



ireland revisited  
by Kate Lynch

# ceád míle fáilte

One hundred thousand welcomes



The sources for this book include writings and photographs of Kate Lynch, a native of Bordentown, New Jersey, where she is related to most everyone named Lynch. Historical references are drawn from several sources and are intended to tell a personal story.

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## ireland revisited

In late June 1984, I wrote my first entry in a travel journal, while waiting in New York for a flight to Ireland: In less than 12 hours, I will arrive in the land that my great-grandfathers left over a hundred years ago. I am making a sentimental journey to the Ireland of my mother's memory and my ancestors' discontent...a journey deep into what makes up my being.

My mother's grandfather Gregory Doyle arrived in Philadelphia from County Carlow, southwest of Dublin, Ireland. Marion Elizabeth Doyle (my Mom) grew up unaware of her Irish heritage. Many Irish did their best to blend in with American life, discriminated against like many of the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free." In the mid-1800s, it was common to see signs in businesses warning "No Irish Need Apply."

My grandfather Moses Doyle was a plumber who told customers that he was "Scots-Irish," which was more acceptable. After all, our founding fathers were descendants of Scots-Irish, people who escaped religious persecution by moving first from Scotland to Ireland, then later to what was to become the United States.

*I am making a sentimental journey to the Ireland of my mother's memory and my ancestors' discontent...a journey deep into what makes up my being.*



Arriving in the Republic - Drogheda, Ireland



Jerpoint abbey - county Kilkenny, Ireland

Jerpoint Abbey in Thomastown, just a few miles from the birthplace of my great grandfather Doyle, is a Cistercian abbey built in 1158.



jerpoint abbey - county kilderry - ireland

This is another view of Jerpoint Abbey inside. I'm not sure which part of the building. I think it may be the presbytery. The downside of shooting slides is that I don't have a shooting record other than a travel journal. I did an image search online for Jerpoint but haven't found this view.

Most photographers were more interested in the carvings. I was more interested in the interplay of lights and darks in and around the structure. I tend to shoot for contrast, and then balance it in the darkroom. These days, the "lightroom" has replaced the darkroom.

## ireland's terrible beauty



abandoned cottage - ring of herry - ireland

Three books about the Irish experience of the 19th and 20th centuries – in particular the Irish diaspora – had a lasting effect, influencing how I experienced Ireland toward the end of "The Troubles" in the 1980s. The Irish Republic Army was still very active and claimed responsibility for bombings and violent protests in Northern Ireland. When I told our bed-and-breakfast host in Cork that we were going to try to spend time in the North, where my father's family was from, she said, "Oh, you mustn't! There are 'the troubles' in the north. Surely you have family ties here in Cork. There are many Lynch families here."

“The Great Hunger” by Cecil Woodham-Smith describes the Irish famine of 1845-1852 that killed more than a million people and drove many more to Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States - including my great-grandparents. Two books that helped me understand Ireland’s social landscape both were written by Leon Uris: his novel “Trinity” and “Ireland: A Terrible Beauty,” a non-fiction work with his photographer wife Jill.

## an gorta mór – the great hunger



famine memorial - dublin, ireland  
wikipedia commons - public domain

In September of 1845, Irish newspapers reported about a potato blight that later was responsible for widespread famine. One million died. Several million escaped to other countries. Before the blight, eight million people lived in Ireland. In 1851, there were about six million. By 1850, the Irish made up a quarter of the population in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. They were the ones who made it. In “Black

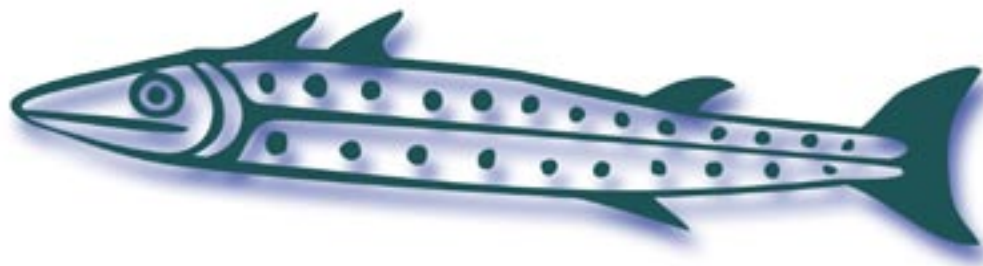
47,” 30 percent of the Irish died on so-called coffin ships bound for North America.

In the early 19th century, most of the land was owned by the British and leased to Irish tenant farmers. Potatoes could be grown to sustain farm families in a small area, leaving land for cash crops. Ireland starved while exporting crops to other countries. Ireland was ruled by England until 1922. From 1695 to 1829, Irish Catholics were subject to English “penal laws” that punished the Irish for supporting Stuart King James II, a Catholic. They could not own or lease land, vote, hold political office, get an education, enter a profession, or do many other things that are needed to succeed in life.

