



Galway Bay

Mary Pat Kelly

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In a hidden Ireland where fishermen and tenant farmers find solace in their ancient faith, songs, stories, and communal celebrations, young Honora Keeley and Michael Kelly wed and start a family. Because they and their countrymen must sell both their catch and their crops to pay exorbitant rents, potatoes have become their only staple food.

But when blight destroys the potatoes three times in four years, a callous government and uncaring landlords turn a natural disaster into The Great Starvation that will kill one million. Honora and Michael vow their children will live. The family joins two million other Irish refugees--victims saving themselves--in the emigration from Ireland.

Danger and hardship await them in America. Honora, her unconventional sister Máire, and their seven sons help transform Chicago from a frontier town to the "City of the Century." The boys go on to fight in the Civil War and enlist in the cause of Ireland's freedom.

Spanning six generations and filled with joy, sadness, and heroism, GALWAYBAY sheds brilliant light on the ancestors of today's forty-four million Irish Americans--and is a universal story you will never forget.

Galway Bay Details

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Author : Mary Pat Kelly

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From Reader Review Galway Bay for online ebook

Wendi says

Perfect for : Personal reading, book club read

In a nutshell: I was very interested in this story as my husband's side of the family can claim ties to Ireland, and my grandmother immigrated here from Norway (yes, NOT Ireland, but in a way, I feel I can understand what she went through on her journey here a little better after reading this book). I was hoping to learn a little more about the Irish history, and what it was like to travel to America, and I was not disappointed. This is a wonderfully written story that follows the Kelly family. We get a glimpse of life prior to the potato famine, and then we see how the Irish were treated as they were starving and trying to survive.

This is a story of strength and survival that will keep you riveted. I was amazed by what I learned, and found that I was enthralled by this family who refused to give up, and instead traveled to America to start over. Even more amazing, Honora Kelly was actually the author's great-great-grandmother, which gives the story even more of a lasting impact.

Extended Review:

Characters: The characters within the book were wonderfully written and developed. I grew very attached to the members of the Kelly family and found myself amazed at what they were able to accomplish.

Story-Line: I can only imagine the amount of time that the author put into her research. The story is amazing and highly detailed, giving the reader quite a nice glimpse into the history of both Ireland and America in the 1800's.

Readability: The book is long, but will capture your attention and hold it from the first chapter, until the end of the book.

Overall: I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in the Irish immigration to America following the potato famine, and to anyone with Irish ancestors. The strength of the Kelly family, and their will to survive is a wonderful testament. This would also be a wonderful book club read due to the number of things that will spark discussions, although you might want to allow a little more time than normal due to the size of the book.

Alaine says

Sensational Irish Family Saga

Beginning in the Emerald Isle before the potato famine begins, the Kelly family fights for their lives to survive. They are deeply spiritual, (Catholic), devoted to their family and friends. After fighting starvation and horrible political strife from the government, two amazing sisters, Maire and Honora, along with eight children, make their way to Amerikay to New Orleans, up the Mississippi River, to Chicago. Their troubles are not over for them in Chicago. The family encounters prejudice and Civil War. Despite harrowing experiences, they always maintain their Irish pride and resilience. Although fiction, Galway Bay was based on historical facts and true stories passed down from Honora Kelly. I learned so much about Ireland's history

while reading this epic novel. Anyone interested in Irish history or Ireland would enjoy this book. Having traveled to this beautiful country recently, I personally cannot seem to get enough of anything related to Ireland. I highly recommend this lovely novel.

Robin says

I love historical fiction, and picked this up after reading a great review. I highly recommend it to anyone who's Irish, wants to be Irish, has visited Ireland, or can relate to hardship. Basically, everyone. Be forewarned - it is a thick book and can be time-consuming to get through, not to mention emotionally wrenching.

