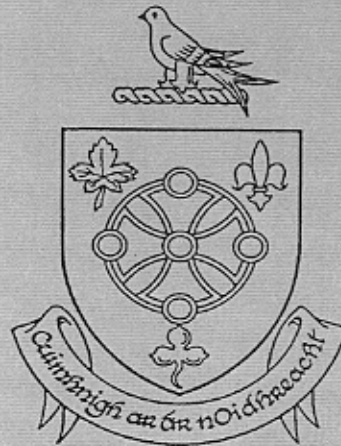


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Saint Mary's University
Halifax, Nova Scotia



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Volume 13, Spring 2001

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Cyril J. Byrne

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Michael J. Miller

AN NASC was established as a link between the Chair of Irish Studies and those who are involved or interested in promoting Irish Studies and heritage in Canada and abroad. It also seeks to develop awareness of the shared culture of Ireland, Gaelic Scotland and those of Irish and Gaelic descent in Canada

AN NASC is provided free of charge. However, we welcome financial contributions which will allow us to extend the activities of the Chair of Irish Studies. A tax receipt will be issued for all contributions over \$10.00.

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News from the Chair 1999-2000

Course Offerings

Cyril Byrne returned from Sabbatical leave September 1999 and resumed responsibility as Coordinator of Irish Studies.

The Chair offered the following slate including a number of cross-listed courses: IRS201.1 (An Introduction to Modern Irish); IRS202.2 (Modern Irish Language); IRS304.0 (An Introduction to Scottish Gaelic); IRS 325.1 (Intermediate Irish I); IRS326.2 (Intermediate Irish II); IRS379.1 [ANT379.1, GPY379.1] (Irish Material Culture); IRS400.0 (Irish Studies Seminar); IRS430.1 (Irish Folklore); IRS441.1 [EGL441.1] (The Irish Short Story); IRS443.2 [EGL443.2] Irish Poetry; IRS455.2 (Gaelic Literature in translation 1600-1800); and IRS525.0 [HIS525.0] (Seminar in Irish & Scottish Emigration).

Cyril Byrne's Irish Seminar Course (400.0) involved internal speakers: Pádraig Ó Siadhail, Donald Wyllie (SMU Irish Studies/Geography), Margaret Harry (SMU English), Gillian Thomas (SMU English), Guy Chauvin (SMU Political Science), Joe Murphy (SMU Irish Studies), Peter Murphy (Historian/Genealogist); and external guest lecturers: Aisling Porter (Irish Dancer with *Scoil Rince na Mara*), Jon Goodman (Irish Piper), Roger Crowther (formerly SMU Department of English), James Candow (Parks Canada), Willeen Keough (Ph.D. Candidate in History at Memorial University, Newfoundland), Ron Beed (Independent Researcher), John Shaw (School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh), and Jim Watson (Cape Breton Scottish Gaelic Teacher).

Students

Two students graduated at Spring 2000 Convocation with majors in Irish Studies: Tara Broderick Martin, Stephenville, Newfoundland and Adam Lawrence, Saint John, New Brunswick.

Scholarships

The Charitable Irish Society of Halifax - Larry Lynch Memorial Scholarships were presented to two Irish Studies majors, Adam Lawrence and Paul Mansour.

Publications and Lectures

Over the last year, Pádraig Ó Siadhail published the following articles: "Cúpla focal Fraincise i gCeanada an Ilchultúrachais," *The Irish Times* (Dublin), 16 June 1999 and "Na Gaeil I bPéin: An Ghàidhlig i gCeap-Breatainn," *The Irish Times*, 29 December 1999. A story, "Taisce-dán," first broadcast on RTÉ Radio One in Ireland in September 1999 as part of a series of stories by contemporary writers in Irish, 'Scéalta san Aer,' was published in Cathal Póirtéir (ed.), *Scéalta san Aer*. Dublin: Coiscéim, 2000, 153-158. Another story, "Meisce Chrábhaidh", was awarded a prize at the Oireachtas Literary Festival in Dublin in the Autumn 1999.

On 26 May 2000 Pádraig Ó Siadhail gave the Plenary Address at the Conference of the Canadian Association for Irish Studies, held at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, as part of Congress 2000, the annual Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities Federation of Canada. His address was entitled "Contemporary Literature in Irish: A Parasite's Delight (or Súgáin, Sougawns and Straw Ropes)."

Cyril Byrne gave a paper, "Conception Bay R.C. Parochial Records: problems and resolutions", to the Family History Seminar of the Newfoundland and Labrador Genealogical Society held at St. John's the weekend of the 16 October, 1999. On Thursday, March 16, 2000, he spoke to the Morning Group of Saint Andrew's United Church on "Protestants and Protestantism in Irish History and Culture." Cyril Byrne also had two book reviews accepted for publication: E.R. Seary's *The Surnames of the Island of Newfoundland and Labrador for Newfoundland Studies* and Michael J. McCarthy's *The Irish in Newfoundland for The Mariner's Compass*.

Cyril Byrne was provided a Grant in Aid of Research from the Saint Mary's University Senate in order to complete a project entitled "Maritime and Newfoundland Diaries of John Francis Campbell", a collector of Gaelic folklore and traditions in Scotland in the middle of the nineteenth century. Campbell is the author of *A short American tramp in the fall of 1864*. Cyril Byrne travelled to Edinburgh, to the National Library of Scotland during April 2000, to conduct his research.

Community-related activities

Pádraig Ó Siadhail was interviewed by Salem Alaton in a special to *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, on December 6, 1999 for an article entitled *To die laughing* pertaining to the rituals of the Irish wake. In September 1999, Pádraig Ó Siadhail assisted with the Irish translation for an inscription to be placed on a Celtic cross memorial to be erected in Québec with special dedication services being held on July 1, 2000. He also assisted with the Irish inscription on a Celtic cross memorial designed by Halifax architect Bill Lydon and commissioned by The Charitable Irish Society in Nova Scotia. The Celtic cross memorial was erected on the Halifax waterfront on Monday, December 6, 1999. The cross was officially unveiled on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 2000.

Cyril Byrne spoke on the differences and similarities between Nova Scotia and Northern Ireland at the Centre for Entrepreneurship, Education and Development during their Nova Scotia/Northern Ireland Exchange held September 11-19, 1999. At the annual banquet of the Charitable Irish Society of Halifax on March 17, 2000, Cyril Byrne replied to the Toast to Saint Patrick.

The D'Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies provided a small donation to local organization *Scoil Rince na Mara* to assist two young Irish dancers with a trip to Belfast, Ireland. They competed in the World Championship of traditional Irish Dance in April, 2000.

Irish Parliamentarians come to town

Just a few months after a visit from President Mary McAleese, Halifax received its first delegation of Irish

TDs and Senators on June 4, 1999. The delegation of Irish parliamentarians was led by James Pattison, the *Ceann Comhairle* (speaker) of Dáil Éireann, the Irish Parliament. He was accompanied by three other TDs and two Senators. A luncheon was held with the delegates, hosted by the Speaker of the House for the Province of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Ronald Russell and attended by Cyril Byrne and Pádraig Ó Siadhail. The Irish Association of Nova Scotia, *An Cumann*, hosted an evening reception as well involving members of local Irish societies. Cyril Byrne represented the Chair of Irish Studies at this event that was also attended by Mr. Paul Dempsey, the Irish Ambassador to Canada.

Moving?

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Ships from Ireland to Nova Scotia, 1765-1850

Terrence M. Punch, FRSAI

As the Canadian member of the international advisory board of the Passenger and Immigration Lists project, I identify publications which name immigrants to America prior to 1900. The lack of specific personal information about migration to colonial Nova Scotia dismays me. Years of research have yielded little result. It may be useful, nonetheless, to provide researchers with a listing of vessels known to me as having reached our shores from Ireland.

One cannot say confidently how many vessels brought Irish people to Nova Scotia in the period covered. It is likely that this list of 183 ships represents somewhat above half of that traffic.

Thirteen ships sailed before 1800, and one was brought in as a capture during the War of 1812. The *Prudence*, en route to New York, was taken by the Royal Navy and brought into Halifax. Its passengers presumably did not remain here.

With the peace in 1815, the floodgates opened. Forty-six ships appear for the short span 1815-19. After a relative lull (34 vessels, 1820-30), the 1830s added at least 65 shiploads of Irish to the immigrations, and a further nine before the Great Irish Famine. During the famine years, just fifteen Irish ships turned up, and at least nine did not leave their passengers, but proceeded to New Brunswick or Québec. My research on Halifax records suggests that few of those aboard any of these ships, 1846-50, remained in the province.

As for Irish port of departure, several are not identified. Of the 141 that are accounted for, 75 ships sailed from southern Irish ports (Waterford 44, Cork 29, Kinsale 2); 37 from Ulster (Belfast 17, Derry 13, Newry 4, Coleraine 2, Larne 1); 17 from Dublin; and 12 from western Irish ports (Galway 6, Sligo 4, Limerick 2). Counties Cork, Kilkenny and Waterford in the south, and Tyrone, Donegal and Derry in the north, predominated as sources of Nova Scotia's Irish population; the shipping information corroborates other research in this regard.

Halifax was the favoured destination: 150 of 183 ships. Fewer arrived elsewhere (Pictou 8, Sydney 3, Pugwash 2, Liverpool, Fort Cumberland, Wallace and Annapolis, one apiece). One ship's landing place is unrecorded.

Travel by sail was dangerous. As many as twenty-two vessels met with mishaps; one or two many not have reached port. The *Shamrock* was believed lost at sea in 1816, and twenty years later, while at sea, the *Lancaster* was set on fire by its captain. The *Lady Sherbrooke* was wrecked on Cape Ray, Newfoundland (1831), but 27 survivors reached Halifax, as did 51 from the *Swift* (1818), after being shipwrecked in the Azores. It is not clear whether the *Ayrshire* ran aground on the Ile d'Orléans before or after calling at Halifax in 1848.

