

Under the Pavement: Kingston's 1847 Typhus Mass Grave in Context

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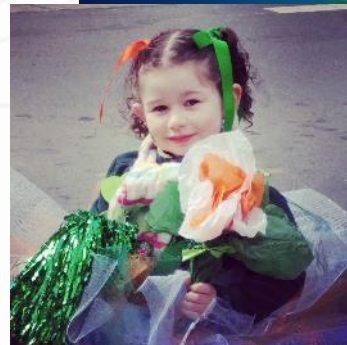
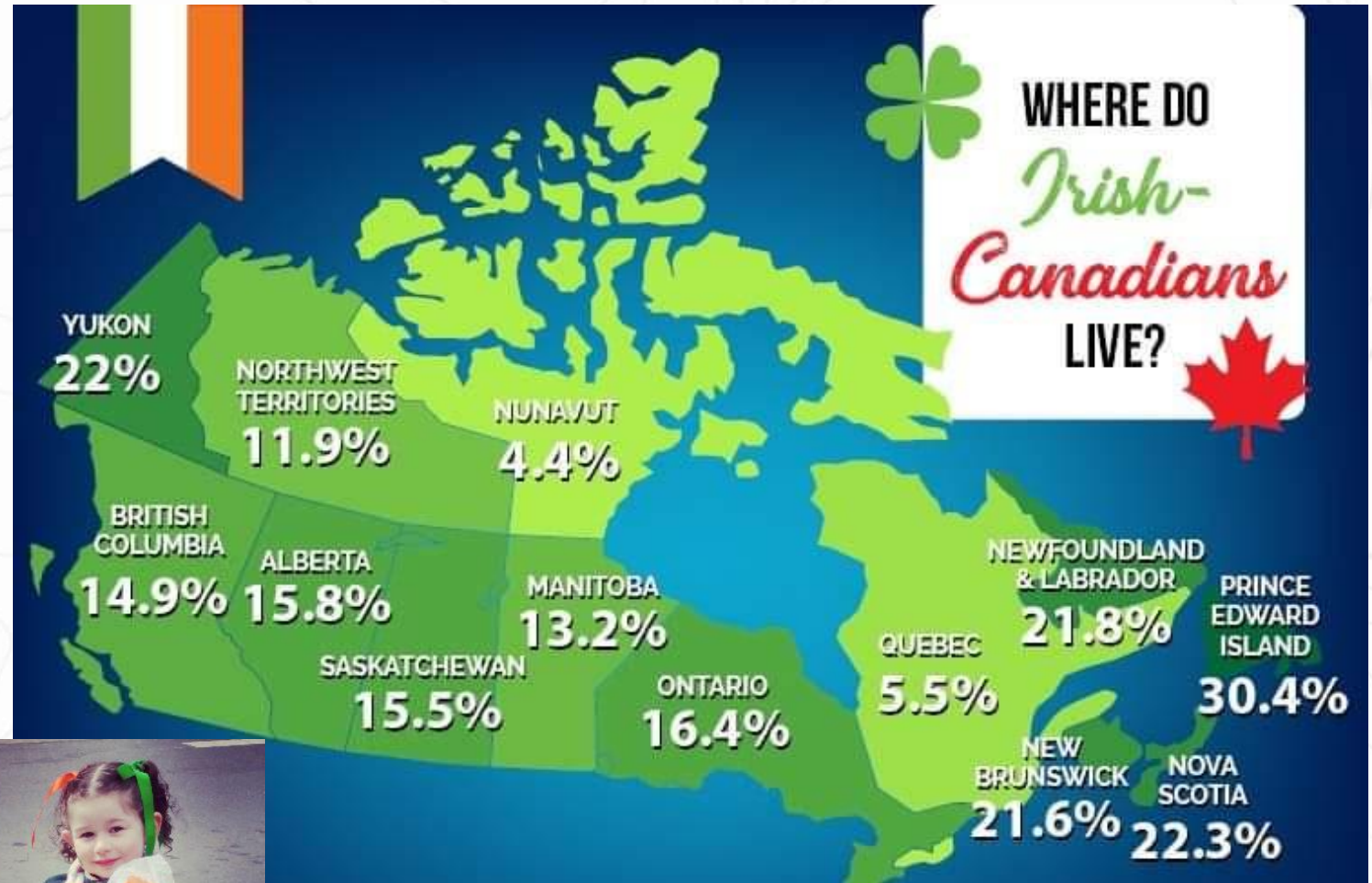
Irish-Canadians Today

As of the 2016 Canada Census, 4,627,000 Canadians, or 13.43% of the population, claim full or partial Irish ancestry.

2,095,460 Ontarians claim Irish ancestry.

1.2 million Irish immigrants arrived between 1825 and 1970.
Over 100,000 in 1847 alone.

By 1867, the Irish were the second largest non-English group after the French.



On the Eve of the Crisis: Early 19th Century Ireland

- Social conditions
- Housing
- Access to land
- Access to work
- Subsistence
- Population
- Socioeconomic hierarchy

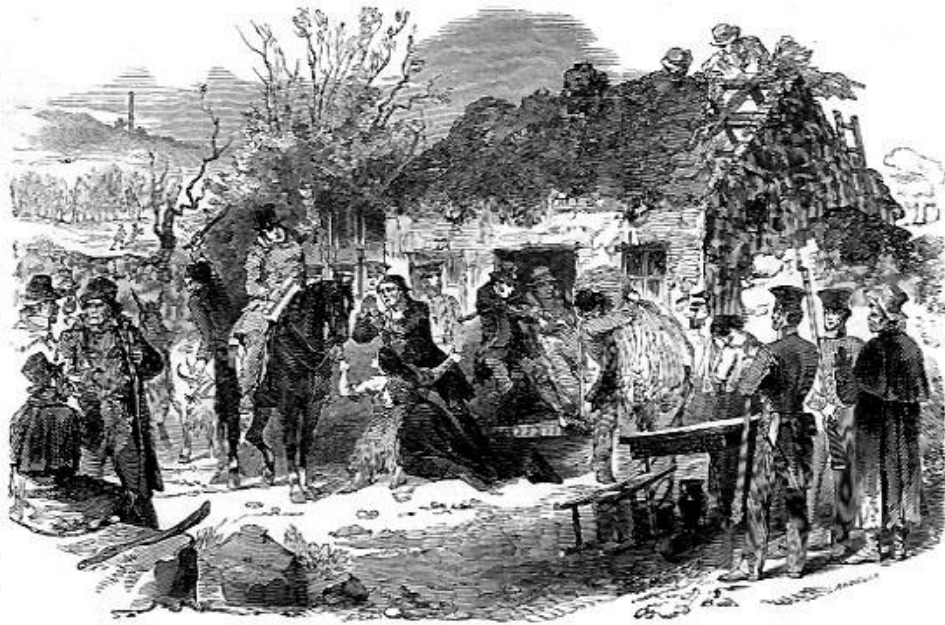
Note: not limited to the Catholic population



Erskine Nicol's iconic "A shebeen at Donnybrook" (1851).