An Gorta Mór – the Great Hunger – permanently changed Ireland. It was a watershed and rallying point for future generations.

*“...on a coffin ship I came. And I never even got so far that they could change my name.”*

*– from “Thousands are Sailing” by Irish folk musicians The Pogues.*





People who are oppressed for hundreds of years, like the Irish, begin to internalize that oppression. So, when freedoms are returned, it may take several generations for people to recover and thrive. Many nations moved to help.

In some of my readings, I learned that the Choctaw people – just 12 years after the Trail of Tears killed thousands of their own – helped by donating more than \$700, the equivalent of \$21,000 today. The U.S. government sent ship loads of dried corn. At first the Irish didn't know how to cook it and later suffered vitamin C deficiencies because that became a sole source of food.

William Butler Yeats coined “terrible beauty” in a poem about Ireland following the 1916 “Easter uprising” that signaled the beginning of a free Ireland: “a terrible beauty is born.” What many called “the troubles” continued well into the 1980s. Ulster, the province that is now Northern Ireland, remained part of the United Kingdom.



railway bridge 1984 – ring of kerry – ireland

Gerry Tuite, now an Irish businessman, was jailed for his involvement with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and a prison break. Nicky Kelly was a politician charged for his alleged part in a train robbery. He became a symbol of injustice. A graffiti campaign was launched throughout Ireland. This one was in the west near the Ring of Kerry. Nicky was pardoned and released in 1984. He is still involved in local politics and serves as mayor of an Irish town.



*Kodachrome  
 You give us those  
 nice bright colors  
 You give us  
 the greens of  
 summers  
 Makes you think  
 all the world's  
 a sunny day,  
 oh yeah!  
 I got a Nikon  
 camera  
 I love to take a  
 photograph  
 So Mama  
 don't take my  
 Kodachrome  
 away.*



I don't remember the name of the town where I photographed the Lynch's pub but it was the only time I saw a pub with my family name.

- Paul Simon, 1973

When I embarked on my Irish journey, I had been a professional writer and photographer for about eight years, and was working for *The Arizona Republic* newspaper in Phoenix. I published a travel article when I returned about Irish castles. I photographed with a Pentax ME Super purchased a few weeks before the trip. I had many challenges because the camera's light meter was off. Many images were under or overexposed. I produced the Ireland images from Kodachrome slides with a Nikon scanner.

Thoor (Tower) Ballylee was the home of Irish poet William Butler Yeats from 1917 to 1929. A poem inscribed by the door:

*I, the poet, William Yeats,  
 With common sedge and broken slates,  
 And smithy work from the Gort forge,  
 Restored this tower for my wife George.*



yeats tower - thoor ballylee - gort - county galway

Gort is about four miles from the tower - a 16th century Norman castle built by the family de Burgo (Burke). The tower was restored again in the 1960s and is now a museum. Yeats wife was Bertha Georgina Hyde-Lees.

*Éirinn go árách  
 Ireland Forever*



old doorway - kilkenny - ireland

I think Kilkenny was my favorite of all Irish cities. It reminded me of Princeton, NJ. A university town, many buildings have been in continuous use since medieval times. Smithwick's (pronounced *Smiddick's*) and Kilkenny ales are brewed there, at least for the next couple of years. The Guinness-owned brewery is moving to Dublin. We only found Smithwick's in southern Ireland. Now I can buy it at the grocery store here in Washington. The doorway is either at Rothe House (16th century) or Kilkenny Castle (12th century).

I wrote in my journal about very specific signs describing the kind of animals to watch for: "caution cows crossing" or "caution cows and sheep crossing." Cows were mostly well-mannered, entering the roadway and

immediately moving to the left side of the road, where slow-moving vehicles are supposed to be. Like the UK, in Ireland the steering wheel is on the right side of the vehicle and traffic travels on the left, passing on the right. In the west, there was less traffic so cows needed a little coaxing, especially with young ones in the mix.

sláinte!  
Cheers!

## naomh pádraig - saint patrick

**Carraig Phádraig** - St. Patrick's Rock - the Rock of Cashel was the seat of the kings of Munster for hundreds of years. It is believed that, in the 5th century, St. Patrick converted the king of Munster to Christianity. He also used the shamrock here to demonstrate the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



rock of cashel - st. patrick's rock - clonmaha - ireland

## Caution - Cows Crossing





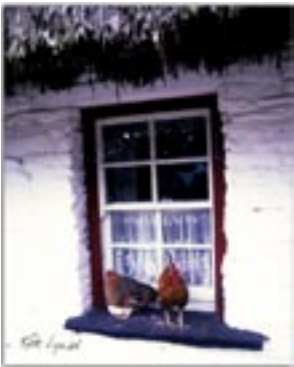
Cashel is in Tipperary in the center of Ireland on a rock plateau. It dates to 1100 A.D. and most of the buildings are in ruins.

