

## Immigration in Lowell

In the 1820s and 1830s, Irish people moved to Lowell to help build mills and dig canals. They typically did not work in the mills and lived in a neighborhood called the Acre. The situation changed in the 1840s. Mill owners needed workers, and the Irish were ready to work. More were arriving daily, fleeing the potato famine in Ireland. By 1860, about 1/4 of the 37,000 people in Lowell were Irish. Lowell continued to grow during the 1800s, as more and more workers were needed.



Beginning in the 1860s, thousands of French-Canadians moved south from Quebec. Later, thousands of immigrants moved to Lowell from Greece, Portugal, Poland, and other European countries. All of these immigrants were looking for a better life in the United States.



They came to Lowell because they had heard that there were jobs in the mills. There were jobs, but it was not pleasant work. The day was long: 10-12 hours per day, six days a week. The conditions were dangerous: injuries and serious illness were very common. The pay was low and whole families often had to work in the mills to make ends meet.

Immigrants kept coming, though, because life was even worse in their home country. Outside the mills, immigrants formed strong ethnic communities. Churches, coffee houses,

marketplaces, and social clubs helped ease the change to a new culture. Life was hard, but many immigrants told fond stories of Lowell's close communities they lived in.

Immigration is still part of the story of Lowell. Today, people emigrate from places like Brazil and Cambodia, and refugees arrive from Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, Iraq, Ghana and many other countries. Their experiences of hope and hardship are very similar to those of earlier immigrants.



Images: *Lowell National Historical Park*  
See also: *Lowell Immigration Time Line*