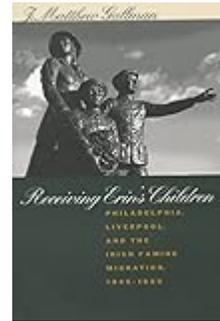


F. Matthew Gallman. *Receiving Erin's Children: Philadelphia, Liverpool, and the Irish Famine Migration, 1845-1855.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. xii + 306 pp. \$59.95(cloth), \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8078-2534-1; \$27.50 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8078-4845-6.



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Gallman (currently the Henry R. Luce Professor of the Civil War Era at Gettysburg College) examines the responses of Liverpool and Philadelphia to new and intensified urban problems that resulted from Irish immigration during the period of the famine. For each city, he considers the responses of the public and the Catholic Church, and explores how the migrants affected health, sanitation, and crime. Thus, this book is a study in comparative urban history, where the developments in the two cities are examined during a period in which “new urban problems were magnified by the thousands of poor Irish Catholic immigrants” (p. 14).

Gallman’s argument is that the responses in each city were determined by a number of similar influences, but that the specific response in a particular case also depended on three aspects of “national distinctiveness.” First, government was structured differently in the two cities, with the central government in Britain traditionally playing a larger role. Decisions in Liverpool were frequently affected by Parliamentary actions whereas Congress never influenced Philadelphia’s responses. Second, Americans tended to be more committed to voluntarism and solved many of the problems caused by the influx of migrants without resorting to government, even at the local level. Third, the two cities faced different options concerning what to do with the migrants and

different economic abilities in helping them. Liverpool was often stuck with many of the migrants, particularly the poorest ones. Philadelphia was able to employ many of the migrants and could try to send the remainder out to the frontier. In addition, Philadelphians seemed more able economically to provide assistance to the migrants.

Gallman’s approach is analytical though he does not use economic theory or provide numerical estimates. The six substantive chapters possess the same general framework. Gallman discusses developments in each city before the famine migration, examines developments in each city during the migration, and draws conclusions concerning how the famine migration affected the situation. The book is especially well grounded in original sources. Gallman has spent a large amount of time going through contemporary newspapers and urban reports along with the more recent literature.

Chapter two examines the public response to the migrants. In both cities, the influx of poor migrants put a strain on public services in the face of public pressure to keep taxes low and maintain economic stability. Gallman finds Philadelphia helped the migrants more through voluntarism than did Liverpool. In chapter three, Gallman examines the issue of poor relief. In Liverpool, non-government assistance was sparse, a situation in stark contrast to Philadelphia where many private organiza-

tions greatly expanded their services.

Chapter four on medical care and chapter five on environmental reform examine the issue of health. During the famine migration, a cholera epidemic occurred, though it affected Philadelphia much less than Liverpool. In both cities, sick immigrants were seen as a public charge. In Liverpool many were forced into medical wards in public workhouses or almshouses, whereas Philadelphia's hospitals expanded their services and philanthropic organizations increased their assistance. In both cities, efforts were made to limit the entry of the afflicted, to quarantine them, and to clean up wastes and "nuisances."

Chapter six on religion and chapter seven on crime and policing examine the repercussions of the famine migration. Even before the migration, religion was an issue in schooling in both cities because the Protestant Bible was traditionally taught. The famine migrants thus arrived in a heated situation in both cities, though the main effect of their entry seems to have been that the Catholic Church expanded its efforts to build parochial schools and churches. The response was greater in Philadelphia, which is viewed as evidence of greater American ability to respond. As to crime and policing in each city, the entry of the famine migrants contributed to street violence and increased arrest rates for minor crimes but did not have major effects on either the level of serious crime or the development of the police forces. Overall, Gallman argues that "the immigrants were adjusting to, rather than recasting, the established patterns of the host culture" (p. 210).

The major criticism I have concerning Gallman's book is his choice of cities to compare. Though Gallman claims that Philadelphia and Liverpool were sufficiently similar in terms of size, population growth, importance

of the Irish, and migration trends that the cities make an appropriate comparison on which to draw conclusions concerning urban decision making, I am not convinced this is the case. Most of the Irish viewed Liverpool as a city through which they traveled on their way to the United States or elsewhere, rather than as a final destination. The port that served the corresponding function in the United States at the time of the famine was New York, not Philadelphia. Thus, a much larger number of Irish arrived in Liverpool than in Philadelphia (so potential effects were larger, such as with the amount of funds needed for poor relief and the extent of the disease outbreaks) and a larger percentage of the Irish arriving in Philadelphia were presumably planning to stay. The two cities therefore experienced substantially different numbers of Irish immigrants who were in different situations. Thus, it is possible that voluntarism would not have taken on the same level of importance in Philadelphia that it did if the city had been inundated with the much larger number of migrants who went through Liverpool. While it is obvious that no set of cities would ever provide a perfect comparison, and though it might not have changed his conclusions, I believe Gallman would have better served comparing Liverpool and New York.

Criticisms aside, Gallman's book is an important work in urban history. In connection with his other work, he continues to provide support for the argument that national and local history matters in affecting how a city reacts to exogenous events.

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