

# Census-takers found 120 natives of Ireland in county in 1850

"Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to  
breathe free;  
The wretched refuse of your teeming  
shore.  
Send me the homeless, tempest  
tossed to me.  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."  
Inscription on the Statue of Liberty

In 1850 when the census-takers knocked on doors in Monroe County they found 120 persons who said they had been born in Ireland. As they blended into the fabric of county history, they left behind a pattern of by-and-large God-fearing, hard-working lifestyle.

Among the total population in the county in that year, the Irish immigrants represented less than 1 percent of the 11,296 counted by the



## Looking back

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census-takers. In that sense, they were a minority group.

For some, the passage to this place had not been easy. Take, for example, the family of Thomas Kilpatrick, numbering five upon arrival. In Thomas' biography in the *Histories of Morgan, Monroe and Brown Counties, Indiana*, it says that, "In May 1837, his (Thomas') father, after a voyage of nine weeks and three days, with his family, landed at Philadelphia..."

The family of Samuel Dinsmore came to the United States in 1838. They came to Monroe County by way of Pittsburgh, down the Ohio River on a flatboat to Louisville, and up from New Albany by wagon, a trip altogether of seven days. They settled on 160 acres in Van Buren Township.

The Cubit family was not so fortunate. Rose and her parents arrived in America at the port of New Orleans. Their trek to Bloomington took 11 weeks!

In 1850, the oldest of the Irish community — Hugh Robison — was 80 years old, and the youngest, little William John McCaw, was two years old. Statistically, the average age of the 120 Monroe County Irish was 40 years.

Other families took considerably

longer to find their way here. The census for the James Craig family reveals that although he and his wife, Isabella, were both from Ireland, they had had two children born in Pennsylvania, one in Ohio and three in Indiana.

Two other families also took their time getting here — perhaps working their way west. Martin Gamble and his wife, Jane, had four children in Ohio and five after their arrival here. On the other hand, Robert Gilmore and his Ohio-born wife, Paulina, had two children in Illinois before they settled in Monroe County.

In head-counting, the Carrs, McKinleys and the Robisons were the largest families of Irish-born, with eight apiece. The Carrs were spread over two family units and the Robisons were three families. Runners-

up were the Semples, McCaughans, Dinsmores, Kilpatricks and the Smalls.

Surprisingly, the most common Christian name in the Irish community was neither "Daniel" nor "Patrick," although they were both used by several families. The winner was "John," followed a close second by "William."

Among the census rolls there is a discrete notation that one of the Irish immigrants had apparently displayed some inappropriate behavior in his adopted country. Joseph Baxter, age 58, was listed among the guests of the county at the jail, which probably explains why his daughter, Eliza, was boarding with another Irish family, the McCrums.

Next week: The Luck of the Irish in Monroe County.