Three ships were wrecked on the Cape Breton coast; the *Hannah* (1833) at St. Ann's, the *Fidelity* (1834) on Scatari Island, and the *Sir George Prevost* (1844) at Gabarus. Vessels which were further offshore could be driven onto the shifting sands of Sable Island, as were the *Nassau* (1826) and the *Granville* (1838).

As shipping neared Halifax, the eastern shore offered perils, and three vessels came to grief: the *Duncan* aground at Marie Joseph (1831), the *Lively* disabled at Beaver Harbour (1817), and the *Fame* aground in Cole Harbour (1818).

Most of the wrecks west of Halifax were of vessels on their way to Saint John, New Brunswick: *Lord Nelson* (1817) wrecked at Shelburne, *Alexander Buchanan* (1818) at Cape Sable, *Constellation* (1819) along the southwestern shore, *Mermaid* (1819) on Cape Negro, *Elizabeth* (1824) struck a ledge at Cape Sable Island and was towed into Barrington, *Kelton* (1830) wrecked with loss of twelve lives at Port Hebert, *Margaret* (1834) at Barrington, *Jane* (1838) cast away near Shelburne, and *Princess* (1848) at Cape Sable.

Roughly one vessel in eight of those recorded met with wreck, grounding or fire. Doubtless others encountered storms or sickness, perhaps privation due to prolonged

voyages or inadequate provisions. The *James* (1827), for example, reported having typhus aboard, with five dead and another thirty-five left at St. John's, Newfoundland.

One arrival in six (28/183) called into a port in Newfoundland en route to Nova Scotia. While in the years down to 1819 passengers were discharged at St. John's or Carbonear, it appears that from 1820 onward, such vessels picked up passengers for the mainland.

Thirty-four vessels proceeded beyond Nova Scotia to other places, taking all or some of their Irish passengers with them. New Brunswick was the favoured destination (23; with 12 of those after 1842), followed by New York (5), Québec (4), Philadelphia (1) and Prince Edward Island (1).

The number of people carried is at best approximate. Two sources may give different numbers for the same ship; in other instances, the round figures suggest estimates, rather than actual figures. How does one interpret the "36 1/3 adults" in the *Lady Ann* (1837), when one wishes to count by head instead of by fare structure? (Was it 30 adults and 19 one-third fare children? Or 28 and 25? Or 32 and 13?) Adding the number recorded for the 147 vessels, we find 14,060±. If we pro-rate for the remainder, the number of Irish passengers was about 17,500

These lists, then, give us one more set of indicators, suggesting origins of people leaving Ireland and where they landed here. Also we can perceive the periods when migration was most intense. We gain some appreciation of the perilous nature of the immigrant voyage. Just once do the records tell the specific reason why these Irishmen were coming to Nova Scotia. In 1827, the *Forte* arrived at Halifax, carrying forty masons and their families. They were to work on construction of the Shubenacadie Canal. Other than that, one very occasionally reads the brief notation, "farmers", "mechanics", "tradesmen", or "labourers", and those only before 1817. For want of passenger lists or naturalization proceedings, most of these Irish immigrants will remain shadowy figures. Perhaps publication of this roster of the vessels which brought them will encourage someone to seek, and

perhaps find, some of these Irish listed on an overlooked document.

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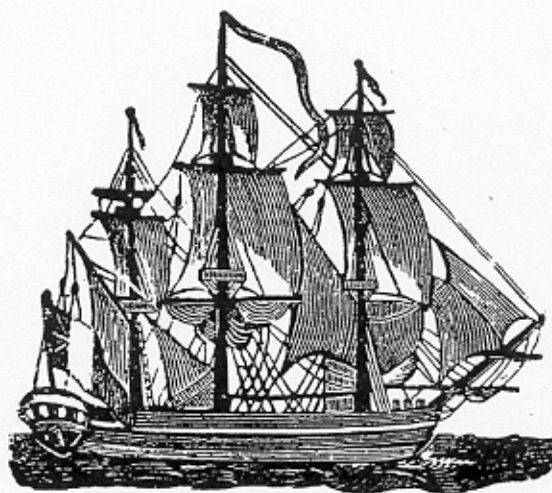
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| Date of Arrival | Irish Port | Nova Scotia Port | Name of Ship | Passengers | Comments |
|-----------------|------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|---|
| 1765 | Derry | Halifax | Admiral Hawk | | |
| 1766 June | Derry | Halifax | Hopewell | | |
| 1771 Aug 13 | Derry | Halifax | Hopewell | | |
| 1773 May 7 | Belfast | Nova Scotia | Yaward | | |
| 1774 Apr | Larne | Fort Cumberland | James and Mary | | |
| 1778 Sept 2 | Cork | Halifax | William | | en route to Newfoundland |
| Oct 10 | Waterford | Halifax | Fame | | en route to St. Peters, Newfoundland |
| Nov 20 | Cork | Halifax | Susannah | | |
| Dec 12 | Cork | Halifax | Commerce | | en route to West Indies |
| 1779 Jan 4 | Cork | Halifax | Sally and Mary | | |
| July 29 | Cork | Halifax | Elizabeth & Nancy | | en route to Newfoundland |
| Oct 16 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Lyon | | |
| 1799 Apr | Belfast | Halifax | Polly | 9 | some went to Québec |
| 1812 Aug 10 | Dublin | Halifax | Prudence | | captured by Royal Navy while en route to New York |
| 1815 Nov | Ireland | Halifax | Two Friends | 3 | went on to New York |
| 1816 July | Ireland | Halifax | Montague | | went on to New York |
| Oct 26/31 | Cork | Halifax | Hibernia | 105 | farmers, mechanics |
| Dec 1 | Ireland | Halifax | Shamrock | 49 | believed lost |
| Dec 14/20 | Ireland | Halifax | Union | | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| Dec 14/20 | Ireland | Halifax | Susan | | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| Dec | Ireland | Halifax | Haron | | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| 1817 Jan 1/4 | Ireland | Halifax | Isabella | 55 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| Jan 18/24 | Ireland | Halifax | Consolation | 30 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| May | Derry | Halifax | N.B. Packet | | chiefly mechanics |
| July 10/17 | Ireland | Halifax | Angelique | 30 | took some to Prince Edward Island |
| July 19/26 | Derry | Halifax | Halifax Packet | 171 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| July/Aug | Ireland | Halifax | Kitty | 44 | tradesmen; via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| Aug 1/2 | Derry | Halifax | Marcus Hill | 250 | |
| Aug 1/7 | Ireland | Beaver Harbour | Lively | 20 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| Sep 11 | Coleraine | Halifax | Amelia | 84 | |
| Sep 12 | Derry | Halifax | Hibernia | 17 | |
| Sep 6/12 | Dublin | Halifax | Mary | 88 | |
| Oct 18 | Dublin | Halifax | Union | 65 | via Newfoundland |

| Date of Arrival | Irish Port | Nova Scotia Port | Name of Ship | Passengers | Comments |
|-----------------|------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------|--|
| 1817 Nov 1 | Ireland | Halifax | Angelique | 50 | mostly labourers |
| Nov 22/28 | Ireland | Halifax | Sisters | 46 | via Newfoundland |
| Dec 13 | Cork | Halifax | Comet | 30 | |
| 1817 — | Derry | Shelburne | Lord Nelson | | shipwrecked; en route to Saint John, New Brunswick |
| 1818 May | Cork | Halifax | Prince of Cobourgh | | went on to Québec |
| June 6/12 | Waterford | Halifax | Fame | 103 | |
| June 6/12 | Newry | Halifax | Industry | 157 | 65 went to Philadelphia |
| June 14 | Derry | Cape Sable | Alex' Buchanan | | wrecked; everyone saved |
| July 4/10 | Waterford | Halifax | Four Brothers | 50 | |
| Aug 10 | Coleraine | Halifax | Amelia | | |
| Sep 3 | Dublin | Halifax | Clyde | 85 | |
| Sep 8 | Cork | Halifax | Amicus | | |
| Oct 3/9 | Belfast | Halifax | Fame | 114 | aground Cole Harbour |
| Oct 3/9 | Ireland | Halifax | Marinhull | 22 | via Newfoundland; settlers |
| Oct 17/23 | Newry | Halifax | Martha | 84 | settlers |
| Nov 2 | Cork | Halifax | Adeline | | |
| 1818 — | Azores | Halifax | Swift | 51 | Irish emigrants shipwrecked in the Azores |
| 1819 Feb | Ireland | Nova Scotia coast | Constellation | | wrecked; passengers saved; went on to Saint John, New Brunswick |
| June 5/11 | Dublin | Halifax | Enterprise | 103 | |
| June 5/11 | Derry | Halifax | Halifax Packet | 113 | |
| June 5/11 | Ireland | Halifax | Lord Gardner | | some went to New Brunswick |
| June 19/25 | Kinsale | Halifax | Johns | 130 | |
| June 19/25 | Waterford | Halifax | Sir John Cameron | 112 | |
| July 3/9 | Ireland | Halifax | Mary | | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| July 24/30 | Derry | Halifax | Frances Ann | 120 | |
| July | Dublin | Cape Negro | Merrmaid | 73 | went ashore; all saved |
| Sept 4/10 | Dublin | Halifax | Chaity | 113 | |
| 1820 May 13/19 | Waterford | Halifax | Rubicon | 150 | |
| June 1/3 | Belfast | Halifax | Oliphit | 43 | |
| Sep 9/15 | Derry | Halifax | Frances and Lucy | | |
| 1821 May 12/18 | Belfast | Halifax | Rob Roy | 139 | |
| May 19/25 | Cork | Halifax | Amicus | 98 | |
| 1823 — | Belfast | Barrington | Proud Ardent | | aground on the Half Moons; en route to Saint John, New Brunswick |

