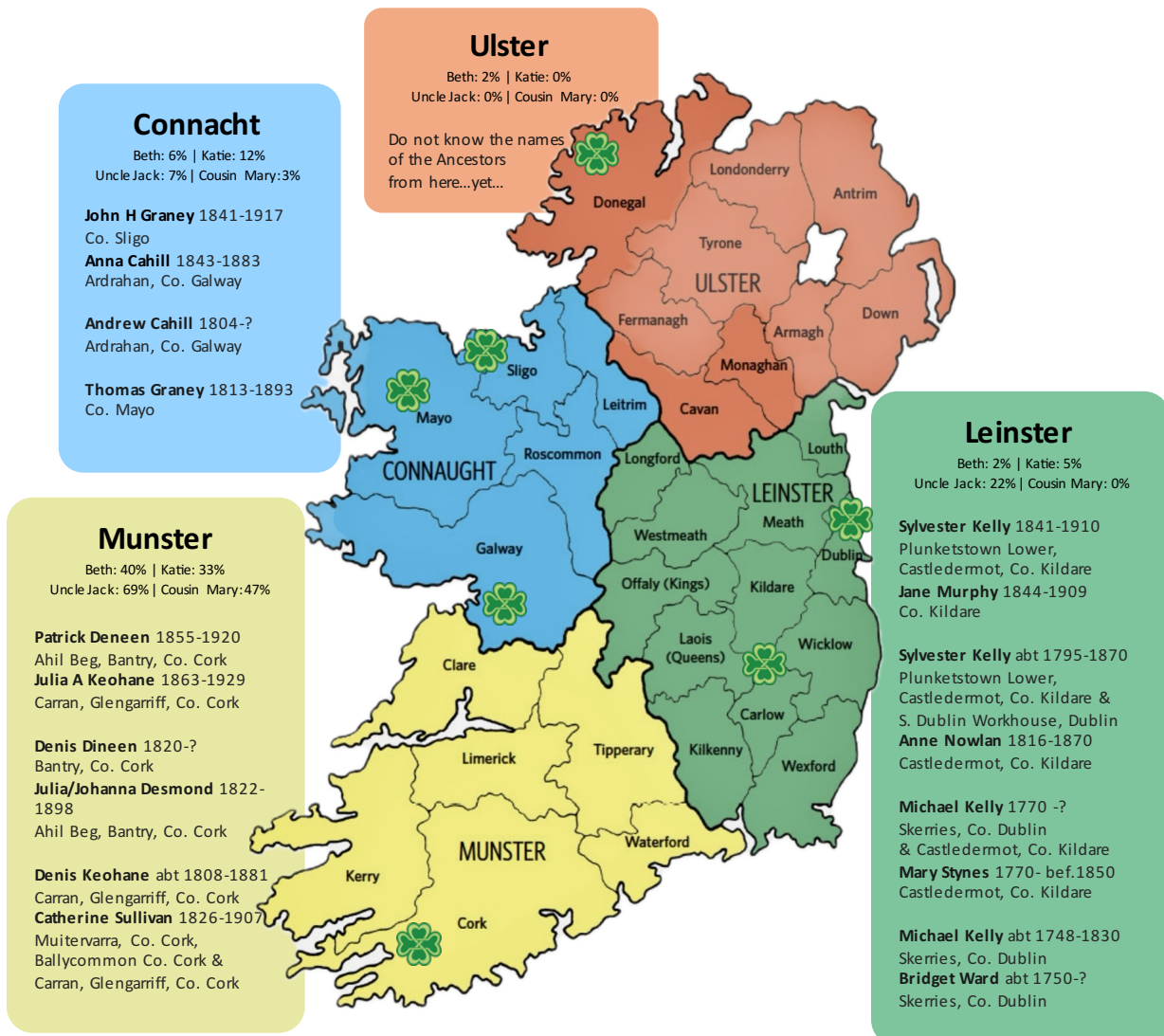


Éire—Ireland

Ireland's history reflects a journey from its earliest inhabitants—prehistoric hunter-gatherers and Celtic settlers—to centuries marked by frequent conflict with English and, later, British rule. This long history of struggle ultimately culminated in the 1922 partition, which created both the independent Republic of Ireland and the region of Northern Ireland, remaining under British administration.

Key historical phases shaping this narrative include the early Christianization of Ireland, the arrival and influence of Vikings and Normans, the devastation of the Great Famine, and, finally, the twentieth-century movement for Irish independence. While this summary does not capture every aspect of Ireland's past, its aim is to provide a deeper understanding of the significant events that shaped the world of my ancestors.

