

Dunbrody Famine Ship

The History of the Famous 'Coffin Ship'



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The History of the Dunbrody



- The original Dunbrody ship was built in Quebec, Canada, in the year 1845.
- She was commissioned by 'William Graves & Son' who were a merchant family from New Ross, Wexford.
- She was built by Thomas Hamilton Oliver who was an expert shipwright and an Irish emigrant from County Derry.
- Her first captain was Captain John Baldwin who supervised her during the six months it took to build her. He captained her from 1845 to 1848.

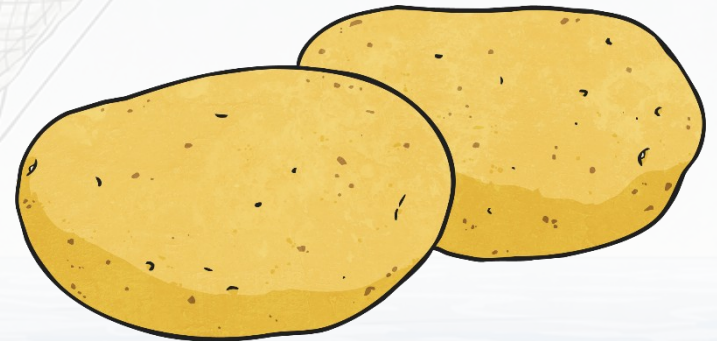
The History of the Dunbrody

- The ship was designed and built as a cargo vessel and had been intended to sail with different items to different parts of the world.
- It was going to bring timber from Canada, guano from Peru and cotton from the southern states of the U.S.A.



