

[PDF] When Ireland Fell Silent: A Story Of A Family's Struggle Against Famine And Eviction

Harolyn Enis - pdf download free book



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Description:

Review "May the sun shine on this book that plumbs the joy and despair of days that will never be forgotten. It will stir readers as it stirred the author's heart." --Carolyn Hart, award-winning novelist and mystery writer

"[T]he author cleverly created a family to experience the tragedy and, with gripping narrative, conveys their anxiety, hope, frustration and desperation . . . To read this book is to experience *An Gorta Mor*." --The National Hibernian Digest

"*When Ireland Fell Silent* is ... rooted in genuine research and an appreciation of the era. It is epic, grand, brimming with life, filled with believable characters. " --James A. Percoco, historian, author of *Summers with Lincoln*

"The book is not only factual in every detail, but her writing style put me in the cottage beside the Reilly family." --Mike McCormack, AOH National Historian, author of *Echoes of Irish History* and *The Long Voyage Home*

"This book should be required reading in all school curricula that teach about the Irish Famine, the Jewish Holocaust, and Native American removal." --Elaine Reed, Executive Director Emeritus of the National Council for History Education

The book provides details that grip you as you wonder whether the Reilly family can overcome the famine and survive. Toward the end, the meaning [of the title] is revealed through the tragedy and triumph of the Irish people.

--Joe Hight, THE OKLAHOMAN

"Enis beautifully recreates life in pre-famine Ireland excellent narrative flowmoving and realistic recreation of society on the brink of destruction."

--Kristin Romano, IRISH AMERICA, August/Sept. 2011 p 75

"...reveals the sense of family and community that has held Irish people together for millennia....as the reports in the local paper update the travesty taking place in an uncaring and brutal Parliament, you can almost feel the cold and the hunger -- the seething sense of cruelty and injustice..."

--Pete Maher, IRISH FOCUS, July 2011 p 16 --This text refers to the edition.

From the Author WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK:

People have asked me why I devoted years to researching historical records and eyewitness accounts of the Great Irish Famine and then decided to incorporate them into a novel. Initially it was mere curiosity about the people with Irish surnames in our family tree who had left at that time from Mayo and Kerry. Most Americans can trace at least one ancestor who fled Ireland during this terrible ordeal or during its long aftermath --as can people in Canada, Australia, England, and even nations in South America. But memories and family histories fade with time, new generations in these nations and in Ireland itself again try to comprehend why it happened and to seek answers.

Like many of them, I wanted to know why they left and what they had to endure. After all, the so called "Great Irish Famine" was the worst human tragedy of the nineteenth century and the percentage of deaths to population exceeded any on record. Yet this horror occurred when Ireland was part of the United Kingdom, the richest and most powerful nation in the world at that time. Clearly it could have done more to mitigate the suffering.

I wanted to know what caused the starvation. Why was it so severe and why did it continue for so long? A cause commonly mentioned is that it was the result of potato blight. Yet, potato blight occurred in England and also in Europe. Only in Ireland and to a lesser degree in Scotland was there mass death for a decade. To help their people survive, the European governments curtailed exports,

imported more food, and allowed their people to eat the food at hand. So why did the British government not do the same?

Actually they did just the opposite. After Prime Minister Robert Peel resigned in 1846, the government decided to import no more maize from America, as he had done. Yet with the blessing of the government, landlords continued exporting all other food to sell elsewhere, as they had always done, with armed soldiers guarding the convoys to port. The results were disastrous for the Irish people. The desire to answer these "why questions" motivated me to write this book for my grandchildren and yours.

Nor was it a "famine" in the traditional sense because harvests and food in Ireland were plentiful. Only the potato failed. It could be termed a man-made famine but not a natural one. As I delved into the social, economic, and political causes of the starvation, I found more that was troubling. Sometime in the early 1800's the government had decided that Ireland with its close proximity to England should become a producer of fresh meat while more distant colonies like British Canada could supply more grain. But to create large pastures, many Irish farmers, termed "excess people," had to be evicted. The report of the Devon Commission shows that the government knew the suffering would be terrible if this plan were implemented, yet it decided to move ahead with it.

While evictions started as early as the 1820's, they proceeded at a relatively slow pace until potato blight ravaged the Irish tenant's only food. Seeing that blight on the potato was helping the government empty the land of people through eviction and starvation, Charles Trevelyan and other government planners of Irish policy did not want to "interfere" with its effects.

Our understanding of the Great Irish Famine has changed dramatically in the last 40 years since the publication of *THE GREAT HUNGER* by Cecil Woodham-Smith in 1962. Her ten years of thorough and scholarly research into primary documents became a best seller on two continents and discredited previous ideas which had excused the government and its policies from any responsibility and had minimized the length of the famine and its death toll. Today there are many fine academic histories which augment Woodham-Smith's findings, but unfortunately, they do not receive the attention and large general audience that they deserve.

Hoping to attract more readers and students to this history, I decided to relay the facts of the Great Hunger through the eyes of a fictional family with engaging characters and suspense. I hoped that by writing a hybrid that combines academic research and a novel, I could present facts accurately and also awaken a sense of justice. In fiction the reader identifies with the viewpoint character and those close to him, and if skillfully written, he almost *becomes* him. He experiences something in the pages that can educate him, change him, and energize him. I created eighteen-year Liam Reilly as that character within the Reilly family.

In order to show the great humanity of the Irish people, a humanity which powerful men in London denied, I included Irish culture with scenes of dance, a wedding, Christmas traditions, worship, a pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick, an American wake, proverbs, and more. That was my aim, and after years of gestation, the novel *When Ireland Fell Silent* was finally published in October, 2010. I hope it will inspire readers to care about and empathize with the Famine victims--whether they are buried in mass graves in Ireland, Canada, or in the ocean's depths. And may we all open our hearts to people everywhere with a heightened sense of compassion, a desire for justice and human rights, and joy in the resilience of the human spirit..

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