Lincoln and the Irish: The Untold Story of How the Irish Helped Abraham Lincoln Save the Union

by [Niall O'Dowd](https://www.amazon.com/Niall-ODowd/e/B001KIIHDS/ref=dp_byline_cont_ebooks_1)  (Author)

**An unprecedented narrative of the relationship that swung the Civil War.**  
  
  
When Pickett charged at Gettysburg, it was the all-Irish Pennsylvania 69th who held fast while the surrounding regiments broke and ran. And it was Abraham Lincoln who, a year earlier at Malvern Hill, picked up a corner of one of the Irish colors, kissed it, and said, “God bless the Irish flag.”  
  
*Lincoln and the Irish* untangles one of the most fascinating subtexts of the Civil War: Abraham Lincoln’s relationship with the men and women coming to America to escape the Irish famine.  
  
Renowned Irish-American journalist Niall O’Dowd gives unprecedented insight into a relationship that began with mutual disdain. Lincoln saw the Irish as instinctive supporters of the Democratic opposition, while the Irish saw the English landlord class in Lincoln’s Republicans. But that dynamic would evolve, and the Lincoln whose first political actions included intimidating Irish voters at the polls would eventually hire Irish nannies and donate to the Irish famine fund. When he was voted into the White House, Lincoln surrounded himself with Irish staff, much to the chagrin of a senior aide who complained about the Hibernian cabal. And the Irish would repay Lincoln’s faith—their numbers and courage would help swing the Civil War in his favor, and among them would be some of his best generals and staunchest advocates.

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Niall O’Dowd, founder of the Irish Voice newspaper, Irish America magazine and the Irish Central Web site, was feted at a book party for his latest tome, “[Lincoln and the Irish](https://www.amazon.com/Lincoln-Irish-Untold-Helped-Abraham/dp/1510736344?tag=nypost-20),” at a party at the Fitzpartrick Hotel.

New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd, a longtime friend, gave him a good-natured ribbing for his ability to pick a book on an individual who is the second-most written about person in history — second only to Jesus Christ, On The Money reports.

She pointed out that O’Dowd had an uncanny ability to find Irish angles in all events.

“If you thought finding the Irish angle to the Civil War was a stretch, consider these Irish Central headlines: ‘Amazing Tale of the Irish Nun Who Survived the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb’ or ‘Irish Woman Escapes Tsunami’ and ‘Bannon Thinks Trump Could Fall to the 25th Amendment,’ which was drafted by the son of Irish Immigrants.

“Loyalty is the special gift of the Irish, and Niall is the most loyal person I know,” Dowd said. “And I’ve already got the headline for the inevitable Irish Central story on this grand event,” which was being held Wednesday as a snowstorm pelted the city.

“Irish Man Escapes Nor’easter to Attend His Own Book Party.”

O’Dowd’s book recounts how 125,000 Irish fought for the North, compared with 25,000 in the South.

He said most Irish initially had mixed feelings about supporting the Republican Party because many of its leaders were also aligned with the virulently anti-Catholic Know Nothing Party.

Lincoln did not support the Know-Nothing wing and was greatly aided by support from the New York Archbishop John Hughes, nicknamed “Dagger John

**Pope John Paul II visited Ireland when Catholicism was at the height of its power over the Emerald Isle. How different a challenge Pope Francis will face when he visits in the summer of 2018. (NIALL O’DOWD ON IRISHCENTRAL)**

Pope Francis will visit an utterly changed Ireland to that which greeted John Paul II in September 1979. For starters, the Prime Minister (Taoiseach) is gay, the seminaries are empty, mass attendance has plunged and the priests are literally dying off.

John Paul faced none of that.

Francis announced on Wednesday he will [arrive in Ireland on August 25](https://www.irishcentral.com/news/pope-francis-ireland-confirmed) for a two-day visit. In contrast, John Paul’s visit was a triumphal procession with supplicants on bended knees everywhere.

The tone was set within hours of his arrival when one million people gathered in Dublin’s Phoenix Park to pay homage as John Paul said mass. In the course of his three days, [an estimated two million came out](https://www.irishcentral.com/news/irish-echo/i-was-one-among-the-million-who-saw-pope-john-paul-ii-in-phoenix-park-in-1979) to see him out of a total population of 3.4 million.

It was a time when 87 percent of the population attended mass every week. That figure is now 30 percent and much of the attendance are members of migrant groups such as the Poles.

As Ireland prepares for the 2018 Papal Visit of Pope Francis, we remember the anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to Ireland in September 1979.

One of the basic skills for any half decent news reporter is to be able to count the number of people.

I have lost count of the number of occasions when the reported numbers at some event or gathering are way off the mark.

Most times it is a case of exaggeration in an upwards direction.

On this day in 1979, I was standing in [Dublin’s Phoenix Park](https://www.irishcentral.com/news/remembering-pope-john-paul-ii-1979-visit-to-ireland-62563642-237662091) staring intently in an upwards direction.

So were the other 999,999 people around me.

Which is, of course, a ballpark estimate.

But hey, we were all in a park, though I don’t think anybody brought a ball to kick around.

There wouldn’t have been any room.

hould be remembered that in 1979 John Paul was still his full vigorous self.

He would not be shot in St. Peter’s Square until May 1981.

The man was truly blazing a trail that September, across the firmament and the heavens.

But right now he was on a flight path.

The passing over the Phoenix Park was deliberate.

It was a tip of the hat to all who had come to this place.

It was also a piece of inspired showbiz.

Where better for a future saint to first appear but up in the sky?

We didn’t see him of course, just the plane.

But we knew we would be seeing and hearing him soon enough.