



Ballykilcline Rising: From Famine Ireland to Immigrant America

Mary Lee Dunn Maguire

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Ballykilcline Rising: From Famine Ireland to Immigrant America Mary Lee Dunn Maguire In 1847, in the third year of Ireland's Great Famine and the thirteenth year of their rent strike against the Crown, hundreds of tenant farmers in Ballykilcline, County Roscommon, were evicted by the Queen's agents and shipped to New York. Mary Lee Dunn tells their story in this meticulously researched book. Using numerous Irish and U.S. sources and with descendants' help, she traces dozens of the evictees to Rutland, Vermont, as railroads and marble quarries transformed the local economy. She follows the immigrants up to 1870 and learns not only what happened to them but also what light American experience and records cast on their Irish "rebellion."

Dunn begins with Ireland's pre-Famine social and political landscape as context for the Ballykilcline strike. The tenants had rented earlier from the Mahons of Strokestown, whose former property now houses Ireland's Famine Museum. In 1847, landlord Denis Mahon evicted and sent nearly a thousand tenants to Quebec, where half died before or just after reaching the Grosse Ile quarantine station. Mahon was gunned down months later. His murder provoked an international controversy involving the Vatican. An early suspect in the case was a man from Ballykilcline.

In the United States, many of the immigrants resettled in clusters in several locations, including Vermont, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, and New York. In Vermont they found jobs in the marble quarries, but some of them lost their homes again in quarry labor actions after 1859. Others prospered in their new lives. A number of Ballykilcline families who stopped in Rutland later moved west; one had a son kidnapped by Indians in Minnesota. Readers who have Irish Famine roots will gain a sense of their own "back story" from this account of Ireland and the native Irish, and scholars in the field of immigration studies will find it particularly useful.



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