| Date of Arrival | Irish Port | Nova Scotia Port | Name of Ship | Passengers | Comments |
|-----------------|------------|------------------|------------------------|------------|---|
| 1824 July 17/23 | Ireland | Halifax | Brothers | 3 | |
| Aug | Sligo | Cape Sable | Elizabeth | 112 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| 1825 June 1/4 | Ireland | Halifax | Brothers | 16 | en route to Saint John, NB, struck ledge; towed into Barrington, NS |
| July 16/22 | Dublin | Halifax | Resolution | 34 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| 1826 June 1/3 | Waterford | Halifax | Thomas | 91 | steerage |
| June 17/23 | Cork | Halifax | Maria | 27 | steerage |
| June 17 | Ireland | Sable Island | Nassau | 95 | survivors taken to Halifax; 20/30 still on Sable Island |
| July 8/14 | Belfast | Pictou | Hopewell | | |
| July 15/21 | Dublin | Halifax | Albion | 27 | |
| Oct 14/20 | Dublin | Halifax | Nancy | 116 | |
| Nov 18/23 | Ireland | Liverpool | Caledonia | 84 | steerage |
| Nov 18/24 | Ireland | Halifax | Admiral Lake | 13 | steerage |
| Nov 18/24 | Ireland | Halifax | William Hunter | 53 | via St. John's, Newfoundland; steerage |
| 1827 May 1/3 | Waterford | Halifax | Liberty | 127 | |
| June 1/6 | Waterford | Halifax | Cherub | 200 | |
| June 7/13 | Waterford | Halifax | Bolivar | 350 | |
| June 14/20 | Dublin | Halifax | Lefilia | 210 | |
| July 1/5 | Waterford | Halifax | Cumberland | 350 | |
| Sep 7 | Waterford | Halifax | James | 160 | |
| Sep 7/12 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Forté | 40+ | typhus aboard; 5 dead, 35 left at St. John's, Newfoundland |
| 1828 May 24/30 | Cork | Halifax | Saltern's Rock | 70/80 | maisons for the Canal and their families |
| June 1/6 | Dublin | Halifax | Dale | 100 | |
| 1829 May 13/19 | Belfast | Pictou | Marchioness of Donegal | 42 | |
| 1830 May 22/28 | Waterford | Pictou | Benjamin Shaw | 300 | |
| June 1 | Cork | Port Hebert | Kelton | 175 | wrecked, 12 dead |
| June 1/3 | Waterford | Halifax | Solon | 150 | |
| July 6/13 | Belfast | Pugwash | Charlotte Keen | | |
| Aug 1/5 | Belfast | Halifax | John and Mary | 24 | |
| 1831 Apr 14/20 | Cork | Halifax | Adephi | 241 | |
| May 18/20 | Waterford | Halifax | Argyle | 225/240 | |
| May 19/25 | Waterford | Halifax | Don | 135/153 | |
| May | Waterford | Pictou | Pandora | 130 | |
| June 2/8 | Waterford | Halifax | Aurora | 101 | |

| Date of Arrival | Irish Port | Nova Scotia Port | Name of Ship | Passengers | Comments |
|-----------------|------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|--|
| 1831 June 9/15 | Belfast | Halifax | Archibald | 31 | |
| June 23/29 | Kinsale | Halifax | Hibernia | 200 | 50 landed at Halifax |
| June | Sligo | Halifax | Charlotte Keir | 93 | |
| July 7/13 | [Ireland] | Sydney | Powels | 4 | via Newfoundland |
| July 7/13 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Caneion | 4 | steerage; via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| July | Galway | Annapolis | Adelaide | ca 50 | "Annapolis Gut" |
| July/Aug | Dublin | Marie Joseph | Duncan | 250 | en route to Saint John, NB; 100 landed in NS; 70 in Halifax; remainder in ship |
| Aug 8 | Derry | Halifax | Lady Sherbrooke | 300 | 27 survived a wreck at Cape Ray, Newfoundland, in July |
| Aug 18/24 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Success | | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| Aug | Ireland | Sydney | Hibernia | 180 | southern Irish people |
| Aug | Limerick | Pictou | Wm. Harrington | 115 | |
| 1832 Apr 5/11 | Cork | Halifax | Pallas | 120 | went on to Saint John, New Brunswick |
| Apr 19/25 | Cork | Halifax | Wellington | 128 | |
| May 24/30 | Waterford | Halifax | Belock | 126 | |
| May 29 | Waterford | Halifax | St. Catherine | 138 | |
| June 1/6 | Waterford | Halifax | Jane | 111 | |
| June 1/6 | Cork | Halifax | Jane | 101 | |
| June 2/8 | Waterford | Halifax | Friends | 181 | |
| July 25/31 | Belfast | Wallace | John and Mary | 68 | |
| Aug 16/22 | Cork | Halifax | Minstrel | 145 | |
| 1832 — | Waterford | Halifax | Hippo | | left Waterford in June |
| 1833 May 31 | Cork | St. Ann's | Hannah | 278 | wreck; none remained here |
| June 1/5 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Sydney | 30 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| June 13/19 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Dolphin | 10 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| June 17 | Cork | Halifax | Union | 30 | |
| July | Dublin | Pugwash | Latona | 176 | |
| Aug 15/21 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Creole | | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| Aug 20/26 | Waterford | Pictou | Molly Moore | 38 | |
| 1834 May 1/7 | Waterford | Halifax | Molly Moore | 119 | |
| May 10 | Dublin | Scalari | Fidelity | | 29 lost in wreck |
| May 15/21 | Waterford | Halifax | King | 159 | |
| May 17 | Belfast | Barrington | Margaret | 10 | wrecked; 22 to New Brunswick |
| May 17/23 | Sligo | Halifax | Ceres | 31 | all went to Saint John, New Brunswick |

| Date of Arrival | Irish Port | Nova Scotia Port | Name of Ship | Passengers | Comments |
|-----------------|------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|---|
| 1834 May 22/28 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Hennietta | 30 | via Carbonnear, Newfoundland |
| June 1/4 | Cork | Halifax | Eden | 181 | went on to Restigouche, New Brunswick |
| June 1/4 | Waterford | Halifax | Jane | 108 | |
| Aug 23/29 | Waterford | Pictou | Molly Moore | 14 | |
| 1835 June 18/24 | Waterford | Halifax | Timanda | 66 | |
| Oct 1/7 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Cordelia | 28 | via St. John's, Newfoundland; steerage |
| 1836 May 19/25 | Cork | Halifax | Bob Logic | 86 | |
| May 21 | Dublin | Halifax | Lancaster | 77 | |
| May 26/28 | Waterford | Halifax | Eagle | 107 | en route to New York; burned |
| June 2/8 | Waterford | Halifax | Molly Moore | 70 | 11 others to Miramichi, New Brunswick |
| June 26/30 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Maria | 67 | |
| July 21/27 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Water Witch | 9+ | |
| 1837 Apr/July | Derry | Sydney | Royalist | 136 | |
| May 18/24 | Waterford | Halifax | Lord John Russell | 181 | |
| May 27/31 | Belfast | Halifax | Adelle | 18 | en route to New York |
| May 27/31 | Waterford | Halifax | Don | 112 | |
| May 27/31 | Waterford | Halifax | Eagle | 106 | |
| June 8/14 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Emily | 14 | |
| July/Sep | Belfast | Sydney | Beisay Castle | 18 | |
| July/Sep | Belfast | Pictou | Lady Ann | 36 | *36 1/3 adults* |
| Aug 1/3 | Cork | Halifax | Citius | 106 | |
| 1838 June 9/15 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Margaret | 6 | steerage |
| June 23/29 | Cork | Halifax | Jane | 50 | cast away near Shelburne, Nova Scotia |
| June 23/29 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Pictou | 7 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| Aug 4/10 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Pictou | 3 | via St. John's, Newfoundland |
| Aug 16/22 | Sligo | Halifax | Granville | 22 | wrecked on Sable Island en route to Saint John, New Brunswick |
| Sep 1/7 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Jane | 6 | |
| Oct 1/5 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Pictou | 9 | |
| Oct 20/26 | [Ireland] | Halifax | Hebe | 6 | |
| 1839 June 18/26 | Ireland | Halifax | Aide-de-Camp | | |
| 1842 May 21/27 | Waterford | Halifax | Eagle | 100 | |
| June 4/10 | Waterford | Halifax | John | 91 | went on to Saint John, New Brunswick |
| June 11/17 | Cork | Halifax | Pons Aelii | 54 | went on to Saint John, New Brunswick |

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The 'old hag' meets Saint Brigid

*Irish women and the intersection of belief systems
on the southern Avalon, Newfoundland*

Willeen Keough

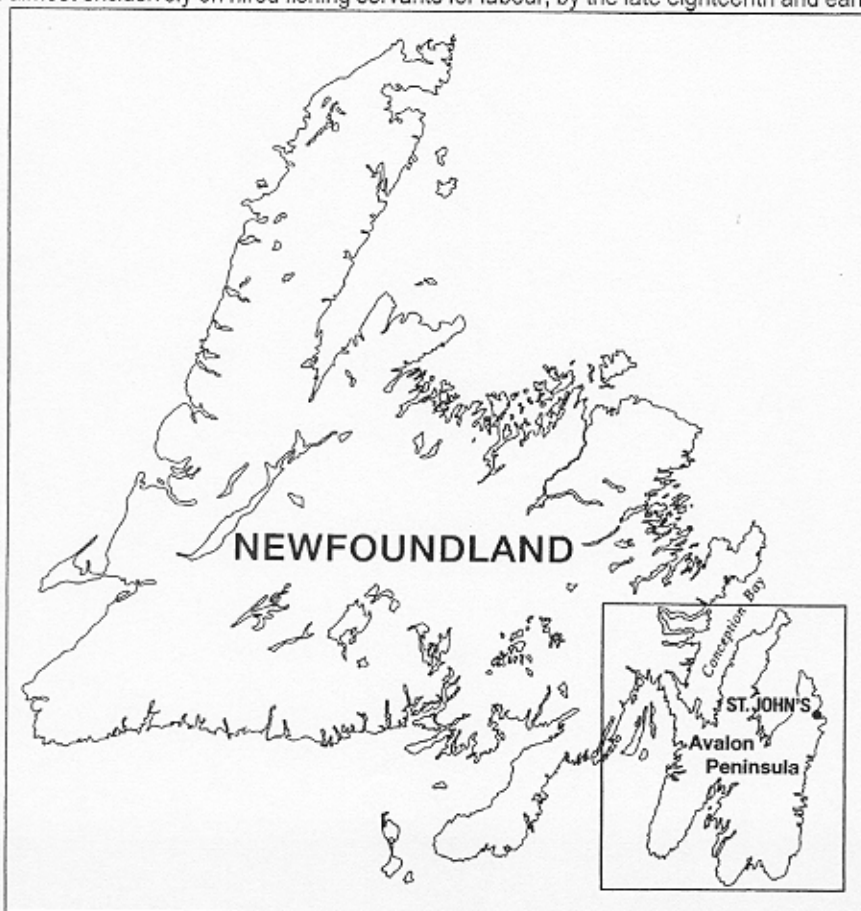


Mrs. Walsh of Torbay, Newfoundland, c. 1900. From the collection of Stewart Fraser

