

# The Irish Road to South America: Nineteenth-Century Travel Patterns from Ireland to the Río de la Plata region

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## Abstract

The nineteenth-century Irish emigration to Argentina has been studied from different perspectives. There is a growing number of historical, demographic and cultural studies focusing on diverse aspects of this migration, which together with Quebec and Mexican Texas, produced the only Irish settlements in non English-speaking territories. However, with a few exceptions, most of these studies concentrate on the settlement and the life of the emigrants from the time they arrived to their destination, thus neglecting the preparations for their journey and the material details of the voyage. While this essay deals primarily with the Río de la Plata region, including the pampas of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, many of its conclusions may be projected to other parts of the continent.

How did the Irish emigrants travel from their townlands and rural villages to the most important ports in Ireland and England, and from there to South American ports? What means of transport did they use on land and sea, and how had those vehicles changed with the technical advances of the century? How expensive were the fares and how comfortable was the accommodation? Which were the most common emigrant ships to South America and what were their usual travel patterns?

Keywords: *Irish migrations, Latin America, Nineteenth-century travel*

In order to answer these questions, we need to recall some facts of the Irish emigration to Argentina. During the nineteenth century, forty to forty-five thousand emigrants left Ireland to settle in Argentina and Uruguay.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 20,000 re-emigrated to the United States, Australia, Ireland or other areas, and 20,000 settled in the country. A majority of the emigrants bound to Argentina came from the Irish Midlands (Westmeath, Longford and Offaly) and from Co. Wexford. According to Peadar Kirby, they "came from two clearly defined areas, south-east of a line from Wexford Town to

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<sup>1</sup> According to Sabato and Korol "between 10,500 and 11,500 Irish immigrants settled in Argentina in the nineteenth century" (Sabato and Korol, 1981: 48). Patrick McKenna, based on sources indicating the existence of significant segments not recorded by the other authors, argued that the numbers were significantly higher, 40-45,000 emigrants. He said that Sabato and Korol's calculation "was based on the assumption that Coghlan (1982) captured 100% of the Irish emigrants in his work on the census of 1869 and 1855. They analysed Coghlan's figures using statistics to build in assumptions for mortality and out-migration and further in-migration up to 1895 to arrive at their figure. The fact that there is such a difference between their figures and mine (especially when I allow for the possibility that my figures may be low) gives some indication of the room which exists for argument about the numbers of Irish who emigrated to Argentina during the nineteenth century" (McKenna, 1994: 210).

Kilmore Quay in Wexford, and from a quadrangle on the Longford/Westmeath border stretching roughly from Athlone to Edgeworthstown, to Mullingar and to Kilbeggan. Virtually the whole population surrounding the town of Ballymore, which stands roughly at the centre of this quadrangle, emigrated to Buenos Aires in the 1860s" (Kirby 1992: 105).<sup>2</sup>

As early as 1842, during his ride through the Buenos Aires province, William McCann estimated that "at least three-fourths of the [Irish] emigrants are from the County Westmeath" (McCann 1853: 195). In his study of the Irish migration to Argentina, Patrick McKenna argues that "the numbers from Westmeath and south Longford were to make up about two-thirds of the total number of Irish emigrants to Argentina" (McKenna 1992: 69). The same author, based on Coghlan 1987, estimated that 43.35% emigrants were from Westmeath, 14.57% from Longford and 15.51% from Wexford (81). These were the typical origins of the emigrants who established themselves in Argentina until September 1889, when poor urban families and labourers from Dublin, Cork and Limerick were induced by Argentine government agents to emigrate to Buenos Aires in the steamer *City of Dresden*.

I will firstly analyze the inland transportation patterns of Midlands and Wexford emigrants, then the journey to Liverpool and the stay at this port, followed by the journey to the Río de la Plata.<sup>3</sup>

## Emigrating from the Midlands

In general, early migrants were "the younger, non-inheriting sons, and later daughters, of the larger tenant farmers and leaseholders. Usually, they were emigrating from farms which were in excess of twenty acres, and some were from farms considerably larger" (McKenna 1992: 71). These farms were typically located in the rural areas of Ballymahon, Abbeyshrule, or Edgeworthstown (Longford), Multyfarnham, Ballinacarrigy, Moyvore, Ballymore, and Drumraney (Westmeath), and Kilmore, Kilrane and other towns in Co. Wexford. notable

In these areas, and in those social segments, nineteenth-century Argentina enjoyed at that time a reputation similar to that of the United States. The real or perceived prospect of acquiring land in Argentina (generally called at that time Buenos Ayres or the Provinces of the River Plate) was a powerful appeal to children of tenant farmers in Ireland, who would never have other means to climb the social ladder. As Graham Davis put it for the Irish colonists from Wexford in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas:

Where previous histories have fostered an image of oppressed victims driven into exile from their native land, I argue that emigrants were able and willing to make their own choices, weighing up future prospects against their own situation. These emigrants were predominantly small farmers from some of the most affluent parts of Ireland and possessed

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<sup>2</sup> Ballymore was once known as "the village with two ends and no middle": all the houses in the middle disappeared after their owners emigrated to Argentina (Irish Parliamentary Debates – Official Report: Dáil Éireann - Volume 433 - 08 July, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes consider a river, an estuary, a gulf or a marginal sea, the Río de la Plata is formed by the confluence of the Paraná and Uruguay rivers, and empties into the Atlantic Ocean. For those who consider it a river, it is the widest river in the world, with a maximum width of 220 kilometres at its mouth. The major ports and capital cities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo are located on its western and northern shores. Río de la Plata has been rendered as *River Plate* in British English and *La Plata River* in other English-speaking countries (Wikipedia entry "Río de la Plata"). A prominent sports club in Argentina is Club Atlético River Plate, founded in 1901 within the context of English-speaking seamen and stevedores in La Boca port.



was the preferred port during the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Fifty-four percent of 6,447 Irish emigrants who arrived in Buenos Aires in the period 1822-1929 boarded at Liverpool, followed by Queenstown (today's Cobh), with 28 percent (*Irish Passengers to Argentina 1822-1929*, Society for Irish Latin American Studies, 2006).