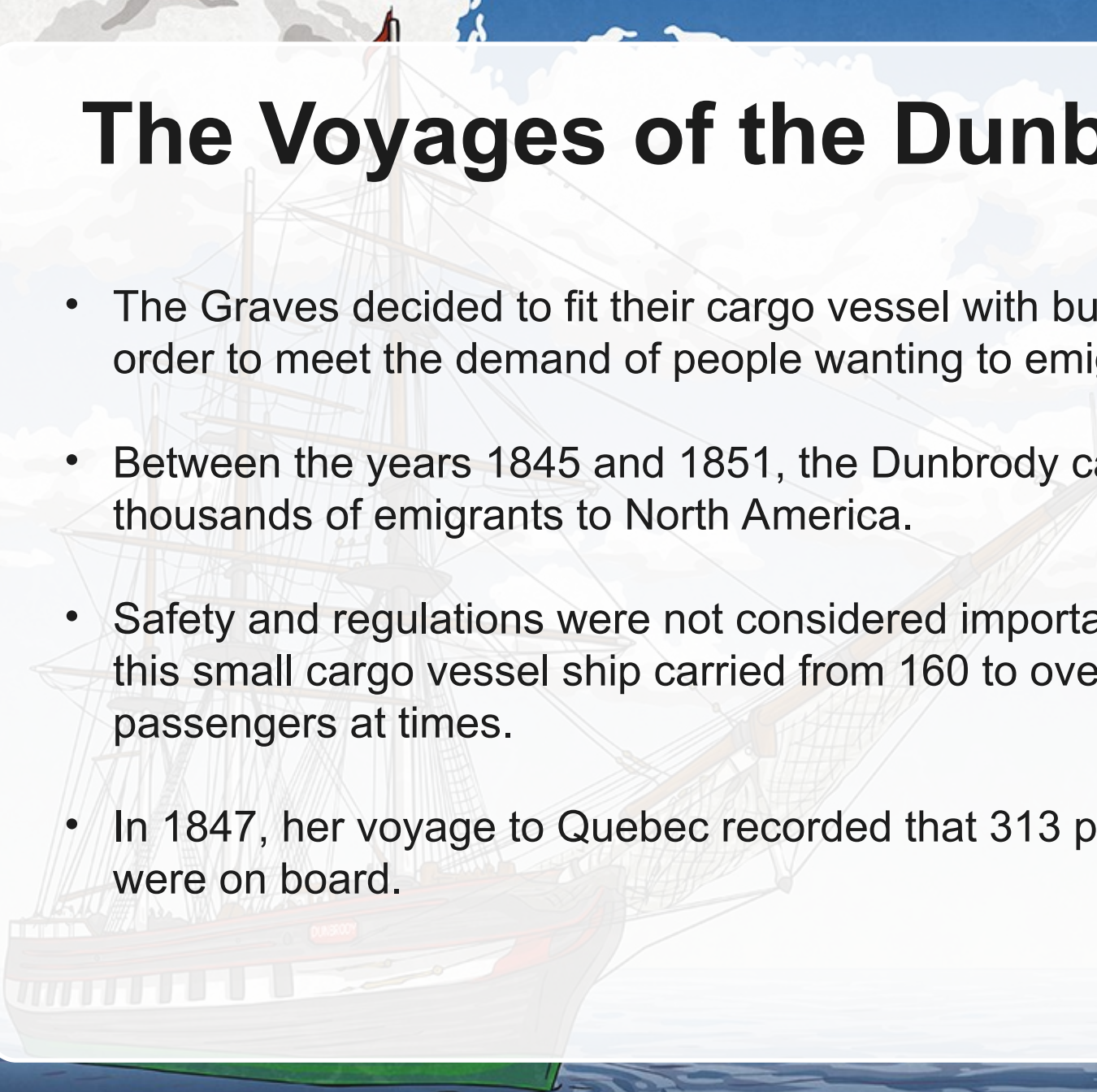
Famine Struck

- The year of the launch of the Dunbrody in 1845, was in fact the year that the famine struck.
- The potato was the main source of food in Ireland and with this hugely important crop failing, it meant that millions of people would be forced to emigrate to avoid starvation, disease and other effects of the famine.
- Many people began emigrating and there was a shortage of passenger ships as a result.



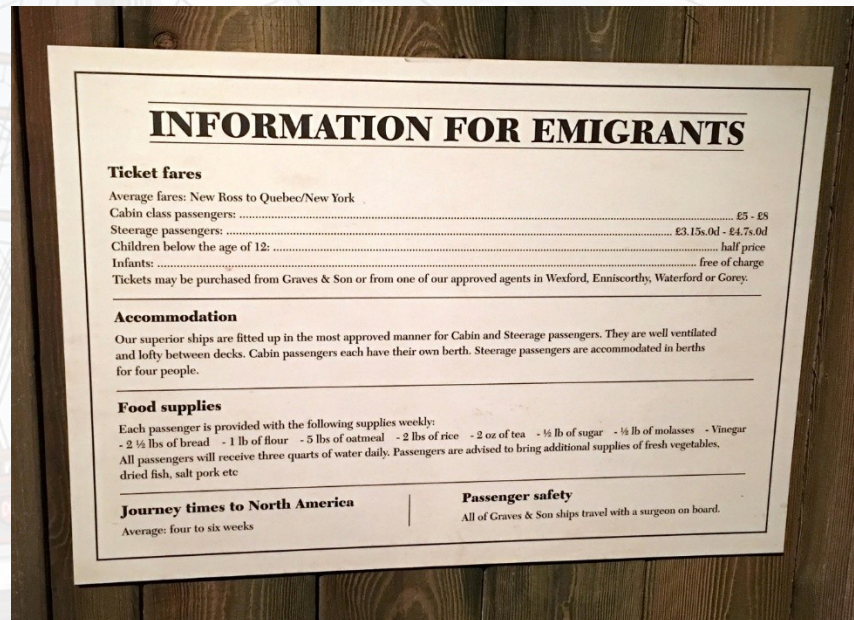
The Voyages of the Dunbrody

- The Graves decided to fit their cargo vessel with bunk beds in order to meet the demand of people wanting to emigrate.
- Between the years 1845 and 1851, the Dunbrody carried thousands of emigrants to North America.
- Safety and regulations were not considered important and so this small cargo vessel ship carried from 160 to over 300 passengers at times.
- In 1847, her voyage to Quebec recorded that 313 passengers were on board.