The spiritual life of any group is a site of continuous negotiation between the natural and supernatural worlds. The process is enigmatic; the issues, profound; the stakes, unfathomable. Those who are chosen as mediators must, therefore, necessarily enjoy considerable authority and respect within their communities. In various cultures and at various times, women have acted as negotiators and guides of the spiritual landscape. One such culture was the Irish-Catholic community that established itself on the southern Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland, the area from Bay Bulls, south of St. John's, to Dog Point in St. Mary's Bay, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The southern Avalon prides itself on being the most Irish corner of the island of Newfoundland, and modern-day visitors seeking a transplanted piece of the 'auld sod' are encouraged to wend their way south of the capital, St. John's. Indeed, the ribbon of highway that threads its way through the area has recently been designated by government nomenclature and tourist signage (regrettably, some may say) as the 'Irish Loop.' Yet the Irish were Johnny-come-latelies in the area, for the 'planter' population there in the late seventeenth century was almost exclusively English — the demographic outgrowth of a West of England-Newfoundland fishery that was almost two centuries old. (A planter was a resident, as opposed to migratory, proprietor of fishing premises; planters in the early centuries of the Newfoundland fishery relied almost exclusively on hired fishing servants for labour; by the late eighteenth and early

nineteenth centuries, the term also referred to heads of household production units using family labour supplemented by some hired labour.) An Irish element was creeping into the migration stream, however, as West Country fishing ships began stopping at southeast Irish ports en route to Newfoundland for cheap salted provisions and labour. Irish numbers in the area swelled, particularly throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, as an Irish-Newfoundland trade in provisions and passengers developed and as Irish servants increasingly replaced English servants at the Newfoundland fishery. By the end of the century, a sizable population of Irish settlers had established itself on the southern Avalon, and it was reinforced by nineteenth-



century migration waves, particularly in the periods 1811-1816 and 1825-1831.¹ Meanwhile, the old English-Protestant planter society in the area was almost totally assimilated by the Irish-Catholic population. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the proportion of Catholics in the area hovered around the 90 percent mark, and by 1845, the population was 97 percent Catholic.² Missionaries' reports indicate that this was not

so much the net result of English out-migration and Irish in-migration as a reflection of the processes of intermarriage, conversion, and integration.³

Irish women — and the term 'Irish women,' when used in this article in reference to the southern Avalon, includes not just Irish immigrants but also Irish-Newfoundland women within the multi-generational ethnic group — played an essential role in these processes of early community formation. Given the highly transient nature of the male fishing population, it was the increasing presence of women that made permanent settlement possible. Irish women featured prominently in the almost total assimilation of the old English planter society as numerous English-Protestant patrilineal, especially within the plebeian community, were absorbed into the Irish ethnic group through marriage with Irish-Catholic women. Irish women were also an integral part of the economic life of early communities — in subsistence production, in hospitality and nursing services, as laundresses and seamstresses, as both domestic and fishing servants, and as mistresses of fishing premises. Increasingly, they became shore crews for the family production unit in the



Preparing codfish for salting and drying in Newfoundland

fishery, replacing hired, transient male servants as they performed the vital work of salting and drying fish — a process that required careful attention and good judgment to ensure the quality of the cure. Because of their vital role as co-producers in the family economy, these women exercised considerable autonomy in the running of their households and were often the primary financial managers of household resources. They also had significant influence over matters outside home, frequently directing male decision-making from behind the scenes and often engaging in verbal wrangling and physical violence in collective actions and individual interventions that were commonplace mechanisms for informal conflict resolution in the days of early settlement. Add to this the image of women smoking and drinking in public and we can see that Irish womanhood on the southern Avalon was not engulfed by the constraints of separate sphere ideology or constructions of passivity, fragility, and dependence that were increasingly constricting the lives of middle-class women (including those on the southern Avalon) by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴

In this, they were similar to their counterparts in rural Ireland, or certainly eighteenth-century rural Ireland, where women derived considerable status from their role as co-producers in a mixed farming and domestic textile economy.⁵ In the subsistence farming economy of the home country, women's work complemented men's. They performed not only domestic tasks but also heavy agricultural work in the fields. They gathered seaweed for fertilizer and food, carried peat for fuel, kept livestock, sold eggs, and distilled and sold spirits. They also contributed to family incomes as domestic spinners in the woollen and linen trades. Indeed, women in rural Ireland often provided the family's only cash income, and it was generally accepted that the men would feed the family, while the women would pay the rent. In the social sphere as well, gender roles were less rigid than they would become in the late nineteenth century. Eighteenth-century Irish women participated in sports, dancing, seasonal celebrations, and festivals; they drank in public and even took part in faction fights, often wielding stockings filled with rocks as weapons.

Thus, there were many similarities in women's status and authority in rural Ireland and the southern Avalon, emanating from their vital roles in family economies. While a facade of patriarchal authority was usually maintained in both cultures, women had considerable input in family and community decision-making, wielding power both within and outside their households. L. A. Clarkson describes this family power structure in Ireland as a "matriarchal management behind a patriarchal exterior."⁶ The oral tradition on the southern Avalon has a more homespun equivalent: "She made the cannonballs, and he fired them."⁷

Indeed, the oral tradition is an invaluable tool in examining the lives of women from an earlier period. Given the paucity of evidence in the written sources, oral history can provide the nuances and shadings that help to bring these women to life for a latter-day audience. Take, for example, the following anecdote from Cape Broyle:

In the early 1900s, the Newfoundland railway was building a branch line along the southern Avalon. Mrs. Ellen T —, a Cape Broyle woman of Irish descent, held a piece of land along the proposed route which she hoped to sell to the company for a tidy profit. Her ownership of the property, however, was disputed by a prominent local businessman, Michael C —. Attorneys were consulted and solicitors' letters were exchanged, but the quarrel would ultimately be resolved on a rather less formal basis. Michael had her fence posts on the property torn down under cover of darkness; Mrs. Ellen set them back up again, and every night thereafter, she personally patrolled the property to discourage any further nocturnal alterations of the boundary lines. One night, she was knocked unconscious with the butt of a gun, and rumour had it that her assailant had been hired by Michael to strong-arm Mrs. Ellen. Advantage in the dispute see-sawed back and forth until Mrs. Ellen's mother, the widow Mrs. Anne A —, entered the fray with an ancient form of conflict resolution: she placed a curse on Michael and his entire family. Michael's wife, a well-educated and well-travelled woman also hailing from Irish stock, believed in the efficacy of Mrs. Anne's curse and begged her to lift her imprecation, but to no avail. Shortly thereafter, one of Michael's sons was returning home from nearby Shore's Cove when his carriage overturned; several days later, he died in hospital of his injuries. Everyone in the community knew that he had fallen victim to the widow's curse. Shortly thereafter, Michael withdrew his claim and Mrs. Ellen's ownership of the land was secured.

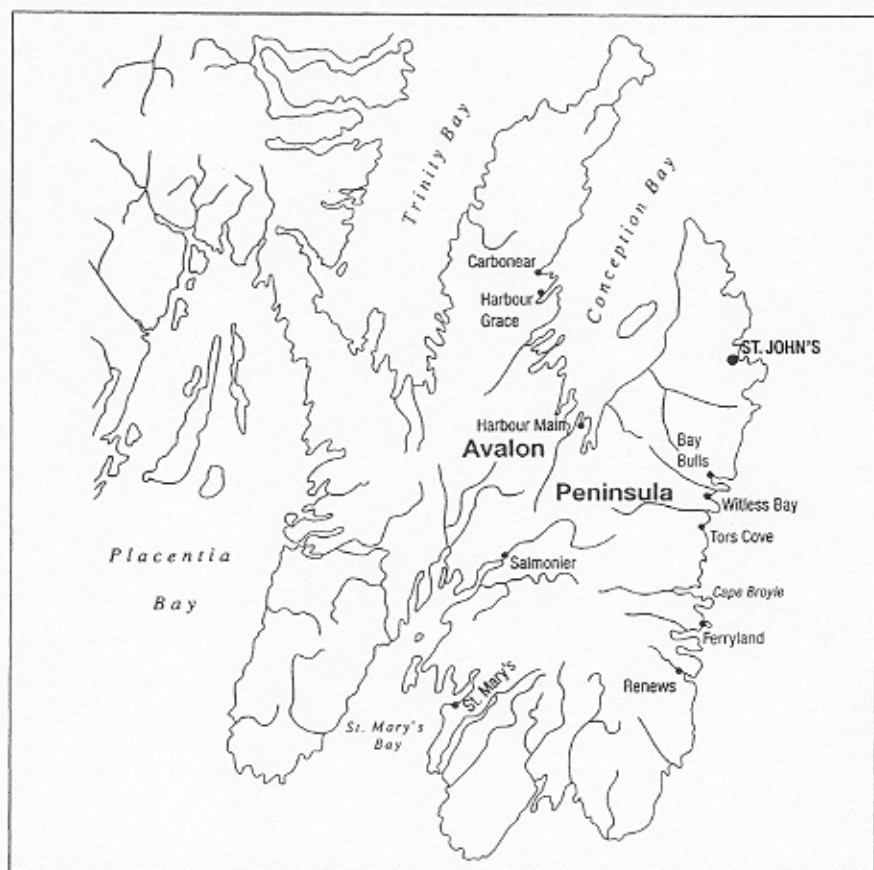
This narrative, paraphrased from a retelling by Mrs. Ellen's great-nephew, illustrates several aspects of the lives of Irish women on the southern Avalon that have also been encountered in documentary evidence: women's ownership of property; women's willingness to defend their property, even in the face of adverse claims from more powerful community members; women's willingness to use, and to submit themselves in turn, to physical force in protecting personal and family interests; women's access to both formal and informal mecha-