Half of my genetic heritage traces directly to Ireland, a connection substantiated by DNA results from multiple family members, including my sister Katie, my paternal uncle John J. Kelly (Jack), and his daughter, my first cousin, Mary Kelly Clark. To further personalize this history, I have included specific details about the regions in Ireland where my ancestors resided, highlighting their enduring ties to the land and its legacy.



Éire



Goddess Ériu
Sculpture on Hill of Uisneach

Ériu - Eireann - Erin - Ireland

Ériu, Banbha, and Fodhla—origin folklore of three sisters and goddesses who are considered patron goddesses representing the land itself, fertility, and sovereignty.

When the Milesians (early humans) arrived from Spain, they met each sister in turn. While all three asked for the island to be named after them, Ériu, whom the bard Amergin met at the center of Ireland (Uisnech), secured the lasting legacy, leading to the name Éire.

While Ériu is the root of the modern name for Ireland, Banbha and Fodhla are frequently used in Irish poetry as, poetic, alternative names for the country. These goddesses symbolize the deep, ancient connection between the feminine, the land, and sovereignty in Irish tradition.

Brehon Law

1st AD thru 17th century

Ancient law of Celtic Ireland. Rooted in oral traditions from the 1st century AD, written records from the 7th – 8th centuries, and in use for over a millennium until the 17th century.

The law **focused on compensation** rather than harsh punitive punishments like hanging or flogging. It was **designed to keep peace between neighbors and clans**. It acted as a comprehensive, living code for society, covering areas like fosterage, property rights, environmental protection, and animal care.



Irish Brehons
Judge & Filidh
keeper of laws & lore
...and a dog

The laws were interpreted by professional, educated judges known as **Brehons**. They fulfilled a role of arbitrator in disputes. Both men and women could be Brehons.

It **provided advanced rights for women**, allowing them to own property, retain assets after divorce, and pursue divorce for reasons such as a husband's incompetence or abuse. As a system that was largely self-enforced by the community, it helped maintain order **without a formal police force**.

The Celts

500 BCE

The Celts were a **collection of tribal societies** that originated in Central Europe, particularly around the area of modern-day Austria, Switzerland, and southern Germany. Over time, they spread across Europe, reaching the British Isles and Ireland.

The first Celtic groups likely **came to Ireland in waves**, not all at once. They arrived by sea, possibly from Britain or directly from continental Europe. Their arrival didn't necessarily involve conquest. Instead, they **gradually integrated with existing populations**, influencing and blending with the earlier Neolithic and Bronze Age peoples.

The Celts introduced iron tools and weapons, a major advancement over the bronze previously used. They spoke an early form of Gaelic (Goidelic Celtic), the ancestor of modern Irish (Gaeilge).

The Celts practiced a **polytheistic religion** with a rich oral tradition of gods, heroes, and nature spirits, much of which was later written down in medieval Irish texts. Organized into tribes or clans, led by chieftains or kings. Druids played key roles as priests, judges, and scholars.



Art and decoration featured intricate spirals, knots, and animal motifs, still visible in ancient Irish artifacts. The **Celtic legacy remains deeply embedded in Irish culture today** — in language, mythology, festivals (like Samhain, the origin of Halloween), and the traditional music and art that continue to thrive.



Janus Stone (Dreenan Figure)

Boa Island in Fermanagh | dated to c. 400-800 AD

Features two back-to-back figures with pear-shaped heads, large oval eyes, and crossed arms. Believed to represent a Celtic deity of duality.



Christianity

By the 4th century

Literacy and Education: The establishment of monasteries brought Latin learning, allowing Irish monks to record native literature, laws, and genealogy, preserving knowledge during the Early Middle Ages.

Monastic Culture: Monasteries became the central hubs of spiritual, economic, and social life, with powerful abbots holding significant sway over communities.

Art and Architecture: This period saw the rise of Insular art, including illuminated manuscripts (Book of Kells), metalworking (Ardagh Chalice), and the construction of high crosses.

Missionary Work: Irish monks became renowned missionaries, bringing Christianity to Scotland, northern England, and parts of continental Europe.

Social and Legal Changes: The church integrated with, rather than fully replacing, existing Irish laws and traditions, but it did introduce new social structures and roles.

Long-Term Political and Social Impact: In later centuries, the Catholic Church became intertwined with Irish identity and nationalism, especially in the context of resistance to British rule. While the Catholic Church had immense influence on education and social services, its dominance also led to significant controversies and power abuses, particularly in the 20th century.

Saint Patrick: Although not the first to bring Christianity, he is credited with widespread conversion in the 5th century.



Symbols resembling the Celtic cross existed in pre-Christian Celtic and pagan cultures as "sun crosses" or "sun wheels" representing the sun, cardinal directions, or elements.