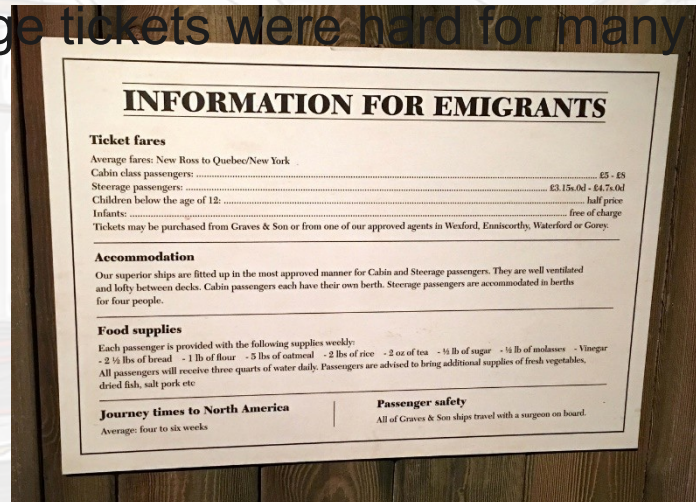
Ticket Prices

- The Dunbrody had two types of passengers that it carried.
- The first were cabin passengers. The cost of a ticket for these passengers was between £5 and £8. They had a substantial amount of food available and other services were provided for them.



Ticket Prices

- The second type of passengers on board were steerage passengers.
- The cost of their ticket was between £3 and £4. They did not get the same food and services as cabin passengers, and had to fend for themselves.
- The average farm labourer would only make about £1 a month so even the steerage tickets were hard for many people to buy.



On Board the Ships

- The journey for the brave and desperate passengers lasted up to six weeks across the dangerous Atlantic Ocean.
- Packed together with very little room, the steerage passengers rarely saw daylight. They were only allowed to come up on deck in small groups, for about one hour a day, to cook.
- If the journey was very rough due to storms, they would remain downstairs to survive on rations.



