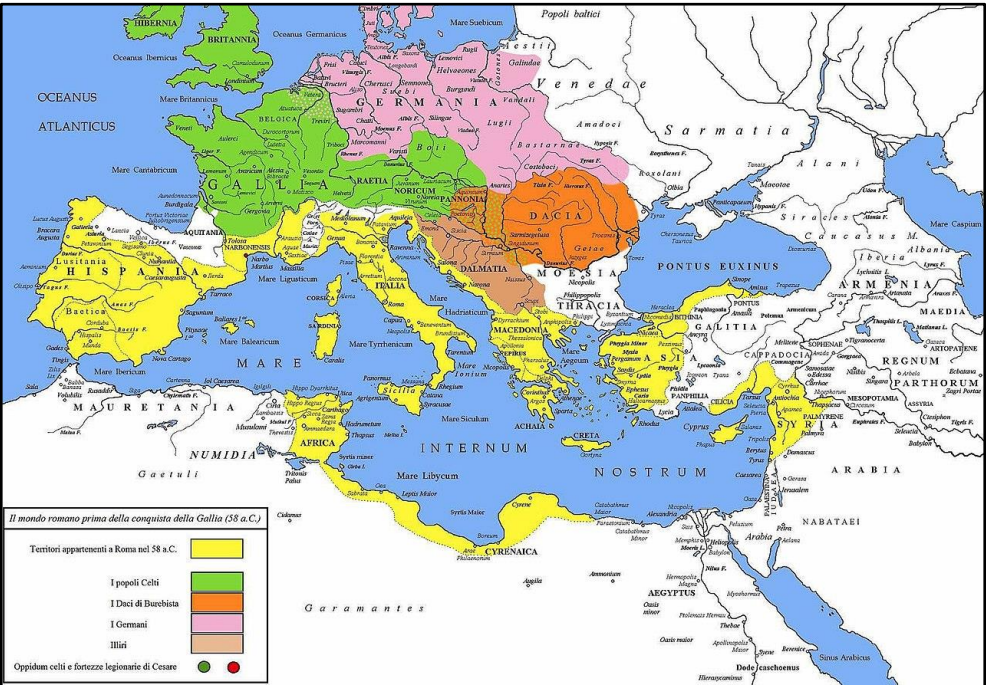
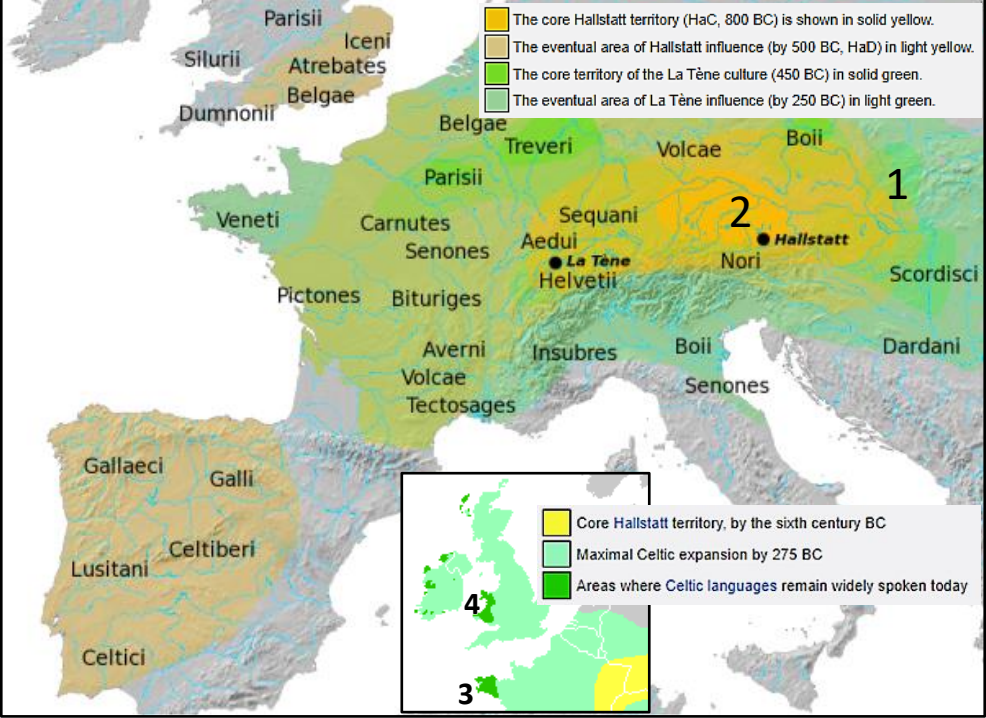


...what brought about the division of
***Northern Ireland** and*
The Free State of Ireland
...and why is there a separation of
***Catholics** and **Protestants**?*



One thing that many people do not know is that the Celts are an ancient people. Their origins are disputed. Some suggest that the Celtic tribes originated in the Pripet River and Pripet Marshes (on the border of modern-day Belarus and Ukraine; see 1 on upper left map). Others hold that the Celts arose from the Hallstatt region (in the area of modern-day Austria, The Czech Republic and Germany; see 2 on lower left map). Their influence is still seen today in archeological evidence and placenames in Central Europe. That evidence shows that Celtic peoples lived in Central Europe in or before the 800s BCE (Before Current Era), and were one of the dominant influences in Europe prior to the rise of the Roman Empire.

