

## **Lowell's Immigration Time Line**

- 1822** Led by Hugh Cummisky, 30 Irishmen walk from Charlestown to Lowell to build canals and mills. They camp near their work in an area called the "Paddy Camp Lands." This area is known later as the Acre.
- 1823** Mill agents begin recruiting young women and men from New England farms to work in the mills. They live in boardinghouses run by the corporations for which they work.
- 1831** St. Patrick's Church opens in the Acre. It is the first ethnic and first Catholic Church in Lowell.
- 1840s** Waves of Irish immigrants come to Lowell fleeing starvation from the Potato Famine in their homeland. Irish immigration continues throughout the nineteenth century.
- 1844** The Ten Hour Movement begins. Workers petition the state legislature to pass a law limiting the workday to ten hours.
- 1850s** "Know Nothing" movement flourishes in northern states. This nativist backlash against immigration is caused by Protestant fears about increased numbers of Catholic voters.
- 1865** Mill agents send recruiters to Quebec to find new workers. Starvation and lack of work cause French Canadians to leave their homeland and immigrate to Lowell in large numbers. Many go back and forth between the US and Canada.
- 1882** Congress passes Chinese Exclusion Act. Virtually no Chinese are admitted to the United States until its repeal in 1943.
- 1890s** The first Greek immigrants to work in the mills arrive. Most are young, single men living in tenement houses in the Acre. Many hope to save money and return to Greece, but few do.
- 1892** Ellis Island opens. Annual immigration to the US averages about 1,000,000 over the next two decades.
- 1890s** Polish immigrants begin to arrive in Lowell. Fleeing starvation and mistreatment, many hope to return to their homeland. They settle in tenement houses near the mills, and are forced to take low-paying jobs because they do not speak English.

- 1905** Greek women, brought over by their fathers and brothers, begin to settle in Lowell. Many single women take jobs in the mills. Once married, most work in the home, raising children. The Greek community grows stronger.
- 1910s** Portuguese immigrants begin arriving in large numbers. Most are from the Azores Islands, and settle in the Chapel Hill neighborhood of Lowell.
- 1914-1918** World War I disrupts ocean travel and dramatically decreases immigration.
- 1921** Congress passes law restricting immigration. Annual quota is about 150,000.
- 1924** Congress passes National Origins Act, drastically reducing immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe (14% of 150,000, or about 20,000 annually).
- 1950s** People from Puerto Rico begin their migration to Lowell.
- 1960s** People from Columbia begin immigrating to Lowell. Many are skilled textile workers recruited by the few remaining mills.
- 1970s-1980s** Southeast Asians, including Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese begin to settle in Lowell. Most are refugees forced to leave their homelands because of the Vietnam war.
- Today** Newcomers arrive weekly, adding to Lowell's diverse immigrant community. Many immigrants still come from Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. Others arrive from India, Central and South America, and Africa. Lowell continues to be home to many immigrants and refugees. The immigrant/refugee/migrant experience continues to shape Lowell and the nation.