



IRISH GENEALOGY TOOLKIT


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Irish American history to 1845

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Irish American history began in the late-16th century with the transportation of petty criminals and beggars to the West Indies. These transportees were subsequently joined by prisoners of war, deported in the middle of the 17th century following Oliver Cromwell's bloody conquest of Ireland, and forced to provide cheap (slave) labour to the Caribbean tobacco plantations.



Most were Catholics from the southern counties of Ireland. One of the largest such Irish communities was on the island of Barbados.

As African slavery expanded in the Caribbean, the descendents of the Irish deportees started to leave the islands and many looked to North America as the place to seek their fortune.

Many of these Barbados-born Irish were among the early settlers of Carolina.

Around this time (the 1700s), the stream of Irish immigrants to America had been steady but small in number, and pretty exclusively Protestant on account of British laws preventing Catholics from freely emigrating to the colony.

The [Irish linen](#) industry had brought a good few across the Atlantic. Ships went in one direction with the flax seeds that Ireland needed to produce the raw materials of the trade, and returned with emigrants keen to satisfy the labour shortage and collect the high wages they'd heard so much about. Many 'bought' their passage by signing up for a lengthy contract of work.

Irish American history: 1720-1790

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Famous Irish Americans

More than 36 million Americans identify themselves 'Irish Americans'. That's nearly 12% of the total population of the United States.

Below is a list of just some of the most internationally famous Irish Americans:

President Barack Obama
 President Ronald Reagan
 President John F Kennedy
 President George Washington
 Henry Ford
 Maureen O'Hara
 Gene Kelly
 John Wayne
 Bing Crosby
 Grace Kelly
 Burt Lancaster
 James Cagney
 Harrison Ford
 Buster Keaton
 Alfred Hitchcock
 Walt Disney
 Michael Flatley
 Raymond Chandler

The first significant wave of Irish American immigration came in the 1720s. This period saw the arrival of the Scots-Irish, a term used in North America (but not elsewhere) to denote those who came from Ireland but had Scottish Presbyterian roots.

Philadelphia was the most popular destination port for Scots-Irish immigrants to America, mainly because the linen trade routes were already well established. They then moved into the Appalachian regions, the Ohio Valley, New England, The Carolinas and Georgia.

Unlike the 19th century chapter of Irish American history, when Catholic Irish immigrants turned their back on the land, most Scots-Irish immigrants continued their farming traditions.

Despite the official line, small numbers of



Catholics also arrived in this period. They sailed from the southern Irish ports of Cork and Kinsale and some settled communities in Virginia and Maryland.

The number of Irish immigrants rose and fell during these years. It was high in the late 1720s and low in the 1730s, before rising in the 1740s and continuing to grow until the 1760s when some 20,000 departed from Ulster ports alone.

From 1770 to 1774 the human traffic peaked with the arrival of some 30,000 mostly Scots-Irish immigrants in America.

By 1790, America had a white population of 3,100,000. Nearly half a million (447,000) are estimated to have been either Irish-born or of Irish ancestry. Of these, some two-thirds (about 300,000) are thought to have originated in the province of Ulster.

Irish American history: post-Independence

After Independence, Irish American history stepped up a pace with an estimated one million Irish immigrants arriving between 1783 and 1844. The majority, at least until the 1820s, were artisans or professionals so they quickly assimilated and prospered.

The letters they sent home told of comforts the average Irish family could only dream of. Soon, many among the poorest were saving for their fare. This wave of Irish American immigration saw the unskilled and illiterate arrive, ready to seek their fortunes, and many found employment as labourers on some of America's huge early infrastructure projects such as the Erie Canal.

While the pace of Irish American history cranked up a gear in the early 19th-century, it was nothing compared to the dramatic exodus caused by the Great Hunger (also known as the Irish Famine) of the late 1840s. Learn about [Irish American history from 1845 onwards](#).

F Scott Fitzgerald

Micky Spillane

John McEnroe

Muhammed Ali

Eddie Cohran

Bill Haley

In 1848, a 26-year-old farmer's son called Patrick Kennedy left the family home in Dunganstown, co Wexford, bound for Boston, via the English port of Liverpool.

His great grandson, John F Kennedy, born 1917, was to become the 35th President of the United States in 1961.

An advertisement for "FREE Websites". It features a large orange sphere with "TOP" and a smaller green sphere with "10". The text says "FREE Websites" and "TOP 10 FREE Websites". Below the image, it says "See my personal selection of the very best free online databases for Irish genealogy research. Click image."

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