



GLOBAL IRISH FAMINE Way™

This site is part of the Canadian section of the National and Global Irish Famine Way.

The Global Irish Famine Way extends from the National Famine Way in Ireland to follow the journeys of all the Irish Famine emigrants around the world, including the UK, Canada, the United States, South Africa, and Australia. These evocative and iconic Bronze Shoes and accompanying information that mark the National Famine Way – the Mother Trail, will also now signify each key location on the Global Irish Famine Way.

Starting at the National Famine Museum, which is cared for by the Irish Heritage Trust, the National Famine Way is a 165km trail in Ireland that traces the footsteps of 1,490 tenants from Strokestown, Roscommon, to Dublin in 1847 during the Great Irish Famine. It was to be their last journey on Irish soil and for the two thirds who survived the Coffin Ships - the first on their way to new lives in North America as part of the Irish diaspora.

For further information on both check out:
www.nationalfamineway.ie



#IrishFamineWay
#GlobalIrishFamineWay

Location

Saint-Colomban City Hall, Quebec, Canada

For migrants leaving Ireland in 1847, Canada—and Saint-Colomban in particular—became a favoured destination. Among them were likely some of Strokestown's Missing 1,490 and possibly Coollattin emigrants, many of whom began new lives in this area.

Saint-Colomban was already home to earlier Irish settlers, including Thomas Barrett. On September 6, 1846, his daughter, Mary Barrett Rush, wrote to him from Ardnaglass, Ireland, pleading for help. She and her husband, Michael Rush, along with their three children, were starving. Her letter asked her father to bring them out of Ireland to Saint-Colomban. To hear their story and for other historical information including Surnames list of our Famine Emigrants click on the QR Code below.

Another family, John Phelan and his wife Catherine Murphy, also emigrated to Saint-Colomban in 1847 with their four children, joining John's brother, Patrick Phelan, who was already living there. Tragically, two of their youngest children died shortly after their arrival and are buried in the Saint-Colomban cemetery.

Listen to the story:



French
youtu.be/XzcSF7-J14Q



English
youtu.be/HTbmCARMe_Y



photo: City of Saint-Colomban

Burial Sites

There is a rare and powerful burial site in the Saint-Colomban cemetery that tells the story of Irish Famine migration through the lives of two small children. John Phelan and Catherine Murphy arrived in Saint-Colomban in 1847 with their four children, joining John's brother, Patrick Phelan, who had settled there earlier. Their youngest children, John and Mary, both born in Abbeyleix, County Laois, Ireland, did not survive long after arrival.

John Phelan was born in 1844 and died on September 5, 1847, at the age of 3. His sister, Mary, born in 1845, died just days later on September 17, 1847. Both children were buried in the Saint-Colomban cemetery. Remarkably, their headstone still stands today—a rare surviving memorial and a direct link to the tragedy of the Great Famine. It is in their memory, and in memory of thousands like them, that the Bronze Shoes were installed in front of Saint-Colomban City Hall in an unveiling ceremony held on July 19, 2025.



photo: City of Saint-Colomban

Thank You

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who made the installation of the Bronze Shoes at Saint-Colomban City Hall a meaningful and memorable tribute.

To the National Famine Way and Global Irish Famine Way steering committees, thank you for your vision and guidance in creating this powerful international remembrance project.

To the Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network (CIMPN), your tireless research, dedication, and advocacy brought to light the moving stories of Saint-Colomban's Irish past and helped connect them to this global legacy.

To the City of Saint-Colomban, your generous support, collaboration, and commitment to heritage have made this project possible, and we are deeply grateful for your partnership.

To the Parish of Saint-Colomban, thank you for your cooperation and for honouring the memory of those who came before us. Your presence in this community continues to carry forward the legacy of its early Irish settlers.

We also thank the Montreal Irish Monument Park Foundation, whose broader work in Irish remembrance helped inspire and support this initiative.

Together, we have created a space of reflection, remembrance, and connection—linking the journeys of the Irish from famine to hope, from Ireland to Saint-Colomban, and beyond.

“Dedicated to all those who offer hope through compassion and success through opportunity to the stranger on your shore.”