We've all heard about the potato famine, and the lack of respect for the Irish once they got to America, but we really have no idea what it was truly like. That's what's so great about historical fiction - you can lose yourself completely in the struggles of people who come to life in its pages, and helps you understand history in a much more personal and relatable way.

(Thank you, Barry, for turning me on to this genre many years ago with a novel from your own collection about the American Revolution!)

LemonLinda says

From the "before" times in Ireland, tough because of the English system of land ownership, but blissful when compared to the near starvation that came with the blight through to two generations later in "Amerikay" where the family is growing, thriving and succeeding in making a "better" life, this saga is tender and exciting, hopeful and unsettling. But throughout I loved it. I loved the story, the characters, the setting and most of all the knowledge that all of the efforts for Ireland finally did come to fruition, albeit after the novel ends.

We begin in Galway Bay with Honora Keeley on the day of her sister's wedding where she meets by chance the love of her life, Michael Kelly. There is much against their making it together but they do overcome any objections and begin building a life of honest hard work. Soon, however, the potato blight takes them to the brink of starvation and the English landowners finally kick them out forcing the reduced family to make the dreaded journey to Amerikay.

Honora and her sister, Mairee, are strong women and fight for survival and success for their large families in Chicago. We follow them through the joys and despairs of the next 50 years.

This was loosely based on the story handed down from the great-great-grandmother of the author and was well-researched, well-written and so completely captivating. I had recently read another Irish story following much of the same time period. But this one brought another perspective - that of so many Irish who left their country as they were forced to do so but never lost their love of country, culture and a distinctive heritage.

Beth says

Mary Pat Kelly's **GALWAY BAY** is a 551-page story of the Keeley and Kelly families beginning in Ireland in 1839 all the way to their lives in Chicago and their get-together at the Chicago World Fair in 1893. While the book is fiction, it is based on the lives of Mary Pat Kelly's own ancestors and stories told to her by her cousin, Sister Mary Erigina, who lived to be 107. Mary Pat Kelly grew up on these stories told to her by this book's narrator, Honora Keeley Kelly, who really was Mary Pat Kelly's great-great grandmother.

But **GALWAY BAY** isn't just stories of Mary Pat Kelly's ancestors. You want to read this for its accurate historical details that Kelly researched for 35 years in both Ireland and the U.S. It covers so much that I thought I knew but didn't. And the advantage to its being historical fiction rather than a history book is that the reader can feel how people lived through these times.

For example, I learned details about living through the Irish Potato Famine that I never knew before. I was ignorant to think the Potato Famine is capitalized because of a terrible blight that killed the Irish potato crops. That, alone, wouldn't have been enough to send them packing for Canada and the U.S. or to merit capitalization. It was the blight three years in a row combined with English laws that seemed designed to wipe out the Irish and, indeed, did lead to so many deaths they were almost annihilated.

GALWAY BAY is full of many other examples of historical events and people. It might make you want to learn more, especially if you, too, have ancestors who lived through this. That's what I plan.

Betty says

I have ancestors who suffered through the potato famine in Ireland, came to Amerikay and settled in Chicago much like the characters in *Galway Bay*. And my great-grandma was also named Honora as is the main character. (Though great-grandma was born in Vermont, not Ireland.) I had to read this book! I was not disappointed.

Not only was the story of the famine heart-wrenching and fascinating, but so was the early history of Chicago. I grew up in Chicago and the names and places were brought to life in a way I hadn't known before. Marshall Field's, for instance. My great-aunt was a buyer there shortly after the period in the book, and my grandma and mother both worked there, too.

I felt connections and threads to my own family. Something came alive in me that had been hovering in the background all my life. Very moving.

The book is well-written and moves well. I recommend it to anyone interested in historical fiction, but particularly those with an Irish ancestry.

Susan Johnson says

It's amazing what you learn from reading a book. You'd think I learned about the Irish famine, emigration or

even the early settlement of Chicago. I did but the most important thing I learned was when Honora, her sister, and 8 children were making their way from New Orleans to Chicago on a riverboat. They overheard someone saying, "Mark that twain." And suddenly I realized how Samuel Clemens got his name... Mark Twain. Oh, the worlds that open up to you when you read.

