

Irish Emigration to America II: The Irish in America

The Irish often settled in the same areas as each other after arriving in America, with Boston and New York becoming the cities that were most heavily populated by Irish emigrants. Life in America was often not as positive as they had hoped, as initially they had to deal with poor living conditions and discrimination. Most Americans were Protestant, and so they were wary of the Irish, who were largely Catholic; in other words, they did not trust the Catholic immigrants. The Irish competed with other ethnic minorities and black people for employment, and often worked in dangerous or low-paid jobs, such as in the construction industry or the laying down of railroads. Women often became house servants.

Over the next few decades, the Irish slowly became more and more integrated into American society. A proud moment for Irish Catholics in America was when John F. Kennedy, the first president of Irish Catholic descent, was elected in 1960. The 50th anniversary of his assassination was on 22nd November this year. A lot of presidents can claim some degree of Irish ancestry, including Barack Obama, who has ancestors who came from County Offaly. More recently, Marty Walsh, who is the son of Irish immigrants, became the mayor of Boston by appealing to the working class and immigrants.

There was a steady rate of Irish migration to America during the 20th century due to high unemployment rates in Ireland. This continued until about the 1990s, when Ireland's economy began to improve.

Today, there are thirty-four and a half million people in the United States who can claim Irish ancestry. Next to German, it is the second most common ancestry in the

US. The Irish migrants also brought with them some cultural influences: for instance, the Saint Patrick's Day parades of cities such as New York, Boston and San Francisco are much larger than any held in Ireland.