The land distance from Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, to Dublin is 81 kilometres, and other ports are farther than Dublin: Cobh (220 km), Rosslare (200 km), Belfast (220 km) and Larne (130 Km). In order to reach Dublin, there were two major means of transport for the typical emigrants to Argentina, canal barges towed by horses from 1806, and later, from 1848, the railway. Of course, poorer emigrants would use less expensive means or just walk to save the fare. But the greater part of the emigrants paid their tickets, some of which were paid by their new employers in Buenos Aires. In 1806, the Royal Canal reached Mullingar from Dublin. The Longford branch was opened in January, 1830. In total, the Royal Canal had an extension of 145 km from Dublin to River Shannon, including 46 locks.<sup>5</sup>



*Figure 2. The Royal Canal at Scally's Bridge in Abbeyshrule, Co. Longford (author's photo, 2002).*

Between 1806 and 1848, emigrants from counties Westmeath and Longford "would have travelled to Dublin by canal boat. The journey time from Mullingar to Dublin was around thirteen hours in the early years of the canal service. By the 1840s, faster boats (known as the "fly boats") cut journey times to eight hours" (Illingworth 2002). Canal barges lumbered sedately at five or six kilometres per hour. For about thirty years following its completion the Royal Canal enjoyed modest success. Goods traffic "built up to 134,000 tons annually by 1833, but this was far short of the business which the Grand Canal was attracting. Traffic on the upper reaches of the Shannon was disappointing and the anticipated trade from Lough Allen did not materialise. However,

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<sup>4</sup> In 1848, a family called Cunningham from near Ballymore sailed to Argentina from Southampton (Illingworth 2002).

<sup>5</sup> A restoration scheme is in progress and the section Dublin-Abbeyshrule is again navigable by small boats.

a branch line to Longford town was completed in 1830 and hotels were built at Broadstone in Dublin and Moyvalley in Co. Kildare" (O.P.W. Waterways 1996: 19).

The journey was relatively comfortable, even if the traveller had to sleep on deck. But as emigration increased during the Famine years, the boats were often overcrowded. In 1845, six passengers died when one boat capsized in Longford Harbour. Some emigrants would have also travelled by the Grand Canal, with a branch to Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath, which was older and busier than the Royal Canal. In Kathleen Nevin's semi-fictionalised memoirs *You'll Never Go Back*, the character Kate Connolly recalls how she emigrated in the 1880s from Granard, Co. Longford, to Argentina. She travelled in the company of her cousin Bessie and friend Nancy Dwyer. They went to Athlone, and from there to Dublin. The narrator does not mention the means of transport they used, but they could have gone from Athlone to Kilbeggan or Tullamore and sailed down the Grand Canal (Nevin 1946: 12).

Edward Robbins, who emigrated to Argentina in 1849, wrote that "at that period [1837], there were a Mail coach, a Day coach and a Canal coach passing and repassing through the town daily" (Robbins 1860). According to an 1807 passage-boat timetable published by the Royal Canal House, there were two boats daily. The first one "will leave Mullingar every morning at five o'clock, and arrive at the Broad Stone Hotel [Dublin] at five o'clock in the evening and the second one will leave Mullingar every day at two o'clock, and arrive at half past six o'clock the same evening at Moyvalley Hotel [Co. Kildare], from whence she will start at four o'clock every morning, and arrive at Broad Stone Hotel, Dublin, at half past eleven o'clock same day." The same timetable includes the fare for the section Mullingar-Dublin (65.2 km): 12s-6d in first cabin and 7s-7d in second cabin. Departing from Mullingar, a passenger would have passed by the following stations: Thomastown, Boyne Aqueduct (over river Boyne), Moyvalley Hotel, Newcastle, Ferns (17th Lock), Kilcock, Maynooth, Rye Aqueduct, arriving at the Grand Canal basin in Dublin.

Writers at the turn of the century had a particular fascination with some enclaves of the Royal Canal. "The Irish/Argentine William Bulfin, the intrepid traveller and editor of *The Southern Cross* approached Abbeyshrule [Co. Longford] by the line from Tenelick. He stopped to chat to a denizen of the locality and realised to his astonishment that he was in the famous Mill Lane of which he had heard many a time and oft far away on *The Pampas in corral or chiquero* when the sun-tanned exiles of Longford and Westmeath recalled some story of Abbeyshrule and its Mill Lane" (McGoey 1996).

Baggage used by the emigrants would have been trunks and boxes for well-off travellers and simple bags for the poor emigrants. Kate Connolly in *You'll Never Go Back* mentions that her party's baggage was a couple of trunks, and that Dick Delaney, the sign painter, "painted our names on both. I remember how just the two boxes looked, standing on the kitchen floor before the dresser, with "The Misses Connolly – Buenos Ayres" on one, and "Miss Dwyer – Buenos Ayres" on the other. [...] Nancy had said she wanted to see her name on a trunk, no matter whose trunk it was, so we agreed, and she was wild with delight at the sight of it" (Nevin 1946: 12).

In October 1848, heralding the decline of the importance of the Royal Canal, the Midland Great Western Railway Company (MGWR) reached Mullingar and in August, 1851, the line extended to Athlone. The railway age "signalled the demise of the canal. In 1845 the railway company purchased the entire canal for £298,059, principally to use the property to lay a new railway. It was legally obliged to continue the canal business, but inevitably traffic fell into decline. Passenger business ceased totally

within a few years and by the 1880s the annual goods tally was down to 30,000 tons" (O.P.W. Waterways 1996: 19).



Figure 3. Mullingar Railway Station (author's photo, 2002).

By November 1855, the railway reached Longford. From 1848 onwards, the railway replaced the canal as the main mean of transport to Dublin. In the 1850s, emigrants travelling on the MGWR line had a choice of four trains daily to Dublin. The number of trains to the capital increased in the 1860s with the extension of the line to Galway and Sligo. Journey time to Dublin was around two hours. Those who travelled by third or fourth class would have had an uncomfortable journey: the 1850s fourth class carriages had neither heat nor sanitation, and were little better than cattle trucks, sometimes without seating.