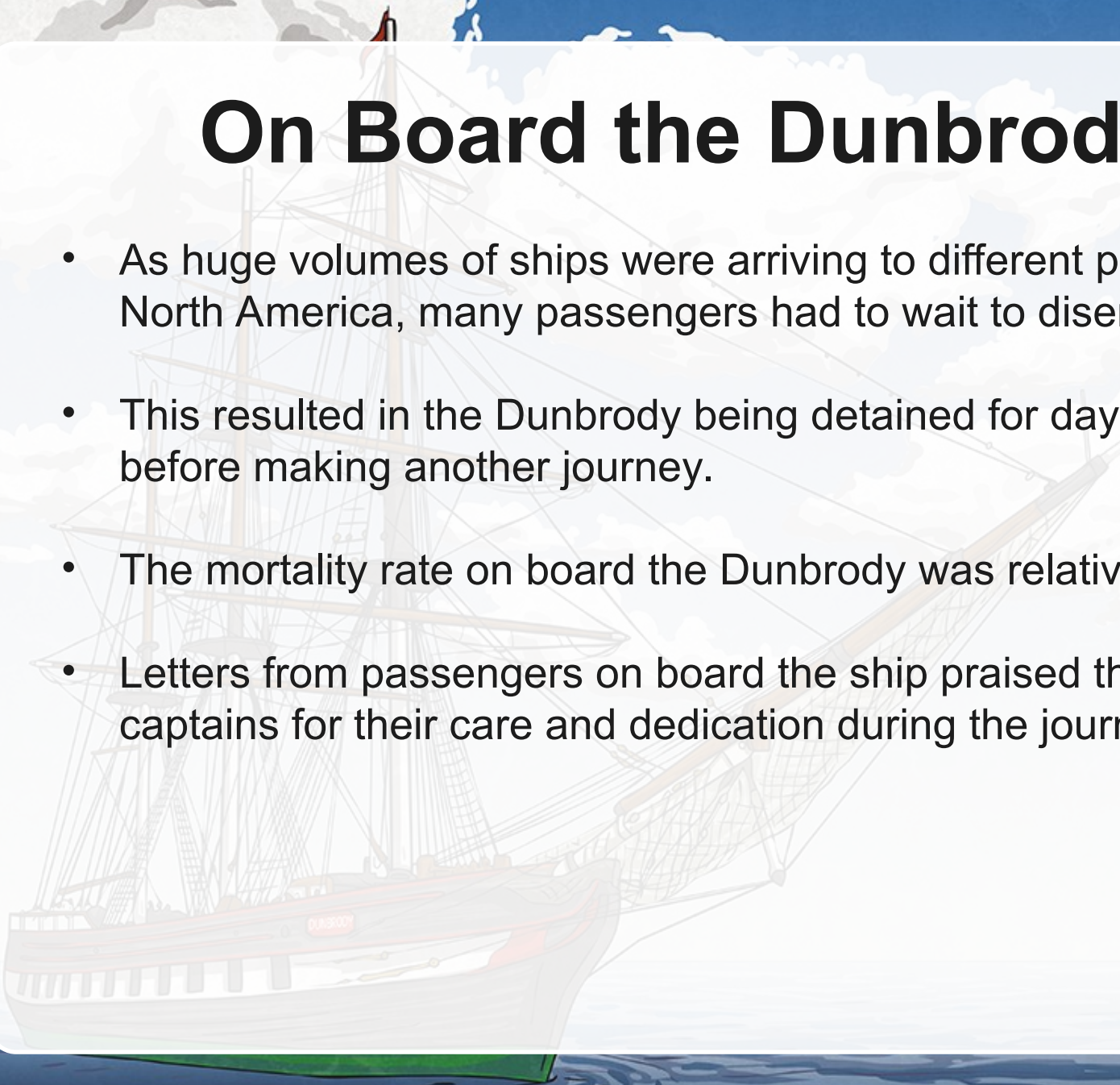
On Board the Ships

- Due to the huge volume of passengers on board these ships, hygiene was extremely poor.
- Buckets were used as toilets and the passengers would use sea water to wash.
- Many diseases spread such as cholera and typhus which caused many people to die.
- Some journeys would see up to 50% of the passengers dying and their bodies were buried at sea.
- As a result these ships became known as 'coffin ships'.



On Board the Dunbrody

- As huge volumes of ships were arriving to different parts of North America, many passengers had to wait to disembark.
- This resulted in the Dunbrody being detained for days on end before making another journey.
- The mortality rate on board the Dunbrody was relatively low.
- Letters from passengers on board the ship praised their captains for their care and dedication during the journeys.



