Diemen’s Land was no exception. In an island such as Tasmania, there was no interior to push natives into as whites took the land. Instead, the Aborigines were slaughtered. Upon European arrival, there were 3,000 to 4,000 Aborigines in Van Diemen’s Land. By 1830, only about 300 were left and most of the usable land in Tasmania had been placed in European hands.

Racial harmony has not been achieved with the descendents of the original settlers. At the start of the millennium, Aborigines make up about two percent of the population of Australia. They suffer appalling housing, health, and medical disadvantages. The Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islanders Commission funds programs designed to correct the two centuries of disadvantages. Its creation reflects the desire of present-day whites in Tasmania to amend for the actions of their ancestors.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Books

“No Irish Need Apply”

Song lyrics
By: Kathleen O’Neil
Date: 1862

About the Author: Kathleen O’Neil, also known as “Kitty,” was a young dancer and singer. Born in 1852, she was approximately ten years old when she began to sing “No Irish Need Apply.” The song is also credited to John F. Poole; the final stanza is believed to have been added by O’Neil. O’Neil went on to perform as a dancer in music halls from New York to San Francisco.

INTRODUCTION

The largest wave of Irish immigrants to the United States began in the 1840s; between 1846 and 1854, more than two million Irish people immigrated to the United States. Irish immigrants were largely pushed out of their homeland by the potato blight, a disease that destroyed the potato crop in Ireland. Potatoes constituted a significant part of the diet for Ireland’s poor, as well as income for numerous potato farmers. The blight, a fungus that ripped through the potato crop, began in 1846; within five years, between 500,000 and one million people had died of starvation.

Given the choice between starvation at home and leaving for the United States, two million chose to emigrate. Most were poor farmers and their children. By 1850, more than one-fourth of the population in cities such as New York, Toronto, Chicago, Boston, and Baltimore was Irish. At the time of the great migration, U.S. population stood at approximately twenty-three million, with the majority being Protestant. The primarily Catholic Irish immigrants increased the U.S. population by nearly ten percent, just seventy years after American independence.

The English government sent ship after ship of Irish immigrants to Canada, but many Irish—angry with the English government for its role in the famine—landed in Canada and migrated into the United States. The English government discouraged Irish citizens from immigrating to England, where anti-Catholic sentiment ran high. Protestant Irish, however, had a slightly easier time in England. In general, the poorest of Irish citizens who left their country went to England, unable to afford the fare to Canada, the United States, or even Scotland or Wales. In 1847, the city of Liverpool was overwhelmed by more than 300,000 Irish; although many men had been seasonal migrants to England for the harvest, this time wives and children made the journey as well.

Those Irish citizens who did move to England and who settled in London faced discrimination in housing and employment. Malnourished, poor, and often ill, the new immigrants seeking jobs were offered lower wages and poor working conditions; at times, they were denied employment altogether, being told that “No Irish Need Apply.” This popular song from the 1860s, sung in taverns and halls, tells the story of such discrimination.

PRIMARY SOURCE

I’m a simple Irish girl, and I’m looking for a place
I’ve felt the grip of poverty, but sure that’s no disgrace
’twill be long before I get one, tho’ indeed it’s hard I try
For I read in each advertisement, “No Irish need apply.”
Alas! for my poor country, which I never will deny
How they insult us when they write, “No Irish need apply.”
Now I wonder what’s the reason that the fortune-favored few
Should throw on us that dirty slur, and treat us as they do
Sure they all know Paddy’s heart is warm, and willing is his hand
They rule us, yet we may not earn a living in their land….
Ah! but now I’m in the land of the “Glorious and Free,”
And proud I am to own it, a country dear to me
I can see by your kind faces, that you will not deny
A place in your hearts for Kathleen, where “All Irish may apply.”
Then long may the Union flourish, and ever may it be
A pattern to the world, and the “Home of Liberty!”