The story was actually quite good. It started slowly and I thought it was going to be a gushy romance at first but it finally evolved into a book that was hard to put down. Try it. You'll like it.

Misfit says

"A nation....Can a country of unmarked graves ever be a nation?". Galway Bay begins in 1839 and covers the life of Honora Keeley, first bound for the church, until she by chance meets Michael Kelly as he's rising from the bay after a swim and it's love at first site for both. Despite the odds against them, they manage to marry and find a place to live and farm and do as well as can be expected under the British oppression - that is until the potato blight hits. With the British government insensitive to the needs of the starving, many begin to emigrate to America and the Kellys finally decide to go as well and join Michael's brother Patrick in Chicago.

Once in America Honora and her family first arrive in New Orleans and then make their way to Chicago, able to rise above the bigotry and ignorance against the Irish and build a new life. The family's story then takes them through the Civil War, the Fenian Rising of 1867, the great fire and Chicago's World's Fair (Columbian Exposition).

While it's not a five star book IMO, I really enjoyed this one, especially the first parts in Ireland - the accounts of the Great Famine were horrendous, as well the ignorance and bigotry of the English government as they sat on their hands and watched so many die such horrible deaths. I also enjoyed their early days in Chicago as they struggled to find employment and keep a roof over their heads. My only complaint is the last 75 or so pages tended to drop off and things got pretty slow as the author wrapped it up. I know that the Irish had large families with lots of kids and grandkids, but finally my head was spinning trying to keep track of them all. Perhaps a family tree for the paperback edition would help readers keep them straight? Lastly, there is a lovely glossary in the back listing many of the Irish expressions used in the book and how to pronounce them. Wish I'd known about it when I started the book. 4/5 stars.

Ryan says

Galway Bay relates the story of one woman's journey from childhood to adult, and at the same time from the shores of Galway Bay to Chicago. The time period is 1839 to 1893. Honora Kelly is the main character and the story is told first person through her voice. It is at times a heartbreak tale of loss, starvation, war, and oppression. The Irish potato famine of 1846-49 is recounted in vivid detail as Honora and her family first struggle to survive in Ireland and then struggle to survive just to leave for a new life in America. The English ("Sassenach" in Gaelic) are presented as oppressive as ever in trying to exterminate the Irish through eviction and starvation. All of the Irish grown food (livestock, oats, barley, wheat, etc.) is taken and exported to Britain, leaving the Irish with only the potato ("pratties"). When the blight hits the Irish are devastated. Honora and her family, after much trial and hardship, finally leave for America. Landing in New Orleans and traveling the Mississippi to Chicago. There they find welcome by the Irish community in a Chicago suburb

and manage their way along until the Civil War. Many Irish fought and died on both sides, often times against each other. The book ends with Honora aged and reflective; wondering how she is to pass on Ireland's storied history to her issue. So many have left their homeland and lost their sense of being Irish, but she sees that deep down, there is something there that each clings to that stirs in their identity and makes them Irish. I appreciated the author's willingness to allow Honora to cling steadfastly to her Roman Catholic faith. Honora unabashedly continued to uphold her faith through every trial; even when the Sassenach would give the Irish charity during the famine if they would just convert to Protestantism, Honora and her family continued their faith. During the Civil War, when her children were away and in danger, Honora prayed for them and her other family by making Stations every day of the week, having a Holy Hour in front of the Eucharist every night, and saying Rosaries. All in all, a great story, even if it does tend a little too much toward the romantic at times for my tastes. I love Ireland, being Catholic, and staying true to who you are. This book is about all three.

Lori says

FANTASTIC novel about the Irish people's struggle during the Potato Famine and the amazing strength that led to one families survival!!! Literally could not put this down... from the first to the last page!!! Highly recommend!!!!