Enter the blight

An already marginalized and impoverished population is faced with a multi-year failure of its one subsistence crop, with little assistance from the landlord class or the British government



THE EJECTMENT.



Death or Canada: Emigration, “Relief,” or Starvation



Historians estimate that Ireland lost half of its population to hunger-related deaths or emigration—a total of 4 million people gone from the island—during the “hungry years.”

I suggest that these numbers are too low.

The Transatlantic Voyage



Modern, sea-worthy replica of the Jeanie Johnston (1847).

Departure: Major ports included Limerick, Cork, Sligo, Belfast, Glasgow, Liverpool

Passage: 3000-mile journey to Quebec

40 days to three months

Often confined to the ship's hold, sanitation was problematic

Epidemic typhus aka "ship fever;" dysentery

Quarantine:

First level quarantine – Grosse Île in St. Lawrence River
Grosse Île could not handle the influx, many died while waiting

Efforts eventually abandoned and ships/barges sent along upriver to Montreal (Pointe-Saint-Charles), Kingston, Toronto, Hamilton and smaller ports in between

Over 5,000 died at Grosse Isle in 1847

British North America absorbed as much as 45% of the total Irish emigration in 1847; roughly 100,000 persons

Contributing to the Narrative Through Archaeology



Diasporic events are incredibly complex and nuanced

Benefit from the synthesis of multiple lines of evidence (history, folklore studies, economics, biology, social sciences)



Specifically, my research attempts to understand:

- Pre-famine life and famine-era evictions in Ireland
- Immigration and quarantine in Upper Canada
- Establishing roots in the rural hinterland

“The Famine Irish had nothing...there is nothing to find.”



Image: *Scene in an Irish Cabin*, Erskine Nicol (1825–1904), Museums Sheffield

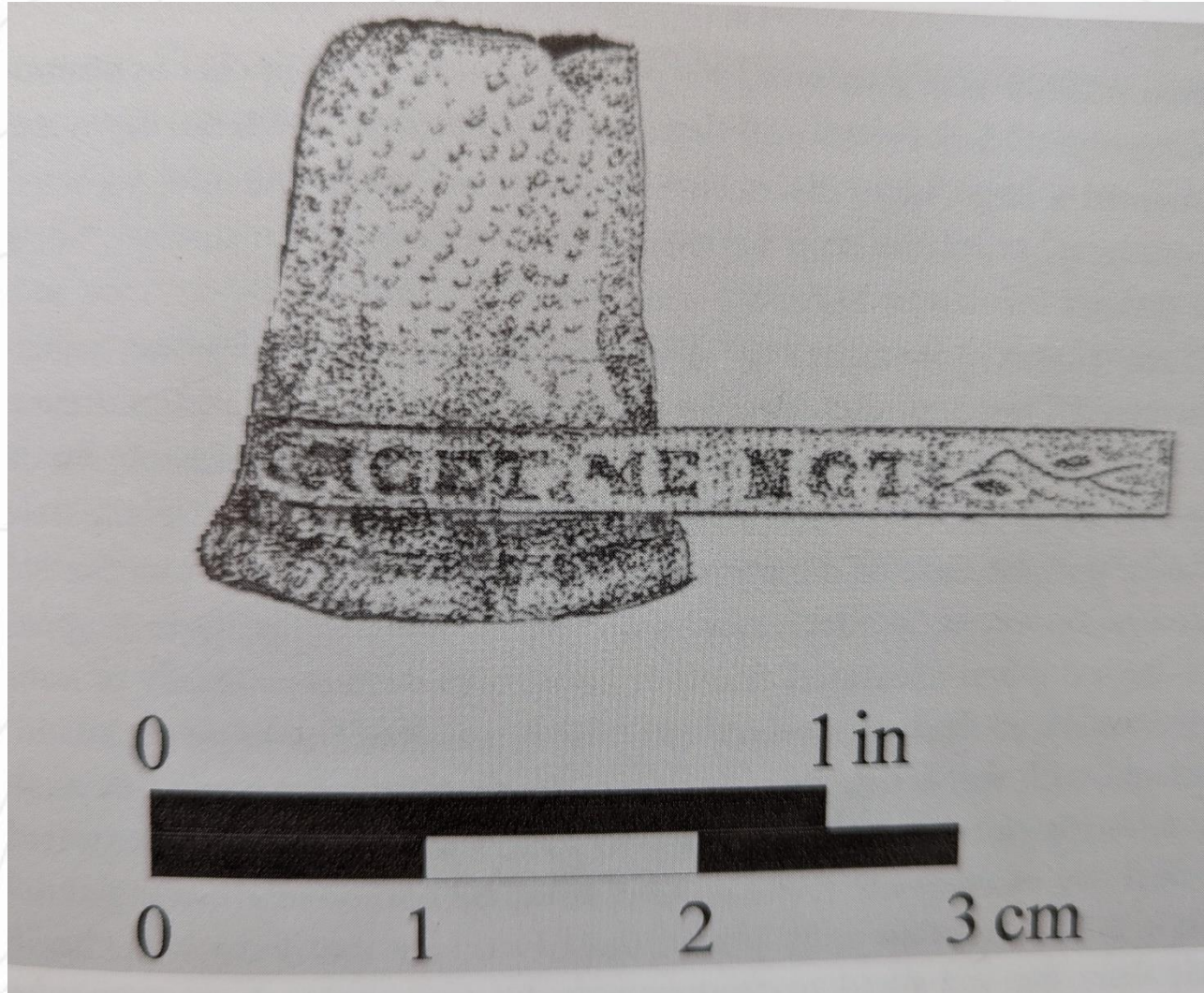
Archaeology in Co. Roscommon



Archaeology in Co. Roscommon



Two of my favourite artifacts



Kingston and Famine Immigration



1850 map of the hospital grounds
and a sketch of the main hospital
building with the Watkins wing, ca.
1860



