

Irish Immigration

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British Discrimination

Ireland was taken over by the British in the 12th century. By 1700, Irish people owned only 14% of Ireland. A switch to ranching caused the loss of 90% of jobs originally occupied by Irish farmers.



Potato Famine

Many Irish families subsisted entirely off potatoes. A disease blight in 1845 destroyed 40% of the crop. By 1855, 1 million people were dead and thousands were evicted.

Leaving for America

Led by the famine, the Irish were leaving by thousands for America. They generally traveled in the cheapest spots on ships. Conditions were tough, with berths made of wood shelves and virtually no space to move around. Thousands died on the voyage or shortly after arrival.

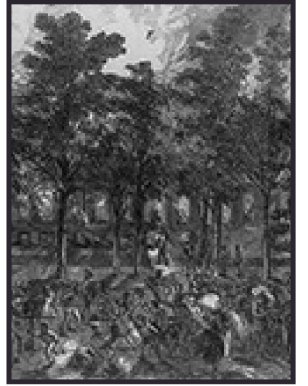


Work

Irish men mainly worked in construction, providing labor for large projects such as canals and railroads. They were viewed as disposable workers, assigned to the most dangerous jobs. Many Irish women worked as maids. In the 1850s, 80% of female household workers were Irish.

Conflicts

Conflicts with other races arose as the Irish spread around the US. During the civil war, Irish anti-black sentiment increased dramatically. The Irish feared freed slaves would take their jobs. Irish workers were also pitted against Chinese laborers. The Chinese worked faster, but with the same quality, and were used as a model for the Irish to follow.



Being accepted

Eventually, Irish people were accepted as Americans. Many began to attend college, got elected to public office, and became highly skilled workers. However, the Irish had an easier time than other immigrant groups due to the fact that they could become naturalized citizens and spoke English.

