October 29th, 1849 – We have no food to eat. The potato was getting sick. A blight has made our potato poisonous, making our family starve. Our potato crop was being wiped out. Our family are farmers. We had lived in the countryside. The only available food that we could feast on were nettles, some berries, turnips and grass. Recently, about 3 years ago, a cold, cold winter has killed some of our family. I remember the snow was piled up to the roof of our house. The winter was so bad, that it could be classified as a blizzard. This snow storm killed my parents and sister. They had been so cold, that they froze to death. My wife, Keira Gorman, was worried about our children and wanted a better life for them. But we are dirt poor. We had sold our clothes to pay rent for our house. Food prices went up due to the potato famine, and our only choice was to move. Move somewhere that our children can live a good life, better than ours.

December 6th, 1852 – We cannot live like this anymore. More of our family are dying. We have no money to afford tickets for each of us. Catrina, our oldest daughter, suggest that we could sell our house to pay for the tickets. I asked Catrina where Kennedy was, our middle child. She said that he was working, building the roads. I continue to work as a farmer, planting crops. But the potato famine has affected our family so bad, we had to emigrate to another country. Once my son came back from work, he had told us about the wonders of America. Where the roads were paved with gold, and there were many crops and animals for us to eat. My wife and I think that America was a fantastic idea to settle in. But the problem is, tickets were very expensive. We had to wait a few more years until we can afford to move.

June 9th, 1969 – We had worked long and hard for the money. The money for being able to pay for the voyage to America. We had bought the cheapest tickets, as those were the only ones that we could afford. The tickets were £4. We had sold our house, clothing, food, everything we had for money to be able to pay for the tickets. We bring our money to the docks and buy our tickets. The steerage tickets that we received, I had put in my pocket. The instructor told us and many other families to board the ship.

June 10th, 1969 – Our family boards the ship and we get told to go to the bottom of the ship, where the steerage of the ship was. The room was very crowded, smelled bad, and was dark. We had to wait in this dark and crowded room for weeks, with the boat rocking back and forward. I looked around the boat, and saw everybody had containers of food, and a milk bottle, along with beer. I gave our youngest daughter, Nóra, my milk, as she needed it more than I did. The steerage was about 7 feet tall and we slept on irregular platforms that hung on the sides of the boat. The beds could hold up to 3 or 4 people. I would see a whole family sleeping on one board, or bed.

August 13th, 1969 – I looked out of the steerage, as I heard people cheering and screaming. I couldn’t believe my eyes. I saw the Statue of Liberty. I notified my family about the sight, that we’re going to become free, and have a good life here. I turned my head, and I saw a massive line towards Ellis Island. I told my wife to get our bags and our children, as we get off the boat. The sight was amazing, the American air seemed refreshing and the smell was better than it was in Ireland. I waited in this line, the line that people waited in to get off the boat, to step on American soil. I saw a bunch of my kind, the Irish. There was a massive outlier in the Irish, as I heard many people speaking my Native language. I wait in this enormous line with my family, to become free.

August 14th, 1969 – My family and I wait for a whole day, when we finally get checked for any sickness, or disease. First, an Irish speaker asked us for our names. I said, “Seán Gorman,” as it was my name, and he said that my name had to be changed to Sean Gorman. I was frustrated with this change, but I couldn’t do anything about it. Furthermore, my wife and kids are asked for their names, and they all passed. In addition, the Americans who claimed to be doctors had examined my body in various ways. Although it was uncomfortable, it was all worth it, as I knew that were going to become free. Then, the rest of my family get examined. My wife, Keira, makes it through. Then, next comes Catrina, our oldest child and daughter. She is allowed in. My son Kennedy passes the examination, but Nóra didn’t pass. The doctors said that she had a lung problem and was prohibited from entering the nation. Our family knew that we couldn’t leave her, and we couldn’t afford a ticket back to Ireland. We either leave her to die, or we illegally sneak her in.