1847: Into a town of 10,000, **50,000** immigrants arrived

	immigrant, who died of fever,	131	Patrick Dollard
Patrick Greer	On the fifteenth day of July one thousand eight hundred and forty seven, I the undersigned priest have interred at the General Hospital Patrick Greer an immigrant aged about years, from the county who died of fever	132	Patrick Dollard
Fitzgerald	On the fifteenth day of July one thousand eight hundred and forty seven, I the undersigned priest have interred at the General Hospital Fitzgerald an immigrant from the county aged about years, who died of fever.	133	Patrick Dollard
John Stewart	On the fifteenth day of July one thousand eight hundred and forty seven, I the undersigned priest have interred at the General Hospital John Stewart an immigrant from the county aged about years, who died of fever	134	Patrick Dollard

"On the fifteenth day of July one thousand eight hundred and forty seven, I the undersigned priest have interred at the General Hospital Patrick Greer an immigrant aged about ____ years, from the County ____ who died of fever"

Records from St. Mary's Cathedral list 1,515 deaths between June and December 1847

Charity and Mortality, Kingston Emigrant Hospital

RETURN OF PATIENTS TREATED IN EMIGRANT HOSPITAL, KINGSTON, TO THIS DATE.	
From 1st to 25th June inclusive :	
Admitted,	182
Discharged,	33
Died	22
Remaining,	127
Out patients treated,	193
Died	38
From 26th June to 2nd July inclusive :	
Remaining last return,	127
Admitted	122
Discharged,	61
Died,	22
Remaining,	196
From 3d to 9th July inclusive :	
Remaining last return,	193
Admitted,	142
Discharged,	23
Died,	25
Remaining,	261
Total admitted to this date, 446	
Out patients treated,	550
Out patients Died,	169
THOMAS W. ROBISON M. D. JAMES MEAGHER, JR. Surgeon, E. H.	

KINGSTON EMIGRANT HOSPITAL.				
Return of Patients treated in Emigrant Hospital's Kingston, up to the 18th ult :				
	Admitted.	Disch'd.	died.	Remaining.
June,	278	79	35	"
July,	602	171	184	"
Aug.	592	150	269	"
Sept.	355	333	166	"
Oct.	132	9	53	"
	1959	831	707	421
T. W. ROBISON, M. D. J. MEAGHER, Surgeon. J. HARVEY, Surgeon.				
[Will some of our Toronto contemporaries obtain and publish a statement, of a similar form in relation to the Toronto Emigrant Hospital ? [Argus.]				

Shreds and Patches.

We regret to announce the death of the Rev. Patrick Neilon, Catholic Priest, aged 25 years, who died on Sunday morning last, of Typus Fever. He caught the infection while rendering humane assistance to the sick emigrants.

TO THE CHARITABLE.

A Committee of the Board of Health intend to call upon the inhabitants of Kingston and its vicinity, to receive such donations of clothing, and materials for clothing, as they may be inclined to give for the use of the Widows and Orphans at the Emigrant Sheds.

Analysis of the existing documentation from St. Mary's

Extant burial records for 1846-1848 contain 1,368 entries (*not individuals*) for burials in the Catholic cemetery, Kingston Hospital, the "Old Cemetery" (Cataraqui), the "Town Cemetery" (Upper Burial Ground?), and others.

First **death from fever** is recorded on 03 August 1846. John Seaton, aged 47, was buried at the Kingston Cemetery

First **Irish immigrant** to die of fever is Mary Mc[S]weeny from County Leitrim, 08 August 1846. Kingston Cemetery

First **Irish immigrant buried at KGH** is William McMorragh, County Leitrim, 15 July 1847 (along with 6 others)

Last recorded Irish immigrant buried at KGH is Mrs. Margaret Mullaly, 50, County Tipperary, *2 January 1848* (although it appears that the burial area at KGH was mostly closed by 20 July 1847 with the burial of John Greer).

Total number of burials with the burial place recorded as KGH: **557**

Total number of burials with NO burial place recorded: **278** (these are likely KGH burials as well)

KGH mass grave was not solely for the Irish. Of those with the burial location noted, there is:

- One soldier's child

- Three local children

- Two "coloured persons"

Deaths Per County

- < 5
- 6-10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 25

Counties labeled on the map: County Donegal, County Londonderry, County Antrim, County Tyrone, County Fermanagh, County Armagh, County Down, County Monaghan, County Leitrim, County Cavan, County Louth, County Roscommon, County Longford, County Meath, County Galway, County Mayo, County Sligo, County Westmeath, County Dublin, County Offaly, County Kildare, County Wicklow, County Clare, County Limerick, County Kerry, County Tipperary, County Carlow, County Kilkenny, County Wexford, County Waterford, County Cork.

