



# Coffin Ship: The Great Irish Famine: The Wreck of the Brig St. John

*William Henry*

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When the brig finally split in two, the remaining immigrants were swept into the sea, grasping for any debris that still remained afloat. Although the American coast lay less than a mile away, it did not offer salvation for most of the men, women and children. The Great Famine drove huge numbers to leave Ireland and pursue new lives in foreign lands. In 1847, some 200,000 people sailed for Boston alone. Of this number, around 2,000 people never made it to their destination, killed by disease and hunger during their voyages, their remains consigned to a watery grave. Others survived the crossing, only to be lost within sight of the New World. The sinking of the brig St. John off the coast of Massachusetts in October 1849, was one of many tragic events to occur during the mass exodus. The ship had sailed from Galway, loaded with passengers desperate to escape the effects of famine. In this new book on the sinking and the events preceding it, historian William Henry brings to life the story of the St. John, its passengers and its ignoble captain who abandoned them to their fate.

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