nisms of conflict resolution. Findings such as these challenge us to re-examine women's status and authority in Newfoundland fishing communities in earlier days. But perhaps the most striking element of the story (and one not found in traditional historical sources) is the motif of the widow's curse. This is not merely a storyteller's device, but evidence of the existence of a non-Christian system of beliefs and practices in which Irish-Newfoundland women acted as guides and mediators, even into the twentieth century.

Indeed, religion — in both orthodox and informal observance — was an important source of informal female power within the Irish community of the southern Avalon, particularly before the encroachment of ultramontanist and the devotional revolution of the mid to late nineteenth century. Women played an essential role in keeping the Irish-Catholic faith alive in the eighteenth century, when the religion suffered under a penal régime which was similar to that which existed in Ireland and Great Britain. Catholics at Newfoundland (who were almost all Irish during the period) could not hold office within the rudimentary system of governance on the island because of the requirement to swear an oath repudiating transubstantiation. They were not permitted to bear fire arms, hold property, or run public houses; their trade was taxed. Catholics were not permitted to exercise their faith openly until Governor John Campbell issued a Declaration of Liberty of Conscience in 1784. Shortly thereafter, several Catholic missions were established on the island, including one in the district of Ferryland on the southern Avalon, although they continued to be understaffed well into the nineteenth century. Before Campbell's edict, however, the Catholic religion operated underground, with a handful of priests travelling incognito to various harbours to serve the growing Catholic population. The oral tradition of the southern Avalon, for example, tells of a priest who escaped authorities at Witless Bay disguised as a fisherman, and of another priest who had to hide in the cellar of a home in Toad's Cove (now Tors Cove) to avoid detection. Local narratives also tell of midnight meetings at the 'Mass Rock' in

Renews, where Irish Catholics secretly congregated for the saying of the Mass, the Rosary, and other prayers.⁸ The potential consequences for those who harboured priests or permitted the Mass to be said in their homes were heavy fines, house burnings, and deportation. Of course, this penal régime was enforced with varying degrees of rigour, depending on the individual attitudes of governor and surrogates of the day.⁹ (The most concentrated assault occurred in 1755 at Conception Bay under the stewardship of Governor Richard Dorrill and his surrogate, Thomas Burnett. Numerous Catholics in the area were charged with flying the Irish colours, harbouring a priest, and celebrating Mass. Fines were imposed, houses burned, and deportations ordered in Harbour Grace, Carbonear, Harbour Main, Crockers Cove, and Mosquito Cove from August 15 to the end of September 1755.) But the intensity of enforcement increased in proportion to the numbers of Irish arriving in Newfoundland, particularly from the middle decades of the eighteenth century.

There is evidence that with the general scarcity of priests, Irish women in Newfoundland performed Catholic religious rites and assumed other religious authority during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For example, Bishop Michael Fleming complained to his superiors in the 1830s that before the establishment of the Catholic missions, "The holy Sacrament of Matrimony, *debased* into a sort of 'civil contract,' was administered by captains of boats, by police, by magistrates, and *frequently by women*. The Sacrament of Baptism was equally *profaned*... [*italics added*]."¹⁰ Fleming may not have been aware that, even after the establishment of Catholic missions, midwives and other women continued to baptize babies at birth to 'tide them over' until the formal church rite could be performed;¹¹ however, in the same report, Fleming did indicate his dismay that midwives had taken the authority upon themselves to dispense with Church fasts for pregnant women. In addition, Dean Cleary's "Notebook" tantalizingly refers to an incident (c. 1830s-40s) in which the women at St. Mary's took "the sacred fire from the altar to burn a house" — perhaps



In addition, female figures were prominent in the Irish-Catholic hagiocracy of the area — harking back to the powerful position of goddesses and female druids in the pagan Celtic belief system, a status that carried over into early Celtic Christianity. To this very day, the Virgin Mary, St. Brigid, and 'good St. Anne' are a triumvirate to be reckoned with on the southern Avalon. Mary, the mother of Christ, perhaps needs no introduction. St. Anne was the mother of Mary and became the patron saint of housewives in the Catholic calendar of saints. Both Mary and Anne have been represented by the Catholic church as models for self-sacrificing Catholic womanhood — particularly for wives and mothers. St.

a rite of exorcism of some sort — at the behest of their priest, Father James Duffy.¹² Furthermore, the oral tradition indicates that women were the spiritual overseers of Irish-Catholic households. Women, more than men, would have observed the rituals and kept the faith alive before the priests came. Indeed, as one informant stated and most others implied: "If it was left to the men, sure there'd be no religion at all." Every informant agreed that women played a more vital role in transmitting this facet of Irish-Catholic culture to following generations, for "it was women who taught children their prayers." These references suggest that women played an important custodial role in relation to the Catholic faith and, by extension, the identity of the ethno-religious group in the period of early settlement.

Brigid has been dubbed the 'Mary of the Gael' because of the high regard in which she is held not only in Ireland but, indeed, wherever the Irish have migrated, for the cult of St. Brigid has spread with the seeds of the Irish diaspora. Brigid (c. 455-525) was possibly a female druid before she converted to Christianity. She founded a mixed religious community (not unusual for the Celtic world) at Kildare, and some sources indicate that she may have been ordained a priest, and possibly a bishop, by Mel, bishop of Ardagh. She is said to have had intimate relationships with both a male bishop, Conlaed, and a female member of her religious community. When she was brought into the formal Catholic calendar of saints, however, her life story was sanitized: she was made into a model of Christian womanhood, virtue, and

piety; her mixed community was transformed into an exclusively female order of nuns. Aside from this white-washing, her adoption by the Catholic church is additionally intriguing in that it provides an example of formal religion's co-opting aspects of pre-Christian belief systems. The feast day of the holy woman of Kildare is observed on February 1 — which corresponds with *Imbolc*, the ancient Celtic feast of fertility celebrating the coming of spring, the return of light after the dark of winter, and the beginning of the lactation of the ewes. The name of the Celtic goddess of fertility — Brigid.¹³

These holy women were revered by both sexes on the southern Avalon. Men made small crosses and erected them over doorways on the feast of St. Brigid for protection, for example, and Mary's capacity as a powerful intervener between Christ and man was acknowledged by the entire Irish community. But Mary, Brigid, and Anne were (and are) particularly cherished by women — not as the sanitized feminine ideals presented in the Church calendar of saints, but as women who once lived worldly lives and who could therefore empathize with the experiences of other women. When asked if women prayed especially to Mary, Brigid, and Anne, one woman informant advised me, "Oh God, yes, sure I'm still at it."

While Irish women and female saints played an important role in the preservation of Irish Catholicism in the study area, they were also central figures in an informal system of beliefs and practices that had been transported from the home country. On the southern Avalon, as in Ireland, there was an alternative pre-Christian religious system operating in tandem with, and sometimes overlapping, formal Catholic practice.¹⁴ Today, there is a tendency to look at these ancient beliefs and practices as quaint folk traditions — grist for the mill of the modern-day tourism industry. But as Seán Connolly points out in his discussion of the derivative traditions in Ireland, this "body of beliefs and practices ... made up a very real part of the mental world of large numbers of Irish Catholics" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁵

On the southern Avalon (as, I suspect, in Ireland, although Connolly does not discuss this), women were important navigators of this mental landscape.¹⁶

A belief in the occult powers of certain persons was part of the ancient belief system, and Irish women in the area featured prominently as mediators between the natural and the supernatural worlds. Women were proficient in reading tea leaves and telling fortunes. Certain women, as well as men, had special healing powers — the ability to stop blood with a prayer, for example. A widow's curse, by contrast, had the power to do great harm — to wither crops or drive fish from nets, to cause bodily harm or even death. And places like Mrs. Denine's Hill, Peggy's Hollow, and the Old Woman's Pond (named for the women who had died there) had supernatural qualities that could cause horses to pull up in their tracks and grown men to lose their way.

The Irish community on the southern Avalon also believed in supernatural beings, and women were again central, either as symbolic figures or as intermediaries in deflecting evil from family and other loved ones. The 'bibe,' the local variant of the banshee, was a female figure — an ancient crone whose wailing cry in the night was the harbinger of death. So too was the 'old hag' who tormented many a nightmare sufferer in the hours between dusk and dawn. The 'hag' was a supernatural creature who came in the night and sat on the chest of her prey in an effort to impede or stop the victim's breathing. The visitation evoked a choking sensation and left the sufferer in a semi-conscious state from which he or she could only be wakened by calling his or her name backwards. Not all variations of the 'hag' actually involved a female apparition; sometimes she manifested herself more diffusely in the form of a bad nightmare from which the sufferer could not wake, or a feeling of paralysis that kept the victim pinned to the bed. Still, such unfortunates were said to be 'hag-rode' or 'hag-ridden' — rendered insensible by the powers of this nocturnal female phantasm.