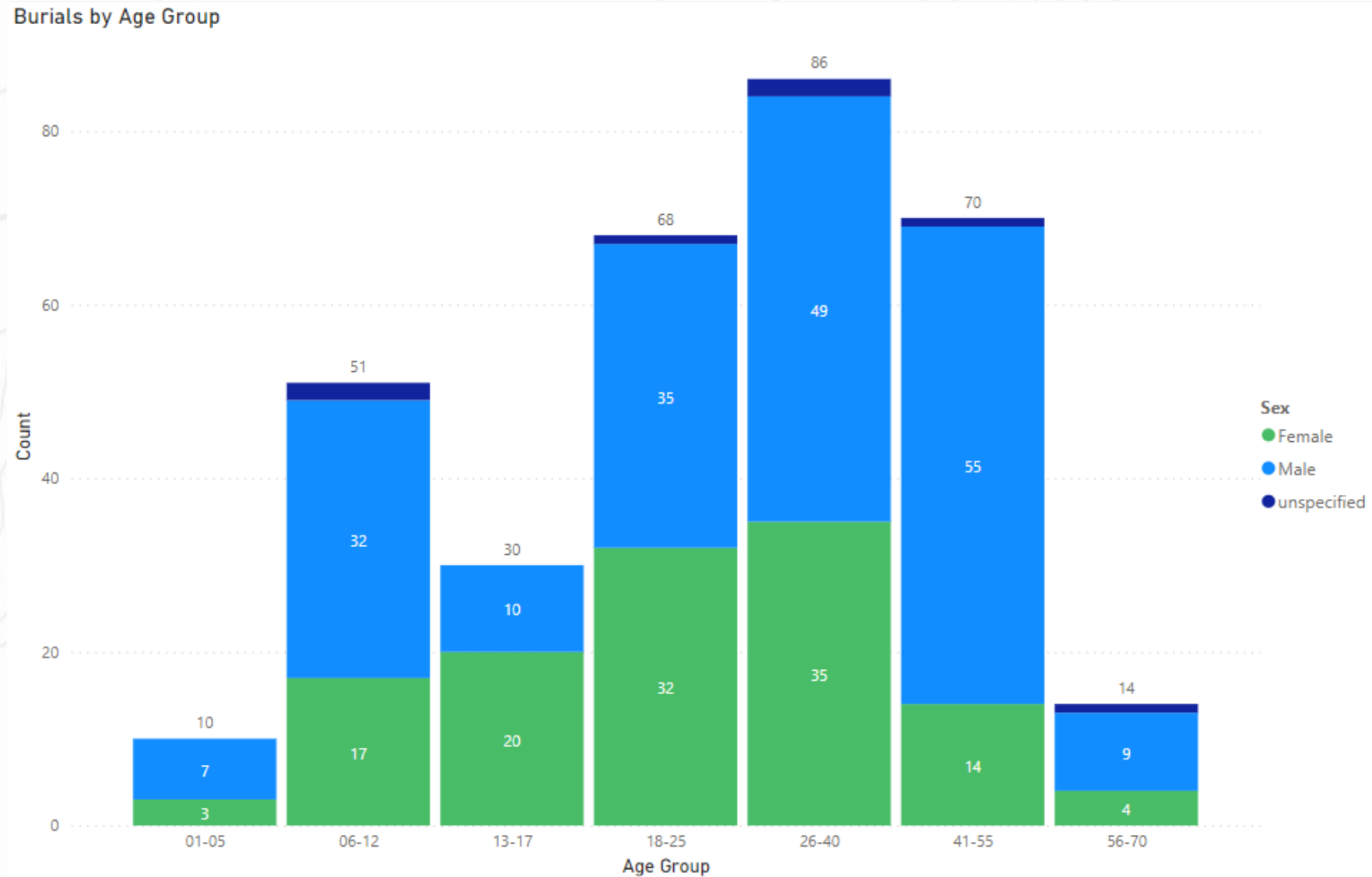
Water bodies: Atlantic Ocean, North Channel, Irish Sea, St. George's Channel.

Scale: 0 to 50 Kilometres.

Logo: ASI



Preliminary aggregate analysis of the records



Impact on Kingstonians

James Barry

Born 1797, Belfast

Emigrated with parents

Married in Montreal, 1827

Wife: Ellen nee Coleman

Served in the militia

Worked as a carter in the 1840s

Family had at least 8 children (last in 1843)

Recorded as a witness in many burials

Last recorded witness entry: 31 July 1847

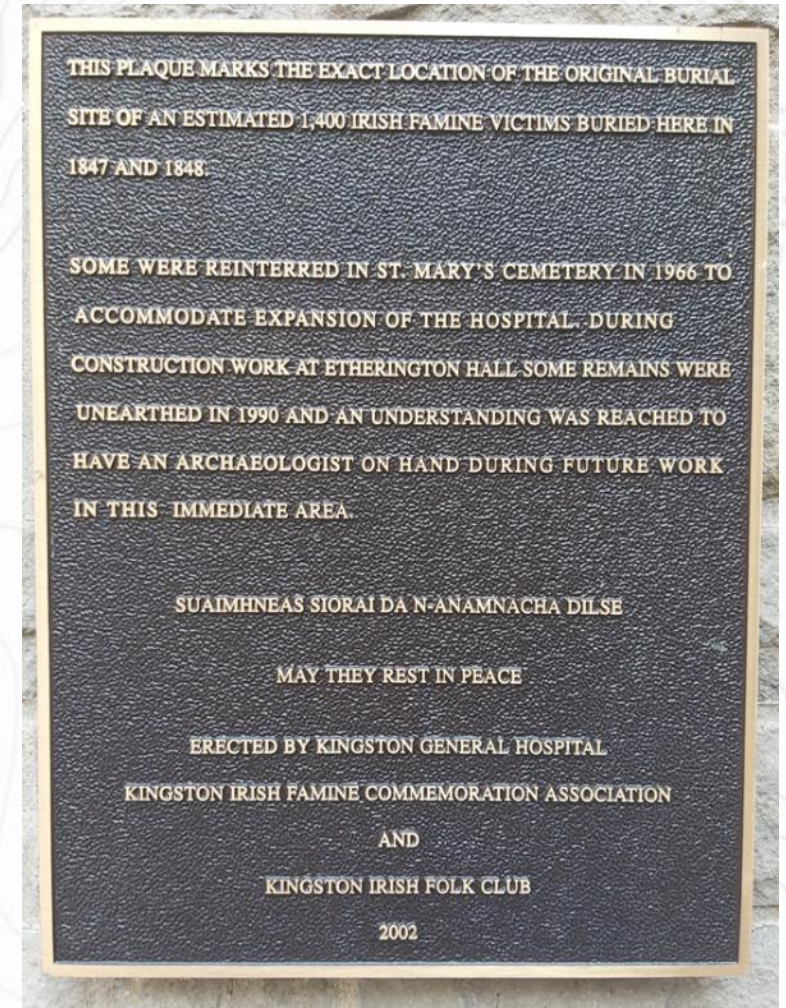
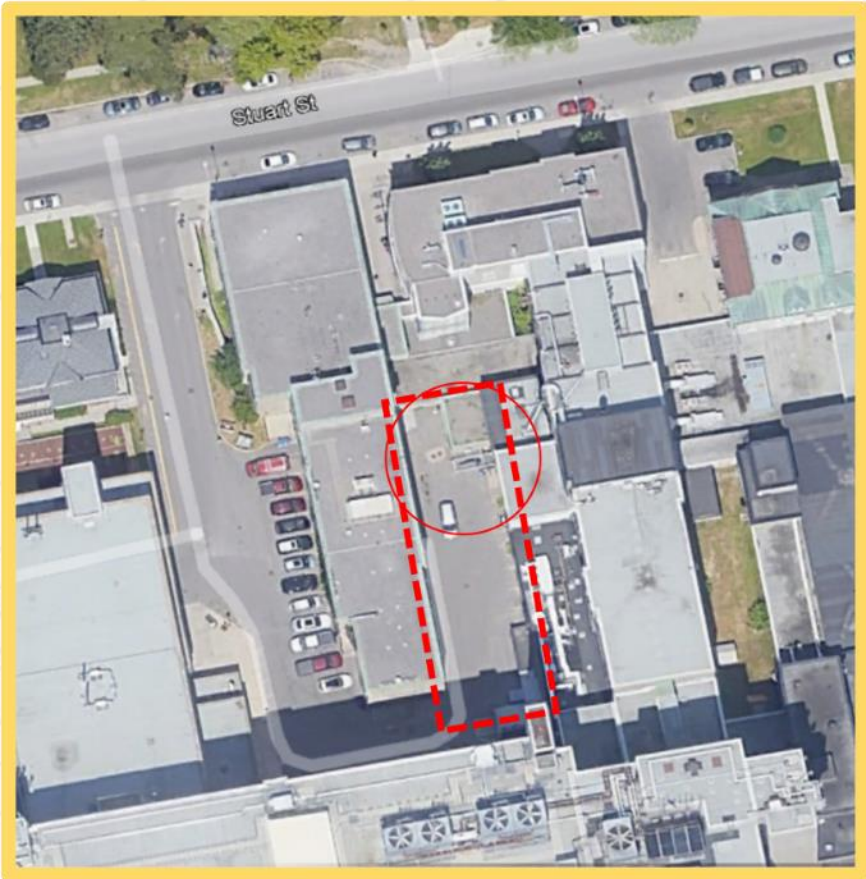
Burial date: 13 August 1847, died of fever

