

Irish immigration to american



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Immigration has come a long way in our country. Immigrants have come to this country to capture “ The American Dream” that we see portrayed, nearly every day, on our television screens. Irish immigration occurred as a major rush in 1845. These immigrants came pretty much only came with the clothes on their backs, a little bit of faith, and hope to start a new life in this new world. Like most other immigrant groups, the Irish had it bad. However, unlike other groups of immigration, the Irish had more advantages with their education, politics, and labor unions, which helped them pave their mark in their new American homeland.

The Irish famine of 1845, which killed nearly one-eighth of the entire population was the main reason why the Irish immigrated. This was major was because potatoes were the major source of food in Ireland (Donnelly). People ate potatoes to live and survive. People without much money were able to grow them, for they grew in great quantities on just small pieces of land. People had farms of them and grew them to sell them and make money. Potatoes were a godsend for the Irish. Unfortunately, in 1845 a disease or blight struck Ireland. “ When the blight hit, stemming from a fungus, potato fields turned black.

Potatoes rotted soon after they were dug up from the ground. Racked with hunger, people sometimes ate the rotten potatoes anyway and became sick. As the blight spread across Ireland people became desperate” (Goldstein 20). The effects of the blight have taken a toll far too great for the people to handle in Ireland and it was time to finally move.

Families had no choice and knew that there will be a long period of time before this famine would end. Some believed that they might not even survive through it. The Irish packed their bags and got on ships to America. Some landlords actually bought some Irish their tickets because they knew it would save them money. The method was for the landlords to just buy their way out. The landlords bought the people their tickets to ship them off to America. The landlords made promises of money, clothes, and food, so they packed the people in cheap, dirty, and unseaworthy ships. These ships got there name of ' coffin ships' (Johanson). Many of the people who boarded these ships had diseases which were very contagious and easily contracted. People left and right where getting sick and even dying before they even stepped one foot on America. The rides to America on boats took up to eight weeks and with bad weather up to 10 weeks. Still though with all of these mishaps the Irish people still managed to have a positive state of mind and were still hopeful of all the fortunes America can bring for them and their families/

Upon arriving in America, The Irish, who were sick, were quarantined and treated. People started to fear that with their conditions they might not even be allowed to enter America. The conditions were horrible and many diseases could not be cured for they were too strong, especially the ones children had. In America the Irish felt as if it's a new marriage between two worlds. Some people even poured some soil they brought from Ireland as a symbol of their combination. Now in America families knew it was time to finally experience that America like they always dreamt about.

Education is very important for someone who wants to make something out of their lives in America. The Irish knew education offered a promising path to success in America. However, parents found it very difficult for their children to attend school in America. The reason was because most Irish were Catholics. “ Public schools in America mostly taught by the protestant culture and read from King James or protestant bible.”(Henderson)

Parents needed a solution, so they came up with the idea of building schools. “ Parents and cities began to build religious schools to teach their children both academics and Catholic studies.”(Jones) When it came to University levels of education, many Irish Americans enrolled in Jesuit Universities, such as Fordham University. With many Irish Americans now enrolled in universities and colleges, they began to receive degrees and enter better professions such as teaching, medicine, engineering, and law.

As the number of Irish grew in big cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York so did the political power in the Irish communities. Many Irish politicians organized rallies in neighborhoods with family and friends. With politics rising in the communities, Irish Americans soon became mayors and city councilors. The politicians were effective, but not always ethical: “ Some Irish politicians used such tactics like bribing people in exchange for votes”(Goldstein. p49)

In New York a democratic party called Tammany Hall used such tactics. Tammany Hall won most of their votes from their peers, the Irish communities. “ Tammany Hall helped immigrants with jobs, social services, and sometimes they even just flat out paid them.”(Bayliss) Despite its

corrupt reputation, Tammany Hall helped many Irish new comers. Tammany Hall also helped many Irish politicians rise higher in politician ranks. Most famous was Alfred Smith who went from Tammany Hall to New York government, becoming governor in 1919. He also ran for presidency in 1928, but eventually lost to republican Herbert Hoover.

Alfred Smith reached very high positions in the offices of government, but he missed one major step left for the Irish Americans to achieve, Presidency. However, that all was changed in the 1960's. Nearly 30 years after Alfred Smiths run and nearly 100 years after the potato famine, John F. Kennedy was elected president of the United States. Many people did not like the idea of him becoming president, epically because he was Catholic. With Kennedy's victory, the last Irish barrier to Irish achievement had fallen. An Irish catholic had reached the highest point of office in America.

When the Civil War ended, many Irish Americans went back to work in factories, mills, farms, and mining companies. America was now literally booming with population growth. Cities were now filled with cars, railroads, buildings and so forth. The people who were keeping all of this together were the Irish. With these steady jobs in place more Irish began to go out into newer professions, including the most popular job irish hold in the 20th century, the police force.

These jobs were very dangerous and women and children worked these jobs, neither of them had no rights. Some jobs with miners had cave-ins which were common. Poisonous gases sometimes seeped into mines and killed many workers. It was a point that where miners lives were in complete

control of the mining company.” People can conclude that even though the Irish had their politics and education in line they still had a tough time, just like any other group of people like the now freed blacks or any other ethnicity.

However, with this mistreatment the Irish actually stood up for themselves with their unions. “ All across the nation, laborers began to form construction, factory, and mining unions. They joined prominent national groups such as the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor. They had strikes and fought for child and women rights.”(Griffin) We can see here that with the Irish bonding together and working as a whole we can see that they fought for rights like no other group of immigrants and they got what they were looking for.

The Irish have come through a long way to get and start a new life from Ireland to America. Fortunately, they had some better ways to things than others. Their politics, education, and labor unions helped them secure their presence in America and helped them start their new generations in this once known foreign land. The Irish are now no longer new comers in America.