

The Irish Spirit Lives in America

By Christina Forrest

Irish immigrants seeking a prosperous, promising life, left their country of Ireland in a sorrowful exile, only to face many of the same economic hardships in America that they thought they left behind in Ireland. John Doyle, John and Jane Curtis and Dennis O'Loughlin fled Ireland to America with the hopes of attaining a life free of discrimination and poverty. Irish immigrants like these braved treacherous seas and extreme illness making their way to America only to reside in unsuitable living quarters and work for wages that were less than moderate. Few Irish were successful in finding freedom without prejudice and those who were fortunate enough to be somewhat educated were able to find jobs that paid low wages for laborers of a skilled craft. They persevered and endured backbreaking labor to succeed in America. Saving money, they were able to pay the fares for relatives starving in Ireland, bringing them to America. Through hard work and dedication the Irish earned their place in American society. A large amount of inexpensive land on the western frontier became available and some of the Irish like Dennis O'Loughlin were able to purchase land and create a future among other immigrants away from the city ghettos. They were able to farm their own land and harvest their own crops, free of religious prejudice under British rule. John and Jane Curtis, John Doyle and Dennis O'Loughlin are all representatives of the strife that the Irish endured to create a plentiful life in America without racial, social or religious oppression.

In 1818 before the great famine ravaged Ireland John Doyle found himself an immigrant. His father, a political radical who participated in the Irish-Republican revolt against Great Britain in 1798, had immigrated to America and resided in Philadelphia, sometime before John Doyle

immigrated. Religious persecution usually played a part in the decision of many Irish to immigrate during this time. The Catholic Irish fought bitterly against the English colonization of their homeland. After Protestant King William of Orange defeated the Catholic Irish in the battle at the Boyne River, Irish-Catholics would find it hard to rise to power again. King William and the British Parliament enacted a series of laws to punish the Irish-Catholics and keep them powerless. They were known as penal laws. Catholics were forbidden to vote, hold political office, own firearms, work in certain trades or professions, or provide their children with a Catholic education. They could not purchase land or own a horse that weighed more than five hundred pounds. Many Irish immigrated to America in the early 1800's fleeing British the misgovernment that had stripped the Irish of their religious beliefs and ability to own their own land. In the 1500's the British conquests and colonization of Ireland had stripped Irish Catholics of their lands, reducing them merely to tenants or laborers on estates owned by wealthy Protestants. Most Irish lived off the land and farmed their own crops, specifically potatoes.¹

During this profound display of landlord tyranny and religious injustice, John Doyle fled Ireland in 1818 during the first wave of immigration to the new nation. However, he was different from most of the Irish immigrants suffering and starving in Ireland; he was educated and skilled in the printing trade. Most Irish were uneducated and were not skilled laborers. They were forced to live in squalor and forced to accept lowly paid jobs working for British landlords, who had the power to evict them at their own discretion.² John Doyle barely made passage from Ireland to America; he was short three or four pence (three or four cents). He had not so much as would pay his passage in a boat to take him ashore. The other passengers filled with jealousy and

¹Cecil Woodham-Smith. *The Great Hunger*. New York: Evanston. 1962. 1-39

²Susan Campbell Bartoletti. *Black Potatoes*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. 2001. 1-13

misery would not lend him the amount that he needed to buy a place on the boat. Somehow he succeeded in acquiring the funds and made his way to America.

In 1818 before the biggest flood of immigrants, the Irish were welcomed in America. At this point in time they weren't considered a curse or a plague. John Doyle was welcomed by his father and his father's friends to the free country, the land of liberty. He had not seen his father in seventeen years. This was common because when most of the Irish immigrated they left their families behind with the hopes of securing a job and sending for them later. John Doyle also left loved ones behind in his search for a new life in America. He left behind his wife, children and his brother's family, who his wife and family were forced to reside with upon his departure. Since living in Ireland was like living in slavery, he was astonished by everyone's surprise at his high regard for Ireland. He described the Irish he was surrounded by in America as, "ignorant with disgusting presumptions and bad manners." He claimed that they knew nothing of the affairs of Europe and were "utterly ignorant of all transactions there." Since Ireland wasn't subject to the industrial revolution because all trade was going from England to America and vice-versa, he seemed perturbed that uppity Irish immigrants living in America were scoffing at beautiful Ireland's demise. He was also upset that his father, who fought for the rights of Irish-Catholics, surrounded himself with such an ignorant display of undeserving, arrogant Irishmen.