Irish Clan System

By at least 7th century

The Irish clan system was a **patrilineal**, kinship-based societal structure that dominated Ireland from the Middle Ages until the 17th century Tudor conquest. **Clans were self-governing groups** sharing a common ancestor, territory, and surname, **led by a Chief (Taoiseach)** or chieftain. This system blended blood kinship with political allegiance, including fostered members and clients who joined for security and resources.

Clans were **deeply tied to their land**, often fighting to expand their territory for power. They were governed by, Brehon Law, an ancient Irish legal system. Land belonged to the clan collectively, leading to conflicts with later British systems of individual land ownership.

Munster

MacCarthy (Mac Cárthaigh): Overkings of the region (Desmond)

O'Sullivan Beare (Ó Súilleabháin Béarra): The dominant power from the 13th century onwards, often referred to as Princes of Beare.

O'Crowley (Ó Cruadhlaich): A clan with deep roots in the area, often holding gatherings in Bantry.

Connacht

O'Conor (Ó Conchubhair/Ó Conchubhair Donn): Kings of Connacht and often held the title of High King of Ireland.

O'Flaherty (Ó Flaithbheartaigh): Dominated West ruling the area around Galway.

O'Kelly (Ó Ceallaigh): Ruled the kingdom in south Connacht.



Leinster

MacMurrough-Kavanagh (Mac Murchadha Caomhánach): Royal dynasty of Leinster.

O'Byrne (Ó Broin): A powerful sept in Co. Wicklow.

O'Toole (Ó Tuathail): Lords of Wicklow who, along with the O'Byrnes, resisted English rule in the Leinster mountains.

Ulster

O'Donnell (Ó Domhnaill): Kings and the dominant power in the region.

Sweeney (Mac Suibhne): Divided into branches (Fanad, Doe, and Boghuine), serving the O'Donnells.

Gallagher (Ó Gallchobhair): Hereditary marshals of the O'Donnell army.

Éire



Viking Raids

795-1014 AD

Origins: Early raiders (c. 795) primarily came from western Norway, while Danish Vikings (referred to as "dark foreigners" or Dubgail) became more active from roughly 849 AD onwards.

Impact: The Vikings established trade routes, transformed Irish society by building cities: Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, and Limerick and eventually assimilated, leaving lasting influences on Irish surnames (e.g., Doyle, MacAuliffe). They introduced a money-based economy with Dublin minting the first Irish coin around 997.



Dublin (Dyflin): Established in 841, it became the most significant Viking stronghold in Ireland, evolving from a raiding base to a prosperous Viking-Irish town and kingdom.



Norman Invasion

between 1169 and the early 1200s

Despite the Vikings, **Irish power remained decentralized**, with constant power struggles between local kings.

Diarmait Mac Murchada, a deposed king of Leinster, **invited Anglo-Normans** to help him regain his throne, leading to a rapid conquest of the eastern coast.

Origin: They were descendants of Vikings who settled in Northern France (Normandy) and subsequently conquered England in 1066. The contingent that invaded Ireland mostly came from England and Wales.

Motivation: They were professional warriors, often operating as mercenaries or seeking land and power, which they carved out in eastern Ireland, establishing the Lordship of Ireland.

Roman Empire

The Roman Empire **occupied Britain from AD 43 until approximately AD 410**, a period encompassing over 350 years.

Despite their presence, the Romans **never invaded or conquered Ireland**. However, evidence suggests that trade, diplomatic relations, and potentially minor, unofficial military expeditions occurred, particularly along the eastern coast.



Battle of Clontarf

795-1014 AD

Fought on **Good Friday, April 23, 1014**, and is one of the most famous and mythologized events in Irish history. It took place at Clontarf, just outside Dublin, and pitted the forces of the **High King of Ireland, Brian Boru**, against a coalition of the Irish Kingdom of Leinster, the Viking Kingdom of Dublin, and overseas Viking allies from Orkney and the Isle of Man.

While often portrayed as a struggle for Irish independence against "foreign" Vikings, modern historians view it as a complex power struggle between Irish kings, with Vikings fighting on both sides.

Historical Impact: The battle effectively broke the military power of the Vikings in Ireland, ensuring they would never again be a dominant political force. However, **Brian's death also ended his vision of a unified Ireland**, as his family's power waned and the country returned to provincial fighting.

Brian Boru first made himself king of Munster, then subjugated Leinster, eventually becoming High King of Ireland. He was the founder of the O'Brien dynasty and is widely regarded as one of the most successful and **unifying** monarchs in medieval Ireland.



Éire



Tudor Conquest

Roughly 1529-1603



Tudor conquest of Ireland was a series of campaigns in the 16th century where English Tudor monarchs established full control over Ireland.

