

"The Foreign Element," February 8, 1855

The Foreign Element

The reports from the Census Bureau furnish many interesting particulars in regard to the foreign population. As of peculiar interest at this time both to foreign and native born, we publish together the following facts concerning the foreign element as it prevails amongst our population:

The Irish immigration is as yet the largest. The German, which nearly equals it is next. Next comes the English, next the Scotch, next the French, next the Canadian, then the Swiss, then the Sweedish (sic), then the Prussian, after the Dutch, after that the Norwegian, then the West Indian, then the Welsh, and successively the Spanish, Italian, Portugese (sic), Austrian, Russian, Chinese, &c.

The whole number of Immigrants in the Union is 2,244,602. The largest number that ever arrived in one year was in 1752– 372,725. The largest number from any one country in that year was from Ireland, 157,548. The smallest number from any one country was three Turks.

The total immigration is increasing a few thousands every year. The Irish immigration is decreasing. It was largest in 1850, when 117,038 landed in New York alone. The emigration from Protestant countries is diminishing. Leaving Ireland out, the Protestant emigration every year largely exceeds the Catholic.

The Irish settle in the commercial towns, and along the great thoroughfares, chiefly on the Atlantic coast, in New England and the middle States. They become farmers, farm hands, laborers on railways, street, canals, telegraphs; bricklayers, porters, ostlers, boatmen, sailors, and soldiers, and sometimes professional men, seldom merchants, except grocers, and rarely mechanics, unless blacksmiths. The Germans settle most in the country, in Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and the new Territories. They are by a large majority, farmers and farm laborers, though in the towns a considerable portion are machinists, tailors, physicians, cabinet makers, workers in gold silver, iron, brass copper &c., and a small portion merchants. The English settle most in towns or in their neighborhood on cultivated lands. Their avocations are like those of both Irish and Germans. The scotch are found most largely in New England and New York, though scattered widely through all the Northern States; they are merchants, carpenters, brewers, teachers, weavers principally, and have a large portion of clergymen than any other class. The French settle, almost exclusively in cities, and becomes merchants, lawyers, artists, musicians and tailors in greatest proportion. The Welsh go into Pennsylvania, New York, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kentucky and Tennessee, into the woods and mines, they are mostly miners and farmers, and choose generally the roughest and most unpromising looking places to begin at. The Swedes and Norwegians are mainly agricultural in their pursuits. The Swiss become merchants, watchmakers, jewelers, or farmers on pasture lands. The others are very few in number.

As to religion, the Germans are principally Lutherans and Catholics; the Irish Catholics and Presbyterians; the English Episcopalians and methodists; the Scotch, Presbyterians; the French and Canadians, divided between Protestants and Catholics; the Swedes, Norwegians, Prussians; Swiss and Dutch; Lutherans or Calvinists.

The British (sic) census reports show that emigration from the United Kingdom is diminishing. In 1849 it was 299,498. In 1850 it was but 280,037. In 1851 only about 240,037. Emigration statistics are not kept on the continent.

For those who fear we may some day be “crowded out” by foreigners, the fact that the native births in the Union annually number 653,917, or about double the number of immigrants, and that the disproportion every year increases, is full of suggestive consolation.