After landing and being reacquainted with his father, he found a job at a printing press earning a meager seven and half dollars a week. This is symbolic because he was a skilled laborer who arrived in America long before the flood of uneducated famine-fleers and although he quickly found work, he still found it hard to find a job that paid a decent wage. At least he was able to find employment; most Irish immigrants later on are chastised for their poverty and religion and find it impossible to obtain a job. John Doyle worked in Philadelphia for five and a

half weeks and was able to save six pounds (twenty-four dollars).³ He then moved to New York where he thought he'd find a better paying job and searched for employment as a bookbinder in the printing trade. He was unsuccessful in finding work in his trade in New York.

He took a job hawking maps for seven dollars a week. The map maker he worked for discharged him after the town was well-equipped with maps and he wasn't given his full salary. This was typical because once a business owner wasn't in need of help they would dismiss their employees and sometimes not pay them what they were owed. The map maker who Doyle worked for owed him nine dollars, but excused himself from paying Mr. Doyle. He was disappointed with the map maker; he was unsure how to seek justice in America and accepted it as lesson learned about the natives in the new nation. This is important to understand because many Irish who came over were cheated out of wages and were not fairly paid for services rendered. Later in the mid 1800's angry Irishmen furious over unpaid wages started to rebel, underground gangs and secret societies such as the Molly Maguire's emerged; they sought rebellion by destroying work that was completed, which they were never paid for.⁴

After John Doyle came to terms with his lost wages, he was thankful because he experienced first hand the corruption in America. Although he experienced hardships he was able to save money and he deposited a hundred dollars in an American bank. That was a lot of money for an Irishman to possess, considering the lack of employment that was allotted to any person of Irish decent in later years.

The Irish spirit was so strong that John Doyle conveyed his deep feelings of "loneliness, and lowness of spirits." The Irish people's love for their families led them to America in search of

³ John Doyle. Letter home to Ireland. 1818

⁴Kirby Miller and Patricia Miller. Journey of Hope. San Francisco. Stanphill 2001.1-31

opportunities that would better their lives and enable them to bring their entire families to America. The Irish were a very family oriented group of people. The want and need to come to America was great, but most of The Irish who came to America regretted it deeply and longed to be home in their beautiful country. John Doyle explained how he, still in America, found charity schools and soup houses, which showed that there was still a large amount of destitute and poor Americans in 1818, “but none of the real actual poverty and distress, which was in all parts of Ireland.” Not everyone with the hopes of flourishing in America conquered this dream. He wrote to his wife Fanny, “if immigrants knew how they would suffer after arriving to America, they would never come here.” America at this time was considered a nation of hope; in America the Irish hoped to be freed from religious oppression imposed by British rule, including John Doyle. During this time in Ireland, the people were frequently visited by “tax gatherers, constables and soldiers”; they were not permitted in Ireland to act or do as they chose or own land with the fear that it would be confiscated at any moment⁵. John Doyle told his wife, “in America you were able to act and speak as you chose as long as it didn’t hurt another and didn’t slander or damn the government⁶.” The punishment in America for crimes was astonishingly less severe than in Ireland. John Doyle told his wife, “a man can wear his hat in court, smoke a cigar and hundreds go unpunished for crimes, which they would have surely hung for in Ireland; in fact, they are so tender of life in this country that a person should have a great interest to get himself hanged for anything!” In Ireland the citizens were not allowed to practice the religion of their choice without being persecuted for it. John Doyle came to America and prospered. He was able to put money in the bank and he found God to help him overcome his loneliness. He expressed his deep love for

⁵Susan Campbell Bartoletti. Black Potatoes. New York. 2001.23-52

⁶John Doyle. Letter Home to Ireland. 1818

his wife and hoped that she understood why leaving his family behind to travel to America, however unfortunate, was necessary.