Wife died of fever 27 April 1848



Carter and horse, British school, artist unknown, 19th century

Location, Institution, and Memory



WARNING: Images of human remains will be included on the following slides.

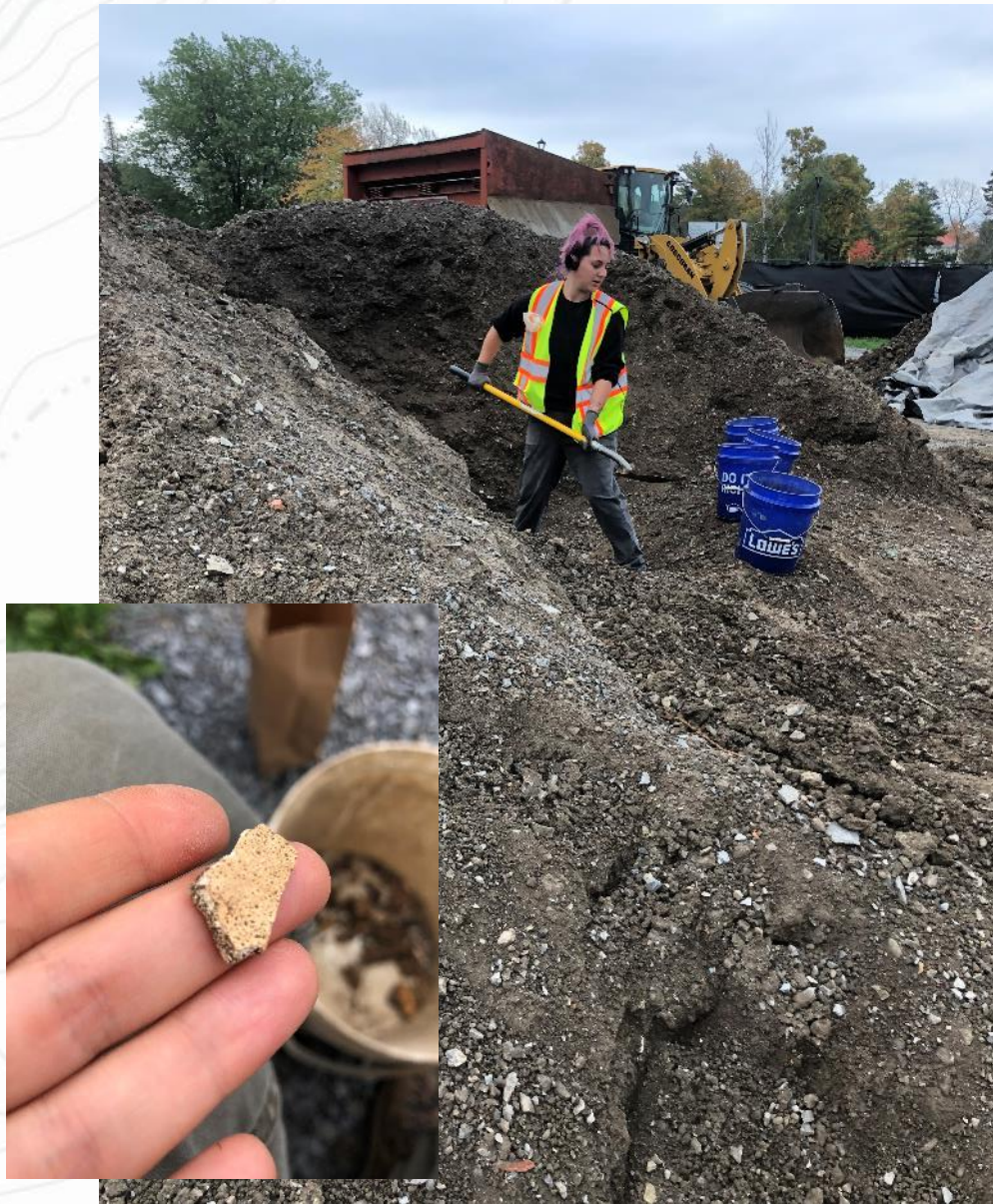
Excavation and Recovery



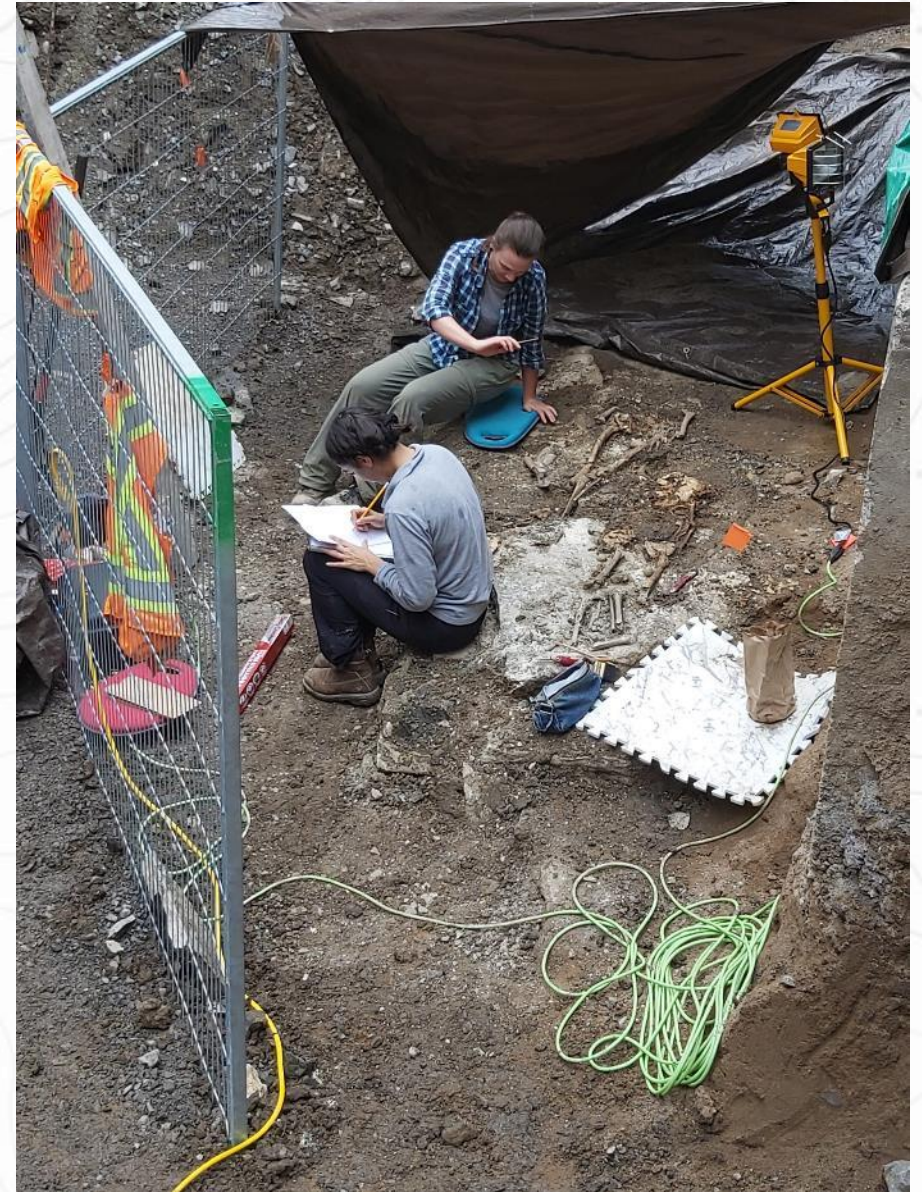
Excavation and Recovery: KHSC Alley



Recovery: Fragmentary Human Remains