Context: Before the 16th century, English control was largely restricted to the "Pale," a small area around Dublin, while the rest of Ireland was controlled by Gaelic Irish chiefdoms.

Henry VIII: Following a rebellion in the 1530s, Henry VIII sought to bring all of Ireland under his control, becoming the first King of Ireland in 1541-1542, rather than just Lord of Ireland.

Methods: The Crown used "surrender and regrant" (encouraging Irish lords to surrender land to receive it back under English law), confiscated land for British settlers (Plantations), and sought to impose English law and the Anglican religion.

Conflict: The policy led to major conflicts, including the Desmond Rebellions (1569–1583) and the Nine Years' War (1594–1603), which was the largest and most expensive conflict of the era, ending with the total subjugation of the island.

Outcome: By 1603, the Tudor conquest was largely complete, resulting in the collapse of the traditional Gaelic order and the establishment of the Protestant Church of Ireland.

The conquest was essentially a "reconquest" designed to secure Ireland as a loyal, Protestant part of the English realm, often driven by fears that Catholic Spain or France could use it as a base to attack England



The Munster Plantation

Initiated by Queen Elizabeth I in the 16th century, aimed to establish Protestant English settlements in Cork, Limerick, Kerry, and Tipperary after the Desmond Rebellions (1579–1583). Despite bringing new settlers and creating towns like Bandon, the effort was disorganized, struggled to attract enough settlers, and was disrupted by the Nine Years' War.

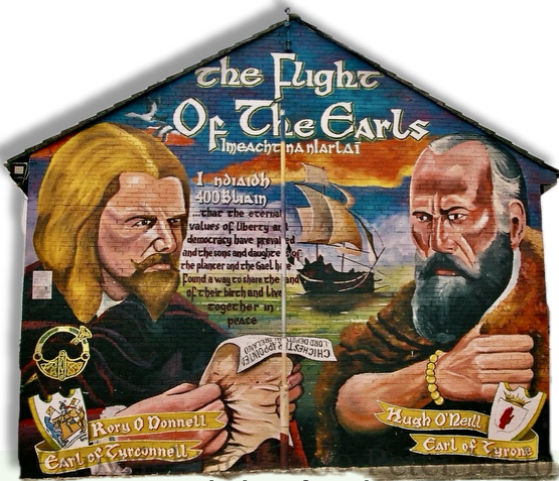


Desmond Rebellions

1569-1573 & 1579-1583

Two major uprisings in Munster, by the Earls of Desmond and their allies against Queen Elizabeth I's Tudor conquest. These conflicts were fought to protect local feudal independence and Catholic interests against English Protestant expansion, **resulting in the dynasty's destruction and the colonization of Munster**, widespread famine and the death of an estimated one-third of Munster's population.





Flight of Earls

1607

Voluntary exile of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and Rory O'Donnell (brother of Red Hugh), Earl of Tyrconnell, from Ulster, Ireland, to Catholic Europe, marking the end of the old Gaelic order. Fearing persecution and English dominance following the Nine Years' War, they left on September 14, 1607, enabling the Plantation of Ulster. **It is considered a turning point in Irish history**, effectively ending the Gaelic aristocracy's resistance and allowing the English to solidify control over the island.

Mural in Ardoyne, Belfast

400 years after the Flight of the Earls

*...the eternal values of **liberty and democracy** have prevailed, and the sons and daughters of the planter [English] and the Gael [Native Irish] have found a way to share the land of their birth and live together in **peace**.*

Nine Years' War

1593-1603

Fought to **resist the Tudor English Kings conquest** of Ireland and prevent the extension of English legal and political control over the entire island, particularly the independent Gaelic lordship of Ulster. Led by Hugh O'Neill and Red Hugh O'Donnell, the alliance sought to **defend Gaelic culture, land, and sovereignty against Protestant expansion**. The war was part of a wider struggle against the spread of Protestantism, with Irish leaders receiving some support from Catholic Spain.

The Plantations of Ireland

16th - 17th centuries

British government-led colonization schemes, primarily in Ulster, Munster, and the Midlands, which **confiscated Catholic-owned Irish land** and replaced it with Protestant settlers from England and Scotland. It established deep-seated religious and ethnic divisions that influenced the development of Northern Ireland. The plantations fundamentally shifted power, rendering the native Irish as tenants on their ancestral lands and causing profound, lasting conflict.

Cromwellian Conquest

1649-1653

A brutal Parliamentary reconquest of Ireland, led by Oliver Cromwell during the **Irish Confederate Wars**. It resulted in a total defeat for Irish Catholic/Royalist forces with mass land confiscations that destroyed the native Catholic landowning class.