John and Jane Curtis immigrated to the U.S. more than twenty years later and encountered a society less than opportunistic for any Irish immigrant, especially those who practiced Catholicism. The biggest immigration of the Irish to the new nation of America, took place between 1845 and 1852.⁷ The industrial revolution didn't occur in Ireland, so new jobs in mills and factories weren't available to the Irish, like in America and Great Britain. Most of Irish were extremely poor and were not afforded the same opportunities as people living in Great Britain or America. Between 1845 and 1852 The Great Famine ravaged Ireland. Many of the Irish under laws of landlords were forced into the streets, due to eviction notices. An eviction notice was like signing a death warrant because it forced families into the streets and they would eventually die of disease or starvation.

Those who lived off of the land mainly farmed potatoes. The Great Famine was caused from blight a fungus that destroyed the potatoes, which was the primary food source of Ireland. Once the blight struck, the Irish under British rule had no government of their own to protect them from calamities. Many landlords evicted tenants and forced them into the streets inciting starvation and provoking disease from lack of shelter from the elements. Many were witnesses to the great injustice being done in Ireland like Hannah Curtis. She was the sister of John and Jane Curtis. She was the last one in their family to be held captive in Ireland due to lack of funding to pay for her passage across. She was a witness to a massive amount of Irish people who were starving in the streets and overcrowding cemeteries.

Fleeing all of the unfortunate circumstances that faced Ireland at this time, John and Jane

Curtis immigrated to America during the great famine, leaving behind their mother, father, sister, aunt and uncle. More Irish immigrated during this time than in all preceding centuries, more than four million in just seven years. Ireland's population would decline by more than thirty percent during this massive evacuation. Crowds of people were leaving and John and Jane Curtis found themselves amongst this massive population of immigrants. Six million Irish farmers were affected by the crop failure, unable to pay the rent or find food many sold everything they had, including the Curtis family to pay for passage on the boats.

Many of the Irish who immigrated could not afford to bring many belongings with them, so all they had were the clothes on their backs or tokens of memories from their loved ones. In a letter from William Dunne to his nephew John, he told him that "many are going to America half naked." Many of the Irish lived in squalor for years before their departure trying to save the funds for the passage and had nothing to take with them when they left. Most of the Irish immigrants were aided in passage by family members already in America. Nearly one million pounds of sterling in small drafts ranging from two to ten pounds was sent from the U.S. to Ireland annually.⁸ The cost of passage was also very expensive and often ship owners would rip the Irish off by charging them for passage and then not permitting them to board. They would promise a safe comfortable passage. Instead, they crammed them into ships where they slept on wooden plank cots. They were forced to urinate and defecate in buckets on the floors of the ships. They also did not give the Irish immigrants thorough medical examinations upon entrance to the ships, which aided in spreading diseases like typhoid fever. By law ships were required to limit the number of passengers, but crowded ships usually sailed carrying two times the legal number of

⁷Susan Campbell Bartoletti. *Black Potatoes*. New York. Houghton Mifflin. 2001.23-52

⁸Cecil Woodham Smith. *The Great Hunger*. New York. 1962.175-181

passengers without access by passengers to a doctor. American and British governments enacted various passenger acts designed to regulate the shipping trade and protect passengers. The acts were difficult to enforce because many small harbors lacked government supervision and there were too many immigrants to make this possible. This put the immigrants in danger by jeopardizing their safety and welfare.⁹ The Irish immigrants braved a journey at sea of three thousand Miles. It would take six weeks of living in cramped, unsanitary living environment before arriving at ports. Some Irish talked of sharks following the boats, waiting for the dead that they would throw overboard at sea. Many arrived in America harboring infectious diseases. Most of the disease brought ashore can be connected to cramped living quarters without the means to wash themselves or their clothing and bedding. Body lice spread quickly, transmitting ship fever. Diarrhea and dysentery also resulted from undercooked food and polluted drinking water. Ships were known as coffin ships.¹⁰