JudiAnne says

Honora has been pledged to the Catholic church, to join their order of nuns, when one ordinary day, a tall dark stranger walks out of the sea on the Bay of Galway, and then walks up to her. They know that they are deeply in love at first sight! I know this must sound like a mushy gushy romance novel but it is actually the historical tale of Honara, Michael and their devotion to their children and family. This is a thoroughly researched novel based on the author's great, great grandmother who survived the potato famine and left Ireland with her sister Maire and eight children between them for Amerikay (what they called America). After trying to hold out through the genocide by starvation of the British rule and the combination of the blight of their mainstay food, potatoes, they finally decide to make the journey to a safe place to survive. Little did they know that the road ahead wasn't all that they had dreamed of, but offered such great challenges that they had to show their true strength to survive. They arrived in New Orleans where the weather was warm and there was plenty to eat but Honara was determined to go to Chicago, still a frontier town, where Michael's brother, a union organizer and rebel, had last been seen. They set out on a boat going upriver and arrive on Chicago's outskirts only to find they are not as well received as they had expected to be and their survival in this frontier town depended on extreme fortitude by all of them.

This is a truly great saga of the changing times of family life in Ireland and America. I enjoyed every word, every page and would love to read the sequel if there ever is one!

Books Ring Mah Bell says

About 10 pages in, I nearly set this down and walked away for good. Why?

1. Instant true love as the main character sees a man come out of the water (with a boner, no less, cause she's a hottie)

Love at first sight is pure poppycock. I almost threw the book.

2. All the, "I'm from county so and so, next to county so and so, where this famous person lived after coming from county of so and so".

zzzzzzzzzz.

3. All that Irish! I guess I should have looked upon it as a lesson in a part of my heritage (where else did this passion for Guinness come from?) But I had to keep referencing the translations in the back... and I hate that. At least with Spanish I can understand and keep reading, not having to pause to look up a phrase.

I'm very thankful I kept going. The story was very... enchanting. I think that's the perfect word for it. Enchanting.

Love, heartbreak, adventure, trials, tribulations... it was honestly a very interesting book.

The sweet thing is, it touches on some interesting history - the horrors of the potato famine and the civil war - all from the author's personal family history.

(I can't go back that many generations! Jealous!)

Well worth it if you are into Ireland at all.

Corinne Edwards says

I have never actually used the phrase "tour de force" when describing a book, but I can't think of anything else that defines a work that covers as much ground as *Galway Bay*. We meet Honora Kelley when she's a young woman, the world ahead of her, living in a coastal village on Galway Bay on the western shores of Ireland. The story begins in the "before times," when Ireland is under the harsh hand of the British and the Irish have little to their name beyond the potato to eat and the joy of each other's company. When Honora finds true love and begins her own family, the situation in Ireland becomes frantically desperate.

I hate to give away much of the plot of a book, but I can't NOT tell you that Honora's journey eventually leads her far from the homeland she loves, because the author's depiction of a mid-19th century immigrant experience is one of the elements of this book that makes it so powerful. I can't imagine the amount of research that went into creating such a believable depiction of Chicago during that time period. As someone very familiar with Chicago, it was thrilling to read a history of the city between the lines of a story that I could not put down.

Life was not easy for Honora. I didn't bother to count the number of times that the sheer magnitude of trials Honora went through brought me to tears. I rooted for her, I cried for her and the people she loves. As hard

as her experiences were, though, I felt like she triumphed. Honora's love of her family, her imperfections, her willingness to scrabble forward, whatever the cost, these qualities made her an incredibly sympathetic and realistic protagonist. The Irish love of stories and tales, song and music are a constant thread throughout, woven through the generations and tying them together.

Galway Bay is a glorious yarn, stretching from the hills and beaches of Ireland to the streets of Chicago. For all of its 500+ pages, I wouldn't leave out a one. An Irish-American history that must simply be read to be believed.

