

For over a century before Cromwell came to Ireland, Ballybrack in the County of Dublin belonged to the Goodman family. Although they were Catholics, they were first class brigands and plunderers. They were given a large expanse of land in Loughlinstown on the borders of the Pale on condition that they kept it out of the hands of the wild Irish tribes of O'Byrne and O'Toole - that is to say the native Irish who were the rightful owners of this land for some thousand years.⁽¹⁾

James Goodman is the first member of the family to appear in the records, and he may well have been the first member of the family to come to Ireland to impose the will of the English on the native population. By 1541 he had become Sheriff of the County Dublin, a job of considerable standing in the County. People like James were expected to maintain a buffer region outside the Pale and they would get short shrift from the citizens of Dublin if they failed to defend their holdings and left the capital city exposed to the vengeance-seeking Irish from the hills. James was sufficiently ambitious to accept a grant of further land in Castlekevyn in County Wicklow and surrounded by the native Irish. With the Government's consent he gave up his job as Sheriff and took up fulltime residence in his new holding.⁽²⁾

According to the records both himself and his wife, Margaret Hyke, were granted a pardon in 1549. It is not clear what crime they had committed, but it is not unlikely that their main fault is that they were Catholics.⁽³⁾ From the Reformation on the Catholic colonists began to fall out of favour with the English monarchy one of whose aims, after all, was to stamp out the old faith. Nevertheless the King was depending on the "Old English", as these Catholic colonists were called, to keep down the Irish tribes, defend the capital city and see that the Royal writ ran as far as possible throughout the Irish countryside.