Women also featured prominently in fairy lore. On the southern Avalon, the belief in fairies was pervasive. The natural environment was filled with evidence of the existence of the 'little people,' for 'fairy paths,' 'fairy caps,' and 'fairy pipes' proliferated in the woods and meadows just beyond the garden gate. Fairies had the power to replace human children with changelings and render all humans, young and old, senseless or 'fairy-struck.' Infants were most vulnerable to their power, for the little people were known to enter homes and snatch babies from their very cradles. Women played a vital role in protecting their families from these troublesome creatures who moved so easily between the natural and supernatural worlds. It was women, for example, who made and blessed the bread that had special powers to keep the fairies from stealing their children. The bread was blessed by making the sign of the cross over the dough before baking, lightly touching down on the dough four times to mark each extremity of the cross. The practice persists today, especially among older women and even among some middle-aged women. They no longer believe in fairies, but they continue the ritual as an act of general benediction of their families, in the belief that it will help to ward off danger in a more diffuse sense. The same bread could help people who were 'fairy-led' — lost in the woods or back-meadows — find their way home. It was primarily a woman's responsibility to ensure that loved ones, particularly children, who moved beyond the safety of the hearth had blessed bread (a 'fairy bun') on their person. Bread made on Good Friday had special protective powers, and most women ensured that they made a batch on this day specifically for this purpose — a combination of practices from formal Catholicism and the pre-Christian belief system.

Connolly notes that this overlapping of systems was quite common in Ireland. Some customary observances maintained their original content but acquired Catholic labels while others were modified to fit the Catholic religion (e.g., the dedication of ancient holy wells to Christian saints); inversely, some Catholic rituals were incorporated into magical practices (e.g., the use of relics

to verify oaths, or prayers to stop blood). Connolly suggests that the Irish-Catholic laity did not see the two systems as conflicting but, rather, mutually reinforcing as they molded the old and the new into a spiritual *mélange* that lent meaning to their lives.¹⁷

This overlapping of systems can be seen in many customary practices on the southern Avalon, including those in which women featured prominently. As noted, women used a Christian symbol (the sign of the cross) to give protective power to 'fairy buns,' and they made special batches of the bread on Good Friday — one of the most sacred days in the Catholic calendar. The efficacy of women's predictions, particularly the identification of future spouses, was greatest on St. John's Eve and All Souls' Night (Allhallows Eve) in the Catholic calendar — respectively, Midsummer's Eve and the Celtic feast of *Samhain* in the ancient calendar, days for celebrating fertility and harvest. Also, women combined formal and informal systems when they anointed their homes with blessed candle wax and holy water to protect their households from general danger and to ward off specific threats such as thunder and lightning. Holy water was water blessed by a priest or holy person; ideally, it was obtained from a holy well — harking back to the ancient belief in the power of sacred and magical sites. Father Duffy's Well near Salmonier on the southern Avalon provides a local example. Father Duffy, curate and then parish priest at St. Mary's in the 1830s and 1840s, led his congregation in the destruction of a fish flake that had been erected by a local mercantile firm over a beach property upon which Duffy had hoped to build a new Catholic chapel. Government forces were brought in to arrest the ringleaders, but to no avail. Ultimately, however, Duffy and eight men from the community gave themselves up for trial at St. John's. On their way to the capital by foot, they found themselves weary and thirsty, with no source of water in sight. Father Duffy struck the ground with a stick, and water sprang forth at his touch. Belief in the spiritual and curative powers of the water was still pervasive in the 1960s and 1970s, and continues among the older generation today.

Blessed candle wax was obtained from a priest on Candlemas Day, February 2. In his 1819 history of Newfoundland, Anglican missionary Rev. Lewis Anspach wondered at the devout observance of this feast day by Irish Catholics:

... who most eagerly crowd to their respective chapels to receive a few drops from the lighted blessed candles on their hats and clothes, and a piece likewise blessed by their priest, which they carry home and preserve with the most religious care and confidence, as a protection against the influence of evil spirits, etc.¹⁸

The Catholic Church promoted the candles blessed on Candlemas Day as a symbol of Christ, deriving from the use of candles in the catacombs of Rome by early Christians, secretly meeting to practice their faith. According to *The Catholic Book of Knowledge*, the bleached wax of the candles represented "Our Lord's most spotless body" while "the wick represented his Soul," and the flame showed "the union of the nature of God with the nature of man."¹⁹ However, within the Irish community on the southern Avalon, Candlemas was always associated with Mary and a fervent belief in her power to ward off evil. Thus, when women dripped blessed candle wax at the windowsills of their homes, it was Mary's blessing and protection that they sought; and when they dabbed the wax into their children's shoes, they said a prayer to Mary to guide their children's footsteps. According to local belief, Candlemas was the day when Mary was churching. This was an unlikely event for a Jewish woman, but demonstrates the awe in which Mary was held by the Irish community, that a Church feast day for venerating Christ was co-opted to honour his mother instead. A further demonstration of the importance of female saints to the Irish community was the effort to link Brigid, the 'Mary of the Gael,' to the event, even though the two women were not contemporaries. According to local informants, Brigid walked before Mary as she was on her way to be churching, with rays of light pouring from her head to distract attention away from Mary's shame. (The churching of women in the Catholic Church was not

a rite of thanksgiving, as in some Protestant denominations, but a rite of purification for the 'sinfulness' associated with conception.) This, they say, is why St. Brigid's feast day is celebrated the day before Candlemas, on February 1, which, as noted, was also the Celtic feast of *Imbolc*. Here, then, was not only an intertwining of Celtic and Catholic systems, but a conflation of time itself. This tradition of contemporizing Brigid and Mary also existed in Ireland in other variations. One very compelling version held that Brigid was a midwife to Mary and wet nurse to Jesus — making her a favourite of pregnant women nearing their time of delivery (note, again, the connotations of fertility that hark back to the goddess Brigid). Shirley Toulson describes the convention as a "venture into the spiritual, timeless world that makes nonsense of chronology..."²⁰ But it was a tradition, with women at the core, that helped the Irish community on the southern Avalon and in Ireland make sense of their spiritual and natural worlds.

Another striking example of the combination of ancient practices with Catholic belief on the southern Avalon was the wake. Here, women also played an essential role in the rituals associated with death as they ceremonially washed and dressed the dead, sat up with corpses at wakes to guard their spirits overnight along with the men, smoked the 'God be merciful' pipes (these were communal pipes shared by those at the wake-house. After a smoker drew in the smoke, he or she exhaled it with the invocation "God be merciful") and keened at gravesides to mourn the departed and mark their passage into the next life. The corpse was usually laid out by a woman, who bathed the body and then poured the water on the ashes in the fireplace — a ritual that suggests spiritual as well as physical purification. The woman was sometimes assisted by a man, especially in shaving the face if the deceased was male; but the preparation of the dead body was decidedly regarded as women's work in which a man might occasionally help. The body was then dressed in a habit that had been made by a woman, preferably by a member of the family but otherwise obtained from a woman of the community with good

sewing skills. A woman also made the shroud that covered the coffin and the small white cloth that was placed on the face of the corpse before the coffin was closed. Throughout the preparation of the corpse, men would cluster outside, waiting for the laying out to be completed before entering the wake-house — a spatial separation that suggests that they were remote from this process of ritual cleansing and preparation.

As in Ireland, the wake, itself, was a mixed gathering at which stories and practical jokes abounded, the 'God be merciful' pipes were at the ready, and liquor was usually in good supply. (Wakes of those who had died young or under tragic circumstances were perhaps more somber affairs; certainly, they were in the twentieth century.) Generally, women as well as men sat up with the corpse overnight to guard its spirit until burial. It was during the overnight vigil that practical jokes were most likely to occur, with men being the common perpetrators, and women, the usual victims. The oral tradition abounds with stories of women being terrified by the sight of a corpse smoking a pipe, or its chin whiskers moving, or a body sitting up or rolling over in a coffin (thanks to some strategically tied string). While modern-day observers might view these jokes as callous or distasteful, they actually had important functions in helping mourners cope with the loss of loved ones and, in a broader sense, re-affirming life in the face of death.

Both women and men attended the Mass for the dead and the prayers at the graveside; although as the nineteenth century progressed, women's presence at the actual burial was being discouraged by the Catholic Church as being an unsuitable activity for the 'gentler' sex (with limited success on the southern Avalon). Another ritual performed by both sexes was keening — a ritualistic lamenting, both at the wake-house and the graveside, to mourn the departed, placate his or her spirit, and mark his or her transition to the afterlife. Anspach observed the practice among the Irish at Newfoundland, again with some awe and trepidation, describing it as "crying most bitterly, and very often with *dry*

eyes, howling, making a variety of strange gestures and contortions expressive of the violence of their grief ..."²¹ But while keening often struck the outside observer as primitive and strange, it was an accepted mechanism for expressing grief within the Irish community. Furthermore, this characteristic wailing usually punctuated a ritual eulogizing, sometimes in rhyming form that required a fair degree of literary finesse. This aspect of keening was not recorded by Anspach (which is not to say that it did not occur in Newfoundland), but observers in contemporary Ireland commented on this more formal element of keening and the musical quality of the lament. Protestant minister James Hall, generally unsympathetic to Irish-Catholic death rituals, conceded that "Some of the women rhyme extempore and offhand with wonderful facility, particularly when they have got a little (but not too much) whiskey." And others described the "plaintiveness" and "melancholy sweetness" of the crying accompaniment.²² It was a practice, however, that was seen as pagan and heathenish by the Catholic Church, both in Newfoundland and in Ireland, and was aggressively discouraged. By the middle of the nineteenth century, keening was increasingly being represented as self-indulgent caterwauling. (One male informant on the southern Avalon, when asked about the predominant role of women in the ritual, told me, "Yes, some of them were real bawlers.") Thus, while most of the other customary practices related to death persisted well into the twentieth century, this one did not. Its disappearance marks a more general crusade by Catholic clergy to impose middle-class standards of respectability on their Irish congregation, particularly Irish women.