Gina Basham says

This book was very well written and researched. The subject matter is fascinating. You can picture yourself in that place at that time. Beautifully descriptive. I have seen documentaries about the great potato famine with description and numbers etc. It is quite different to read it from characters you have gotten to know and see the impact on entire families and villages. I recently read they have finally identified the fungus that caused the blight. I couldn't believe the article came out one day after finishing this book. The mass exodus to America was very distressing. Knowing what they escaped from in Ireland and knowing what hardships they would further endure after the emigration is heartbreaking. To read about the way they were taken advantage of is so unsettling. I've read enough accounts to know what they endured once they got here. I have also read further accounts of Ireland's bid for freedom in later years. A long harsh history of a great and noble people. I would highly recommend this book. It is heart wrenching in parts and lovely in others. You won't regret it.

Challis says

so far this has been disappointing. It seems very juvenile and all the dialog is trite and unreal. It feels like something I would've written in grade school or jr. high.

the story isn't very interesting and not at all believable yet. the characters aren't exactly lovable, they aren't unlikeable, but I'm not fond of them yet. They seem very 2 dimensional.

I usually feel quite compelled to get into & finish a book when I start, but I started this one on Friday and have only picked it up again once since then. Don't really care about what happens. Maybe this will be one of the rare times I don't finish a book. We'll see....

on pg 145 now. The story has gotten more interesting now that they're all starving and beginning to fight the Brits. The characters are still undeveloped and I don't feel an attachment to them yet.

One frustrating thing the author does is totally skip details. She'll rev you up about some big thing that is going to happen, and then just say, "it happened" without describing it. The horse race probably had the best description of anything that has gone on so far and it has covered 7 years in the book. I think the horse race took 2 pages. She seems to drag out unimportant, boring things like get-togethers and parties, and skim over exciting and important things like fights, protests, starvation, relationships etc.

The book started to get more exciting and devastating and I ended up really liking it. I especially liked that it was based on history, a true family, a real woman and her progeny. I think that's my favorite part about the whole thing. Makes me want to write similar books about my own ancestors. The amazing, horrible things they went through, the strength and courage, the resiliency and gratitude they showed. We could learn so much from them. lately I've felt bad that I've had to feed my kids Ramen noodles every day for lunch because we've been going through 'hard' times. These people went 3 years living on bark and grass and

anything they could find starving all the while, being pregnant, trying to nurse etc. When have any of us actually had to go barefoot through any season, especially winter! It was an inspiring story. The thing that stood out to me was that their lives and deaths were not wasted because of the family line that continued on.

Juliet Doubledee says

Couldn't have finished **Galway Bay** at a better time, St. Patrick's Day. This book was so much more than I had expected, and gave me a good feeling for what the Irish went through during the Potato Famine, and what led many to emigrate to America.

Written in a first person perspective by Honore Keeley Kelly, this book tells the story of a young woman who evolves from a school girl (who had aspirations of becoming a nun) into a strong woman who will do whatever needed to help her family survive the Potato Famine, emigration to America, and participating in the U.S. Civil War. Set in the mid 1800s in the village of Bearn, off Galway Bay, Honore and her family must deal from day-to-day with the social bias' that they as Irish Catholics are considered the underclass by the landowning Anglo-Irish gentry, and little more than pack animals. Catholics made up 80% of the population during this period, the bulk of whom lived in conditions of poverty and insecurity not allowed to own land, thus forced to rent homes from the land owners. The majority of their yearly income went towards this rent, and at anytime they could be evicted (rent paid or not). Honore's family brought in much of their income from fishing the bay and selling the catch in Galway City. Since most the profit went towards rent, they depended on the potatoes they grew on the side to sustain their family. Others in the village tended the crops of grain that are grown on the Anglo-Irish gentries land. They also lived on potatoes they grew at home, because they couldn't afford to buy the Anglo-Irish owned grain at market price. This system enslaved the people of Ireland to depend on the potato for daily nutrition.