In the Midland Great Western Railway line, the stations between Mullingar and Dublin were Killugan, Hill of Down, Moyvalley, Enfield, Ferns Lock, Kilcock, Maynooth, Leixlip, Luran, Clonsilla and Blanchardstown, with a total distance of 83 kilometres. A timetable sheet of December, 1853, includes six daily trains (arriving at Dublin 5.15 A.M., 9.45 A.M., 11.30 A.M., 2.00 P.M., 9.00 P.M., and 10 P.M.) and two Sunday trains (arriving at Dublin 5.15 A.M. and 10.00 P.M.). Fares were 8s (first class), 6s-6d (second), 4s-9d (third), and 3s (fourth). Most of the emigrants "would have purchased third or fourth class tickets to Dublin" (Illingworth 2001).

Those emigrants who lived at a distance from the railway would take a coach to reach the rail station. The village of Ballymore, which was the epicentre for the Midlands emigration to South America, is about twenty kilometres west of Mullingar on the now road to Athlone. The nearest railway stations "were Athlone and Mullingar, and stage coaches passed through Ballymore on the way to Mullingar and Dublin" (Illingworth 2002). By the late 1840s, *Bianconi* coaches,<sup>6</sup> each capable of carrying up to twenty passengers, provided the means by which emigrants could reach Longford, Mullingar and Athlone from the countryside, and from the small rural villages and townlands of Westmeath and Longford. Smaller stage coaches travelling directly from Athlone and

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<sup>6</sup> Named after Charles Bianconi (*the king of the Irish roads*), who started the first Irish mail coach service in 1815, beginning from the Hearn's hotel in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, to Thurles and Limerick. By 1825, Bianconi had 585 route miles and two decades later he had trebled. In 1836, long cars with twenty passengers capacity were added to the service. He had rivals but, where they often competed with the canal boats, Bianconi tended to run connecting feeder services, a move which enabled him to outstay many other operators.



Mullingar to Dublin were also used by emigrants up until the 1850s. Horse-drawn stagecoaches moved at about twelve kilometres per hour, with frequent stops to rest both horses and passengers, "who sometimes needed it more after long bumpy rides over rough roads" (O'Cleirigh 2002). A traveller who went by coach from Strabane to Enniskillen in 1834 tells that:

At first it drove on at a rapid rate, carrying about twenty-eight passengers, ten inside and eighteen on the outside, noisy and inebriated fellows... My feet had got numb with cold... When we had arrived within two yards of Seein Bridge, between Strabane and Newtownstewart, the lofty vehicle was thrown into the ditch, within two yards of a dangerous and steep bridge. If the vehicle had advanced about three yards further we would have been dashed to death (O'Cleirigh 2002).

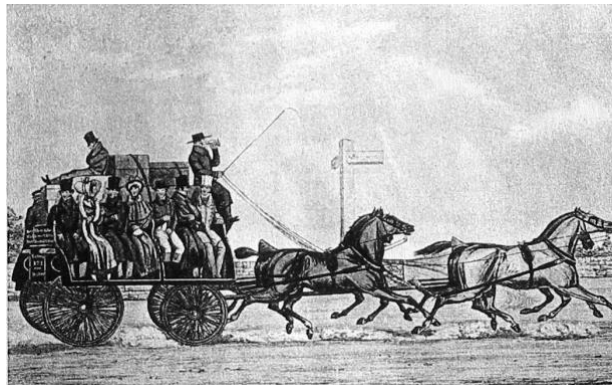


Figure 4. Bianconi coach (Ulster Folk and Transport Museum).

The Bianconi's *Car and Coach Lists* of 1842 includes the timetable of the stagecoaches connected with the Royal Canal boats to Dublin, and intermediate stages. From Ballymahon, the coach departed 4.08 A.M. arriving at Mullingar at 6.11 A.M.

In the 1850s, William Mulvihill of Ballymahon, Co. Longford, was the agent for the River Plate Steamship Company in the Midlands.<sup>7</sup> Prospective emigrants would buy their tickets from Mulvihill's grocery store. From Mullingar, the emigrants could book a direct rail plus boat ticket to Liverpool for £2-2s. "The fact that emigrants [to South America] were advised to bring a revolver as well as a saddle may not have deterred farmers who had been forced to protect their stocks from starving labourers" (O'Brien 1999: 55). This would indicate that some of the emigrants bound to Argentina – who were able to pay a high fare to South America – were also able to ride a horse, a skill that would be very useful for them in the Argentine pampas.

Once in Dublin, emigrants would stay a night at a local hotel. The Broad Stone Hotel was the establishment of the Royal Canal Company in Dublin. In October 1807, under the management of John Rooney, the fare for one bed for one person in a room containing two or more beds was 2s-2d.

In order to cross the Irish Sea from Dublin to Liverpool, there were at least three boats daily and the journey took twelve to fourteen hours. There was a fully developed shipping trade between Ireland and Liverpool. The first quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed technological developments in the application of steam power to

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<sup>7</sup> Under "Mulvihill, William" there are two entries in Leahy 1996: 166 (*County Longford Survivors of the Great Famine: a Complete Index to Griffith's Primary Valuation of Co. Longford 1854*), and one in Leahy 1990: 151 (*County Longford and its People: an Index to the 1901 Census for County Longford*).

shipping which led to the strengthening of the connection between Ireland and England. From the 1820s onward, "Liverpool was connected with all the main Irish ports by a fleet of relatively fast, cheap steam vessels, mainly paddle-driven but some screw-driven". The leading company of the Dublin-Liverpool trade was the Dublin and Liverpool Steam Packet Co. According to the company's estimate, "they carried more than 100,000 passengers from June 1853 to June 1854" (Préteseille 1999). The crossing was a traumatic experience for passengers. There was little cabin accommodation. Moreover, "most ships were carrying animals below deck and they were usually taken better care of." William Watson, managing director of the Dublin and Liverpool Steam Packet Company gave evidence when he was questioned by a Parliamentary Committee (Préteseille 1999):

- *If you have both cattle and passengers you give the cattle preference?*
- *We cannot have them both in the same places.*
- *But the cattle would be sheltered, and deck passengers would not be sheltered?*
- Yes

Few ships had steerage accommodations so most passengers had no shelter. They were therefore exposed to the weather and often arrived exhausted, scarcely able to walk. Most of the time, steamers – whose average tonnage was 500 to 700 – were overcrowded. Other emigrants bound to Liverpool sailed in boats headed to Holyhead, and then travelled by stagecoach to Liverpool (about 145 km).

