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Journey An Irish-American Odyssey

Michael B. Melanson

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Narrative nonfiction exploring Irish history, customs and traditions as told through the lives of ordinary people who lived through extraordinary times. In Part I, English subjugation, penal laws, famine, landlords, evictions, hedge schools, matchmaking and settlement of the farm are among the topics examined within the scope of four Irish families and the communities in which they lived. The Great Famine and emigration took many to Boston, where the Irish were welcomed by bigotry, fear and distrust. Relegated to the slums of Fort Hill, the North End and the waterfront, their lives were a simmering cauldron of poverty, crime and disease. Community was the key to success for those who circumvented the city and formed a new Irish townland in Newton, Massachusetts. In solidarity, they financed and welcomed friends and family from home, started businesses, purchased land, built homes and established their own churches. Through naturalization, they proudly became Irish-Americans and gained the political clout none could have imagined in their homeland. Part II chronicles the author’s search for his own Irish roots. From family folklore to documented, historical evidence, the story of an Irish-American family unfolds. In honor of his Irish grandfather, he, his mother, aunt and cousin journey to Ireland to find the places and people their family left behind. An experience of a lifetime they would never forget.

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