Indeed, there was a concerted effort by the Catholic Church to stop ancient observances and undermine the alternative belief system in both Ireland and Newfoundland in the nineteenth century. Connolly points out that even as early as the eighteenth century, higher Church authorities in Ireland were trying to discourage popular supernaturalism because it threatened Church ambitions for a monopoly on mediation of the supernatural world and provided alternative mechanisms for meeting

the emotional and psycho-social needs of their flock. But many in their congregation were reluctant to part with their customary practices, for they helped to explain "what would otherwise have appeared as a meaningless pattern of good and bad fortune," and enabled people "to feel that they exercised some control over that pattern."²³ Thus, while the Church unleashed the full battery of its "machinery of discipline" — the confessional, public denunciation, exclusion from the sacraments, and even excommunication — against the older practices, it found that these measures were effective only in as much as the congregation was willing to reinforce them through the shunning of non-compliers. Until the people, themselves, wished to abandon the ancient system, it would persist; the clergy could only lead the people where they wanted to go.²⁴

The tide turned for the Catholic Church in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century as adherence to formal religious practices increased markedly. Emmet Larkin has attributed this transition to the "devotional revolution" spearheaded by Cardinal Paul Cullen, with its intensification of Church discipline and promotion of a wider range of devotional practices.²⁵ Certainly, these reforms spurred an evangelical revival within the Irish-Catholic Church. But Connolly very compellingly argues that more significant was the dramatic shift in the profile of the Irish population that occurred during the Great Famine. Before mid-century, an overwhelming majority of the population was comprised of labourers, cottiers, and smallholders — groups that clung tenaciously to the older belief system; after the Famine, this class had been decimated due to death and emigration, and the small farmer class emerged as the backbone of the population, with aspirations to greater respectability that more closely meshed with the wishes of Church authorities. Once again, the priests were leading the people where they wanted to go; the composition of their flock had simply changed.²⁶

The Catholic population at Newfoundland also experi-

enced the impact of the devotional revolution through religious personnel regularly recruited from Ireland; but it did not experience the massive demographic shift that Ireland underwent at mid-century. As the nineteenth century progressed into the twentieth, many Catholics within rural, plebeian culture continued their customary practices in tandem with formal religion, and women's roles in this alternative system — as symbolic figures and as interpreters of the supernatural world — continued. But this alternative female power was perceived by Church authorities as competing with, not complementary to, the Church's own status as mediators of the supernatural. It would be discouraged within an effort to impose Church and middle-class notions of respectability on the congregation in general, and feminine ideals of domesticity and dependence on Catholic women in particular.

This campaign began on the southern Avalon with the establishment of the Catholic mission at Ferryland. In 1789, the newly arrived parish priest, Father Ewer, expressed pastoral concern about the irregularity of women's marital arrangements in the area, complaining to Archbishop Troy in Dublin that:

The magistrates had for custom here, to marry, divorce & remarry again different times, & this was sometimes done without their knowledge, so that there are women living here with their 4th husband each man alive & form different families in repute. I would wish to know if these mariages are but simple contracts confirmed & dissolved by law, or the sacrament of matrimony received validly by the contracting partys. If the latter it will be attended with much confusion in this place, with the ruin of many families & I fear the total suppression of us all as acting against the government ...²⁷

What Ewer was observing were frequent incidents of common-law relationships and informal marriages, separations, and divorces in the area — part of a marital regime that kept fairly loose reins on female sexuality

and, in effect, provided freedom for a number of women from the repercussions of coverture (the legal principle of 'marital unity' whereby a married woman's identity was subsumed by her husband's). Intriguingly, Ewer framed the problem primarily in terms of women's marrying multiple partners; apparently, the men's role in these irregular arrangements was not of equal concern. With the priests, then, came a concerted effort to bring women into formalized marriages within the precincts of the Church; and as their efforts met with increasing success (as evidenced by the parish records available from the 1820s onwards), the options of cohabitation and informal separation and divorce disappeared.²⁸ A dichotomized construction of woman as respectable wife and mother or temptress Eve was also part of Church discourse. Thus, with the priests came the practice of churching women after childbirth: a perfunctory, shady ritual — usually a few prayers mumbled at the back door of the priest's residence over a woman who had to be 'purified,' regardless of marital status, for the 'sin' of conceiving a child. With the priests also came a more systematic shaming of unwed mothers and adulterous wives — reflecting a double sexual standard that laid the 'sin' of pre- and extra-marital sexual relationships overwhelmingly at the feet of 'unchaste' women. Particularly in terms of illegitimacy, single mothers were punished more harshly than fathers, suffering public humiliation, even ostracism, as they were denounced from the altar and denied (either for a limited period of public penance, or indefinitely) churching and the sacraments.²⁹

Church efforts to control 'unruly' womanhood gained momentum after Bishop Michael Fleming took over the reins in the 1830s. The monitoring of female respectability was the main goal in Fleming's decision to bring the Presentation nuns to Newfoundland from Galway in 1833. In his 1837 report to Propaganda Fide, he expressed his abhorrence of the way in which "the children of both sexes should be moved together pell-mell" in the island's schools and found their intermingling to be "dangerous" and "impeding any improvement of mor-

als."³⁰ In a later letter to Father O'Connell, he explained his urgency in sponsoring the sisters' mission, even at considerable personal cost: "I felt the necessity of withdrawing female children from under the tutelage of men," he wrote, "from the dangerous associations which ordinary school intercourse with the other sex naturally exhibited," in order to protect "that delicacy of feeling and refinement of sentiment which form the ornament and grace of their sex." In separate schools, the nuns could "fix ... [their] character in innocence and virtue," prepare them for motherhood and domesticity, and lead them to their destiny as moral guardians of their families. A curriculum that included knitting, netting, and plain and fancy needlework would ease the transition from work on flakes and in gardens to pursuits more properly reflecting womanly respectability. And "solidly instructed in the Divine precepts of the Gospel," they would abandon the ancient customary practices that were an alternate source of female power.³¹

The Presentation sisters did not actually arrive in communities on the southern Avalon until the 1850s and 1860s. But the effort to circumscribe women's lives within the parameters of middle-class ideology had begun with the arrival of sanctioned Catholicism, and was articulated as early as Father Ewer's expression of concern about women's living arrangements. The endeavour intensified as the nineteenth century unfolded, and some inroads were being made by the 1830s, when then parish priest Father Timothy Browne mounted a shaming campaign against a local woman, Peggy Mountain of Ferryland, for suspected marital infidelity. Over the course of several months, he repeatedly denounced her and convinced the local community to shun her (albeit reluctantly on their part) for an alleged transgression that would have been readily tolerated in the area not many years before. Ultimately, he succeeded in hounding her out of the district.³²

Within the framework of Catholic orthodoxy, the denial of female sexuality, the celebration of selfless mother-

hood, and the increasing pressure on women to transform their homes into spiritual havens, removed from the outside world, were impelling women to retire into genteel domesticity and respectability. Still, Church constructions of femininity met with resistance from the local Irish community because they clashed with the realities of plebeian women's lives. On the southern Avalon (as elsewhere in Newfoundland fishing communities), the continuing need for women's work in the household production unit of the fishery and their continuing status and authority in family and community acted as a counterweight. Because the southern Avalon remained a pre-industrial society into the twentieth century, plebeian women's status did not undergo the erosion experienced by women in rural Ireland, where the masculinization of agricultural work and dairying and the industrialization of cottage industries led to the devaluation of women's labour, while the collapse of the potato culture led to a depreciation of women's worth as reproducers.³³ Along the southern Avalon, women's status as essential co-producers in the fishing economy, as well as reproducers of family work units within that economy, remained intact, and they continued to wield significant influence in family and community well into the twentieth century. And within the realm of belief systems, formal and informal, the old hag and St. Brigid continued to fend off the incursions of an increasingly patriarchal Church.

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Notes

¹For a discussion of Irish migrations to Newfoundland in general, see various writings of John J. Mannion: "The Irish Migrations to Newfoundland" (Unpub. Summary of a Public Lecture delivered to the Newfoundland Historical Society, St. John's, October 23, 1973); "The Impact of Newfoundland on Waterford and its Hinterland in the Eighteenth Century" (Paper delivered at the Annual Conference of Irish Geographers, University College, Galway, April 22, 1977); "Introduction" in John J. Mannion, ed., *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography, Social and Economic Papers No. 8* (St. John's: Institute for Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), 5-9; and "Tracing the Irish: A Geographical Guide," *The Newfoundland Ancestor*, 9:1 (Spring, 1993), 4-18.

²See: C.O. 194 Series, Governors' Annual Returns of the Fisheries and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the 1790s and early 1800s; and the Newfoundland Census, 1845.

³See, for example, Father Thomas Ewer to Archbishop Troy, September 20, 1796, in Cyril Byrne, ed., *Gentlemen-Bishops and Faction Fighters: The Letters of Bishops O Donel, Lambert, Scallan and Other Irish Missionaries* (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1984), 140-2. See also RC Archives at St. John's [RCASJ], 103/26, Bishop Michael A. Fleming Papers: "The State of the Catholic Religion in Newfoundland Reviewed in Two Letters by Monsignor Fleming to P. John Spratt," 1836, 91; and Monsignor Michael Fleming, *Report of the Catholic Mission in Newfoundland in North America*, submitted to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda (Rome: Printing Press of the Sacred Congregation, 1837), 39. And see Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador [PANL], MG 598, Society for the Preservation of the Gospel Collection [SPG]: "C" Series, Box 1, f. 56, Petition of the Inhabitants of Bay Bulls for a clergyman, October 19, 1773; "C" Series, Box 1A/18, f. 180, Rev. John Dingle to Rev. Doctor Morris, Secretary to the SPG, November 22, 1801; "E" Series, n.f., Report on the Diocese of Newfoundland, Mission of Ferryland, 1845; and "G" Series, vol. 1, f. 159, Bishop Edward Feild to Rev. Ernest Hawkins, November, 1845.