Under the **Act of Settlement 1652**, Catholic land was confiscated, with owners transplanted to Western Ireland in Connacht. Thousands were transported to the West Indies as indentured laborers.

Ireland was incorporated into the Commonwealth, creating a new, dominant Protestant landowning class.

The era is remembered for the destruction of religious buildings and the displacement of the native population, embedding a deep, long-lasting animosity towards Cromwell in folk memory.



Éire

Penal Laws

Late 17th and 18th centuries

Restrictions on Property and Inheritance: Catholics were forbidden from purchasing land, holding long leases, or inheriting land from Protestants. Land was divided equally among sons unless the eldest converted, which entitled him to the entire estate.

Political and Legal Disfranchisement: Catholics were barred from voting (1727), holding public office, serving on juries, or entering legal profession.

Religious Restrictions: Catholic bishops were banished, and priests were required to register, while new priests were forbidden to enter Ireland. Catholic worship was technically restricted or banned.

Education and Arms: Catholics were forbidden from teaching in schools, sending their children abroad for education, or possessing weapons.

Economic Restrictions: Catholics could not own a horse worth more than £5, effectively limiting their mobility and status.

1796 French Fleet

In December 1796, a French fleet of 30-50 ships carrying roughly 14,500 soldiers, **aimed at supporting the United Irishmen's rebellion**, anchored in Bantry Bay. Though poor weather prevented the landing, it was considered the closest England had come to a major defeat since the Spanish Armada.

The **near-invasion caused panic in the British government**, leading to a "vicious campaign" against the United Irishmen and their supporters in the area. Following this, the British enforced the Insurrection Act, declared martial law, and engaged in widespread violence to prevent further uprisings.



American and French Revolutions

1776-1783 & 1789

Each revolution profoundly inspired Irish people in the late 18th century by demonstrating that British power was not invincible and that liberty could be achieved through radical action. These events directly fueled the growth of Irish nationalism.



Society of United Irishmen

1791

A revolutionary political organization founded in Belfast and Dublin, aiming to unite Protestants, Catholics, and Dissenters to achieve parliamentary reform, Catholic emancipation, and independence from British rule. Began as a legal, open political debating society but was banned in 1793, subsequently becoming an underground revolutionary group.



1798 Rebellion

The 1798 Irish Rebellion was a major uprising by the Society of United Irishmen, inspired by the French Revolution, against British rule, seeking Irish independence and democratic reform but ultimately crushed by brutal British counterinsurgency, leading to immense casualties, transportation, and the 1801 Act of Union that abolished the Irish Parliament and merged Ireland with Britain. Tens of thousands of Irish people died, far outnumbering British losses.





Act of Union

1801

Abolished the Irish Parliament, and merged Ireland into the United Kingdom, causing severe political, economic, and social disruption. It triggered a "brain drain" to London, stalled industrialization, and failed to grant promised Catholic Emancipation, causing widespread betrayal, fostering intense nationalist movements, and contributing to the Great Famine.

Catholic Emancipation Act

1829

Irish Catholics mobilized under Daniel O'Connell's Catholic Association (1823), demanding rights and threatening rebellion. The resulting legislation **repealed most anti-Catholic laws**, allowing Catholics to become MPs and hold most civil/military offices.



Famine Memorial
Custom House Quay, Dublin
Created by Rowan Gillespie



The sculptures depict people walking toward the docks to board "coffin ships"

An Gorta Mór: The Great Hunger

1845-1852

The Proximate Cause: Potato Blight

The Fungus: In 1845, an airborne water mold called *Phytophthora infestans* (blight) arrived in Ireland, likely from North America via trade ships.

Monoculture: Irish farmers relied almost exclusively on a single variety of potato, the **Irish Lumper**, which was high yielding but genetically uniform. This lack of diversity allowed the blight to wipe out entire crops rapidly.

Successive Failures: While crop failures weren't new, the blight returned for several consecutive years, peaking in "Black '47", leaving the population with no food reserves.

*The Irish term for the Great Famine is **An Gorta Mór** which translates to "**The Great Hunger**". It emphasizes the suffering rather than just a lack of, as other food was grown but exported during this period, making it a social crisis and, by some, considered genocide.*

Socio-Economic Vulnerability

Land Tenure System: Under British rule, most land was owned by absentee landlords who lived in England. They used "middlemen" to extract high rents from Irish Catholic tenants.

Extreme Subdivision: To pay these rents, families were forced onto increasingly smaller plots of land. By 1845, roughly 24% of farms were only 1–5 acres, making the potato the only crop calorie-dense enough to sustain a family on such small space.