SIGNIFICANCE

While London newspapers carried advertisements advising Irish people not to apply, according to historian Richard J. Jensen the anti-Irish attitude was less prevalent in the United States: “In the entire file of the New York Times from 1851 to 1923, there are two NINA [No Irish Need Apply] ads for men, one of which is for a teenager. Computer searches of classified help wanted ads in the daily editions of other online newspapers before 1923 such as the Brooklyn Eagle, the Washington Post, and the Chicago Tribune show that NINA ads for men were extremely rare—fewer than two per decade.” While many advertisements for female positions stated “Protestants Only,” Jensen finds few instances in the United States of “No Irish Need Apply” ads, and in fact points to the last stanza of this song as evidence that life for the Irish was far better in the United States than in England.

In England, where the NINA attitude was more prevalent, Protestant Irish persons experienced far less discrimination than did the Catholic Irish. The “Protestant Only” advertisements were intended to exclude Irish Catholics, and the deep divisions within Ireland between Protestants and Catholics were exacerbated by the famine and outflow of Irish citizens to other countries. In addition, the poor Irish
immigrants after 1846 were malnourished, ill, and unable to handle hard manual labor in their first year or two after emigrating; unlike previous Irish immigrants, these victims of the blight entered England not as strong contributors to the labor market but as weak, sick people in need of help. The English viewed the Irish as disgusting for their habits and for the dirty, crowded conditions they were willing to live in; attitudes from the middle and upper class were elitist and condescending, while working-class British men and women feared labor-market competition from immigrants willing to work for nearly any wage to support their families.

Most jobs assumed by the Irish immigrants were either unskilled labor, temporary farm labor, or domestic work. “Bridgets,” Irish girls who worked as kitchen and cleaning servants in households, were common throughout England and the United States, and while the prevailing opinion of Irish female household labor was that they performed adequately, some ladies of the home refused to hire Irish Catholic girls for fear of a perceived moral corruption or negative influence on the children of the household. This was rare—perhaps one in ten women held this opinion, according to Jensen—but helped to feed the NINA concept.

At that time, poverty was viewed by the British middle and upper classes as a reflection on the poor person’s morality; the influx of poor Irish citizens into England only served to reinforce negative stereotypes about the Irish. Upper- and middle-class Brits feared that the Irish would overwhelm the charity system, and the rise in street crime, begging, and street children only added to English resentment and prejudice. The “No Irish Need Apply” attitude limited the types of jobs available for Irish immigrants escaping the famine and shaped their experiences in their adopted homelands.

**FURTHER RESOURCES**

**Books**

**Periodicals**

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**California “Anti-Coolie” Act of 1862**

**Legislation**
- **By:** State of California
- **Date:** April 26, 1862
- **Source:** California “Anti-Coolie” Act of 1862. State of California.

**About the Author:** The “Anti-Coolie” Act of 1862 was passed by the state legislature of California and signed by Governor Leland Stanford.

**INTRODUCTION**

California was the site for the largest concentration of Chinese immigrants to the United States from the early 1850s through the end of the nineteenth century. Drawn to the Gold Rush, Chinese immigrants from Canton, aware of the United States through American Christian missionaries, immigrated to the west coast of the United States to work in gold mines; the Chinese referred to America as *Gam Saan*, or “Gold Mountain.” By 1851 more than 25,000 Chinese immigrants were settled on the west coast, with the goal of spending as little as possible, saving their money, and returning home to China to live well.

Once in California after surviving the ocean voyage, Chinese immigrants seemed alien to white Americans with their basket hats made of woven bamboo, fur-lined coats, knee-length trousers, Chinese accents (when they spoke any English), different facial features, and completely different culture. In mining towns small supportive industries, such as stores, brothels, and taverns, relied on miners’ expenditures; Chinese immigrants often brought their own rice and food with them, and spent very little if any on vices. Business owners viewed their frugality with contempt, and as the gold dried up, Chinese immigrants faced harsher discrimination by being forced to work older mines, accept lower wages than white counterparts, and began to experience racial violence from white Americans.

The “coolies,” a term for an unskilled Chinese or Asian immigrant that is derived from a Hindi word but later became an ethnic slur, worked on the transcontinental railroad as mining jobs disappeared. Paid less than other workers, Chinese workers were found by railroad crew supervisors to be hard-working and dependable. At the same time, white workers were