



## Media Release

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### **Famine Irish in Kingston: Unveiling a forgotten chapter of history**

Uncover the hidden stories of courage and compassion that lie beneath the surface of Kingston's rich history.

On June 3, Dr. Katherine Hull will explore the tragic journey of Irish emigrants during the peak of the Great Famine in 1847 and the heroic efforts of the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph in providing care and support.

During the mid-19th century, Ireland was ravaged by the Great Famine, caused by a devastating potato blight, crop failures and absentee landlords. In their desperate search for survival, thousands of Irish departed for North America.

However, their hopes for a better life were marred by the harsh realities of the journey. Overcrowded ships exposed passengers to deadly typhus, and many arrived in North America either gravely ill or orphaned. The sick and dying were received in Kingston at the "fever sheds" on the waterfront. The Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph cared for these vulnerable individuals and found homes for the many orphans left behind.

A sombre reminder of this tragic period lies in the mass grave near Kingston General Hospital. It is estimated that approximately 1400 typhus victims were laid to rest there, their resting place ultimately impacted by the hospital's expansion over the years. In 2021, Archaeological Services Inc. undertook the task of recovering and documenting the remains. Dr. Hull will talk about that project as well as about the Irish famine, emigrants and the typhus epidemic.

"This event not only serves as an opportunity to learn about a significant yet often overlooked aspect of our shared history, but it also pays tribute to the resilience of the Famine Irish and the compassionate care they received in Kingston," said Anne Hall, Local History and Heritage Librarian at KFPL.

Register for this thought-provoking event online at <https://calendar.kfpl.ca/event/8076241> or call (613) 549-8888.

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