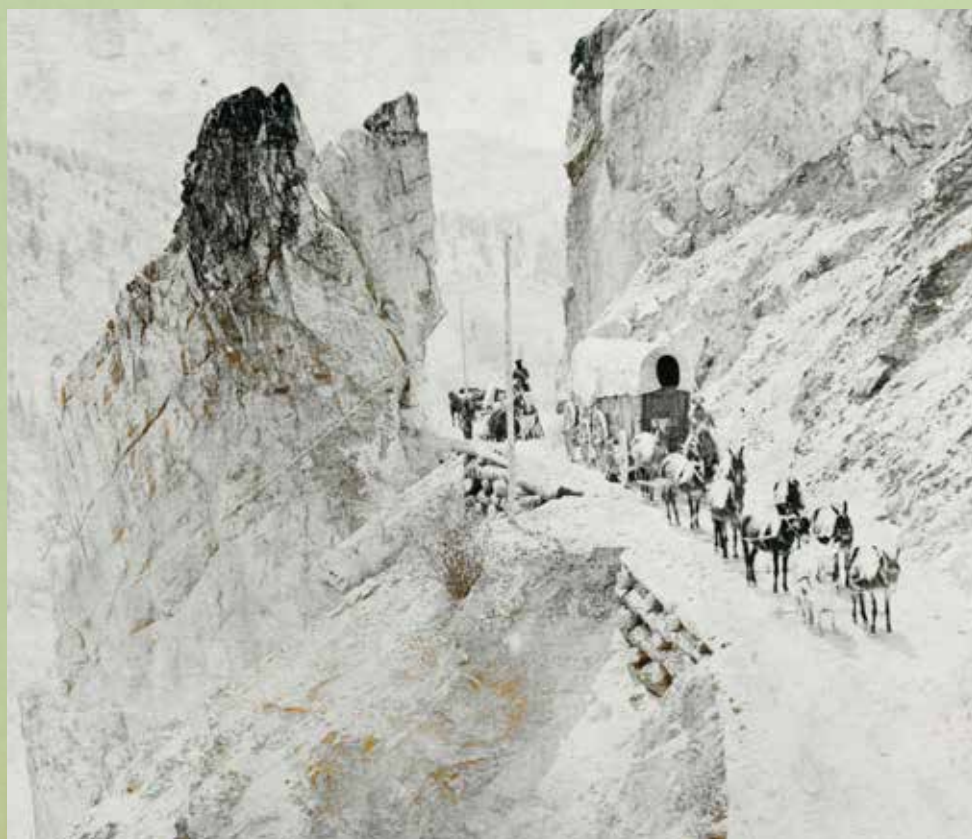


Irish Kitchen workers, Butte, Montana, America. Courtesy C. Owen Smithers Photograph Collection, Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, Butte, Montana



Irish Born teachers with a Sister of Charity Nun, Butte, Montana, America. Courtesy C. Owen Smithers Photograph Collection , Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, Butte, Montana

In the 1900 census there were still hundreds of thousands of Irish immigrants living in poverty. But economic circumstances were improving for a significant proportion, and the Irish were gaining footholds in the workplace, especially in the labour or trade union movement, the police and the fire service.



Wagon Trail heading West in America. Courtesy Derry Central Library, Libraries NI

'A Letter Home'



Emigrant Savings Bank in 1880,
Library of Congress

Emigrants sent letters or parcels home to support those left behind. Amongst items which were enclosed were money remittances and photographs. The Irish Emigrant Society founded the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank in 1850. Between 1845 and 1854 19 million dollars was sent back to Ireland, much of it in the form of prepaid tickets.

In July 1879, Mary Gailey, from near Raphoe, wrote to her friend Ann Russell in Ontario, Canada telling her that she could send a "Bank Order of any of the Banks in Ireland and we will get it cashed in Raphoe as we have got a bank there now".

The Irish in Australia and New Zealand



Irish Settlers in Australia 1841

The Irish have immigrated to Australia since the arrival of the First Fleet to New South Wales in 1788. Their influence upon, and contribution to, Australia's cultural, economic, political and social life has been of central significance.

Around 40,000 Irish convicts, men and women, were transported to Australia between 1791 and 1867. Female convicts mostly worked in domestic service or in factories making spun wool, cotton and linen. On the conclusion of their sentences women usually stayed in Australia, married and had children there.

From the 1830's to 1914, over 300,000 Irish people immigrated to Australia. They settled far and wide across the colony and did not form the type of ghetto communities that were common in American and British cities. Most gained employment in domestic service and as labourers, often in remote farming and mining regions. Eighty percent of the Irish emigrants were Catholic and many faced prejudice because of their religious views and for their support of Irish nationalism.