## **Emigrating from Wexford**

Already in the late seventeenth century, Wexford was an international port with heavy trade to Liverpool, Dublin, Bristol, and other ports of the British Isles and the continent. The modern quay front "began to take shape in the early part of the [19<sup>th</sup>] century" (Rossiter 1989: 13). The Quay Corporation was responsible for the maintenance of the many wharfs and quays, as well as the pilotage control, piped water supply, and cleansing of the streets. The Quay Corporation "had the power to levy rates on vessels using the port" (13). Later in the 1830s, "the Redmond family opened a dockyard in Wexford causing Lewis, in his Topography of Ireland to remark: 'Shipping interests have been materially promoted by the construction of a patent slip and shipbuilding yard at the southern end of his embankment'" (14). Wexford town was well connected to the county villages and townlands through Bianconi and carts.

From Wexford Quay there were steamer-boats sailing directly to Liverpool. In 1861, the Wexford Steam-Ship Company sailed "their magnificent paddle steam ships *Troubador* (Capt. Edmond Roach); *Vivandiere* (Capt. Chas. McKenna); *Prince of Wales* (Capt. Wells); or other suitable vessel, weekly between Wexford and Liverpool" (*The People* 28 December 1861). Departures from Wexford were every Thursday at 6.00 A.M. and Saturday at 7.00 A.M., with an estimated sail time of twelve hours. There were accommodations for cabin and deck passengers. Other choice was to sail to Dublin and from there to Liverpool (British & Irish Steam-Packet Co.).



**WEXFORD STEAM-SHIP COMPANY**  
(LIMITED.)

IMPROVED STEAM COMMUNICATION  
BETWEEN  
WEXFORD AND LIVERPOOL.



**T**HE Wexford Steam Ship Company (Limited), will sail their magnificent Paddle Steam Ship "TROUBADOUR," Capt. EDMOND ROACH; "VIVANDIERE," Capt. CHAS. M'KENNA; "PRINCE OF WALES," Capt. WELLS, (or other suitable Vessel), weekly between WEXFORD and LIVERPOOL (unless prevented by any unforeseen occurrence) as follows, with or without Pilots, and liberty to tow vessels:—

FROM WEXFORD,

THURSDAY, 19th DEC., at 8 Morning.  
SATURDAY, 21st do., at 7 Morning.

FROM LIVERPOOL,  
(North West Corner of Clarence Dock.)

TUESDAY, 17th DEC., at 10 Morning.

Superior accommodation both for Cabin and Deck Passengers.

Shippers of Dead Weight and Live Stock are requested to have their Goods at the Packet Wharf, two hours before the advertised time of Sailing, to secure their being forwarded.

For further particulars, apply to W. A. REDMOND, Agent to the Wexford Steam-Ship Company (Limited), Office, 3, Drury-lane, Liverpool; and Steam Packet Office, Wexford. Wexford, 29th Nov., 1861.

Figure 5. Newspaper shipping news (Wexford Town Library).

In the 1880s, Lamport & Holt's agent in Wexford was William Timpson, who would sell tickets to Liverpool with connections to the Río de la Plata sailing every fourteen days (Bassett 1885, 104).

## The Liverpool Experience

A dreadful experience awaited those disoriented Irish arriving in Liverpool in order to get a passage to South America. Indeed, the arrival in Liverpool did not guarantee the next leg of the journey. Some of Liverpool residents were notorious for tricking the inexperienced travellers out of their passage money or even seducing women emigrants into employment in the city's brothels. During the Famine period, "many rural emigrants never escaped the slums of Liverpool. The Irish now had to survive the streetwise con-men and racketeers" (Préteseille 1999). Before getting on board, emigrants had to deal with ship-brokers, runners, boarding-house keepers who overcharged them, keepers of spirit vaults and provision stores who sold them bad food and drink at high prices. They also had to pass a medical inspection.

When arriving at Liverpool, emigrants from Dublin and Wexford landed in Clarence Dock. Since most of the emigrants bound to Argentina would have already purchased their tickets in Ballymahon, Mullingar or Wexford town, their money was secured and just had to take care of their lodging until the boarding time. During the days of sailing ships, vessels were "expected any day now" and, if the wind was against them, they could be up to three weeks late. From the many boarding-houses in Liverpool, those for poor emigrants were to be found in the neighbourhood of Waterloo Dock and northwards of the Clarence Dock, "more especially about Denison Street, Regent Street, Carlton Street, Porter Street, Stewart Street, and Great Howard Street" (Préteseille 1999).



Figure 6. Erskine Nicol (1825-1904), "An Irish Emigrant Landing at Liverpool" 1871 (National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh).

The two biggest boarding houses were run by Frederick Sabel (Union Hotel) and Frederick Marshall, at 28 Moorfield and at Clarence Dock, respectively. In the 1850s, Sabel's charged one shilling a day for bed and three meals. Marshall's charged four pence a night. Most emigrant boarding houses were of the filthiest kind. Emigrants sometimes even had to bed down in cellars that were as destitute of comfort and convenience as they were overcrowded, with the landlord making a profit on each warm body.

From 1851 onwards, before the day of departure, emigrants had to go through a medical inspection by government doctors. The examination was undertaken by government decree to prevent any outbreak of contagious disease on board. However, doctors worked at factory speeds, going automatically through the ritual of examining as many tongues and feeling as many pulses as it was possible to do and still keep within the letter of the law. On Monday, which was the busiest day, sometimes more than 1,000 emigrants were waiting outside the office (known as the Doctor's Shop), in which there were two inspectors. Lodging-house keeper Sabel called this inspection a farce: doctors "start behind a little window, and when the people come before them they say: 'Are you quite well? Show your tongue,' and in the mean time their ticket is stamped" (Préteseille 1999). The stamp proved that the emigrant had been inspected and sometimes as many as 2,000 or 3,000 people were inspected in a day.

Most emigration vessels departed from the Waterloo dock, and "passengers were entitled to board the ship twenty-four hours before departure" (Préteseille 1999). However, since most of the emigrants bound to South America boarded cargo ships, their captains often did not allow the passengers to board until the last minute, when the cargo had finally been stowed in the hold. In fact, the captain often started to move his vessel before emigrants had time to get on board. When the captain was doing so or when the passengers arrived too late (which was quite common), that is to say after the gangplank was raised, then they went to the dock-gate.

