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Grosse-Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site of Canada

## The Relationship Between Canadian Immigration and Grosse-Île

- All ships had to stop at the quarantine station before immigrants could disembark in the city of Québec
- Captains needed a medical certificate from Grosse-Île before passengers could disembark at the port
- Sick immigrants were treated for infectious diseases on the island
- Healthy immigrants were kept under observation for a few days (to be monitored for diseases that might yet develop)
- When a ship did not need disinfecting, it continued to the port
- Immigrants were transported to Québec in steamers from Grosse-Île

## Grosse-Île and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site of Canada

### **Commemorative Intent**

1. The importance of immigration to Canada, particularly via the city of Québec, from the early 19th century to the First World War
2. The tragedies of Irish immigrants, especially the 1847 typhus epidemic
3. Grosse-Île's role from 1832 to 1937 as a quarantine station for the Port of Québec, long the main point of arrival for immigrants to Canada

## The Relationship Between Canadian Immigration and Grosse-Île

- 1830-1940: Nearly 4.5 million immigrants (43 nationalities) arrived in the city of Québec
- 1832-1937: Grosse-Île -- quarantine station for the Port of Québec
- 1832: British soldiers opened Grosse-Île as a quarantine station  
50,000 immigrants arrived in the city of Québec / cholera epidemic
- 1847: 100,000 immigrants arrived -- mostly Irish fleeing the Potato Famine  
Typhus epidemic / 15% death rate  
441 ships sailed from Great Britain to Québec, 122 without deaths
- 1848: 278 boats arrived -- four were placed in quarantine for more than three days

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- ~1850: Sailing ships were used to cross the Atlantic Ocean (eight weeks)
- ~1860: Steamers replaced sailing ships (15 days)
- 1867: Confederation: Canadian government in charge of immigration
- ~1880: “Modern” medicine -- contagious disease theories
- ~1885: Canadian Railway “coast to coast”  
Development of western Canada / recruitment in Eastern Europe
- 1937: Closing of Grosse-Île as the quarantine station of the port of Québec

### Colonial Emigration (1815-1867)

- 1830-1867: Almost 90% of immigrants were from Great Britain
- 1867-1940: Immigration began to diversify:
  - 1860-1880: ~30% from Scandinavian countries
  - 1870 on: Beginning of ethnic diversification
- All ships were coming from Great Britain
- Economic crisis in Great Britain
- “Shovelling out the paupers”
- Not enough immigration agents to enforce laws
- The Port of Québec was the most important port in Canada
- 50-70% of immigrants arriving in the city of Québec went on to the United States

### Canadian Immigration (1867-1940)

- Poor and humble immigrants gave way to prosperous farmers attracted to Canada by the vast lands of Manitoba and the Northwest
- By the end of the century, Canada was retaining a larger number of immigrants (nearly 70%)
- The city of Québec was still the major port of entry to Canada
- The economic boom resulted in an influx of immigrants
- Immigration in the first two decades of the 20th century was three times greater than it was from 1880-1900
- With the end of the First World War through the 1920s, immigration dropped:
  - 1921-1931: 123,000/year vs. 1932-1941: 15,000/year
- The city of Québec continued to handle 45% of immigrants to Canada, falling to 26% between 1932 and 1941
- Great Britain was no longer supplying the majority of new arrivals (47%)

**Immigrants (Place of Origin) -- 1829-1851**

(from ports of departure)

<b>%</b>	<b>Ports of departure</b>
27.5	England
58.5	Ireland
10.8	Scotland
3.2	Others

696,129 immigrants (over 23 years) -- average per year = 30,267

At least 60% of immigrants from the British Isles are Irish

**Immigrants (Nationality) -- 1852-1867**

<b>%</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
19.2	English
28.3	Irish
13.7	Scottish
14.2	German
21.2	Scandinavian
3.4	Others

398,031 immigrants (over 15 years) -- average per year = 26,535

61.2% of immigrants are from the British Isles (next most common: Scandinavian)

**Immigrants (Nationality) -- 1868-1891**

<b>%</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
47.2	English
11.1	Irish
9.7	Scottish
2.9	German
24.1	Scandinavian
5.0	Others

662,037 immigrants (over 23 years) -- average per year = 28,784

68% of immigrants are from the British Isles (next most common: Scandinavian)

### Immigrants (Place of Origin) -- 1891-1914

<b>%</b>	<b>Place of Origin</b>
59.8	British Isles
14.6	Eastern Europe
10.8	Scandinavia
8.3	Western Europe
2.8	Middle East
3.7	Others

1,514,452 immigrants (over 22 years) -- average per year = 68,839  
30% of immigrants are from “new” countries (59.8% from British Isles)

### Immigrants (Nationality) -- 1914-1941

*No data concerning nationality of immigrants*

758,666 immigrants (over 26 years) -- average per year = 29,180  
Two world wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945)  
Economic depression

### Grosse-Île Eyewitness to Canadian Immigration

- 7,553 people are buried in the three cemeteries
- 5,424 people are buried in 1847 alone
- 31,829 hospitalizations between 1832 and 1913 (no data for 1914-1937)
- An isolated society: physicians, nurses, a superintendent, translators, disinfection employees, a baker, a carter, a telegraph operator, a teacher, sailors, etc.
- Three sections:
  - West:* Healthy immigrants section
  - Centre:* Village
  - East:* Sick immigrants section

### The Irish in the city of Québec

- Irish soldiers served in the French army
- After the Conquest of 1759, British soldiers stayed in the new colony (mostly Irish)
- In 1847, the tragedy marked the local population of Québec city
- The tragedy of 1847 influenced the population of the city of Québec
- 702 orphans of the 1847 epidemic were adopted mostly by French-Canadian families

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- Competition and rivalry between French-Canadians and Irish who shared the same jobs (port employees, shipbuilders, carters, innkeeper, etc.)
- One of the Fathers of Confederation in 1867: Thomas D'Arcy McGee
- Louis Riel's lawyer was Irish: Charles Fitzpatrick
- Québec mayors of Irish descent in the 19th century: Charles Alleyn, Owen Murphy
- Saint Patrick's Church (1833) and Saint Patrick's School (1842) still exist
- Today, 40% of the population of the province of Quebec have Irish ancestors
- Celtic Cross inaugurated at the Artillery Park (Parks Canada site in Old Québec and in the first Irish district, McMahan Street)
- The Irish Cemetery of Grosse-Île is the largest Irish cemetery of the Great Famine outside Ireland
- The Celtic Cross of Grosse-Île, inaugurated by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in 1909, is the tallest in the world (16.2 metres/53 feet)
- Many Irish pubs in the city of Québec