John and Jane Curtis set out for America to escape economic recession, and The Great Famine. Most of the Irish entering the U.S. between 1818-1870 came as refugees from disaster.¹¹ People like the Curtis siblings were running away from misery and death rather than rushing toward freedom and opportunity and they were forced to leave family members alone in unhappy Ireland. This is necessary to remember because at this point in time most of the Irish were residing in America were considered a social plague, due to the illness and poverty they brought with them ashore. Upon Arriving in America John and Jane Curtis immediately sought out their aunt Mary Dillion, who had been in America for fifteen or more years and was their mother's

⁹Edward Laxton. *The Famine Ships*. New York. Holt and Company. 1998.150-160

¹⁰Edward Laxton. *The Famine Ships*. New York. Holt and Company. 1998.140-160

¹¹Edward Laxton. *The Famine Ships*. New York. Holt and Company. 1998. 140-160

sister. She happily greeted them in Philadelphia and provided Jane with clothing. They were excited to see each other. She talked of her mother's silver knife that their mother had given her many years before her departure to America. John and Jane's aunt was clearly upset that their mother could not come also, but nobody could afford to pay her passage at that time. They were to send for the rest of the family after finding jobs and saving money. Both John and Jane Curtis became ill shortly after arriving in America. Their mother's brother John was not fortunate enough to make it across the ocean unscathed by illness either. "He died in my arms shortly after arriving in America, said Mary Dillon." Illness was a great setback for most of the Irish because when they arrived ill, it prohibited them from finding work for an extended period of time, preventing loved ones left in Ireland from being able to sail to America. A year after John and Jane Curtis arrived in America they were able to send for their parents, Bridget Dunne Curtis and William Curtis. They claimed to have waited awhile to do so, do to extreme temperatures and fires that occurred in Pittsburgh and New York. The great fire destroyed more than one thousand buildings¹². After their parent's arrived in America, John received a letter from his sister Hannah who was still left in Mountmellick Ireland. She described how their friends back home were not as fortunate in escaping death from disease; father Byrne of Caphard, a pastor in their community died of disease. Hannah was begging for them to send for her. She had sold everything in the house, except for bedding, with the hope that it would be enough to pay for her passage." "Everything we had I sold except for the bed and bed clothes." She described how expensive food was. In the letter Hannah Curtis explained how there wasn't trade of any kind coming into Ireland. There wasn't any money coming into Ireland she told him "the money had went and gone to America." "The food prices are very high." The poor houses were crowded and people

¹² www.nhes.state.nh/us

were dying the streets.” “Ten to twenty people were dying in the streets daily due to a strange fever and the doctor said it would spread around the town soon.” She said “everyone who can go to America was going and things are getting more expensive.” Hannah Curtis stated that bacon was one to three pence per pound, beef was eight pence per pound, mutton was four pence a pound, flour was three to eight pence per pound and oatmeal was three to ten pence per stone. She didn’t mention potatoes because there were none in the country. She was explaining how harsh the living situation was and that people in Ireland are not only homeless, but starving. She explained her frustration of them not sending for her and she had wondered if she had done something wrong. “I thought nothing would make you all forget me.” She was frightened at the circumstances that she faced and became angrier throughout the letter at the promise they broke of sending for her. She apparently did not know the circumstances that the Irish faced, including her family, when they arrived in America. They were not free from poverty and discrimination. It was quite possible that due to the illness that John and Jane were struck with they might not have been able to work and, therefore, could not send money back to Hannah to aid in her passage. This is symbolic because due to illness many Americans feared the destitute, emaciated immigrants that arrived at the ports and would not employ or house them.