In situ documentation



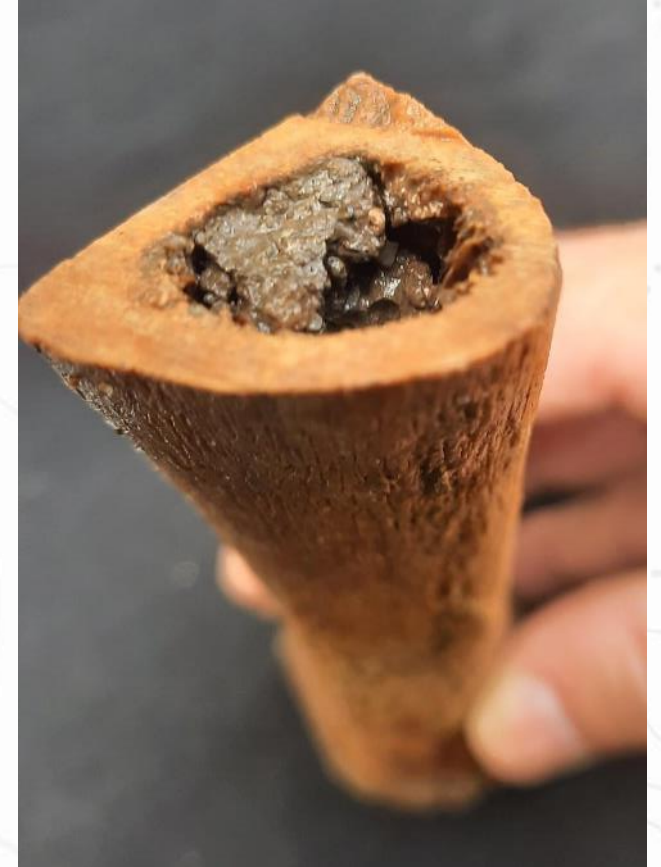
3D Imagery



Skeletal Condition and Associated Artifacts



Skeletal Condition and Associated Artifacts



Pathologies and Morphological Modifications



Evidence for osteoarthritis, degenerative joint disease, enamel hypoplasia (due to malnutrition in youth), dental caries (cavities), and pipe stem notches.