The book begins in June 1839, the day of Honore's older sister Maire's wedding; she has just been accepted into the first Catholic Convent to be established in 200 years in Galway City, and is unsure about her future. As she walks along the beach near her home looking out onto Galway Bay her eyes are drawn to a dark object bobbing in the waves. At first she thinks it is only a seal, but as the object gets closer she realizes that it is a person. Rushing to the shore to see if she can assist if this person is drowning, Honore comes face-to-face with Michael Kelly, and instantly the two are drawn to each other. Honore realizes at that moment that she will not be joining the convent but instead her life will be with this handsome, dark haired young man with the sparkly blue eyes.

The book then takes off describing the trials and tribulations of the young couple; from introducing Michael to her family, getting her parents to understand she no longer wants to join the church, and finally assuring them that he will be able to support her as his wife. Michael is not a fisherman, like her father, brothers, new brother-in-law Johnny, or any of the other men she knows. Instead Michael has been raised to be a blacksmith, and aspires to compete in the yearly Galway Races on a mare he has raised himself named Champion. In the end he does enter the race after being sponsored by the Honorable Marcus Lynch (who rents to Honore's family), and against the odds wins. The prize money is set aside to rent a parcel of land (to be divided between farming, raising horses, and trying to set up a forge for blacksmithing) which the couple will live on after marrying. From the beginning of their marriage though they are harassed by a cruel land owner, Major Pyke, who feels it his right to abuse the tenants. Also, there is friction with the local priest, as he is unwilling to release Maire from her marriage vows when her husband Johnnie is lost in a freak storm at sea, because the body was never found. This leads to much trauma for the widow, and for Honore.

By 1845 the couple have built on their dreams with fertile land that Michael's half-brother Patrick has taught them to farm, a thriving horse breeding business, and three children. One evening just before the harvest season begins they see a strange fog hovering above their potato crop and smell the putrid stench of rot. They find most all the spuds are now balls of black mush infected with an unknown fungus. This marks the beginning of *the famine*. With the blight wiping out the potato crop many who have grown dependent on this food source begin to die. The landlords and the British rulers do not care and attempts to help are mired down in bureaucracy and are ineffectual. It is estimated that over 1 million people die (20-25% of the population) during the famine which ran from 1845-1852.

Honora watches her children starve, her neighbors die, miscarries a baby because of malnutrition, and begins to search for a means of escape so she and her family will not perish. After praying year after year for a good season of potatoes, and only a forth of the crop being edible, it's decided in order to survive they must join the millions who are booking passage to America. The voyage is dangerous and many die of *the fever* before they even reach North America. But some make it and they send back the means for the next ones to escape. An entire race of people, trying to rescue each other.

In many places in the book you can't help but feel touched as you hear of the agony these people went through and how heartless their government was. To them America represented a new beginning and something to give them hope for.

Unfortunately, for many upon arrival during this time period they were exposed to America's problem, *the slave issue*, and the Civil War. In some cases families who had been separated during travel found themselves on opposite sides of the issue, and brother was forced to fight brother.

So much was discussed in this book, and when I finally reached the end to realize it was roughly based on the authors family history (Honore was in fact the author May Kay Kelly's great-great-grandmother) it touched me even more. I strongly recommend this book to those who love history, and those who enjoy a touching love story!

Vikki says

I saw Mary Pat Kelly at the Kansas City Irish Fest in August, 2013 talking about *Galway Bay*. I knew it was a book I wanted to read. It is the story of Honora Keeley Kelly born in 1822 in Galway Bay, Ireland. Honora is Mary Pat Kelly's great-great grandmother.

Reading this book was a very pleasant way to learn more about the history of Ireland. Pleasant for me sitting reading about it from my comfortable reading chair. But it was horrible reading about the starvation that occurred in Ireland beginning in 1843. This account told of how the potato crop was fine, green and healthy one day. Then in the night a sticky, smelly fog came (different from other fogs) and turned the potatoes black. I also did not know that one of the final stages of starvation is a fur growing on the face.