With the expansion of the Roman Empire, the Celtic population was either absorbed into local populace or the population mix resulting from migration of peoples inside the empire, or it was pushed further and further west. By the first century in the Current Era (CE), remnants of the Celts were in Gaul (which Roman literature sometimes notes that those peoples referred to themselves as Celts), and pushed into the far reaches of the British Isles and Ireland.

While it is well known that the Roman Empire had settlements on the British isle from London north to the Hadrian Wall (the separation between England and Scotland), there is little evidence that they settled in Ireland. The exception to that is the Christianization of Ireland, which is thought to have occurred from 500 to 900 CE. By the time the English arrived just before 1100 CE, nearly the entire island of Ireland was Christian... and Catholic. Some historians hold that the founding of monasteries throughout Ireland created a reserve of learning and knowledge that was lost in many other parts of Europe during the Medieval Period (sometimes referred to as the Dark Ages for the losses that occurred after the fall of the Roman Empire, though these may be exaggerated).

While today we recognize that there are distinctly Celtic populations in Normandy (France; see 3 on the inset map upper left), Wales (4), Scotland and Ireland, the one Celtic cultural characteristic that has barely survived is the Gaelic language. The inset map shows the areas in the Celtic world in which Gaelic is still spoken as a first language or a fluent second language; there are efforts in Ireland to revive the language more broadly throughout the country.

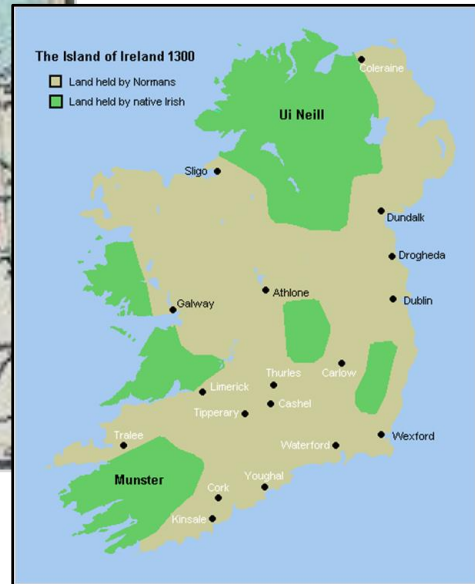
1069: start of British involvement in Ireland

BELOW: Prior to the English coming into Ireland, the land was ruled by a number of clans/families with varying and changing alliances, and a nominal (but largely powerless) “King of Ireland.”



LEFT: Before the English, there were other “visitors” to Ireland. The Vikings (from Denmark and Norway) came to the island in a series of raids starting in the early 800s CE (Current Era) and lasting 200 plus years. Viking settlements were established in some areas, some of which became the first large towns in Ireland - Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, Limerick (several of which are today still among the largest cities in Ireland). The Viking imprint on Ireland can be seen in some placenames... Dublin, for example, is from Dubh Linn, meaning “black water.” Some also claim that the stereotypical Irish red hair is a genetic remnant of the Vikings.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, England – like many European areas, fractured in many small kingdoms and holdings. The victories of William the Conqueror resulted in a mostly unified England (see the pink area in the map), under one king, by 1069. England began looking to expand its empire. To the east, France was becoming a powerful nation with designs on expanding on the continent. To the west... well, there wasn’t much to the west, but Ireland was there, and the English set their sights on the island.



The Norman invasions were quite successful, and for a time, England controlled much of Ireland along the eastern and southern coasts and parts of the interior (map at left), but they were not successful holding that territory over the long run. Over time, the Irish began to push the English back towards the east, towards Dublin.



And the person most determined to do that was Henry VIII. Henry increased the military presence in Ireland, and also set into place a system of “forfeit and regrant”... current landholders in Ireland would forfeit their land to the King but those lands would be regranted to them if they then pledged fealty to the king. Some landowners did, others resisted, and the English used brute force against the those who resisted (a pattern that became the norm in the relations between Ireland and England for hundreds of years after).

But for the Irish, the bigger problem came when Henry instituted the English Reformation. Up to then, Henry was a devout Catholic, and England was a largely Catholic nation – and Ireland was Catholic through and through. Henry at one time was appointed as a Defender of the Faith by the Pope, but his loyalty to the church came to an end as he became increasingly interested in remarrying, and wanted an annulment for his first marriage to Catherine of Aragon. It was not that Henry and Catherine did not have children, but the first, a girl, was stillborn. The second, a son, died just seven weeks after birth. Two more sons in 1513 and 1515 were also stillborn. In 1516, Mary was born, and she was the last. Henry also had an illegitimate son, Henry FitzRoy, who, in theory, could become his successor but only with intervention by the Pope, and even then, the legitimacy of his position could be challenged.

Henry had had another affair as well with Mary Boleyn, and later became fixated on her sister, Anne. Anne would not consent to have an affair, and Catherine’s failure to produce a male heir drove Henry to try to obtain an annulment from the Pope to his marriage to Catherine.

The Pope refused, and thereafter, Henry worked to rid England of the Catholic Church. Numerous acts passed in the parliament over time abolished monasteries, tore down monuments and shrines, and made Henry the head of the church in England – an act that resulted in the Pope excommunicating Henry.

By 1541-42, Henry has made the Church of England the official church of the state, and with his growth in control of Ireland, he proclaimed himself the King of Ireland, and forbid the practice of Catholicism in British lands – which, of course, included Ireland, perhaps one of the most Catholic countries in the world. The Church of Ireland was created, and the Irish were urged, cajoled and threatened to convert.



