

# Analysis of memories of an immigrant

Experience, Memories



Today, during our broadcasting, we will talk about immigration, particularly the huge immigration's period, from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, to the USA: nearly 12 million immigrants, coming from all parts of the world, arrived in the United States between 1870 and 1900. To discuss of this subject with us, the famous author of “Memories of an immigrant”, Mary Wilde, will present her book. Good morning, as you know, immigration is an important subject in the world today.

But, what did you decide to write a book about it, and what did you choose this time in particular. “Memories of an immigrant” is a biography of my grand-mother Annie McBride, an Irish immigrant. Social and cultural differences of immigrants have built north-American culture. In your book, why did your grand-parent decide to immigrate to the USA? Annie was born in 1880 in Ireland. She emigrated in 1901 because she wanted personal freedom or relief from political and religious persecution.

Actually, there were political subordination by the British policy and religious prejudice of Protestant Masters to the Catholic Irish. In 1845, the great potato rot killed many of the crops people had planted and a famine resulted, but 50 years after the situation was the same. What were her expectations and dreams? Fleeing crop failure, land and job shortages, and famine, she came to the U. S. because it was perceived as the land of economic opportunity “Golden Land”. She decided to settle down in the US to start a new life, in order to have better prospects, so as to earn a better living.

She hoped for a better future. Did she go with all her family in the "Golden land"? Her parents died when she was young but she was raised by her uncle Bill and his wife: a couple of farmers. In 1895, Bill immigrated to the new country while his wife and Annie would stay in Ireland. After he had worked and earned money for the passage of them, they could have joined him. There is an extract of her journey to the US. Annie McBride said... My journey to Ellis Island: Day 20 I'm in this boat since 20 days. It is so long. I thought the trip gonna be less hard.

I am in steerage class; my bed is not comfortable at all. I sleep with six other persons, a French woman and an old German man. The four others, I don't know their name, I didn't understand their language. They are kind people; I ate with them yesterday evening, in the dormitory. My only dinner was a lukewarm soup, a boiled potatoes and a stringy beef. The quality is poor, but it was good compared to the piece of bread we had in Ireland. I still have two months to end this trip. During the day, I talk with Julie and Gunter, my bedroom's mates.

I learn very much about their country their lives and why did they decide to come to the USA. For me, eating potatoes was a miracle, in Ireland; the potato famine was a disaster and left lot of people destitute. I had the feeling that I was living the beginning of my new life. A life without fears and problems. I am very hopeful and impatient. Yesterday I didn't succeed to sleep, outside, a huge storm was rumbling. I was afraid because I hate storms and I always thought that in the ocean, it could be very dangerous.

One hour ago, when I talked with her, Julie told me that the captain wasn't very nice, he committed sexual offences. I think this behavior is inappropriate to a female passenger, and I don't understand why he used this language. There is not drinking water on the boat. Yesterday, I drunk water with and horrible rancid smell and I had an unbearable stomach ache. I staid in my bed all the day, I was so bored. I heard that a typhus disease appeared on the boat. I'm afraid, it's gonna increase my constant pressure, this illness made lot of dead people in Ireland.

I will propose to people to play cards with me, stay without do anything is just impossible, I think I will die of boredom. This day will end in four hours and let the place to another long and hard traveling day. I can't wait to arrive to USA. To see this new country, this new people, to live my new life. How was the arrival in the US and at Ellis Island? After four weeks in the boat, she made out the shore through the fog and was very excited. Annie's first view of the United States was at Ellis Island in New York.

After leaving the ship all the immigrants had medical and legal inspections. If they were healthy and if they had 25\$ they were allowed to leave Ellis Island and start their new lives. After inspections, where did she go? Bill told her the situation was very difficult when he arrived in the USA. In the ship, he met another Irish Sean who proposed to him to go to Philadelphia where there were working opportunities: the country was growing and it needed men to do the heavy work of building bridges, canals, and railroads.

Thus, they were engaged to do work of building of railroads and canals, for miserable wages. They were forced to live in cellars because of poverty. Their

brogue and dress provoked ridicule; their poverty and illiteracy provoked scorn. Then, Bill and Sean settled in the already existing Irish communities, where Catholic Churches had been built, and cultural traditions were carried out. Consequently, Molly, Bill's wife, and Annie joined him at Philadelphia. They found work as chamber maid and caretaker of children. The Church played an integral part in their lives.

It was a Church who fought not only for their souls but also for their human rights. Often stereotyped and discriminated against, many immigrants suffered verbal and physical abuse because they were "different." Their transition into American life, however, was not smooth as the Irish minority came into direct and sometimes violent conflict with the Protestant majority. After 10, Annie had children with Sean, and in 1950, she founded a college, today renowned, in Virginia. Thank you for your presentation and participation, Mary Wilde.