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The Columbia Guide to Irish American History (Columbia Guides to American History and Cultures)

Timothy J. Meagher

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Once seen as threats to mainstream society, Irish Americans have become an integral part of the American story. More than 40 million Americans claim Irish descent, and the culture and traditions of Ireland and Irish Americans have left an indelible mark on U.S. society. Timothy J. Meagher fuses an overview of Irish American history with an analysis of historians' debates, an annotated bibliography, a chronology of critical events, and a glossary discussing crucial individuals, organizations, and dates. He addresses a range of key issues in Irish American history from the first Irish settlements in the seventeenth century through the famine years in the nineteenth century to the volatility of 1960s America and beyond. The result is a definitive guide to understanding the complexities and paradoxes that have defined the Irish American experience.

Throughout the work, Meagher invokes comparisons to Irish experiences in Canada, Britain, and Australia to challenge common perceptions of Irish American history. He examines the shifting patterns of Irish migration, discusses the role of the Catholic church in the Irish immigrant experience, and considers the Irish American influence in U.S. politics and modern urban popular culture.

Meagher pays special attention to Irish American families and the roles of men and women, the emergence of the Irish as a "governing class" in American politics, the paradox of their combination of fervent American patriotism and passionate Irish nationalism, and their complex and sometimes tragic relations with African and Asian Americans.

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