

Invisible Immigrants. The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in 19th Century America. By CHARLOTTE ERICKSON. (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1972. Pp. 482. Introduction, illustrations, notes, index. \$17.50.)

Charlotte Erickson is the author of several books, lecturer in economic history at the London School of Economics, and secretary of the British Association for American Studies. In planning her study of British immigration to nineteenth-century America, she has limited herself to English and Scottish families and to the correspondence of twenty-five families; and she has grouped them according to profession or whether they worked in agriculture, industry, or commerce. She has also researched the genealogical backgrounds of these twenty-five families, wherever possible, in the British Isles and in the United States.

From the study of their correspondence in *Invisible Immigrants*, she has been able to analyze their motives for immigration, has traced them in their efforts to find a suitable location, and has studied the factors influencing their social and economic adaptation in the new country. Some letters are moving; all are revealing; and all contain much human interest.

An occasional immigrant wrote letters for publication, obviously to encourage or discourage immigration to the United States. Many wrote for financial help from those at home, and many sent money to help their families in England. Not a few express homesickness and a desire for loved ones to migrate. But the purpose of the majority of letters was a desire to keep in touch. There was great interest in farming expressed in some letters.

Quite a few of these British immigrants spent time in the East before settling west of the mountains. In 1850, roughly 27 percent of the English and Scots settled in Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, or Illinois. Cornishmen and Yorkshiremen, on the other hand, became miners in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan, and, after 1850 the English transferred their interest to the eastern-seaboard states. Gradually the original influx along the Great Lakes fell off.

Why did all these people come? Some left parishes in which opportunities were limited, yet most of these were able to take capital with them. There was resentment about high rent, taxes, and tithes. Some feared becoming day laborers. A great number wanted the satisfaction of independence — being boss on a farm that would provide for their families a living of high enough standard that their children

would not move further west. For malcontents who could no longer endure life in the British Isles, farms provided an outlet. But those who were ambitious to educate their children mainly stayed in the East.

A few immigrants were known on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, the writings of men like Morris Birkbeck on opportunities in America sold well in England. Another immigrant, John Ingles at Evansville, Indiana, had a bureau to forward money to England. He also helped immigrants to collect legacies from the British Isles. Many immigrants already in the states, however, advised those at home to avoid guidebooks and to plan their own trips.

Uncles were often financial "angels" to those overseas. The young often came with in-laws. Quite frequently two or more brothers set out together.

Those immigrants without sufficient money to purchase land often worked for a while in factories, lumber camps, mines, or stone quarries. Those with special trades or skills often earned the money for farms and equipment. Indeed, some found their skills so much in demand that they never farmed.

As for social adaptation, the native-born did not try to make the newcomers conform or to exclude them from employment. The immigrants could be active in local churches or, when becoming citizens, could enter politics. Actually, many of the immigrants were the aloof, exclusive ones, holding themselves a cut above the natives. Women especially resisted adaptation as they had resisted immigration itself. They feared childbirth in these new settlements without female relatives or midwives. Some who had had servants in England now resented doing manual labor. Many settlements were founded by "better-class" English to avoid Americans; there was not much intermarriage in the first generation. In fact, those who adapted best had little or nothing when they arrived and were now "getting ahead" and were really content.

Among the immigrants were some who did attend American churches or took part in politics. It is interesting that the Civil War was a great catalyst in making these British for the first time speak of themselves as Americans.

The bulk of *Invisible Immigrants* is devoted to the human, often sad, often amusing letters of twenty-five families. Charlotte Erickson's book is well worth reading.

Pittsburgh

FLORENCE C. McLAUGHLIN