When I was there, visitors could climb to a ledge right below where the roof used to be. That's where I photographed these images.



## IRISH AMERICAN CONTRASTS

I grew up in a small town in New Jersey: Bordentown. Quakers, noted for tolerance and commitment to social justice, founded the town in 1682. Quakers also ran soup kitchens in Ireland during the famine years.



This little town drew many Irish immigrants escaping the potato famine in their native land in the mid-1840s. I remember my Dad talking about the social divisions in Irish society that followed my ancestors to their new home.

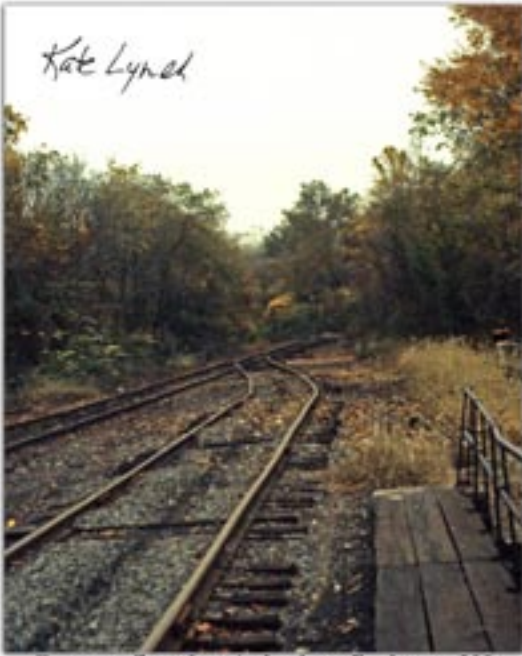
“Shanty Irish” or “mud Irish” were the most impoverished. Most had no skills and worked at anything that would put bread on the table. “Lace curtain Irish” were fairly well off, often wealthy. My great-great-grandfather was a cobbler by trade and was probably somewhere between “shanty Irish” and “lace curtain Irish.”



Catholic Mass was held at the home of my great-great-grandfather Cornelius Joseph Lynch and other Irish, now Americans. At least, according to a Bordentown history book written in 1932 by James Magee, publisher of the *Bordentown Register News*. St. Mary's Catholic Church was dedicated in 1872. According to information on St. Mary's website, a small church had already been built in the area where my family lived, a full decade before they arrived. Regardless, my great-great-grandfather was a founding member of the first church.

In my hometown, many of the Irish lived in the “2nd ward” of the town close to the railroad and “hilltop.”

ṪIR gan Ṫeanga, ṪIR gan anam  
A country without a language, a country without a soul



Former Camden & Amboy Railway, NJ

My great grandfather, also Cornelius Joseph Lynch, was an engineer on the Camden & Amboy Railway before his untimely death at age 27. According to family legend, he had a heart attack after hitting a woman crossing the tracks while he was driving the train. The August 1879 *Bordentown Register* simply says that he died.

The discrimination my grandfather Doyle felt was even closer for the Lynch family. My grandmother Mae Lynch came from a German-English family who disowned her when she married (as she told me) a *durty* Irishman and a Papist, my grandfather. I grew up two blocks away from a great aunt I never knew.

## what i took home

On my journey, I picked up threads of a complex colorful weaving of interconnected life and continuity. My mother did quite a bit of genealogical research before she traveled to Ireland in the 1960s. Her goal was to find long-lost cousins. What she learned is that every member of the family had either emigrated or died in the 1840s famine.

My great-great grandfather Cornelius Lynch was a native



currach – traditional Irish boat at renvyle bay and mt. muelreea – county galway

of Errigal Parish in Derry County, now Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

My last night in Ireland was spent singing in a pub in the far west of Ireland – Renvyle House, Connemara – at one time the country home of the Irish poet and author St. John Gogarty. As one does in the pub, I lifted a pint with a family returning from a visit in Derry.



Killarney cottage – county Kerry – Ireland

They asked about my trip and whether I was going to get to “the North.” I told them that my family was from Derry. They knew Errigal Parish and told me there were many Lynch families still living in the area. Although we drove 2400 kilometers (about 1500 miles), our journey left out Ulster. That road is one yet to be traveled.



*May the road rise up to meet you.  
May the wind be always at your back.  
May the sun shine warm upon your face  
The rains fall soft upon your fields.  
And, until we meet again,  
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.*





maireann croí éadrom i bhfad.  
A light heart lives longest.