

Development and growth of belfast essay



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The expansion and change of Belfast from a town to a city in the late 19th century to early 20th century was due to by trade from Belfast harbor to overseas. The Industrial Revolution boosted the city's population and at the beginning of the 20th century the city was the biggest linen producer in the world. Belfast provided a marketing and Employment for the surrounding urban areas and the River Lagan which flowed into Belfast Lough gave the city its own harbor. The harbor created a trade route with the rest of the United Kingdom and later Europe and America.

In the mid-17th century, Belfast exported beef, butter, hides, tallow and corn and it imported coal, cloth, wine, brandy, paper, timber and tobacco. During the American Civil War the Union Army cut off cotton supply to the Southern states across the Atlantic and then in 1864 the cotton plantations were destroyed by the Union troops advancing southwards. Belfast had been importing and exporting to and from North America and now with the raw material used to make the cotton (flax) had been destroyed the city had Belfast had nothing to produce, and the cotton industry was beginning to decline in the mid-18th century.

But there was a substitute product which was Linen, Belfast had to see if this new product could work because it had to face up to the challenge of making up for this temporary breakdown in the British market Around this time, the linen trade in Ireland was a massive boost in industrial activity and Turned out to be very successful, as it was beginning to surpass linen as a major industrial product in the middle of the 18th century, one fifth of all the linen exported from Ireland was shipped from Belfast.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, Belfast had transformed into the largest linen producer in the world, hence its nickname 'Linenopolis'. Belfast has been very famous in the last 100 years or so for its shipbuilding industry. Shipbuilding was one of Belfast's biggest industries, as it employed 30,000 people at the time. Many have worked in the ship yards and some of the biggest and most infamous ocean liners of the early 20th century e. g. like the RMS Titanic were constructed in Belfast harbor.

Actual ship building in Belfast began in 1791 and the Harland and Wolff shipyard was founded in 1862 by Edward J Harland and G. W Wolff. Belfast harbour was urged in 1845 to provide deeper waters for larger ships. Large quays were built e. g. Donegall Quay was built out into the river to make room for much larger ships. As the harbour was developed further trade became more efficient, now that more and bigger ships can get into the harbour. During World War Two there was a huge increase in shipbuilding, but not building cruise ships or ocean liners but the production of ships for the British Royal Navy.

Four Battle cruisers were constructed for the Royal Navy in the Second World War. The mechanization and modernization of linen and shipbuilding were instrumental in helping Belfast's iron foundry had developed in the first half of the 19th century until by 1870 there were twenty; Steam engines, water turbines, electricity generator, steam pumps, piston rings, electric dynamos and engines for cotton mills were made in Belfast and sold in Britain and abroad.

New engineering schemes also were associated with and contributed to the trade of textiles and shipbuilding, as from 1881 the Sirocco works made industrial fans. Belfast Ropeworks, established in 1873 under Gustav, made ropes for the shipyards as it was needed for rigging both sailing and steam ships, and the factory owned by Gustav in East Belfast became the world's largest ropeworks. Ever since industry commenced the population of Belfast began to grow significantly, Belfast's population increased by almost 47% between 1801 and 1811, it was nearly 28, 000.

Many people came flooding into Belfast from the countryside looking for work and the population just kept on getting bigger and bigger, from 1816-1821 it rose from 30000 to 37000 with the city occupying just over 5500 houses. In the 1840s-1850s the period of the Potato famine. mill workers arrive by railroad, three stations at edges of town became surrounded by mills and houses for the poor workers. The city now has a huge population and an irregular growth pattern.

In 1851 the number reaches 87000 and the city expands to include suburbs with wealthy factory owners living in the north, south, and eastern parts of the city. West Belfast and Ballymacarrett are incorporated into the city. There is also a large increase in industrial housing near the textile mills. By the start of the 20th century Belfast had a population of 350, 000 and by the beginning of the Second World War it had risen to 440, 000.

During the late 18th century one of the industrial suburbs situated in Belfast seemed to expand both industrially and residentially more rapidly than any other area. Brick works, glassworks and iron foundries, rope, starch and

factories were established and were clustered all round this area, two main indicators of the expansion of Ballymacarrett was the building of an embankment and quay on the east bank of the River Lagan the long bridge over the river to 50ft which would enable carriages to pass each other on the bridge.

Ballymacarrett and any surrounding areas continued to grow in both industrial and commercial sectors. A good indication of this growth was the increased availability of land for services, yards and other premises. There were several iron foundries being formed in the inner suburbs of Belfast in the mid 19th century and in the late 19th century a large engineering industry grew up. Also in the late 19th century there was a whiskey distilling industry in Belfast and a tobacco industry also.