August 16th, 1969 – Me, Keira, Catrina, and Kennedy pass the security. I had told Nóra to blend in the crowd, as she was so little, the doctors and guards couldn’t see her. Even if the guards were trying to catch her, she could escape, since she is very agile and sneaky. So, we step foot on free American soil. As I look around me, I don’t see any gold paved streets. I just see regular stone paved road. In addition, as I begin looking around even further, I saw many of the people in the town that we’re in, were home to the Italians. All the food, their culture. So interesting, but weird at the same time. I knew I couldn’t stay in this Italian town any longer, as I would get harmed. My family and I must settle in a calmer, and Irish town, to fit in. I breathed in the nasty air, there was the awful stunk of urine and feces around the city. I saw little buildings that were crowded together. The Italians didn’t really have a good living, but I hope that the Irish town has a more spacious home for our family to live in.

August 20th, 1969 – We manage to find a tenement to rent, but we cannot afford it. We are despite for money, and I must find a job somehow, even if it means that I must compete with somebody else for a job. I walk around Hell’s Kitchen, the name of the Irish town, looking for available jobs. I had told my family to stay above vents that are blowing out warm air, as we are currently homeless. I venture around the town for around 10 minutes, and I had asked the managers in all the buildings I came across if they needed anybody to hire. But all the jobs were taken, being I got denied by all of the ones that I went to. I look around even further, and I find a poster. A poster stating that they are hiring people to work in factories. I look at the poster and it states the address of the building. I don’t exactly know where this building is, but I ask people where it could be. I ask a fellow lady for the directions to the factory, and she points north. I start headed north, and I eventually reach the factory that has posters all around it saying, “For Hire.”

August 20th, 1969 – Continued

I walk into the factory, asking if I am able to get the job. The boss walks up to me and says, “Yes, but there are also many more waiting, so you better be good, or else.” I am terrified. If I lose this job, I won’t be able to feed my family, or give them a shelter. The boss shows me where I have to work in this factory and tells me to just pull a lever, over and over again. I think in my head, well, that’s easy, and I just pull the lever constantly, hoping that I’ll make some money. But then, the boss says that another person may take my spot if I don’t pull the lever, as there were many people waiting in line for my job. In addition, he adds that he won’t pay me if I fool around or don’t do my work. So, I continue on doing my job until the boss says to stop.

August 24th, 1969

I just worked and worked, pulling that one lever, repeatedly, until it was pay day. I had received $1.3 for the week, and I think it was time to start heading back to my family. I can’t wait to tell them that I could afford them food and rent few days of shelter. I come back to the vent, and I don’t see them anywhere. My first thought was that they were dead, but then I thought about it. Maybe Keira went looking for a job because she couldn’t stand being hungry and took the children with her. I realize that women cannot work in jobs, so I’m panicking, and desperately need to know where they are. What if they’re in another vent since the vent that they were previously on stopped giving them heat? So, I search for nearby vents, and I find Keira, Catrina, Kennedy, and Nóra. I was so relieved, as I thought I had lost them. I told them the good news, and they were so happy because they could finally eat. I walk them to a nearby store and bought some bread. After we ate the bread, we decide to buy a place to stay for the week. I stop by this old tenement and ask the landlord if we could stay. He kindly says yes and offers a tenement room for $0.50. I agree and give him the money. We check out our room, and it is cramped, and smelly. We originally went to America to have a better life, not to restart life. So, as I work, my family would stay in the tenement. Keira would watch over the children and if you wanted to go to the bathroom, you would go outside, and do your business. Other families were living in the same building as well, so we better get used to them. Well, at least we didn’t starve to death back in Ireland, because our family would have if we didn’t move to America. America wasn’t what we expected, but it at least was better than what we had. Manhattan was a nice and relaxing place to stay, as it was there were lots of Irish staying there, and not a lot of violence, compared to other cities.