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



Church of Ireland

A province of the Anglican Communion

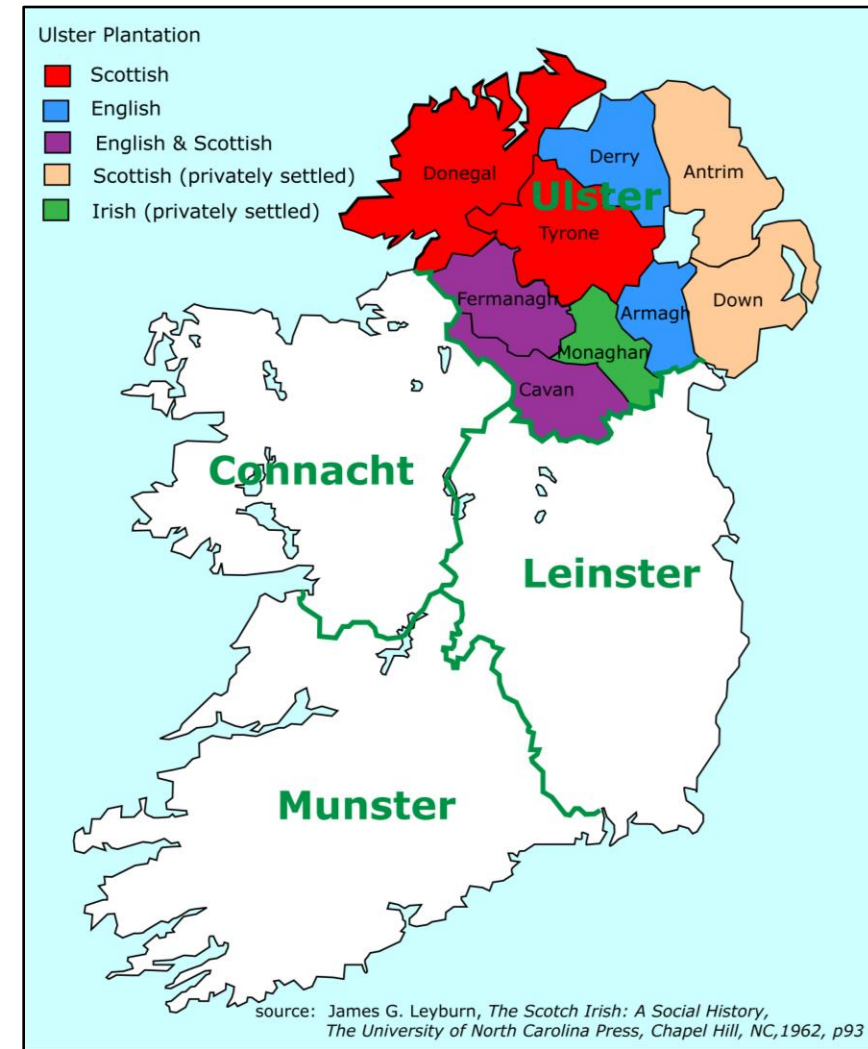
Beginning in the late 1500s and into the early 1600s, the English put into place a “plantation scheme” of settlement. These were plantations in the agricultural sense, though not like what we might think of in the US (where plantations are associated with the slave labor of Africans).

In Ireland, the plantation scheme’s purpose was to bring into the island large numbers of loyal British subjects. These migrants were promised land – land that was taken away from Irish Catholics who refused to give their loyalty to the Crown, which also meant converting to Protestantism.

Large and small land grants were made in various parts of Ireland, but the Crown began to focus on the north. The province of Ulster was the most Irish part of Ireland at that time. The English had had less success there, and they were eager to “make it English.” The closest part of the English isle to Ireland is Scotland, and Scotland had a lot of very poor, very Protestant people that would gladly take good land in Ireland, no matter how they got it.

The English provided protection, and pushed Irish Catholics off the land, turning over to the “English.” Over time, counties in Ulster shifted from being almost entirely Irish Catholic to having either significant majorities of English (Scottish) Protestants, or large minorities (35-45%).

And that led to more problems later.





This started what some refer to as the first Irish diaspora. In the map in the center left, as the English gained more and more control, the Irish that were being uprooted from their land were faced with three choices:

1. Work on the land they once owned as little more than a destitute field hand,
2. Leave the land they, and often their family for generations, had held and go to another part of Ireland,
3. Leave Ireland entirely. In this case, sometimes it was by choice, with Irish opting to head to Europe; sometimes not by choice, as the English were not above shipping the Irish off to the Caribbean (to work on English plantations there, often little better off than the African slaves that were there) or Australia, where the English liked to send troublemakers.

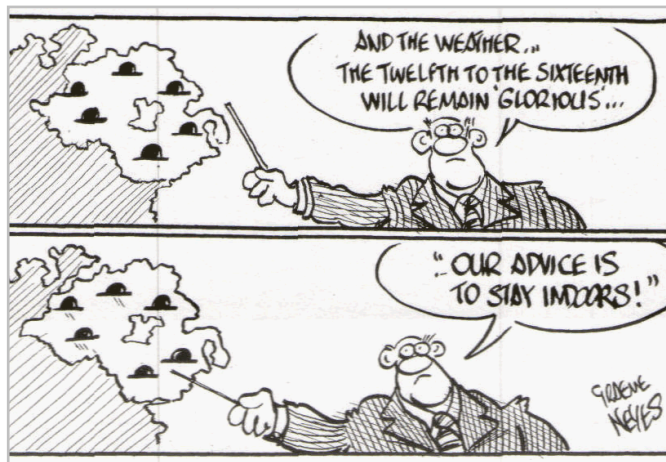


Many had little choice but to work on the farms that used to be theirs. There is little mobility in poor societies. Some moved to other parts of Europe. Many were shipped off to one of the colonies. A famous Irish song, “The Fields of Athenry” describes how a poor man tried to steal corn to feed his family and was caught, put on a ship in Galway Bay, and sent away – without his family. Simply moving to another part of Ireland was not easy either, as land was either controlled by the English or still in the hands of another Irishman. Many of the displaced ended up in the far west, in the areas past the red dotted lines on the map at left.