Penal Laws: Earlier 18th-century laws had restricted Irish Catholics' rights to own land, forcing them into a cycle of poverty and total dependence on rented land.



Political and Policy Failures

Continued Exports: Throughout the famine, Ireland continued to export massive quantities of food—including wheat, oats, beef, and butter—to Great Britain. The British government refused to ban these exports, despite the local population starving.

Laissez-Faire Ideology: The ruling Whig government, led by Lord John Russell, adhered to a "hands-off" economic policy. They believed the free market would solve the crisis and that providing free aid would make the Irish "lazy".

Inadequate Relief: Early efforts like Sir Robert Peel's secret purchase of Indian corn were replaced by harsher measures, such as public works programs that required starving people to perform heavy labor for minimal pay.

Evictions: As tenants failed to pay rent, landlords conducted mass evictions. The "Gregory Clause" further worsened this by barring anyone with more than a quarter-acre of land from receiving government relief, forcing thousands to give up their land to survive.

How was the *The Great Hunger* viewed Internationally?

Viewed as a massive humanitarian catastrophe, prompting a significant, unprecedented relief effort from the United States, which saw the crisis through a lens of charity, empathy, and, later, the arrival of massive waves of Irish immigrants. The US response was notable for spanning different communities, including a famous donation from the Choctaw Nation.

United States Response: The US government and private citizens sent extensive aid, with President Polk and Congress encouraging contributions. The U.S. Navy's *Jamestown* was repurposed as a "ship of mercy" to deliver food, symbolizing a new era of international humanitarian aid. There was cross community support from America including Jewish, Quaker, and African American communities, as well as the Choctaw Nation.

Great Britain: The response was heavily influenced by laissez-faire economics and, in some circles, a callous belief that the famine was a "natural" solution to overpopulation.

Contributions came from unexpected places, including significant funds from **Calcutta** and **Bombay** in India. Also, by people in **Canada** and **Australia**.

"Indeed, Ireland's chief export has been neither potatoes nor linen, but exiles and immigrants who have fought with sword and pen for freedom around the earth."

Robert F. Kennedy
Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Dinner in 1964

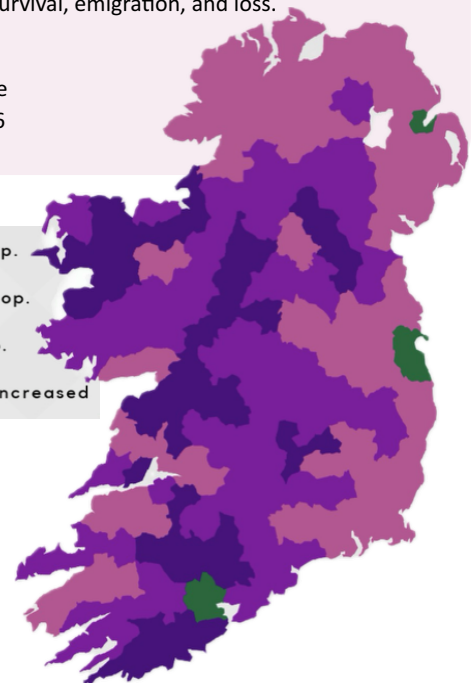
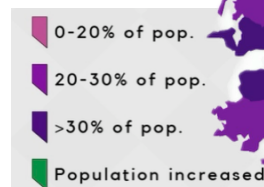
The Scale of Change

The Great Famine wasn't just a tragic event - it fundamentally transformed Irish society. Imagine entire villages where half the population either died or emigrated within a few short years. Family structures were torn apart, farms were abandoned, and traditional patterns of life were forever altered.

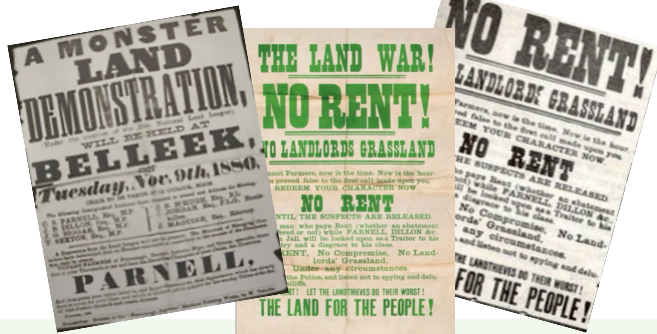
In raw numbers, Ireland's population fell from about 8.4 million in 1844 to 6.6 million by 1851. This population loss continued even after the Famine, dropping to 4.4 million by 1911 - and the numbers continued to decline in some counties all the way up to 1971. Behind these numbers lie countless family stories of survival, emigration, and loss.