The entrance of the dock was narrow and ships were detained there for a short time while other vessels were going out. During that time,

Men, women and children were scrambling up the sides of the ship. One could see hundreds of people confused, screaming. Luggage and boxes were flung aboard, followed by the passengers. When they or their luggage missed the ship and fell into the water there was usually a man in a rowing boat ready to rescue and get his reward. But sadly there was not always someone there to rescue and consequently a few people drowned. Those who did not manage to get onboard at the dock-gate had no choice but to hire a rowing boat to catch up the ship down the river Mersey. The boatmen would not do it for less than half a sovereign (10 shillings). Getting on board a ship was really rough, even for the cabin passengers (Préteseille 1999).

There were usually a large number of spectators at the dock-gates to witness the final departure of the ship. The sad scene of the departure was described in the *Illustrated London News* in 1850: "The most callous and indifferent can scarcely fail, at such a moment, to form cordial wishes for the pleasant voyage and safe arrival of the emigrants, and for their future prosperity in their new home. As the ship is towed out, hats are raised, handkerchiefs are waved, and a loud and long-continued shout of farewell is raised from the shore, and cordially responded to from the ship. It is then, if at any time, that the eyes of the emigrants begin to moisten" (Préteseille 1999).

TIMPSON, Watchmaker, Wexford.

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**The Pacific Steam Navigation Company's Steamers**

Valparaiso, 3,575 tons, Cotopaxi, 4,028 tons, Aconcagua, 4,112 tons, and several other Steamers from 2,877 tons to 4,112 tons register, sail with Royal Mails and Passengers every fortnight from Liverpool for Rio de Janeiro, Monte Video (for Buenos Ayres); Sandy Point (for Falkland Is); Valparaiso and West Coast Ports. 1st Class, £30 to £75; 2nd Class, £20 to £50; 3rd Class, £10.

Apply to A. M. SAUNDERSON, Manager and Secretary, Liverpool; or to WILLIAM TIMPSON, Agent, Wexford.

**Liverpool, Brazil and River Plate Steamers**

Galileo, 2,233 tons, Biela, 2,169 tons, Holbein, 2,053 tons, Orion, 2,257 tons, Maskelyne, 2,605 tons, Hevelius, 2,169 tons, Cuvier, 2,300 tons register, sail every fourteen days with First and Third Class Passengers for Monte Video and Buenos Ayres; once each month for Bahia and Rio de Janeiro and to Rosario without change. 1st Class, £25 to £30; 3rd Class, £10 to £15.

Apply to LAMPORT & HOLT, Liverpool; or to WILLIAM TIMPSON, Agent, Wexford.

Figure 7. Bassett's Wexford County Guide and Directory, 1885 (Wexford Town Library).

## Trans-Atlantic Crossing

Once the emigrants managed to get on board the ships, the following stage in the emigration process was to cross the Atlantic ocean. The Irish emigrants who departed from Liverpool, sailed back the way they had come, towards Ireland, with the winds dictating their routes: north around Mallin Head, or south by the Waterfront Estuary, Cove and Cape Clear. The sea crossing was not an easy voyage. It was long, taking between one and three months, and the sea was a strange environment to most emigrants, especially for those from rural areas in Longford and Westmeath.<sup>8</sup>

Aboard many ships bound to North America the risks were so great that there were numerous deaths, and these ships became known as "coffin ships". There is no

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<sup>8</sup> An extreme case of lengthy journey mentioned by Eduardo Coghlan was "Luke Doyle, from Mullingar [...], who arrived in Buenos Aires after a five and a half month journey" (Coghlan 1987: 279). Even longer was the journey of Sarah Elliff (née Flynn). She arrived in Buenos Aires on December 1848, after a six-months journey. Her ship weighed anchor at Liverpool on 20 June 1848, with 600 passengers on board. Thirty died during the journey, and many others stayed in Rio de Janeiro (Coghlan 1987: 306).

evidence that the journey to South American ports like Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, or Buenos Aires, was as dangerous as that of the emigrant ships bound to North America. In fact, due to insurance requirements, the ships sailing from Liverpool to the Río de la Plata were mostly first and second-class, i.e., surveyed and judged as best or good quality in terms of age, condition and seaworthiness, whilst many of the coffin ships were third-class vessels, a status which prohibited any but short voyages. In addition to this, most of the vessels in the North American seaway were built in Canada or the USA, while those destined for the South American trade were built in England by more experienced dockyard workers. Ships sailing the South Atlantic routes often had purposes other than the transport of emigrants, such as: mail, cargo, and cabin passengers. Emigrants were often piled into steerage. It wasn't until the late 1880s that the emigrant trade proper emerged in the South Atlantic, when crowds of emigrants – especially from the Mediterranean countries – began to escape from the poor conditions in their home countries in order to find a new life in Buenos Aires and other South American regions.

Nineteenth-century transatlantic transport between the British Isles and this region may be divided into two periods that correspond to advances in navigational technology: sail (1824-1850) and steam (1851-1889).

The sail period begins with the opening of the British mail packet route to Buenos Aires, and the arrival at this port of the first packet, *Countess of Chichester*. The majority of ships were wooden sailing vessels. The *Countess of Chichester* sailed from Falmouth, England, and "reached Buenos Aires on 16th April [1824], having called at Montevideo one or two days previously" (Howat 1984: 42). This was the result of the negotiations between Woodbine Parish (1796-1882), the first appointed British Consul-General to Buenos Aires, and Bernardino Rivadavia, then Minister of State of the Argentine Provinces and two years later President of the Republic for 18 months. The agreement, a good example of British-Argentine diplomacy, "worked up into a set of regulations, [and] proved to be so advantageous to Britain, that the English packets had an effective monopoly for at least 25 years to carry all overseas mails to Europe, apart from those taken by trading ships" (Howat 1984: 42).

