

# The Irish Potato Famine

The Great Famine – also known as the Great Hunger or the Irish Potato Famine – was a period between 1845 and 1852 in which mass starvation, disease and emigration in Ireland occurred.

About two-fifths of the population was solely reliant on the potato for a number of reasons. The proximate cause of the famine was potato blight. During the famine, about one million people died and a million more emigrated from Ireland, causing the island's population to fall by between 20 to 25 percent.

According to *Wikipedia*, the famine was a watershed in the history of Ireland, which was then part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The famine and its effects permanently changed the island's demographic, political and cultural landscape.

John Bloomfield, the owner of Castle Caldwell in County Fermanagh, was working on the recovery of his estate when he noticed that the exteriors of his tenant farmers' small cottages had a vivid white finish. He was informed that there was a clay deposit on his property of unusually fine quality.

Bloomfield, an amateur mineralogist, ordered a geological survey of his land and found that the area was rich in minerals.



To generate revenue and provide employment for his tenants on his estate, he built a pottery at the village of Belleek in 1857. The unusually fine clay yielded a porcelain china that was translucent with a glass-like finish. It was worked into traditional Irish designs, and was an immediate success.

*Belleek*

By 1865, the prestige of the company had increased enough that its market had grown into Australia, Canada, England, Ireland and the United States, and its customers included the Prince of Wales, Queen Victoria and the nobility.

Today, Belleek's, with its delicate strength and its iridescent, pearlized glaze, is enthusiastically purchased the world over. The multimillion-dollar industry arose from innovative thinking during some very anxious times.



That story contains at least a couple of lessons:

1. Opportunity may present itself at any time – even in circumstances of distress or adversity.
2. Success may be right under our noses; we just need to recognize the possibilities.

*May He grant you according to your heart's desire, and fulfill all your purpose (Psalm 20:4 NKJV).*

– Beecher Hunter