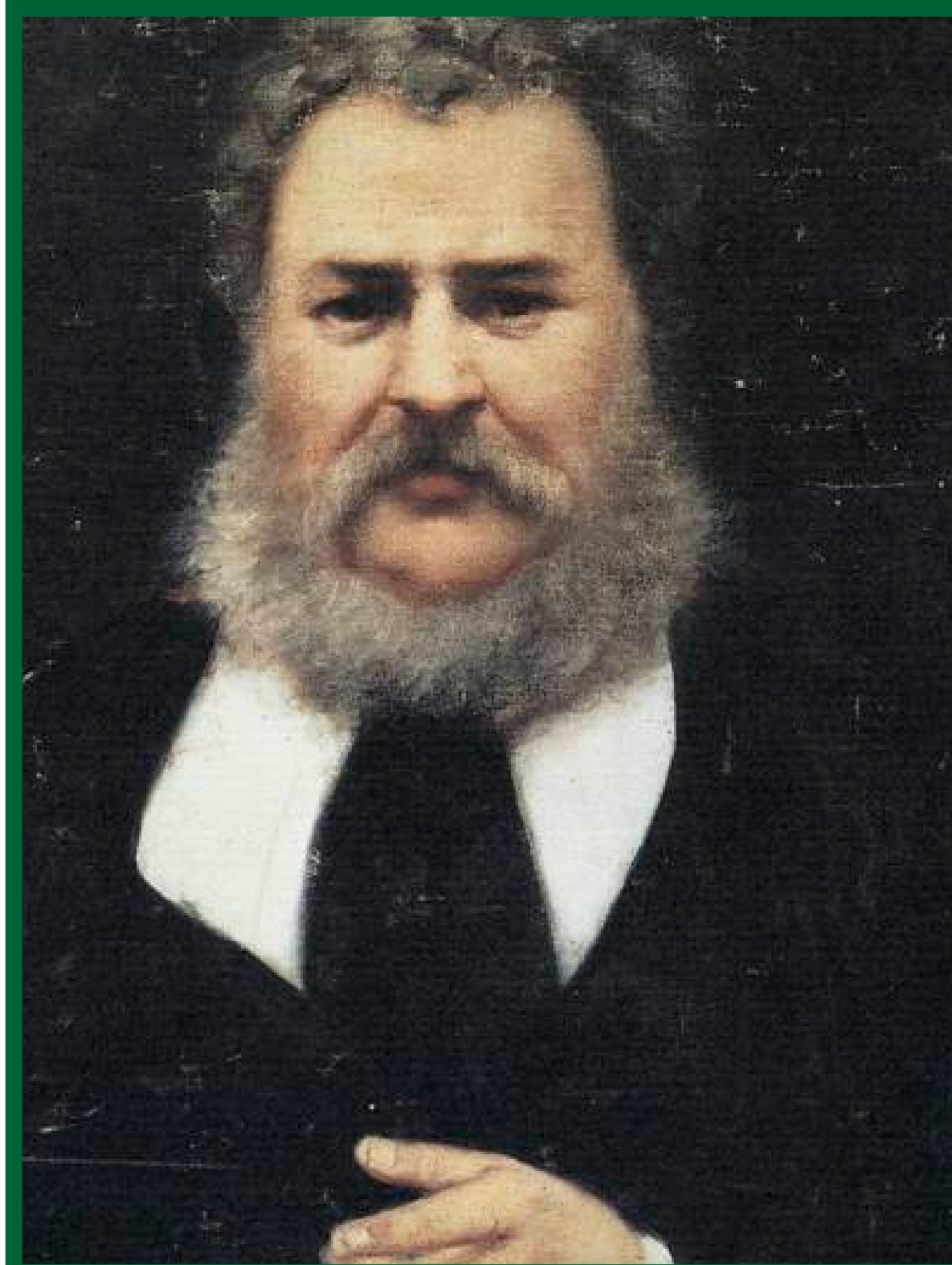


CARLO GATTI

1817-1878

Swiss-Italian
entrepreneur



About

This pack contains a short profile of the Swiss-Italian entrepreneur Carlo Gatti (1817-1878). An immigrant in Victorian London, Gatti introduced hot chocolate and ice cream to the masses.