Scientific research on the remains continues

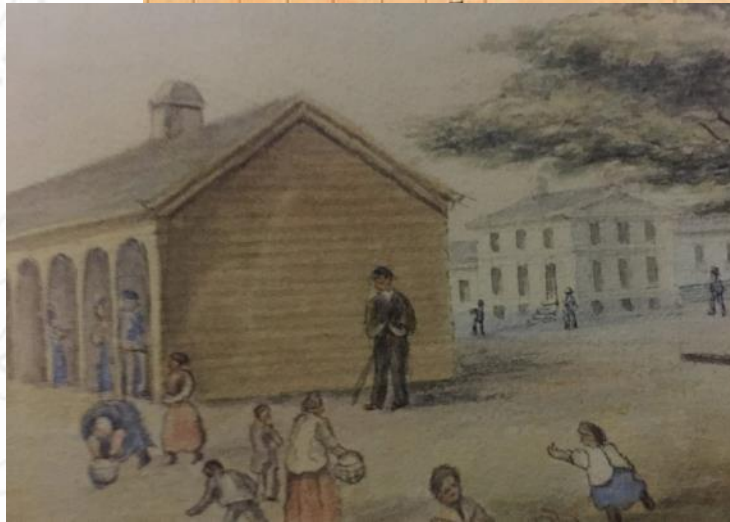
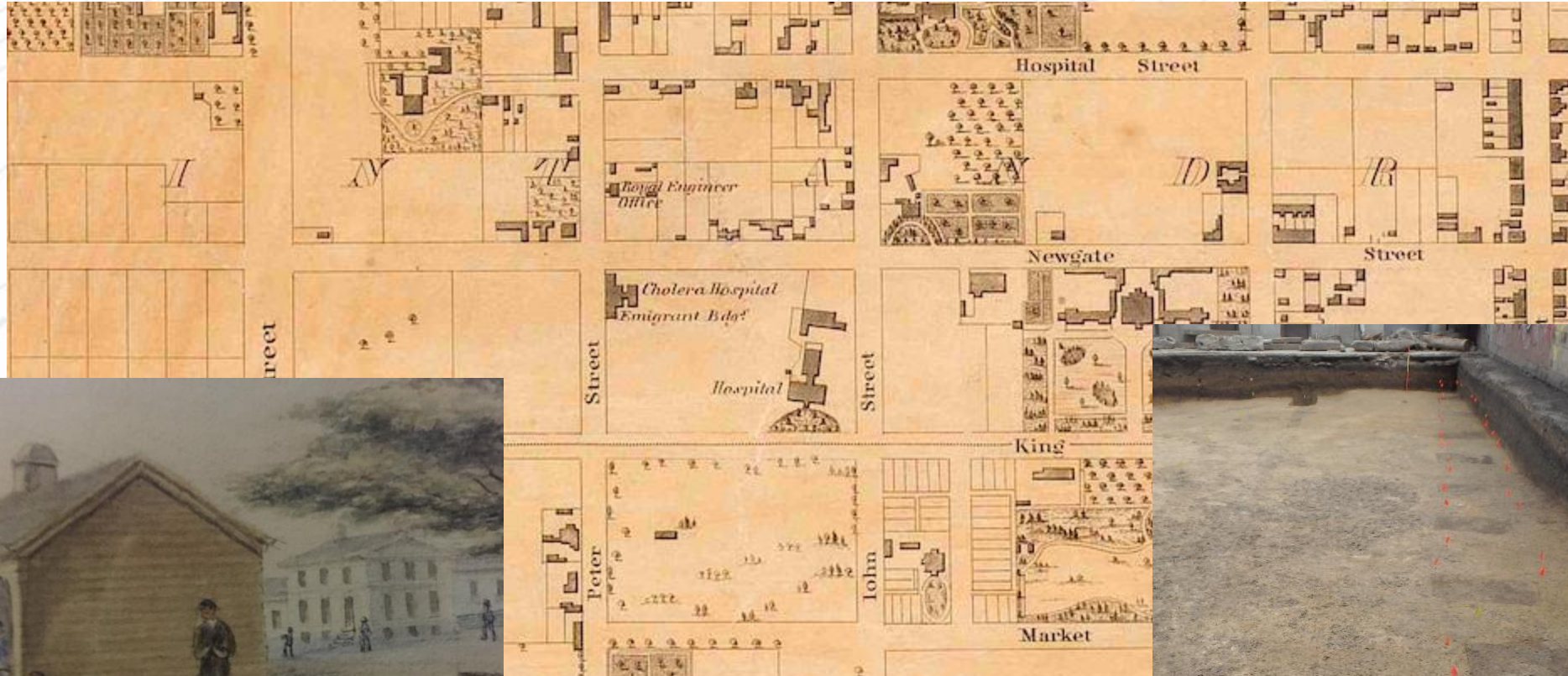


Alexis Rausch, Trent University
stable isotope analysis
diet, geographic origins



Marie-Hélène B-Hardy, McMaster University
ancient DNA analysis
Rickettsia (typhus bacterium) DNA, familial connections

Quarantine and Healthcare in Toronto



Detail of watercolour painting by John Howard (1834) showing one of the wooden emigrant sheds on the waterfront. The hospital fever sheds may have been similar in appearance.



Looking east across a line of post pits for the north wall of a Toronto-Hospital-era fever shed.

Memory and Place in Kingston



THIS PLAQUE MARKS THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE ORIGINAL BURIAL SITE OF AN ESTIMATED 1,400 IRISH FAMINE VICTIMS BURIED HERE IN 1847 AND 1848.

SOME WERE REINTERRED IN ST. MARY'S CEMETERY IN 1966 TO ACCOMMODATE EXPANSION OF THE HOSPITAL. DURING CONSTRUCTION WORK AT EATHERINGTON HALL SOME REMAINS WERE UNEARTHED IN 1990 AND AN UNDERSTANDING WAS REACHED TO HAVE AN ARCHAEOLOGIST ON HAND DURING FUTURE WORK IN THIS IMMEDIATE AREA.

SUAIMHNEAS SIORAI DA N-ANAMNACHA DILSE

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

ERECTED BY KINGSTON GENERAL HOSPITAL
KINGSTON IRISH FAMINE COMMEMORATION ASSOCIATION
AND
KINGSTON IRISH FOLK CLUB

2002

THE TYPHUS EPIDEMIC 1847

Though typhus had been epidemic periodically in Canada since the 1650s, the worst outbreak occurred in the summer of 1847. In that year some 90,000 emigrants embarked for Canada, most of them refugees from the potato famine then ravaging Ireland. Nearly 16,000 died of typhus, either at sea or after their arrival in Canada. Those stricken while passing through Kingston found shelter in makeshift "immigrant sheds" erected near the waterfront. Despite the efforts of local religious and charitable organizations, notably the Sisters of the Religious Hospitaliers of St. Joseph and the ladies of the Female Benevolent Society, some 1,400 immigrants died. Buried near the present general hospital, their remains were re-interred here in 1966.

Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario



KINGSTON GENERAL HOSPITAL ROLE IN TYPHUS EPIDEMIC

In 1847 and 1848 this site became the largest of the city's mass graves for more than 1,400 Irish immigrants who died in fever sheds adjacent to Kingston General Hospital and Emily St., after fleeing "The Great Hunger" in Ireland. This plaque commemorates them and the selfless care givers who died nursing them. In 1966, many remains from this site were re-interred beneath the Angel of Mercy in St. Mary's Cemetery. Others discovered in 1990 now rest in Cataraqui Cemetery. In 1998, a Celtic Monument honouring all who died was raised in "An Gorta Mor" Park. Erected by the Kingston Irish Famine Commemoration Association, with the support of Kingston General Hospital in 1999.