The Irish-Catholics were considered a plague in Ireland and this carried with them to America. Americans feared the spread of infectious diseases by the Irish.¹³ They were also worried that the Irish would take jobs away and drag down wages. To prevent this many employers refused to hire the Irish and they would hang signs that said no Irish need apply.¹⁴ The Irish were now forced into ghettos, living with rats and sewage and forced to take jobs that were

¹³ www.2.ops.org

¹⁴ Kerby Miller and Patricia Miller. *Journey of Hope*. San Francisco.2001.1-28

labor intensive with low paying wages. A year after arriving in America, Bridget Dunne Curtis and her husband John and Jane's parents were struck with illness. This might quite possibly be from unsuitable living accommodations in America. The Protestant Anglo-Saxon society did not accept the Irish from the start, which made it very difficult when finding living quarters and jobs. Many Americans were quoted as saying even though a Negro is black on the outside; the Irish are black on the inside. They were referred to as the white Negro.¹⁵ This loathing of the Irish came from poor living conditions and the Irish's low social class. The Irish had to overcome their lack of education and skill before they could fight for a higher social class. This fight for jobs and education led to much of the strife of the Irish.

One of the biggest setbacks for Irish immigrants was the living situation. Cellar tenements were unsuitable for any living creature, but the Irish lived in tenements where floors ranged from ten to thirty feet below high water mark; in sub-tidal basements nineteen families or a hundred and ten people lived below sea level.¹⁶ William Dunne John Curtis's uncle who still was in Ireland wrote to John three years after his arrival in America and was concerned as to why he hadn't sent them any money or sent for them yet. The Irish population also began to drink large quantities of alcohol to repress the negative environment created for them in America. Families in many cases were irreparably broken by the famine immigration experience.

At this point in time William Dunne Curtis was frustrated by his relatives that had been less than communicative with him in the U.S. He spoke in anger of his neighbors in Ireland who could not even afford to keep a horse and were forced to sell all belongings for lack of food. He sent one final letter to his cousin John in America cursing him for leaving behind the family he

¹⁵ [musejhu.edu/journals of social history](https://musejhu.edu/journals-of-social-history)

¹⁶ www.historycooperative.org

promised to send for. He told him that the family was destined for starvation. Food was not easily attainable in Ireland and this affected the Curtis family along with all of Ireland's homeless. This was important because in America at that time people would eat quite well and food was not expensive. Almost all Americans ate well, except for the Irish who still in America could barely afford food and in order to purchase food they were forced to take low paying, strenuous jobs. The Irish were starving in Ireland and they were starving in America also.

Perhaps the separation of family took place with the Curtis family like it did many others, due too long hours of working far from home for less than moderate wages. In Irish families the father's absence and the mother's long working hours resulted in a lack of family structure. Parents left their children home alone to fend for themselves, continuing to live in poverty slowly wasting away over time. The Irish people by nature were community minded, gregarious by nature, fond of visiting and talking.¹⁷ The absence of one or both parents left the children isolated from this social interaction and led to a loss of their beliefs and morals. Without interaction between other people children became socially dysfunctional while adults felt a deep loneliness that they could not prevent. They took it out on their families through violence brought on by alcoholism.¹⁸ Maybe, Hannah Curtis did not realize, along with her family, the fate that awaited them in America. Like John Doyle explained in the letter to his wife, "it might have been better to stay in Ireland if possible than come to America." The Irish still faced hardships once they arrived in America, including discrimination and extreme dis-attachment from family, along with strenuous work for meager wages.