The contents of this pack look at the following themes:

- Life in Islington
- Victorian Life
- The Industrial Revolution
- Immigration and migration

This pack is part of Islington Heritage Service's digital schools offer, which includes a range of profiles of fascinating and inspiring historical and contemporary with links to Islington.

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Curriculum links

Gatti's story and the sources included in this pack supplement learning around the following curriculum subjects:

KS 1 History:

- changes within living memory
- significant people in their own locality

KS 2 History:

- a local history study
- a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066

KS 2 Geography:

- human geography, including types of settlement and land use, economic activity, trade links, and the distribution of natural resources such as energy, food, minerals and water

KS 3 History:

- ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain 1745–1901
- challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day
- a local history study
- at least one study of a significant society or issue in world history and its interconnections with other world developments

GCSE:

- OCR GCSE History: Explaining the Modern World J410
 - Migration to Britain c.1000 to c.2010
 - The Impact of Empire on Britain 1688–c.1730 with Urban Environments: Patterns of Migration

AS and A Level:

- AQA History: Industrialisation and the people: Britain, c1783–1885

This pack is designed to flexibly support learners from Key Stage 1 to A-level. As such, not all content will be suitable for your age group. Feel free to pick and choose the resources most relevant to your learners.

Early life

Carlo Gatti was born in 1817 in the Italian speaking region of Switzerland called Ticino. After a severe beating from his school master he left his childhood home to join his father and brothers, who lived in Paris. The young Gatti walked the 600-mile journey with a group of walnut sellers.

While in Paris, Gatti worked with his brothers in the family business. He was not very successful and eventually left the business in his early twenties. He married his first wife Maria Marioni in 1839 at the age of 22. They had three children together.

The first record of Gatti appearing in London was in 1847, when he was 30-years-old. He may have arrived alone, but his wife and three children, Stephano, Maria and Rosa, eventually joined him.



Carlo Gatti (1817-1878)
(Image: courtesy the Canal Museum)

Little Italy

In the early 19th Century lots of people from Switzerland and Italy left their homes and came to live in the United Kingdom. They were fleeing war and revolution. Many Italian immigrants settled in Holborn and Clerkenwell and the area eventually became known as Little Italy. The writer Charles Dickens describes the area in detail in his famous book *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839).

"As John Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o'clock when they reached the turnpike at Islington. They crossed from the Angel into St. John's Road; struck down the small street which terminates at Sadler's Wells Theatre; through Exmouth Street and Coppice Row; down the little court by the side of the workhouse; across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-Hole; thence into Little Saffron Hill; and so into Saffron Hill the Great: along which the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels."

Charles Dickens - *Oliver Twist*



Saffron Hill, in Little Italy, c1900. Saffron was grown here in the middle ages, it was added to food to hide the taste of rotten meat!

Gatti first lived in Holborn but then moved to Clerkenwell. He lived in Coppice Row (now Farringdon Road) with his family. The area was a slum, filled with pickpockets and the Italian immigrants living there suffered some of the worst housing conditions in London.

The Gatti family would have lived in very poor conditions. Two of Gatti's children, Stephano and Maria, tragically died in 1849.

Gatti often helped other immigrants find work or a place to stay. Many of them would be given jobs running his stalls or helping him collect ice on the Regent's Canal.

At the time many Italian immigrants were organ grinders. These street musicians would play barrel organs and were seen as a noisy nuisance by some Londoners. However, by 1900 their image had improved, partly thanks to Gatti's work. After his introduction of ice cream to the masses, many Italian's became ice cream sellers and were given the nick name "okey-pokey" men by Londoners. They would hear them call in Italian "Ecco un poco!", meaning "have a little (taste)".

Prompts

During the 19th Century the UK had an "open door" policy to immigration. This meant that anyone could come and live in the UK.

- How do you think Londoners at the time might have reacted to so many people moving to the city?
- Why and why did attitudes towards Italian immigrants change?
- How would you feel if you had to move to another country?
- Have you ever moved to another country? If so, how did you feel?

Charles Dickens, the famous Victorian author, wrote a lot about London in his novels.

- What does the quote on the previous page tell us about Islington at the time?
- Write your own imagined journey through your local area. Where might you go? What might you see? Who might you meet?
- How might historians find contemporary novels useful?

Use the resources in the back of this pack to find out more about immigration to London in the 19th Century.