This part of Ireland is difficult to live off of. The picture at the top looks like an idyllic bit of Irish countryside. But those lush green pastures are deceptive. The soil is very thin, capable of supporting sheep if you keep few enough so as not to overgraze the land. You can’t really grow crops in much of the area, and, some of the soil here is “created” by hauling sand and seaweed from the shoreline inland, creating – over time – compost. Much of it looks more like the bottom picture, rocky, with little or no soil.



The English now in Ireland also wanted more restrictions on the Irish, who were in the late 1600s banned from certain apprenticeships. In that time, becoming an apprentice to a trade was often the only possible upward social mobility for many (apprentice → journeyman → master craftsman). In the political cartoon at right, the weather forecaster is predicting great weather for the 12th to the 16th (of July). Why would one stay indoors? The bowler hats at a symbol of the – Protestant – Apprentice Boys, and July is the protest marching season... and these protests have been quite violent in the past.





One of the most infamous times of Irish history occurred in 1690-1691. The Irish had not stopped fighting the English, but they had been slowly losing the war. The Irish didn't have many allies outside of Ireland, and those they did have couldn't get supplies to them in quantity or on a timely basis.

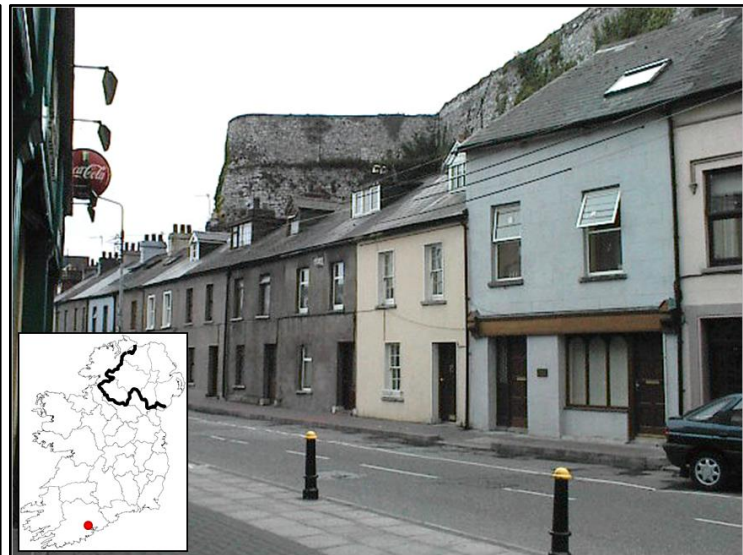
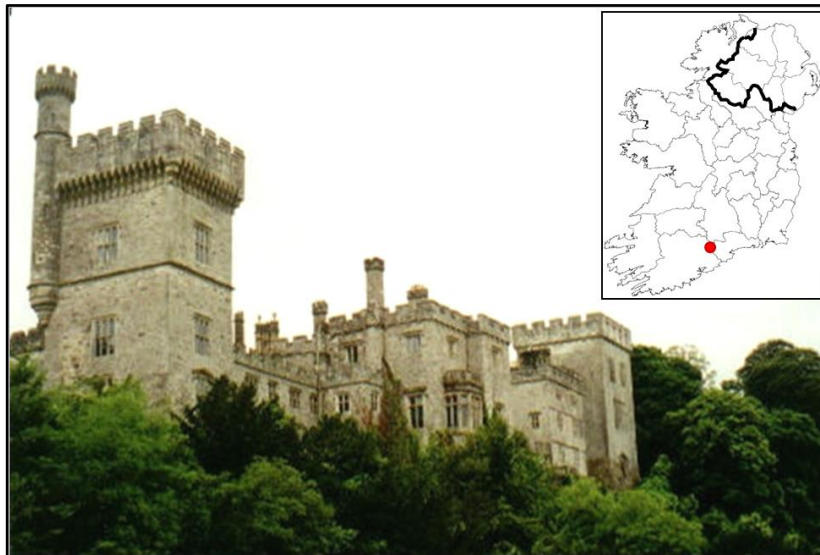
The English forces of King William slowly pushed the Irish forces into a trap in the city of Limerick, in the center of the arrows on the map at left. With nothing to gain any longer but the certain death of all his men, King James of Ireland surrendered in late 1690 and the formal Treaty of Limerick was signed in early 1691.

