



Flight from Famine: The Coming of the Irish to Canada

Donald MacKay

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Winner of the 1991 QSPELL Prize for Non-fiction

One of Canada's founding peoples, the Irish arrived in the Newfoundland fishing stations as early as the seventeenth century. By the eighteenth century they were establishing farms and settlements from Nova Scotia to the Great Lakes. Then, in the 1840s, came the failures of Ireland's potato crop, which people in the west of Ireland had depended on for survival. "And that," wrote a Sligo countryman, "was the beginning of the great trouble and famine that destroyed Ireland."

Flight from Famine is the moving account of a Victorian-era tragedy that has echoes in our own time but seems hardly credible in the light of Ireland's modern prosperity. The famine survivors who helped build Canada in the years that followed Black '47 provide a testament to courage, resilience, and perseverance. By the time of Confederation, the Irish population of Canada was second only to the French, and four million Canadians can claim proud Irish descent.

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Herbert Mikula:

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