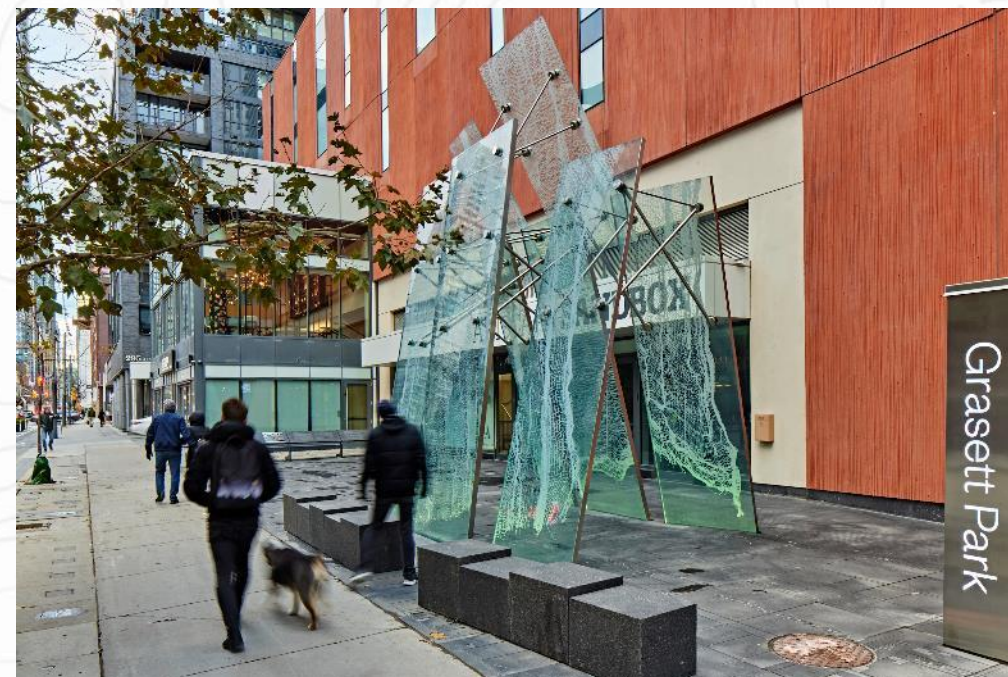
Memory and Place in Toronto



Ireland Park, Eireann Quay, Toronto

1847: Nearly 40,000 Irish immigrants arrived between May and October. Approximately 1,200 died at the emigrant hospital/fever sheds.

Images of Ireland Park and Grasset Park courtesy of the Canada-Ireland Foundation

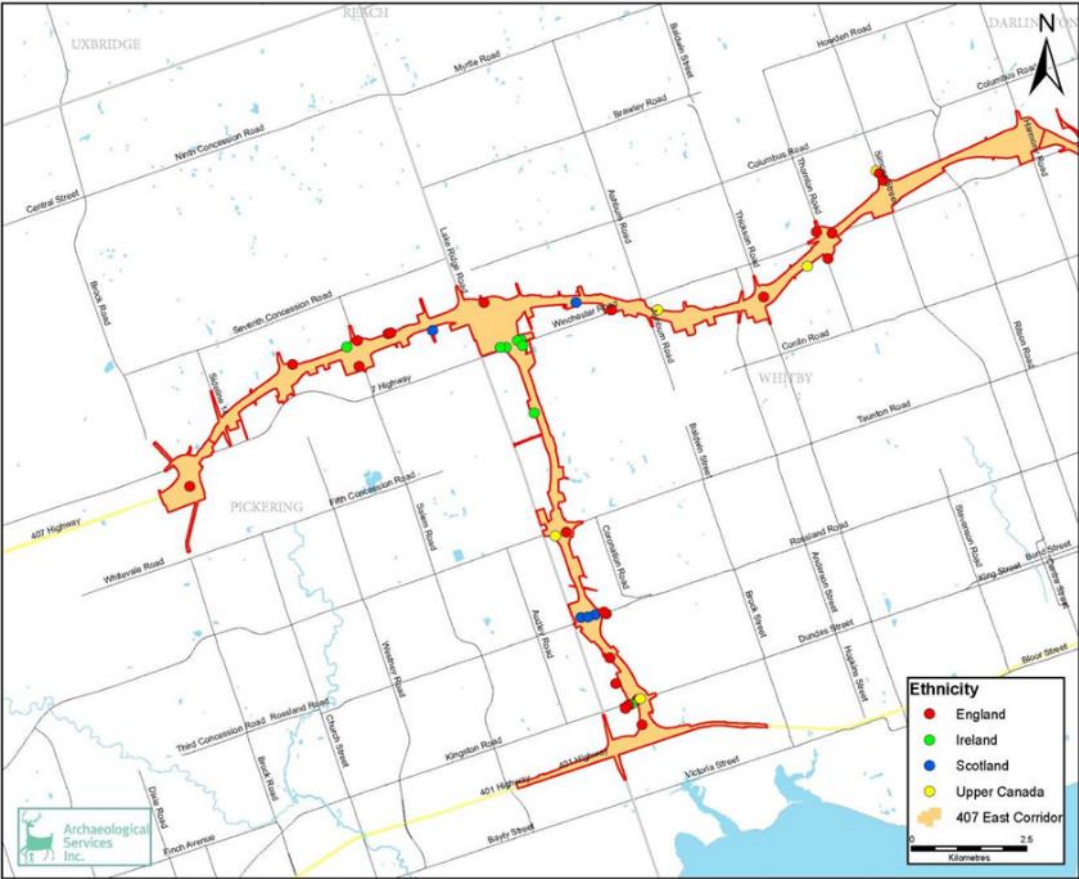


Adelaide Street West and Widmer Street, Toronto



Copper alloy cap badge recovered during the Toronto Hospital excavation

Resilience and Success



Many heartfelt thanks to...

Bioarchaeologist Johanna Kelly, ASI
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Lorna Knight, KHSC Archives
Corcoran Excavating, Kingston
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