In spite of an incident which nearly marred the auspicious occasion of the *Countess of Chichester*,<sup>9</sup> the Buenos Aires route was successfully opened in 1824 and ships arrived from Falmouth approximately every month during eight years. The packet's called on Buenos Aires during 10 to 14 days to allow reply mail. The hazards of navigating the Río de la Plata between Montevideo and Buenos Aires were described by Richard Poussett, one of the British vice-consuls in Buenos Aires:

We had a good proof of the dangerous navigation a day or two afterwards when the Cossack of Liverpool, Alexander Keir master, who had been up and down the River twice or thrice, was totally lost on the 19th and now lay sunk in five fathoms water on the southern extremity of the Ortiz Bank (Howat 1984: 48).

The direct route from England to Montevideo and Buenos Aires was "discontinued as one of the consequences of the Report on the Packet Service at Falmouth by Vice-Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm, published in January 1832 [...]. By placing two branch

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<sup>9</sup> According to Woodbine Parish's letter of protest to Bernardino Rivadavia, dated the same day, the captain and the Vice-Consul "embarked in their boat to proceed ashore with the bags of the Despatches and Letters. They hardly left the Packet when a shot was fired at them by the [Buenos Ayrean] Brig of War, and this was repeated a few minutes afterwards with Ball which struck the sea at a very short distance from the boat" (in Howat 1984: 74).



sailing packets on permanent station at Rio de Janeiro to take onwards the Río de la Plata mails, it was possible to reduce the total number of packets needed for the South American service from twelve to eight" (Howat 1984: 87). However, a mandatory stay at Rio de Janeiro was introduced and the time taken to reach Buenos Aires slowed down from an average of 62.5 days in 1826 to 77 days for the first combined Brazil and Río de la Plata mail (departure from Falmouth 7 September 1832 in the *Lady Mary Pelham*, arrived Buenos Aires 24 November 1832 in the *Cockatrice*).



Figure 8. *Dunbrody* (Newross, Co. Wexford).

During the sail period, the numbers of Irish people emigrating to Argentina were still small. According to Eduardo Coghlan, between 1822 and 1850, only 1,659 Irish immigrants were registered at the Buenos Aires port, with an exceptional peak in 1849 (708 immigrants) (Coghlan 1982: 16). From 1851 to 1889, this number increased to at least 5,419.<sup>10</sup> Some of the ships used by the emigrants in the first period were *Cockatrice* (1832-1844), *Spider* (1832-1850), and *Griffon* (1846-1848).

Other ships, owned by private cargo companies, were important at this early stage of the Irish emigration to Argentina. For instance, the *William Peile* (sometimes spelled *William Peele*) sailed at least twice to the River Plate. The first voyage was in the spring of 1844, with 114 Irish passengers on board. Seven years later, she sailed again through the South Atlantic seaway and arrived at Buenos Aires with 48 Irish emigrants. According to the *Whitehaven Herald* (20 May 1843), the *William Peile* was "a handsome new barque called William Peile in honour of the senior partner of that firm" (Peile, Scott & Co.). She was a small three masted-barque of 279 tons burthen, square-rigged on the fore and main masts, and fore-and-aft rigged on the mizzen mast. The ship was built in Workington, Northeast England, and launched on 13 May 1843. Her maiden voyage was from Workington departing 27 June 1843 for Cádiz and Montevideo, and then returning to England, with Liverpool as her first port of arrival, which she reached on 26 February 1844.

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<sup>10</sup> Including the 1,772 immigrants of the *City of Dresden* in February, 1889.

On 21 April 1844, the *William Peile* weighed anchor again at Liverpool under Captain Joseph Sprott's command. He was a veteran of the North Atlantic and Pacific seaways. The ship called on 13 May 1844 at "Saint Jago" (Santiago island, Cape Verde, about 620 km off the west coast of Senegal). After crossing the South Atlantic Sea, she probably called on Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro, and finally arrived in the Río de la Plata on 25 June 1844 (Lloyd's List & Index 1844). Other journeys were longer. John Brabazon emigrated in 1845, and observed that the ship in which he travelled, *Filomena*, 300 tons registered and commanded by Captain Robert Bell "arrived here after three months voyage from Kingston [today's Dún Laoghaire], Ireland, to Buenos Aires" (McKenna 1994: 145).

Conditions on board for the sail period can be reduced to three features: bad food and water, lack of space and hygiene, and poor medical care. On most journeys, the staple diet was "a concoction of water, barley, rye, and peas, which became saturated with moisture on board ship" (Préteselle 1999). Passengers had to do their own cooking on deck. Food was often either half-cooked or not cooked at all, since when the weather was bad they were not allowed on deck. In some ships, every crew member:

got a pound of biscuits big coarse items called Water Biscuits, a day. These were known as blahs in Wexford but aboard the old sailing ships were called pantiles [...]. These biscuits were as hard as rocks and full of maggots and weevils and every kind of insect. In order to eat the biscuits, they put them into a canvas bag and pounded them with an iron pin. Then they mixed the crumbs with whatever water could be spared from the daily ration and ate them that way. On the odd days that marmalade or jam was given out, it was mixed in. That was the sailors' breakfast at about 7.30 A.M. along with a mug of coffee. Sometimes they baked the mashed biscuit and water; this was known as "dandyfunk". Each Friday a sailor was given either a pound of butter or a pound of marmalade but not both. For dinner at 12.30 each man got half a pound of boiled corned beef or corned pork. This menu alternated and on pork days pea soup was added. In the early days of a voyage potatoes would be served at dinner but when they ran out, which was quite rapidly, only the remains from the pound of blahs was eaten with the meat (Rossiter 1989: 17).

Routinely, steerage passengers had the same or worse food than crew members.

Berths were simple spaces consisting of wooden bunks, usually six foot square and built into the ship's timbers on either side of the hold, with a gangway down the middle. Each adult was usually allotted one quarter of a bunk, or 18 inches or bed space. There was no bedding, which is why passengers were often advised to get a mattress before going on board. Decency and comfort were almost impossible.

The living quarters were dark, cramped and dirty. They were never or very rarely cleaned. The fact that passengers had no means of changing their clothes or bedding, provided ideal condition for the spread of body lice and the typhus fever they carried. Typhus was the deadliest disease, and it was called ship fever. Most passengers tried to remain on the deck as much as possible to escape the lice and odours below but when there was a storm, they were forced back in steerage without fresh air as there was no ventilation. As doctors were seldom present on board, emigrants often had to doctor themselves and took their medicines, such as Holloway's pills – which were widely advertised at the ports.