Mike Collins

Your Irish Heritage
February 12, 2026



Éire



Land League

1879-1882

Founded by Fenian Michael Davitt and Charles Stewart Parnell, the movement linked agrarian unrest with parliamentary politics. It triggered the “Land War” (1879–1882) a **period of agitation, boycotting of exploitative landlords, and protests**. The League protected tenant farmers from unjust evictions and sought to end the power of absentee landlords. Its pressure led to the British government passing the **Land Act of 1881**.

1916 Easter Rising

Dublin

Causes: The rebellion was largely driven by the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and the desire to break away from the United Kingdom, particularly in opposition to the delay of Home Rule and the threat of conscription during World War I.

Key Locations: Rebels seized the General Post Office (GPO), which served as their headquarters, along with sites like Liberty Hall and Boland's Mill.

Duration and Action: The armed uprising lasted from April 24 to April 29, 1916. Roughly 1,600–2,500 rebels faced a force of up to 20,000 British troops.

Aftermath and Leaders: The leaders were tried by court-martial, and 15 of them were executed in May 1916, which transformed them into martyrs and garnered public support for their cause.

The insurrection, though initially unpopular with the public, is recognized as a defining moment leading to the eventual creation of an independent Irish state.

Fenianism

The Irish Republican Brotherhood
1858

Sought an independent Irish Republic, moving away from constitutional, non-violent methods. Despite the failed 1867 Fenian Rising, it firmly established radical republicanism.

World War I

1914–1918

As a part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland roughly 200,000–210,000 Irishmen served in the British forces, with over 30,000–40,000 losing their lives. Despite political tensions, Irish soldiers from both nationalist and unionist backgrounds served in major battles.

Voluntary Enlistment: No conscription was enforced in Ireland, meaning the large number of participants was due to voluntary enlistment.

Major Actions: Irish divisions were heavily involved in the Gallipoli campaign (1915), the Battle of the Somme (1916), and other fronts.

Post-War Impact: The heavy casualties and the 1916 Rising significantly shifted Irish politics, leading to the War of Independence shortly after WWI ended.



The “Irish Republic” flag that flew over the General Post Office in Dublin during the 1916 Easter Rising.



Irish War of Independence

1919–1921

The Spark

January 21, 1919

On the same day the first Irish parliament (Dáil Éireann) met in Dublin to declare independence, IRA volunteers led by Dan Breen and Seán Treacy killed two police officers in the Soloheadbeg Ambush, widely cited as the war's start.



Bloody Sunday

Nov 21, 1920

A pivotal day of violence where Collins' "Squad" assassinated 14 British intelligence agents in Dublin. In retaliation, British Auxiliaries opened fire on a crowd at a Gaelic football match in Croke Park, killing 14 civilians.

Leinster

During the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921), Leinster, particularly Dublin, was the nerve center of the conflict. Dublin (The Capital) saw intense urban guerrilla warfare. Michael Collins and his intelligence network, including "The Squad," operated from here, targeting British intelligence agents (G-men) and informants.

Assassinations of British undercover agents and the burning of official buildings were frequent in Leinster to disrupt British administration. IRA units in counties like Wexford, Wicklow, and Kildare carried out ambushes on Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) patrols and raids for weapons, complementing the urban fight in Dublin.

The war involved brutal, localized conflict between IRA units, the RIC, and Black and Tans throughout the province. Leinster was pivotal in making Ireland ungovernable, which pressured the British government into negotiations that led to the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921.



Irish Republican Army

August 1919

Formed from the Irish Volunteers (founded in 1913) to serve as the military wing in the fight for Irish independence from Britain. They waged a guerrilla campaign under the intelligence leadership of Michael Collins, used "flying columns" for hit-and-run attacks on the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and British military.



Black and Tans

The Black and Tans were a special force of around 10,000 British military veterans recruited in 1920 to bolster the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) during the Irish War of Independence. Known for wearing mismatched dark green police tunics and khaki army trousers, they acted as a paramilitary force against the IRA.

The force was often described as poorly trained for police work and, while effective in terrorizing, failed to stop the Irish independence movement, being disbanded following the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921–1922.



Flying Columns

Small highly mobile IRA units of 10–50+ volunteers, active mainly from late 1920 to 1921, who lived "on the run" in the countryside, relying on safehouses and local support. These specialized, armed guerrilla groups executed hit-and-run ambushes on British forces (RIC/Black and Tans) and then quickly disappeared.

They heavily depended on the local population for food, shelter, and intelligence. Volunteers rarely wore uniforms, often wearing trench coats, civilian clothes, and armed with captured weapons (rifles, revolvers, Lewis guns). They forced the British to significantly increase troop deployments to rural areas to counter the threat, particularly in Munster.