Ice cream and hot chocolate

When he arrived in London, Gatti started out with just one coffee and waffle cart. By 1849 he had built up his trade and went into business with a local restaurateur called Battista Bolla, opening a café and restaurant together in Little Italy.

Bolla was a chocolatier from Switzerland and he was keen to sell hot chocolate to Londoners. Hot chocolate was very popular in France and other parts of Europe but had not caught on in Britain. Bolla convinced Gatti and they bought a chocolate making machine, which they brought all the way from Paris. They put it in the window of their café so that passers-by could watch as the hot chocolate was made.

In 1851 Gatti and Bolla exhibited their chocolate making machine in the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace, where Queen Victoria herself described it as a very curious machine.



A typical Victorian coffee stall

Great Exhibition - The Great Exhibition took place in Hyde Park in the summer of 1851 in the temporary Crystal Palace building (which later moved to Crystal Palace Gardens and burned down in 1936). The exhibition was organised by Prince Albert and its aim was for Britain to “make clear to the world its role as industrial leader”.

In the same year, Gatti set up a stall at Hungerford Market near Charing Cross. The stall sold pastries and 'penny ice' – the first affordable ice cream. Before Gatti introduced his penny ice, ice cream had been a treat only the rich in the Britain could afford. At the height of its popularity the stall was selling over 10,000 penny ices a day. The ice cream was served in glass containers, called 'licks' which were not washed in-between customers. This would have been quite normal at the time, but unthinkable today! The glass 'lick' was popular with ice cream sellers right up to the 1920s, when it was made illegal for health reasons.

Prompts

Gatti and Bollo had a big impact on Victorian London, popularising hot chocolate and ice cream:

- Can you think of other examples of food and culture that have been brought to Britain by immigrants?

The "penny lick" was a bit like a reusable ice cream cone:

- How would you feel if the "penny lick" was still used today?



An Italian ice cream seller in Clarks Green, c.1900

Like hot chocolate, ice cream was already popular in Europe, but it was expensive to make because refrigeration had not been invented. Gatti, and other ice-cream sellers like him, would have used a mixture of ice and salt to cool the ice cream mixture. It needed to be stirred constantly to stop it freezing hard. It was hard work, but luckily for Gatti, he could get ice easily from the Regent's Canal ice wells.

The Norwegian Ice Trade

Ice was expensive and hard to come by in Victorian times. Gatti and his workers collected ice from the Regent's Canal ice wells to make his ice cream. However, Gatti soon realised that he could make a lot of money selling ice to the food industry.

Gatti decided to start importing ice from Norway in 1857. Ice was shipped across the North Sea and up the Thames to Limehouse, where it was loaded onto barges and taken up the Regent's Canal to Gatti's ice wells (he built several of these on the Regent's Canal). He sold his ice to local businesses such as restaurants and butchers and his brown and yellow ice carts became a familiar sight in Victorian London.



One of Gatti's ice carts

Ice well - These large underground rooms measured 30-feet across and 40-feet deep. They could store thousands of tonnes of ice for months on end. The trick was to keep it away from sunlight and store it in large quantities so that it kept itself cool.

One of Gatti's wells, on Caledonian Road, Islington, could hold up 1500 tons of ice. It was built to store ice for the Metropolitan Cattle Market, which stood where Caledonian Park is today. The market sold cattle, sheep and other animals. Many of the businesses in the local area at the time were slaughter houses, which needed lots of ice to keep their meat cool and stop it from going bad.



Above: Plaque marking the location of Gatti's Caledonian Road ice well
Left: A typical day at the Metropolitan Cattle Market

The Metropolitan Cattle Market – This cattle market replaced Smithfield as London's live meat market. It was the largest market of its kind in Britain. With thousands of animals sold and slaughtered everyday, the market needed a good supply of ice. The Cally Clock Tower is the only reminder of the market that can still be seen today.

The ice was cut from natural lakes in Norway during spring time. It was then transported, mostly to London, by ship. It was important that ships were fast to prevent the ice melting too much. The ship's crews would race each other and bets were placed on who would set the fastest time.



Transporting ice from Norway.
(Image: courtesy the Canal Museum)

Prompts

The Norwegian ice trade lasted for almost 100 years.

- Apart from making ice cream, what else was Gatti's ice being used for?
- Why did the Metropolitan Cattle Market need its own ice well?