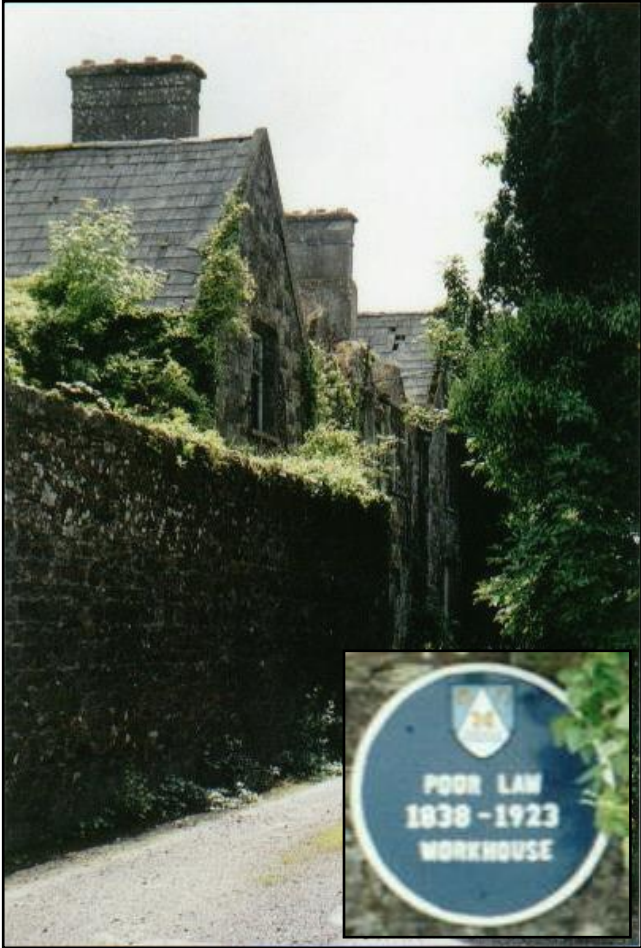
The political cartoon at bottom highlights that event, with REM (Remember) 1690. (We'll come back to the other dates later!) To the Irish, this is the day that the people of Ireland "lost the land."

To reinforce the control of Ireland, the Crown often awarded large land grants to friends in the royalty, who were often absentee owners but nonetheless built imposing structures like the Lismore Castle (bottom middle)... reminding the Irish exactly who was in charge, and who was not.

The Crown itself did the same. The bottom right photo is in Cork City, and the homes here were once part of the Irish residential area (the English lived down the hill, along the River Lee). Note the massive wall behind the homes. Those are the battlement of Fort Victoria. In other areas, in other cities, you might find similar military posts, and/or jails (the main jail in Dublin was in the middle of the Irish Catholic area).

We (the English) are in charge. You (the Irish) are second-class citizens.



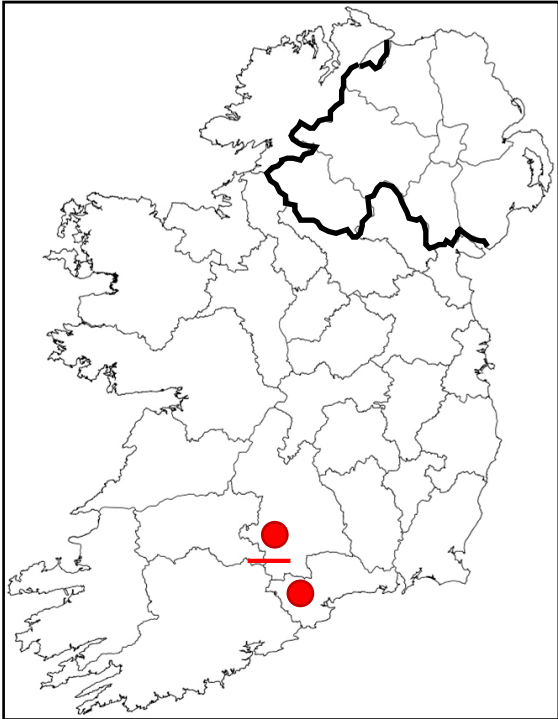
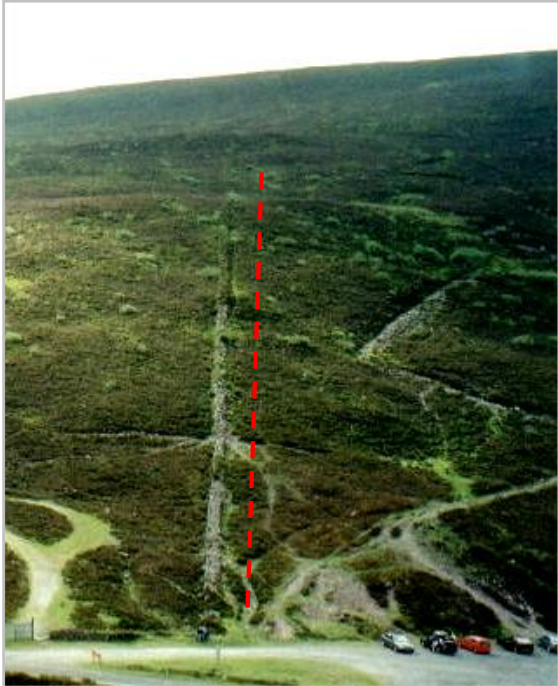


The town of Lismore also has another reminder of those times. At left is a picture of the town's workhouse. These were set up in starting in 1838 as more and more of the Irish Catholic population became landless and poverty-stricken. Work was hard to find and not guaranteed. Food was becoming scarce, and not because there wasn't plenty. England was in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, and its population was growing rapidly – and most of those folks were moving to the cities where the factories and jobs were. Ireland was being turned into a giant farm to feed England, and what was allowed to the Irish was little.

Meat in the Irish diet was rare. Potatoes were the main dish, sometimes supplemented with a bit of cabbage. One could forage in the woods, but mostly for plants as the English had forbidden their enemies to use or own guns.

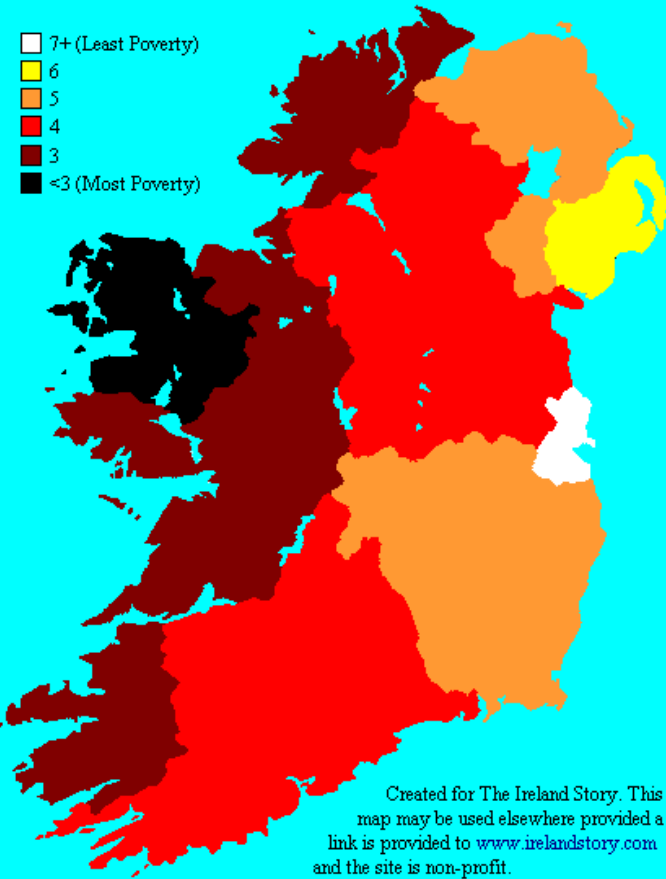
Once a family became desperate enough, they could ask for admission to a workhouse. The laws governing the workhouses put Irish families in even more dire circumstances... as you enter the workhouse complex on the road in the middle of the picture, the men's quarters are on the left and the housing for women and small children is on the right. Families were separated, and they often would not see each other; even if they had been allowed to, they were often worked from daylight to dark.

Women and children were used in town and at the castle from domestic chores. The men were sent out into the fields, and sometimes to do back-breaking labor. In the top photo at right, note the very straight line running through the middle of the image (next to the red dotted line). Nature creates very few straight lines. This is a stone wall, built by the men in the Lismore workhouse. It is the boundary line between the land owned by the Duke of Lismore (bottom red dot on map at right) and the Earl of Tipperary (upper red dot on map at right). The red line on the map shows about where that wall is at. In addition to the wall you can see here, if you were to turn around, that wall also runs up the hill on the other side as far as you can see.



Poverty in Ireland on the Eve of the Famine, 1841

Mapping an index derived from literacy and quality of housing



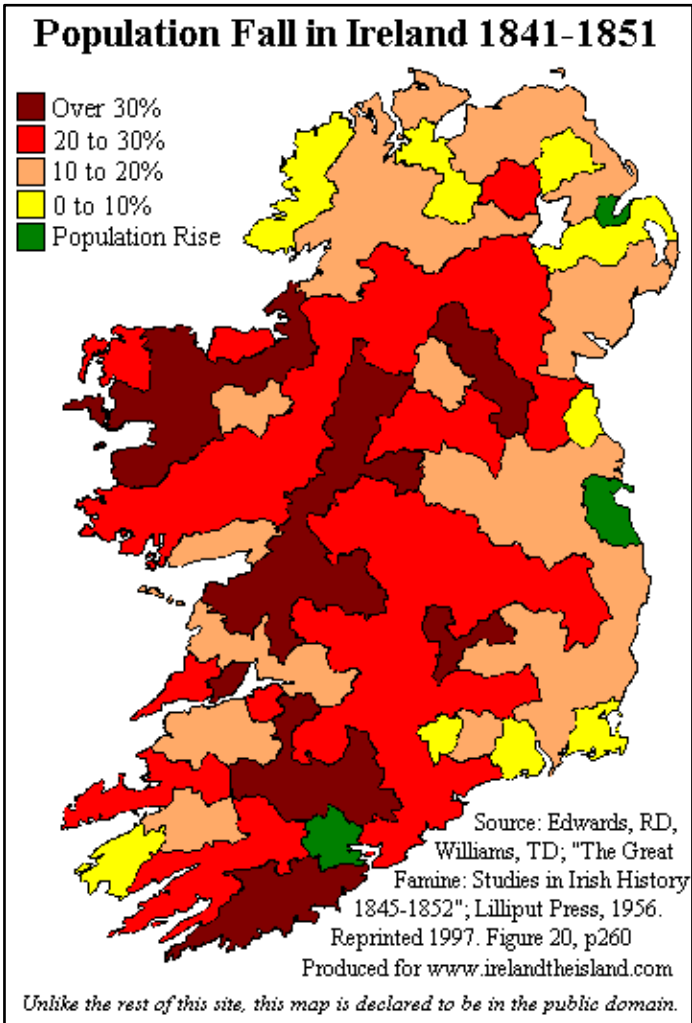
ABOVE: note the extent of poverty in Ireland, just before the start of the Great Famine. The western area was already in extreme poverty. The north – mostly Protestant – and the area around Dublin, much less so. The north-central and south varied, but the level of poverty among the Irish Catholics was high everywhere.

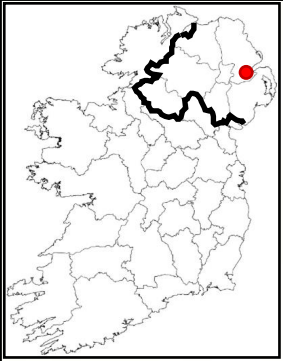
The problem of persistent, extreme poverty in the Irish Catholic population meant that the hardships already faced by them were magnified by many orders of magnitude by the Great Famine.

As noted earlier, the quantity, and even the quality, of food “available” in Ireland was not the problem. The problem was that that most of that food was not available to the Irish Catholic population... what was not being consumed by the Irish Protestant population was being exported to England (and even some other European countries).

In 1841, there were losses in the potato crop. A potato blight was affecting potato crops throughout Europe, but it hit Ireland perhaps harder than elsewhere as potatoes were being monocropped in Ireland, and having the majority of the crop of a single variety left it very vulnerable to the blight. No alarm was raised the first two years... crops often go through scarce years, and cycle into bumper crop years. But the crop was in steady decline, and in 1846, the potato crop was at an all time low – dropping from an estimated 16,000,000 tons in 1844 to 2,000,000 tons in 1846, and recovering only slowly well into the 1850s.

The impact on Ireland? The population in Ireland in 1841 was over 8 million persons. From the famine years, it is estimated that nearly a million Irish died. And from the 1840s to the 1920s, the Irish left, moving to Europe, Australia, New Zealand... and to the US and Canada. Emigration to the US and Canada during that time is estimated at more than 4.5 million people. Entire villages were deserted, and remained empty for a hundred years (some are preserved today as national monuments). Note on the map at right that the only areas to see population increases were Belfast (in the north), Dublin (in the east) and Cork (in the south). These were places one could hope to get help... or get out.





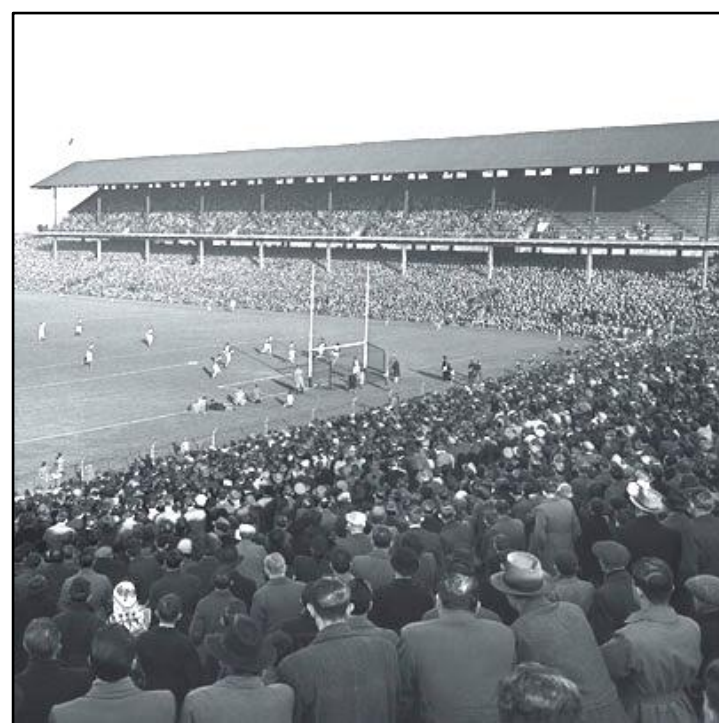
The population declined, but those who stayed remained bitterly defiant of the English. Because the beginning of the famine was thought to be just another crop cycle, England did little to help, and when soup kitchens were established, they were only in the larger population centers, poorly stocked and often overwhelmed.

Following the founding of the Society of United Irishmen in the 1700s, Sinn Fein arose as a political force – and sometimes more. Sinn Fein is a Gaelic phrase that roughly translates to “ourselves alone.” The group’s push was not only to re-establish the government in Ireland (it had been abolished), but also to have that government be autonomous from the London parliament.

Protestants, especially in the northern part of the country where most lived, were adamant that that should never happen, and protests on both sides began to get violent. The Ulster Convention of 1898 demanded that London reassert control in Ireland, and particularly control the increasing resistance of the Irish Catholic population. In the photo top left, notice the orange-ish building in the center of the picture. This is the headquarters of one of the “unionist” parties (the unionist parties are those whose platforms are based on continued union with England).

This is in the city of Belfast. One should take note that there is NO orange sandstone anywhere in Ireland. The stone for this building was imported from South Africa. This building really stands out in Belfast... the color orange is the symbolic color of the Protestants (it comes from the House of Orange, the royal house of England).

This building stands directly across the street from one of the main Catholic residential districts of Belfast. Like the castles and the jails built in the midst on the Catholic areas before, this is a symbol of power – who has it, and who doesn’t.



To say things went from bad to worse would be an understatement even in Irish terms. Violence escalated between the unionists (Protestant) and the republicans (Catholic, pushing for a republic free of English control). The English underestimated the Irish, who had infiltrated their intelligence services. In 1916, the IRA – by then the paramilitary arm of Sinn Fein – tracked down 12 of the highest military and intelligence officials, pulled them from their homes at midnight, and shot them.

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The IRA, by turn, underestimated the English. As the violence had increased, the English found themselves strapped for manpower. In order to bolster their forces in Ireland, they created the Black and Tans. This was a poorly regulated, quasi-official vigilante force, so named because the English did not want to spend the money on uniforms (this is all happening as England is engulfed in World War I). So this “army” was given extra uniforms from different branches of the services... some got a black shirt and tan pants, others got a tan shirt and black pants, thus , the Black and Tans. In retaliation for the deaths of the English officers, the Black and Tans drove an armored car through the gates of Croke Park (above left photo), during a Gaelic football match, and opened fire on the crowd with a mounted machine gun. There are no official figures, but estimates are that over a 100 people were killed either by the gunfire or by being trampled in the panic, and thousands were injured.

From there, Ireland became increasingly violent. And the English were increasingly tired of spending money and manpower there.



The Irish, in 1918, pulled together enough men and enough weapons to drive the English out of Dublin during the Easter Uprising.

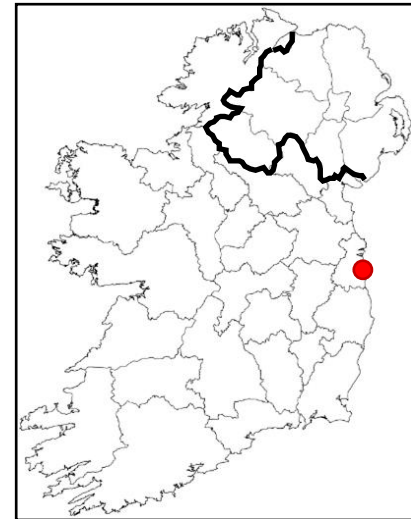
Unfortunately, the Irish could not sustain their victory, and once the English were able to resupply, they pushed the rebels back into the city, into the downtown, and eventually into the GPO – the government post office (building in top right photo).

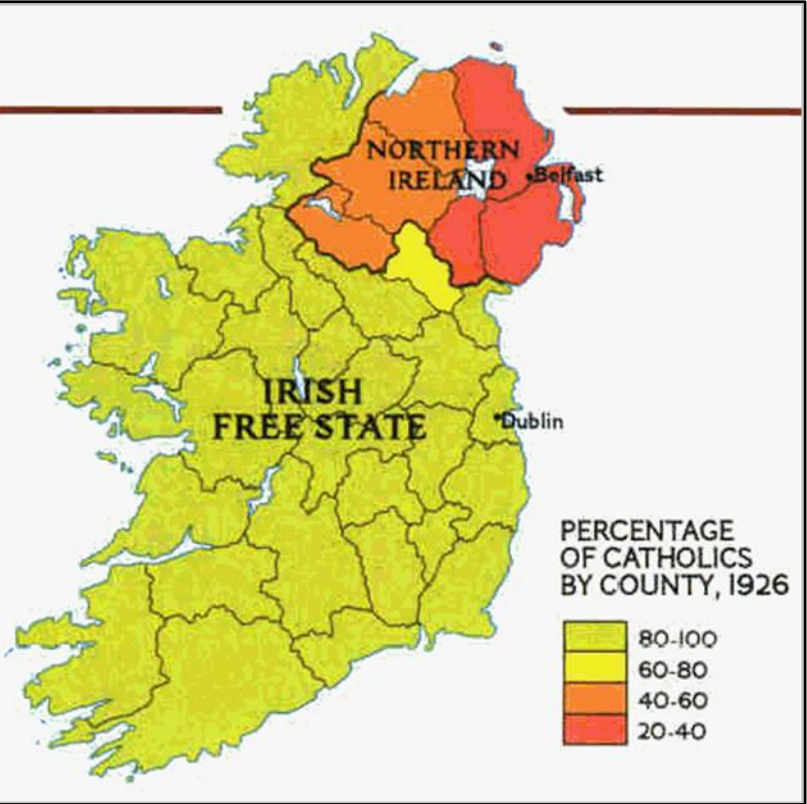
Trapped there, the Irish surrendered, disarmed as they came out of the building, and most were sent away. And if the English had stopped there, some think that that might have ended everything, and the Irish moderate political forces might have worked to find a way to live with being part of Great Britain – the English might have been willing to allow autonomous governance in Dublin.

But, the English pulled out the leaders of the rebellion, jailed them, and sentenced them to death. The jail, in the middle of the Catholic district in Dublin, had an open, walled courtyard that the English used to execute the IRA leaders, during the day so that the Irish could hear. Rather than finally acquiescing to the English, these acts turned even the moderates against the British. And two of the prisoners escaped death. Michael Collins, the head of the IRA intelligence services, somehow escaped the jail, and no one knows how, unless he had inside help.

The second was Eamon de Valera. The English problem with de Valera? He was an American citizen, the son of parents who had migrated to the US. Shooting a citizen of an ally who had come to your aid in the recent war? Probably not wise. So, the English deported de Valera to the US...

...where he promptly began raising money to send back to Ireland to fund Sinn Fein and the IRA (Irish Republican Army).





The English invited the new political leaders of Sinn Fein to meet in London, to try to forge a peace agreement.

In the end, the Irish Free State was created, composed on 25 southern counties plus County Sligo in the north.

Northern Ireland was also created from 6 counties in the north. England refused to give up control of this area because of the large Protestant population... a majority of the population in the 3 eastern counties (the first areas affected by the in-migration of Scottish Protestants in the plantation settlement schemes 300 years earlier).

Back home, half of the people said ok, we're tired of fighting. The radicals, though, were angry that full independence for the entire island had not be won. Civil war broke out (1921-1922), with the moderates eventually winning... in the Free State (now the Republic of Ireland).

In Northern Ireland, though, Irish Catholics were still second-class citizens, and would remain so for another 70+ years.