⁴All these themes are discussed more thoroughly in the writer's Ph.D. thesis, in progress.

⁵For a discussion of the status of women in rural Ireland, see: L. A. Clarkson, "Love, Labour and Life: Women in Carrick-on-Suir in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Irish Economic and Social History*, XX (1993), 18-24; Mary Daly, "Women in the Irish Workforce from Pre-industrial to Modern Times," *Saothar*, 7 (1981), 74-82. Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); David Fitzpatrick, "The Modernisation of the Irish Female," in Patrick O'Flanagan, Paul Ferguson, and Kevin Whelan, eds., *Rural Ireland: Modernisation v. Change, 1600-1900* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987); and Janet A. Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989).

⁶Clarkson, "Love, Labour and Life," 30.

⁷Unless otherwise specified, the information from the oral tradition in this paper is taken from a series of interviews that were conducted by the writer in 1999 with informants from six communities in the study area.

⁸Similar anecdotes also appear in: Rev. M. F. Howley, *Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland* (Boston: Doyle and Whittle, 1888. Reprinted Belleville, ON: Mika Publishing, 1971), 181; RCASJ, 103/32, Fleming Papers, Dean Patrick Cleary [parish priest, Witless Bay], "A note of church history" [Dean Cleary's "Notebook"], 1784-1850, 4, 6-7, 18; and Frank Galgay, Michael McCarthy, Sr. Teresina Bruce, and Sr. Magdalen O'Brien, *A Pilgrimage of Faith: A History of the Southern Shore from Bay Bulls to St. Shott's*, Frank Galgay, ed. (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, 1983), 27 and 65.

⁹See various orders in PANL, GN 2/1/A, 2/202, 251-264/1755.

See also Cyril Byrne, "The Penal Laws in Newfoundland," *An Nasc*, 12 (Winter 1999), 7-12 and 37.

¹⁰RCASJ, 103/26, Bishop Fleming, "State of the Catholic Religion," 90.

¹¹This information comes from the oral tradition.

¹²RCASJ, 103/32, Dean Cleary's "Notebook," 28.

¹³See: Peter Berresford Ellis, *Celtic Women: Women in Celtic society and literature* (London: Constable, 1995), 27-29 and 146-150; and Shirley Toulson, *The Celtic Year: A Month-by-Month Celebration of Celtic Christian Festivals and Sites* (Shaftesbury; Rockport; Brisbane: Element, 1996), 73-81.

¹⁴In the following discussion, unless otherwise stated, information on the pre-Christian religious system in Ireland is taken from S. J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982). Information on the corresponding system on the southern Avalon comes primarily from oral interviews conducted in 1999. Some additional information on customary practices associated with death derives from undergraduate papers at Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, particularly: Zita Johnson, "Calendar Customs and Rites of Passage at Renewals" (ms 68-011D, unpub. research paper, MUN, 1967-1968), 30; and Andrew O'Brien, "Wake, Funeral and Burial Customs in Cape Broyle" (ms 68-016C, unpub. research paper, MUN, 1967-1968), 7-10.

¹⁵Connolly, *Priests and People*, 100.

¹⁶The following discussion focuses on aspects of the system that had specifically female elements. It does not include the myriad other beliefs and practices in which men and women participated equally — e.g., the belief in omens and good luck charms.

¹⁷Connolly, *Priests and People*, 119-20.

¹⁸Rev. Lewis A. Anspach, *A History of the Island of Newfoundland Containing a Description of the Island, the Banks, the Fisheries, Trade of Newfoundland, and the Coast of Labrador* (London: Anspach, 1819), 474.

¹⁹Rev. Leonard Boase, ed., *Catholic Book of Knowledge* (London: Virtue and Company, 1961. Reprinted Chicago: Catholic Home Press, 1962), vol. 3, 262.

²⁰Toulson, *The Celtic Year*, 80.

²¹Anspach, *History*, 472-3.

²²Connolly, *Priests and People*, 157-8.

²³Connolly, *Priests and People*, 119.

²⁴Connolly, *Priests and People*, chapter 3, particularly 119-34.

²⁵Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75," in Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism*, (New York: Arno Press, 1976. *The Irish-Americans* series. Lawrence J. McCaffrey, ed.).

²⁶Connolly, *Priests and People*, chapter 7. Larkin also acknowledges this demographic shift, but places much greater weight on Cullen's efforts in dramatically increasing adherence to formal Catholic practices; see Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution."

²⁷Father Ewer to Archbishop Troy, November 30, 1789, in Byrne, *Gentlemen Bishops*, 77-9.

²⁸At the same time, similar pressures to formalize relationships were being brought to bear on unwed couples in Ireland. See Connolly, *Priests and People*, 179-82.

²⁹The information on churching and shaming comes from the oral tradition of the area. Connolly notes that in Ireland, similarly, the greatest disgrace for illegitimacy was borne by the mother and, to a lesser extent, the child. Connolly, *Priests and People*, 188-9.

³⁰RCASJ, 103/26, Fleming, *Report [1837]*, 3-4.

³¹Michael Anthony Fleming, "Letter on the State of Religion in Newfoundland," January 11, 1844, addressed to the Very Rev. Dr. A. O'Connell, Dublin (Dublin: James Duffy, 1844), 18. See also Galgay et al., *Pilgrimage of Faith*, chapter 9.

³²See: PANL, GN 5/4/C/1, Ferryland, Box 1, file, ff. 57-60 and 64 -1, *Peggy Mountain v. Michael Mountain*, December 23, 29 and 30, 1834, January 2, 12, and 19, and February 23, 1835; and Maritime History Archives, MF-053, Robert Carter Diary, December 30 and 31, 1834, and January 1, 5, and 12, March 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 23, and 28, and May 6 and 9, 1835.

³³See, for example: Daly, "Women in the Irish Workforce"; Diner, *Erin's Daughters*; Fitzpatrick, "Modernisation of the Irish Female"; and Nolan, *Ourselves Alone*.

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CITATION FOR THE CONFERRAL OF TERRENCE MICHAEL PUNCH WITH THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS (HONORIS CAUSA)

Cyril J. Byrne

*Terry Punch has done an enormous amount of research and created hundreds of genealogical charts on Irish families in Halifax. He is the author of two important works on the Halifax Irish community: **Some Sons of Erin in Nova Scotia** (Petheric Press, Halifax, 1980) and **Irish Halifax: The Immigrant Generation, 1815-1859** (Volume 5 of the Ethnic Heritage Series published by the International Education Centre, Saint Mary's University, 1981). Terry Punch received his honorary doctorate from Saint Mary's University at Spring Convocation, May 2000.*

It is an honour and a great personal pleasure to present Terrence Michael Punch as a candidate for a degree *honoris causa*. Since graduating from Saint Mary's in 1964 with a baccalaureate in arts, Terry Punch has further distinguished himself academically with a degree in Education and two earned Masters degrees in History from Saint Mary's and Dalhousie Universities respectively. With such an academic profile it was natural that Terry who is a born teacher would enter the teaching profession in which he has had an illustrious career in the Halifax City Schools from 1965 until his retirement in 1994. His years in the History Department at Saint Patrick's High School were ones of extraordinary achievement as he created programs and instructed, cajoled and encouraged a number of generations of students in the mystery of history. So many encomiums of his prowess as a teacher at Saint Pat's have come from former students that anyone less modest than Terry would walk away with a swelled head. An illustrious career as a teacher does not come without great work, work sufficient to fill any empty hours a person might have available. However, Terry was a devoted husband and parent as well, giving himself characteristically with great energy and generosity to the multiplicity of tasks these roles required. We honour him for the way he selflessly addressed himself to this very full and demanding life, overwhelmed for a time by great personal anguish and sorrow.

However, there is yet another very important dimension to Terry Punch which grew out of his love of family and his love of history and that is his multifaceted career as a family historian and genealogist. Beginning in his

very early years, Terry began probing into his own family's history and ethnicity which ultimately encompassed the Irish community of Halifax and Nova Scotia for which he painstakingly amassed a mammoth archive of materials which would do credit to a whole battery of scholars. In enjoying many happy hours with Terry in his office crammed and stuffed with books, files and miscellaneous notes on various bits of paper, I have often felt as if I were in the presence of that great creator of the first English dictionary, Dr. Samuel Johnson, who possessed a similar office and similar qualities of mind to Terry's: an open humanity and a generosity of spirit.

Not being content with merely creating genealogies as lists of individuals names about whom nothing but the names was known, Terry Punch has concerned himself with the social and psychic dimensions of human history long before family history became fashionable or even acceptable in the groves of academe. The lengthy list of his publications, the file of societies of which he is a member and the honours he has earned both in Canada and abroad attest to both the scope of his interests and the respect with which his scholarship has been greeted in all corners of the English-speaking world and beyond. One such achievement beyond the English-speaking pale is his considerable work in identifying the areas of Germany whence so many Nova Scotian ancestors derive. In this important work he began by learning both German and the difficult German scribal hands which enabled him both to read eighteenth century German documents and correspond with contemporary German scholars. Not narrowed but broadened by his study of the Irish and German forebears of Nova Scotians, Terry

Punch's work has spread out to encompass a world of family history scholarship which, as many of you will know from his perennial CBC Radio broadcasts, is encyclopedic and from which he draws with a facility making one marvel as his mind's capacity for recall. For one who is so given to a sense of our past and of the values available therein to gain a deeper understanding of our individual and community identity, it is appropriate that the asking for the conferral of this degree be in the ancient language of the University. *Reverendissime Cancellarie, praesento vobis, Terrentium Michaelum Punch, magistrum in artibus, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse, qui admittatur ad gradum Doctoratus in Literis humanioribus, idque tibi fide mea testur ac spondeo totique Academiae Sanctae Mariae.*

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