With the invention of refrigeration the Norwegian ice trade ended. This also saw the end of the Metropolitan Cattle market:

- The Market was a "live meat" market, why might markets of this kind be impacted by the invention of refrigeration?
- Can you think of other ways that life might have changed when refrigeration was invented?

The Norwegian ice trade started in the 1820s and continued until the 1920s. Gatti started trading Norwegian ice during the trade's peak, and probably contributed to its success.

Music hall and later life

Tragically, Hungerford Market burnt down in 1854 but Gatti was insured and he used his insurance money to set up a music hall. This was a theatre where people could go to eat and listen to live music. Eventually he sold his music hall to the South Eastern Railway, who knocked it down to make way for Charing Cross Station. He build two more theatres, one of which became the famous Player's Theatre in Charing Cross.

By this time, Gatti was getting older and his music hall business was mostly run by members of his family. He moved back to Switzerland in 1871, where he remarried. He died there a millionaire seven years later, aged 61 .

After his death, his daughter Rosa and his nephews, Agostino and Stephano, continued to run the family business. The ice business finally closed in 1881. Over a thousand Swiss Italian people came to London to work for Gatti and their descendants still live and work in London today.

Prompts

Music hall was hugely popular when Gatti started to open his theatres.

- What does this tell you about Gatti as a buisnessman?

Gatti entered the UK as a poor man and died a millionaire, but his legacy goes far beyond the wealth he created for himself:

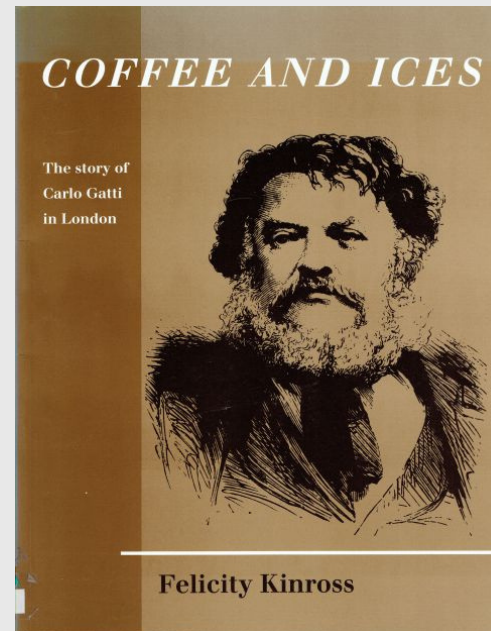
- What was Gatti's contribution to British culture?
- How would you describe Gatti's achievements to someone who has never heard of him?

Additional Resources

As you study Gatti's life, use some of the following resources to discover more about some of the key themes this pack explores.

Book:

Coffee and Ices (1991) by Felicity Kinross is a good place to start, with excellent images and information on Gatti's life and the Norwegian ice trade.



Early Life / Little Italy:

Teaching Resources to support delivery of lessons focused on immigration and life in Islington:

- Follow this digital tour of Islington which explores immigration in Islington:
<https://friendsofim.com/islington-as-a-place-of-refuge/>
- Find out more about Little Italy on the Hidden London website:
<https://hidden-london.com/gazetteer/little-italy/>
- Culture 24 also has information on Italian immigration in London:
<https://www.culture24.org.uk/history-and-heritage/art41527>
- This document is a great primer for immigration to the UK in the 19th Century:
https://www.gale.com/binaries/content/assets/gale-us-en/primary-sources/intl-gps/intl-gps-essays/full-ghn-contextual-essays/ghn_essay_bln_lloyd1_website.pdf
- Our Migration Story tells the history of migration to the British Isles:
<https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/>

Ice cream and hot chocolate / Music Hall and later life:

Teaching Resources to support delivery of lessons focused on Victorian life:

- The Victoria and Albert Museum has a great introduction to Music Hall here:
<https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/music-hall-and-variety-theatre#slideshow=688275&slide=0>
- Music Hall star Ada Reeve remembers Gatti's Music Hall:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZHISjGZ28s>
- Find out more about the history of ice cream at the Canal Museum:
<https://www.canalmuseum.org.uk/ice/icecream.htm>
- A blog post on penny licks from the Tyne and Wear Museum:
<https://blog.twmuseums.org.uk/penny-lick/>

The Norwegian ice trade:

Teaching Resources to support exploration of the ice trade.