On Board the Dunbrody



On Board the Dunbrody



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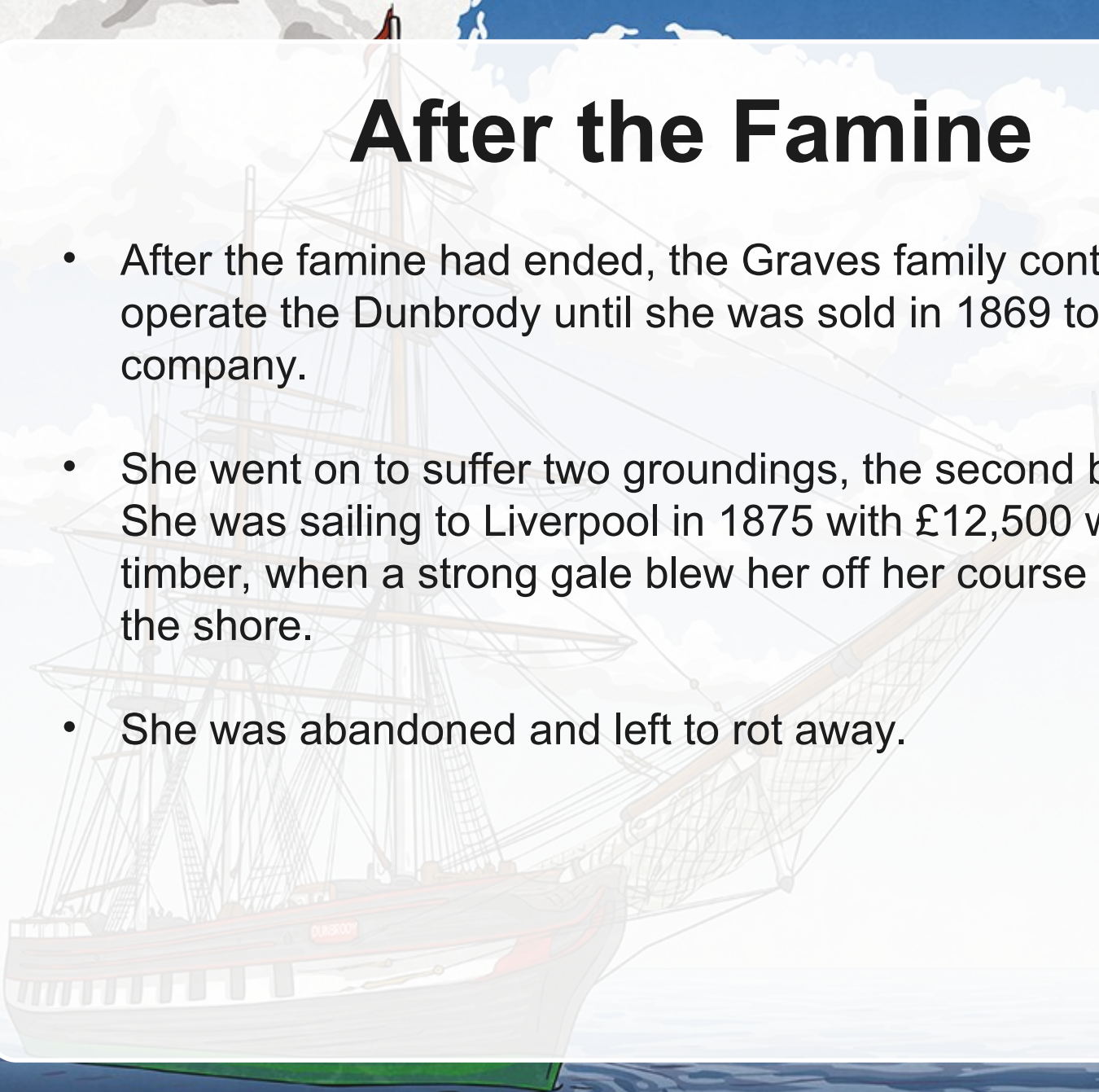


On Board the Dunbrody



After the Famine

- After the famine had ended, the Graves family continued to operate the Dunbrody until she was sold in 1869 to another company.
- She went on to suffer two groundings, the second being fatal. She was sailing to Liverpool in 1875 with £12,500 worth of timber, when a strong gale blew her off her course and onto the shore.
- She was abandoned and left to rot away.