Some of the Irish emigrants to Argentina experienced fatal consequences from these conditions. In 1849, Edward Robbins (1802-1866) from Clara, Co. Offaly, and his family emigrated to Argentina via Liverpool:

Early in the month of March, I left for Liverpool and I arranged for a passage to Buenos Aires for myself and family with Michael McDonald. On the 4th of April, all my family arrived at Liverpool and were kept there until the 8th of May, on which they sailed. There



was much sickness on board from the neglect of the Government Inspectors at Liverpool: one man and a child died at sea. My family and myself suffered very much, [but] had a good passage and arrived at Buenos Aires on the 13th of July. [We were] in quarantine until the 22nd on which day we landed. It was a Sunday. My family and myself counted 13, of which 10 had to go to the Irish Hospital (Robbins 1860: 11).<sup>11</sup>

On 10 August 1849 the Robbins left the Buenos Aires Irish Hospital, but the outcome of the trip was appalling for the family: Edward's wife Ann Ryan died on 21 August, their son Bernard died on 29 August, and Ann Ryan's daughter Mary Ann Coffy died on 4 September.

The effects of the voyage in the passengers' health were still alarming by the end of the century. Thomas Murray, who emigrated in 1892, complained "of the dreadful conditions experienced in the quarantine station. "The treatment given to people is an outrage to humanity". The third class passengers in particular appear to have been deplorably treated. The food was 'the dirtiest slop ever offered to a human being'" (McKenna 1994: 150).

Every sailing vessel "was compelled to carry livestock. Cows and calves, sheep, goats, pigs and hens were carried in the larger vessels and the noises they made and the smells from their quarter did nothing to improve the conditions" (Greenhill & Giffard 1974: 14). Even the smallest vessels carried a few animals on voyages likely to be of any duration. In the tropics, "this heat, added to the closeness, made our cabins very oppressive; the foul air came up the hatchway in the form of smoke, and the captain even sent some one down to see whether the ship was not on fire" (Greenhill & Giffard 1974: 14).

On these long voyages to South America, averaging from four to six weeks, the modern passenger would be faced with interminable tedium. For most of the travellers, boredom and monotony were annoying aspects of the journey. The first Sisters of Mercy in Argentina (who afterwards would be in charge of the Irish Hospital) had a typical journey in one of the British Packet (Lampport & Holt) vessels:

Cheerfully did they bear the heat of the torrid zone, the monotonous days, the trying tediousness of that lengthy voyage. While most of the passengers, enervated by the fierce tropical sun, lay stretched out as if dead, they [the Sisters] were up and doing. The cooler waters of the South Temperate Zone and its beautiful, starry skies were a relief and a joy to them. After a prosperous but uneventful voyage, their vessel cast anchor in Rio, where they were detained a fortnight for the repair of the coasting steamer in which they were to continue their voyage to La Plata (Murray 1919: 172).

In *You'll Never Go Back*, Kate remembers that in Liverpool they boarded a steamer. At first she and the other girls "were very, very sick [...]. It was a long voyage, and after a fortnight the weather became very warm. One day was so like another that I began to wonder whether we were ever to see anything again but green water swinging up and down, and the sky above, so still." Promiscuity on board presented moral dangers to young women. Kate and her friends sailed "under the Captain's protection, at least he told us so [...]. He protected Nancy the whole way out, telling her not to trust the officers, and putting her on her guard against some of the gentlemen who were married and who wanted to have a bit of fun because their wives were not on board" (Nevin 1946: 12-13).

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<sup>11</sup> On 23 July 1849, the Buenos Aires port authorities registered twelve members of the Robbins family, who arrived in the *Vanguard* (Coghlan 1982: 96).

A sailing vessel, especially a square-rigged sailing vessel, "of course took the routes where the winds were most favourable because to do so was to save time and trouble in the end, even if it meant going thousands of miles out of the way" (Greenhill & Giffard 1974: 20). In 1834, a vessel of 420 tons, flush-decked and with three masts would have been mastered by a crew of about twenty persons: "the master, two mates and the steward [...], the carpenter cooper and one apprentice [...], the cook, ten seamen and three apprentices" (Greenhill & Giffard 1974: 24).

Fares to the Río de la Plata varied with shipping company and accommodation, and they "ranged from £10 to £35" (Illingworth 2002). An average price paid by the emigrants can be established in £16 (McKenna 1992: 71). Later in the 1880s, an advertisement placed by The Pacific Steam Navigation Co. (Lampton & Holt), announced fares of £25 to £30 in first class, and £10 to £15 in third class (Bassett 1885: 104). On an announcement in *The Standard* newspaper of Buenos Aires, 29 June 1873, we read that the fares from Buenos Aires to Southampton were £35 (first class), £20 (second), and £15 (third) (Howat 1984: 120).

If a regular wage for an Irish rural labourer at that time was 7½ shillings a week, he should have been forced to save during about a year to pay for the passage ticket. This is the reason why McKenna and other authors argue that emigrants from the Irish Midlands and Wexford were tenants and farmers with relatively higher income than the emigrants to North America and other parts of the world, who were primarily labourers. However, labourers without the funds to purchase their tickets to South America were financially assisted from sheep-farmers in Argentina who were looking for skilled shepherds in Ireland. John James Murphy from Salto, Buenos Aires, addressed ship captains in an 1864 note: "If you choose to bring out to this country any passengers that my brother (Martin Murphy of Haysland) arrange for, I shall hold myself accountable for the payment of same on their arrival out here." In a separate communication to his brother, Murphy suggested to avoid "letting others to see it [the note]. But this I consider only fit for the ears of my own friends in Haysland or at least the greater part of it." In this way, he did not risk the expensive cost of tickets on unskilled or unreliable workers (Murphy to Murphy, 25 March 1864).

## **The Steam Period**

The second period, 1851-1889, is marked by iron and steel sailing ships and, in particular, by steam. "The major effect that steam power appears to have had was that it reduced the length of the journey from around three months to about thirty days" (McKenna 1994: 147). The shorter journey was used in private letters as an argument to convince others to visit Argentina. On 28 August 1863, Fr. Anthony Fahy, the Chaplain of the Irish in Argentina, wrote to his superior Fr. Goodman: "I wish you would think of taking a trip out here when you are relieved from the cares of office - the steamers from Liverpool arrive here in twenty six days now! - Seven thousand miles is great travelling!" (Ussher 1951: 103).