- The Canal Museum has some excellent information on ice wells and a video of the inside of one:
<https://www.canalmuseum.org.uk/ice/ice-wells.htm>
- It also has information on the Ice Trade, with many photographs that illustrate the process of harvesting ice:
<https://www.canalmuseum.org.uk/ice/iceimport.htm>
- Find out more about the history of refrigeration in this BBC news resource:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-02b44e78-2da1-4a27-bcc5-dd0de5f38b20>

Printable Resources

Over the next few pages you will find images and quotations. These are intended for use in your classroom as discussion prompts, sources to investigate or inspiration for creative work.

1. Saffron Hill in Little Italy
2. Plaque marking the site of Gatti's ice well on Caledonian Road
3. One of Gatti's famous ice wagons
4. Portrait of Carlo Gatti
5. Italian ice cream seller in Clarksenwell Green, c.1900
6. Ice harvesting in Norway
7. Ice cut into blocks before transport
8. Transporting ice from Norway
9. Quote from Oliver Twist, Charles Dickens

Suggestions for use

Below, we have provided a few ideas for getting started with the resources included in this pack.

Enquiry-based conversations. Encourage your pupils to look closely at your chosen resources. Using their observational skills and prior knowledge, what can they learn?

- When using objects and images:
 - Ask students to discuss 'Who? What? When? Where? Why?'

- In groups or pairs, ask students to describe what they see. Using their descriptions, ask students to infer the stories behind objects or images.
- Ask students to discuss:
 - Does this object or image confirm or contradict what I knew before?
 - What does this object/image tell me about values or attitudes of the time?
- When using quotes or text, ask students to explore:
 - Who wrote this text?
 - What is the intention behind this piece of writing?
 - What happened next?
 - Does this text confirm or contradict what I knew before?
 - What does this text tell me about perceptions or attitudes at the time?

Compare and contrast.

Use these resources alongside modern objects or images of a similar nature. What can we learn about changes over time? Ask students to consider:

- Does it remind you of something familiar?
- What is different? What is similar? Why?
- What do these objects tell you about changes in: technology, values, perceptions and attitudes?

Use sources to build a chronology or a narrative.

When exploring a theme, encourage students to build a narrative by piecing together information from a selection of objects, images, stories or figures:

- Examine and compare personal, organisational and media stories. What can you learn from these different perspectives?
- Use primary and secondary sources together.
- Exploring archive stories together with contemporary issues can help students have a deeper understand of a topic and draw links between 'then' and 'now'. How does this story link with today?

Use them as inspiration.

Primary sources and heritage can provide inspiration for creative work. Delving into some of these local stories through art, drama, poetry, prose or movement can help students to inhabit and explore them.



Saffron Hill in Little Italy
(Images: courtesy Islington History
Centre)



A large
ICE WELL was
built here in 1862 by
CARLO GATTI
to hold 1500 tons
of Norwegian
ice

Plaque marking the site of Gatti's ice
well on Caledonian Road
(Images: courtesy Islington History
Centre)



One of Gatti's famous ice wagons
(Images: courtesy Islington History
Centre)



Portrait of Carlo Gatti
(Image: courtesy the Canal
Museum)



Italian ice cream seller in Clarkenwell
Green, c.1900
(Images: courtesy Islington History
Centre)



Ice harvesting in Norway
(Image: courtesy the Canal Museum)



Ice cut into blocks before transport
(Image: courtesy the Canal Museum)



Transporting ice from Norway
(Image: courtesy the Canal Museum)

“As John Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o’clock when they reached the turnpike at Islington. They crossed from the Angel into St. John’s Road; struck down the small street which terminates at Sadler’s Wells Theatre; through Exmouth Street and Coppice Row; down the little court by the side of the workhouse; across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-Hole; thence into Little Saffron Hill; and so into Saffron Hill the Great: along which the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels.”

***Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens**

References

- Quote taken from *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens. (1838)
- *Coffee and Ices*, Felicity Kinross, Lavenham Press (1991)
- Images, The Canal Museum
- Islington Local History Centre, 245 St John Street, EC1V 4NB
- Islington Museum, 245 St John Street, EC1V 4NB
- Cally Clock Tower Centre, Caledonian Park, N7 9HF