It was a beautiful story of many generations of the Kelly and Keeley families. It told of their many struggles but many great times too. I highly recommend this book.

Carey says

At sunrise on June 23, 1839, her sister Maire's wedding day, Honora Keeley stands on the Silver Strand of

Galway Bay and gazes out. The Bay is her home and her family's livelihood since her father is a fisherman in the village of Bearna. She is sixteen years old and pledged to the church. She will join the convent as a novice nun in a few months, a great honor to so poor an Irish family as the Keeleys.

But that morning will change the course of Honora's life. Out of the sea, fresh from an early swim, walks a beautiful young man, tall, dark haired. Michael Kelly. Within the space of an hour there is no going back, fate has brought them together and they are determined to be married.

There are obstacles. Michael is not a fisherman, has no land or money. But, despite the problems, they are wed and they are happy. Maire is not, she is quickly widowed and then is forced to become a servant to a tyrant landlord. She is the one bleak spot in the otherwise happy life of the Kellys. They have a small farm at the top of a hill overlooking the Bay and, though the work is hard and the rent high, they manage to feed their growing family and find joy together.

"I was used to the give-and-take of a large family, where one broke in on the other, splintering sentences, bouncing thought away from meaning. But Michael and I listened to each other, each waiting as the other found words for what we'd never said before, never even thought before, giving shape to dreams and to fears. I'd no idea I was such a worrier - the ifs and buts that flowed out of me. Michael teased them away."

And then the unthinkable happens. In 1845 the potato harvest, the staple of the Irish peasant diet, is blighted and rots in the ground. The hunger and suffering that winter is terrible. When the potato crop fails two out of the following three years, the result is millions of deaths. The landlords and the British rulers do not care and attempts to help are mired down in bureaucracy and are ineffectual.

Honora watches her children starve, her neighbors die, and she dreams of finding the means to escape, to buy passage to another place where her family can live and grow: America. She is far from the only one, the ships are filled with Irish immigrants trying to find a better life. The voyage is dangerous and many die before they even reach North America. But some make it and they send back the means for the next one to escape. An entire race of people, trying to rescue each other.

She does escape, with her family and Maire's. Not without losses and terrible grief, but Honora has strength of spirit, strength of character, strength of will to sustain her loved ones and find a place where they can prosper.

All great historical fiction is rooted in fact and Galway Bay is no exception. Mary Pat Kelly is the great-great-granddaughter of Honora Keeley Kelly. The author has followed the great Irish storytelling tradition and created this fictionalized account of her own ancestors, an epic saga of one family's journey through one of the darkest hours in human history. It is a story of faith, of family lore and ancient tales, of great suffering and the triumph of the human spirit.

I am, as so many Americans must be today, part Irish. This book brings home the terrible destruction of the Great Hunger in a way that has never been clear to me before. Because it is personal story, one family's struggle that could be any family from that place and that time. Fiction, maybe, but with the weight of truth behind it.

Joni says

This book chronicles the life of an Irish woman who marries, survives the great famine, moves to America and settles in Chicago. I learned a great deal about the potato famine from this book.

Chrissie says

Too cute for my tastes. Maybe I have read enough about the Irish Famine. Not much depth, rather a summary of prominent events from the Irish Potato Famine 1845-1848, subsequent emigration to America, travel from New Orleans to Chicago up the Mississippi, life in Chicago in the latter 1800s, the Irish Brigade and the role it played in the Civil War, the fire and the Fair of Chicago. Indians too. And blizzards. Everything that should be mentioned is mentioned. Maybe that is the problem - there is nothing unpredictable. Half of the book is set in Ireland and half in Chicago. The book is fiction, but based on the author's great-great-grandmother's life.

I think most people who love historical fiction will enjoy this. Maybe I wasn't in the mood.....
