

Abstract

This paper focuses on those Irish women who were deemed to be unfit mothers in New York, Boston and Toronto in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In examining the experiences of unmarried mothers, this paper will explore attitudes to Irish women who were pregnant on disembarkation from Ireland or who brought children with them to the 'new world', as well as Irish women who became pregnant and gave birth in North America. We will examine other Irish mothers who came to the attention of the authorities for activities that were considered criminal, such as drunkenness and child neglect. Their experiences will be placed in the wider context of the experiences of Irish women emigrants to North America.

Biographies

Dr Elaine Farrell is Senior Lecturer in Irish Social History at Queen's University Belfast. She has published on Irish crime and punishment in the nineteenth century. Her *A most diabolical deed': Infanticide and Irish Society, 1850-1900* (Manchester, 2013) won the National University of Ireland Publication Prize in Irish History (2015). She is CI on the AHRC-funded 'Bad Bridget' project.

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