During this massive flux of immigrants to the U.S. most of the Irish, so poor, unskilled and ill

¹⁷Terry Golway. *The Irish in America*: New York. Hyperion. 1997

¹⁸Terry Golway. *The Irish in America*: New York. Hyperion. 1997

educated had nothing to sell in America, but their strength. Many due to discrimination and lack of jobs took jobs working in factories, on railroads, canals or in the military. Many are accredited with the construction of the nation's roads, canals, docks, levees, railroads.¹⁹ Others harvested the forests and extracted raw materials such as coal, iron, lead, marble, gold and silver from the hills of the Appalachian Mountains. Through their migrant labor the Irish built much of America, laying the foundation for its dramatic economic growth. Employers and contractors often cheated Irish workers by lowering wages or by selling supplies at extortionate prices, while getting them to blind drunk to notice. Many of the Irish formed underground societies that rebelled against this type of abuse of labor,²⁰ such as the Molly McGuire's.

Many of the Irish who came to America largely settled in cities or towns. In the mid-nineteenth century in America, the Irish had the highest proportion of their members living in urban-industrial areas. They comprised a fifth of New York City's, and Boston's inhabitants and a seventh of Philadelphia's and Chicago's. The Irish imagined America's streets paved in gold. Instead it was the Irish who did not pave the streets with gold, but with tar for low wages. Irish-Catholics were not welcome at all. Both skilled and unskilled laborers moved from city to city and town to town in search of a better pay or steady employment as did John Doyle. The average wage for an Irishman working in a machine shop was six dollars per week and lodging was fifty cents per week. Most Americans believed that the Irish poverty resulted from laziness, immortality, ignorance and superstition. This was due to their Catholic religion. Many were forced in the underdeveloped back country.

Millions of available acres in the back country of Wisconsin were a powerful attraction for

¹⁹Kirby Miller and Patricia Miller. Journey of Hope. Stanphill San Francisco. 2001

²⁰Kirby Miller and Patricia Miller. Journey of Hope. Stanphill San Francisco. 2001

many Irish. Usually the Irish lacked the funding to purchase high-priced land near the seaports, so instead they were pushed into the back country where uncleared soils sold cheaply. In the process they helped push America's frontier further westward. Those who were able to purchase land were usually Scots-Irish or other Protestants who brought money with them into the new nation. A person who is a representative of this is Dennis O'Loughlin. He was from Naugville Ireland. He was a Protestant and not a Catholic, which probably made him more successful in America than others. He immigrated to the U.S. at around the same time that the Curtis brother and sister did. He seemed to be more fortunate in his attempt at a normal life, full of promise in America. He seemed to have brought some funding with him ashore, unlike the Curtis family, because he was able to purchase a home and land. He wrote a letter to his brother Laurence O' Loughlin who was still in Ireland explaining his situation and inquiring about theirs. He purchased land and a home in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He described being forty-two miles west of Sheboygan within two miles of Lake Winnebago and sixty-three miles from Green Bay and six miles from the city of Fond Du Lac at the southwest point of the lake. His land was thinly wooded, consisting of white oak, black oak, bur oak, hickory poplar and elm. He said that the token of good land was small. The hazel never grew there higher than about one foot. He arrived in the winter to Philadelphia and moved into the frontier land soon after he arrived. He arrived healthy and was struck with illness soon after he settled on the frontier. He talked to an Irishman from Leinster living in his community and he explained how sweet the herbage was and how Ireland could not fatten a cow or a bullock faster or better than those woods on the highest oak openings. "There was a dark mellow loam about three inches and under this there was a bright brown loam." He was talking about soil. It is important to remember this because all of the Irish that resided in Ireland were forced to farm and live off of their land due to lack of trade coming in and out of Ireland. Many

Irish were not educated nor did they possess a skilled trade, but they were excellent farmers. He went on to say that the land descended to the upper loam and increased in depth and richness from one to two feet. The black loam was entirely like the earth under the richest pasture of Naugville. “The subsoil was something like the earth appearing under the Drumoland hill” another reference to Ireland,²¹ there were limestone in plenty throughout the soil. He had a limestone quarry on his land and strong prairie herbage. His land was covered with substantial grass, mixed with wild leek, which was cut and the day that followed was made into a rick. There was not a bog on the land, heath, rushes or firs. He explained that his prairie “could never be exhausted by cropping it.”