Dunbrody Famine Ship Tourist Attraction

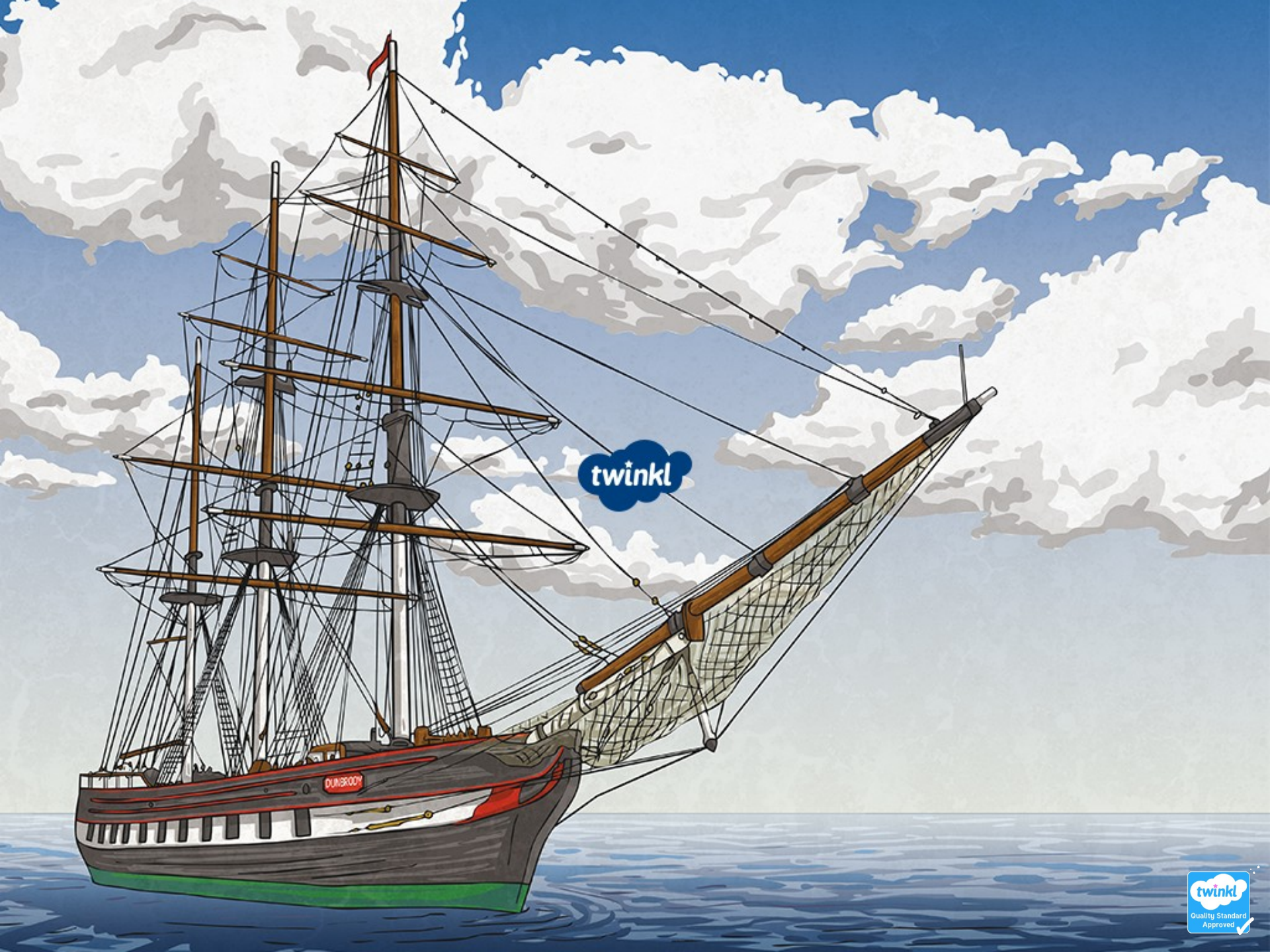
- In the year 1996, the JFK Trust began the construction of a replica ship. Plans were drawn of the original ship and construction began.
- This attracted many tourists, interested in seeing the construction of this well-known famine ship.



Dunbrody Famine Ship Tourist Attraction

- In February 2001, the ship was ready to launch.
- Tourists can visit this wonderful attraction to board the ship and learn about what it was like for the passengers many years ago.





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