Biscuit, per week.....	3 lb.	Tee,	1 1/2oz.
Beef, "	1/2 lb	Coffee,2oz.
Pork, "	1 lb.	Sugar,	3/4lb.
Preserved meat.....	1 lb.	Veal,	1/2lb.
Soup & Bouillon.....	1 lb.	Butter,	1/4lb.
Fish, "	1/4 lb.	Cheese,	1/4lb.
Flour, "	3 1/2 lb.	Oatmeal,2oz.
Saisins, "	1/2 lb.	Lime Juice.....	1 gill
Preserved Fruit.....	1/4 lb.	Pickles.....	1 gill
Suet, "6 oz.	Mustard.....	1/2 oz.
Pease, "	2/3 of a gill	Salt,2 oz.
Rice, "	3/4 lb.	Pepper,	1/2 oz.
Preserved Potatoes.....	1/2 lb.	Water,5 gallons 1 quart
Carrots, "	1/2 lb.	" each infant, 1 gallon & 3/4	

Diet allocation on board ship to Australia

However there were many advantages to living in Australia. In Australia it was possible to own land, something people could only dream of in Ireland. For women the colonies offered an opportunity for well-paid employment and the chance to live an independent life in a society where women were in the minority. Australia led the world in bringing women's suffrage rights during the late 19th century. Women became eligible to vote and stand for election for the Parliament of South Australia in 1895. In 1902, the Commonwealth Parliament passed the Commonwealth Franchise Act which gave the vote to adult women.

In the 19th century a fifth of immigrants to New Zealand were from Ireland, the majority from the province of Ulster (56% in 1914). There are approximately 600,000 New Zealanders today of Irish ancestry.



Catherine Diver (nee Hegarty), born in Co Donegal, and her daughters Mary and Sarah. She arrived in New Zealand on the 'Zealandia' in October 1875.

Katikati Settlement and the Ulster Scots



Katikati No 2 School

Maria Hardy Gallaher became the first Head teacher in 1879. She emigrated from Ramelton with her family including her son Dave Gallaher, who became the first Captain of the All Blacks.

In 1875 George Vesey Stewart, a landowner from Co. Tyrone, founded a unique settlement at Katikati on the north island of New Zealand, securing 10,000 acres and supported by the Orange Order. Katikati became the only planned Ulster Scots settlement in the world. Vesey Stewart, his wife, Margaret, their nine children and 27 other families settled there. They built homes, farms, a church and an Orange Hall. Three years later he brought out another shipload of emigrants. Their descendants live there today.

Irish immigration to Scotland and England

The Industrial Revolution in Britain led to a huge increase in agricultural production. Demand for seasonal workers grew from the 1830s. Irish migrants usually found employment in Scotland, as they were willing to work hard, often in harsh environments. However, there was much local opposition to their presence. Sectarianism, lack of education and the

fact that some migrants only spoke Irish, prevented them from working in highly paid and skilled trades.



Fish gutters at Ullapool, Scotland



Irish workers on the way to Scotland and England

Women migrants often worked in factories or in the fishing industry. In Dundee there was a large female Irish community involved in gutting and curing herring, or in weaving and textile work. In 1851, 44.3% of textile workers in Greenock were Irish women. Many Irish women in Scotland were street sellers or hawkers. Working from barrows, hand-carts or baskets, they sold items such as flowers, fruit and matches. Irish women also ran lodging houses, providing cheap accommodation for their countrymen and women.

Migrant workers, many from West Donegal, who travelled to parts of northern England and Scotland, often did general farm work or 'tattie hoking' - picking potatoes during the harvest months. Workers lived in bothies- small huts for agricultural labourers.



Tattie Hokers, Ayrshire, Scotland c. 1890 . Courtesy John Clark Maddison



Funeral procession of the victims of the Arranmore Disaster
Donegal County Museum Collection

The Arranmore Disaster is remembered as the greatest tragedy associated with seasonal migration in County Donegal. On 9th November 1935 a yawl from Burtonport to Arranmore, carrying migrants who were travelling home from Scotland, overturned. Nineteen men and women drowned. The death toll included 7 members of one family. The youngest victim was a girl of 16.

From 1945, thousands of Irish male and female migrants were involved in the reconstruction

of post-War Britain. The Irish-born population in Britain almost doubled from 367,424 in 1931 to 726,121 in 1961. Women worked on farms, in factories, shops, hospitals, and in offices. From the 1950s Irish female migrants' job opportunities expanded and their social status began to improve. Many women were now moving to Britain to work in the civil service, education, banks, social work and transport.

Emigration continues to be a defining feature of Irish life.



Celine Rutherford, Falcarragh,
training at Stobhill Hospital,
Glasgow, 1949.
Courtesy of Celine Gallagher

A Long Farewell – Emigration of Donegal Women 1845-1950

Migration has been a feature of Irish society for centuries. Emigration from Ireland peaked during the Great Famine (1845- 1851) and over the following century.

It is believed that up to 10 million people left the island of Ireland over the last 200 years. Emigrants and their descendants are known as the Irish Diaspora. Donegal woman emigrated to countries such as Great Britain, Scotland, United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

This booklet tells the story of women's emigration; from the horror of the coffin ships of the famine years to the post-war immigration to Great Britain.

**Músaem Contae Dhún na nGall &
Cartlann Chontae Dhún na nGall**

**Donegal County Museum &
Donegal County Archives**



An Rannán Cultúir, Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall
Culture Division, Donegal County Council

Músaem Contae Dhún na nGall, An Bóthar Ard, Leitir Ceanainn, Contae Dhún na nGall
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