Not only was he able to purchase land he, he also purchased a house on the land. It was built of solid good oak logs 26x20x11 ft. He had a large cellar and upstairs chambers. This was significant considering that droves of Irish people lived in basements under sea level. His deed was drawn by the government and was recorded in the county office. He purchased his house for seventy dollars. That was less than the amount of money that John Doyle had put in the bank while living in New York. He described his neighbors as Dutch and German. They were robust and rough, but cheery and pleasant. He said “the women are far below the men in shape and beauty.” Most of the inhabitants of this area during this period were Dutch and German. His neighbors were all Catholics. “The priest is a zealous man of Dutch-German decent.” He seemed to be accepted in his community despite being a stereotypical Irish-catholic, poverty-stricken low life. He appeared to have friends, specifically one that he referred to as Mr. Hill. “Mr. Hill was our chief companion.” He was able to acquire land free from mortgage and incumbrance. In Ireland it was forbidden for all Catholics to own land and Dennis O’Loughlin, along with John

²¹<http://students.uwww.edu/eddyjc29/oltr>

Doyle was impressed by the lack of control the government seemed to have over a man's rights and his right to own land. He was able to farm his own crops and completely live off of his own land. Among his crops he farmed wheat and potatoes. He was also able to purchase horses, which is symbolic because in Ireland they if you were Catholic you were not able to own horses over a certain weight, which was disabling for the Irish, but not for O'Loughlin because Protestants were allowed to own horses. A pair or span of horses cost a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars. A good mulch cow paid from fifteen to twenty dollars. A good oxen yoke cost about eighty dollars. "There weren't any fairs that were held in the state, so we would get their stock from Indiana and Illinois, who brought the supplies to their town by better trained oxen cows and horses, which were more sprightly and mettlesome than Irish horses." This is important because it symbolizes the trade from the northern towns with the western frontier and the fact that he is able to acquire the goods to plant his own food. Dennis O'Loughlin was able to eat meat twice or three times a day and three different kinds of bread. In the letter he responded to the matter if he preferred America to Ireland and his response to this was, "if he was back in Ireland and offered Glandine for one half his brothers rent and that forty nine years he would rather live on forty acres in Wisconsin. He expected to live twice as better and more comfortable than his brother. He wrote this letter while sick in bed after developing a fever while cutting wood. Dennis O'Loughlin is proof of how hard the Irish worked to secure a place in American society. Pushed into the back country, like so many Irish were, he was his own workman and was successful in farming. He was responsible for breaking in the unplowed soil and was successful in harvesting crops on unplowed land. By breaking the mold of the stereotypical, curse of the Irish, Dennis O'Loughlin proved that the Irish, through hard work could flourish in America. While writing this letter he explains being ill, he wrote to his brother that he was sick with a

fever. It was Typhus fever and he later died, not sending another letter to his family in Ireland.

All immigrants coming to America at one time were foreigners to this land, including the British who first settled it. Most of the Irish who settled in America were unskilled laborers and were persecuted harshly for their religious beliefs and low social status. They did not receive fair treatment or the same opportunities as other immigrants. They struggled to secure a safe place in society for the survival of their children. Whether the Irish brought a skilled trade like John Doyle, were uneducated and poor like the Curtis family or were successful in acquiring land like Dennis O'Loughlin, all Irish immigrants were connected in their struggle of maintaining hope in order to flourish freely in America.

Through many years of dedicated hard work the Irish people were able to flourish in America and gain the respect of the American people. Most gave up their religious beliefs while maintaining a strong sense of family. They faced severe discrimination and overcame poverty without losing their identity in the process. The strife endured by the Irish is unrelentingly displayed in the work ethic that Irish contributed to American culture. They became a part of society by courageously overcoming ethnic stereotypes while maintaining the dream of having a life free of poverty and religious oppression. John Doyle, John and Jane Curtis and Dennis O'Loughlin all represent Ireland and the Irish presence that was courageously fought for in America. The Irish spirit lives in the heart of America and is a part of its culture today.