Munster

Bantry Bay Area

A tense, active area characterized by guerrilla warfare and severe British counter-measures. The province was effectively under siege, with both the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and, later, the Black and Tans **facing constant, aggressive, attacks**, making it the most volatile region in Ireland.

Ordinary citizens provided "safe houses" and provisions to IRA units "on the run," which was critical for the survival of flying columns. Civilians, including local shopkeepers and workers, gathered intelligence on the movements of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and British forces.

The women's branch, Cumann na mBan, was highly active in West Cork, providing support by carrying weapons, delivering messages, and nursing wounded men.

Many Volunteers lived in the "Rockies" area of Bantry and were supported by the community there. The **general population in the area often engaged in, or supported, passive resistance**, such as boycotts of the police. Support for the IRA came at a high cost, as the British forces used intense "official" reprisals (property destruction and arrests) to punish communities supporting the rebels.

In addition to support during the War of Independence, local involvement continued into the subsequent Civil War (1922–1923), which featured several, sometimes bloody, engagements in the town.

Where the Borlin River Flows

Excerpt of verse written about Co. Cork locals helping IRA soldiers during the War for Independence

**To Mary Ryan's we often went, May her soul rest in peace. There we got "Cead Mile Failte". She was one of the best.*

From the shores of the Atlantic, to the wilds of Gugane, every outlaw and rebel knew Joney Keohane, and when danger and death lay thick on their path, they came to his dwelling, a shelter they got.

Some sat at the table playing twenty-five, all gathered together, like bees in a hive. The cares of the day for while they forgot, and everyone shouting, "Can you strike that"!

Verse composed by Maggie Brine, 1919

neighbor of Mary Ryan Keohane



John "Joney" Keohane and his wife Mary Ryan Keohane supported IRA fighters by providing shelter, food, drink, and a chance to forget the day's troubles. My great-grandmother, Julia Keohane Deneen and John "Joney" were siblings.

The Truce

July 11, 1921

After a bloody escalation in early 1921, both sides reached a stalemate and agreed to a ceasefire.



Anglo-Irish Treaty

December 1921

Negotiated by Michael Collins (pictured) and Arthur Griffith, the treaty created the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion. The treaty confirmed the partition of Ireland, allowing six northern counties to remain part of the United Kingdom.

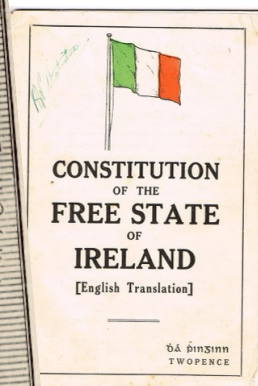
Éire



Saorstát Éireann—Irish Free State

December 6, 1921

Irish Free State (Saorstát Éireann) was a self-governing state following the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. It comprised 26 of Ireland's 32 counties and functioned as a Dominion within the British Commonwealth for 15 years before evolving into the modern Republic of Ireland.



The Irish Civil War

June 1922 – May 1923

A conflict between Irish nationalists over the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which ended the War of Independence. It split the movement into the pro-treaty Free State government and anti-treaty republicans, who rejected the oath of allegiance to the British King, the loss of a full republic, and the partition of Ireland.

The Split: Pro-treaty forces, led by Michael Collins, argued the treaty was a necessary stepping stone to full independence. Anti-treaty forces, associated with Éamon de Valera, viewed it as a betrayal of the Irish Republic declared in 1916.

Causes: The main points of contention were the requirement to swear an oath to the British monarch, the continued partition of Northern Ireland, and the retention of certain naval bases by Britain.

Outcome: The pro-treaty National Army won, with substantial support from the British government in the form of weapons.

IRA

After the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty

The IRA divided over the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which created the Irish Free State but left Northern Ireland part of the UK. Pro-treaty forces became the core of the new Irish National Army, while anti-treaty IRA members fought a losing civil war against them.

After losing the civil war, the remaining anti-treaty IRA continued to exist as an illegal organization dedicated to overturning the new Irish government and fighting British presence in the north.

The organization split into the Official IRA (Marxist-oriented) and the Provisional IRA (focused on armed struggle). The Provisional IRA (PIRA) became the main paramilitary group fighting in Northern Ireland for three decades.

Following the **1998 Good Friday Agreement**, the **PIRA formally ended its armed campaign in 2005** and destroyed its arsenal.



Éire—Ireland

April 18, 1948

In 1937, a new constitution (**Bunreacht na hÉireann**) was adopted. The state was renamed Éire (or Ireland), abolished the office of Governor-General, and became a republic in all but name.

The final legal links to the British monarchy and Commonwealth were severed with the **Republic of Ireland Act 1948**, which came into effect on April 18, 1949.