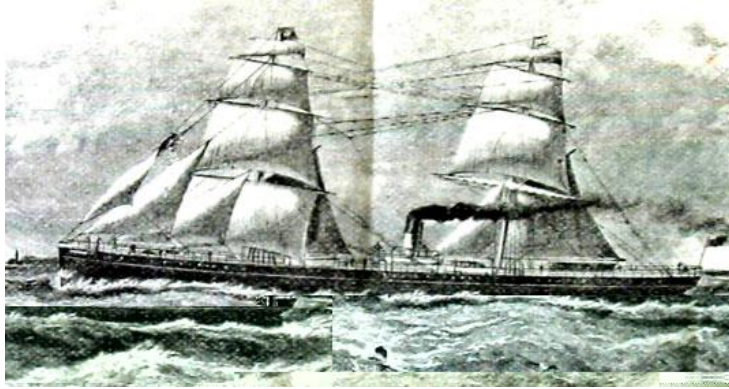


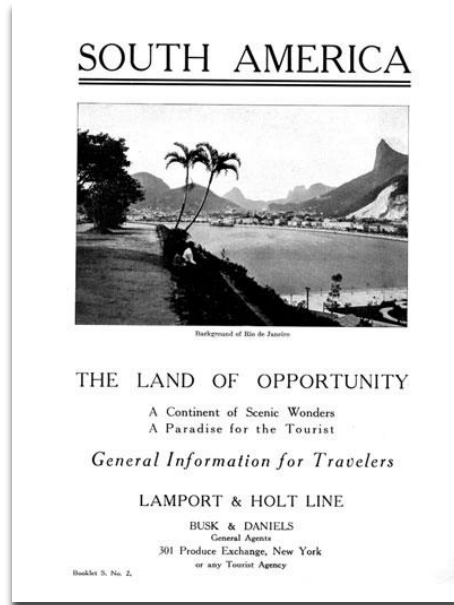
Figure 9. Typical 1870s Lamport & Holt screw steamer to Río de la Plata (company brochure, 17 June 1876). In 1876, there were departures from Liverpool for Buenos Aires on the 3rd, 10th, and 18th day of every month (Mary Anglim Collection).

Steamships were far superior vessels, to such a degree that the last sailing ships were built by 1855. Sailing packets carried emigrants to South America for another twenty years but they steadily lost ground to steamers. The transition from sail to steam was radical. The introduction of steam packets "on the Brazil and River Plate trade route in 1851 brought an immediate speeding up of the pace of communications" (Howat 1984: 147). For instance, the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co.'s *Teviot* left Southampton on 1 January 1851 and arrived at Buenos Aires on 18 February of the same year (49 days). Thirteen years later, a letter from John Murphy was stamped on 27 May 1864 in Buenos Aires, 4 July in London, and 5 July in Wexford (39 days).

In spite of the better speed and efficiency of the steamers, even in the late 1880s conditions on board for poor emigrants did not improve. "Many of the emigrant ships had, [Fr. van Tricht, a priest defending the rights of emigrants] asserted excellent first and second class accommodation, but no cabins or partitions of any kind for the emigrants. Between decks a forest of iron poles, on which the hammocks, sometimes 1,000 in number, are slung in three layers, for men, women, and children together, with no possible privacy of decency, spreading a moral contagion to which he could only allude before his present audience, and inducing an atmosphere which baffles description." Such was often the emigrants' accommodation, in spite of Government Regulations ordering the separation of the sexes and families. He attributed the deaths which invariably occur during the passage out to the over-crowding and utter disregard of all sanitary and hygienic rules which prevail on board many of the emigrants ships. "[Fr. van Tricht] had been assured by many of his correspondents that the food, though sufficient in quantity, was execrable in quality, and often quite uneatable" (Vivian to Salisbury, 20 April 1889).

From 1851 onward, the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co. was the major carrier of cargo and passengers from the British Isles to the Río de la Plata. The service was inaugurated with the above-mentioned ship *Teviot*. "The gently shelving estuarine shores of the River Plate presented difficulties in the landing of passengers and goods at Buenos Aires. Bushell [...] reports how the *Esk* anchored about 12 kilometres off the city, with the passengers and mails being transferred to a tiny steamer to steam to within 3 kilometres of the shore. The next transfer was to an open whaler, which was sailed or rowed to about 200 yards off the shore. The long-suffering passengers were then taken by a horse-drawn, large-wheeled cart to a wooden jetty and, at last, reached terra firma" (Howat 1984: 111). Murphy adds that "in those days [1844], sailing vessels anchored far out in the river; from there they came as far as possible in rowing boats and then on in carts. When the tide was high, the boats came in as far as the Merced

Church, and were tied up to iron rings in the wall of the church. For many years after, those rings were still there" (Emily Murphy 1909: 1).



During the 1860s and 70s, which marked the peak of Irish emigration to Argentina (with the exception of 1889 *Dresden*), the most active shipping company was Lamport & Holt (or Liverpool, Brazil and River Plate Steam Navigation Co.). Lamport & Holt was established in 1845. In 1863, they began to sail to and from Brazil and the Río de la Plata. In that year, "the Company despatched 2 vessels to South America from Liverpool; in 1864, 8; in 1865, 24; and in 1866, 41" (Howat 1984: 159). Their business was carefully planned, as part of the migration market that began to increase significantly during those years.

The number of British settlers in these States [Uruguay and Argentina] is immensely large – and, unlike most other fields which attract Emigration, they comprise all classes of society from Upper middle class downwards. A very great number of the estancias and saladeros (ranches and meat-salting plants) in the country are the property of and managed and worked by Englishmen (Lamport to Scudamore, 15 June 1868, in Howat 1984: 161).

In 1868, Lamport & Holt signed the contract with the Royal Mail to service South American ports. The fifth article of the agreement established that "the voyage from Liverpool to Buenos Aires was to take no more than 34 days, including the stoppages at Rio de Janeiro and Montevideo" (Howat 1984: 162). Indeed, that year the average journey was 30.5 days, and in 1869, 30.8 days. Later in the late 1880s, