



# The Forgotten Irish: Irish Emigrant Experiences in America

*Damian Shiels*

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On the eve of the American Civil War 1.6 million Irish-born people were living in the United States. The majority had emigrated to the major industrialized cities of the North; New York alone was home to more than 200,000 Irish, one in four of the total population. The research for this book has its origins in the pension records of the Civil War, which included birth and baptismal certs, medical records, and letters and private correspondence between family members. The treasure trove of material made available by the widows and dependent files comes, however, at a cost. In every instance, the file only exists due to the death of a soldier or sailor. From that as its starting point, colored by sadness, the author has crafted the stories of 35 Irish families whose lives were emblematic of the nature of the Irish emigrant experience.

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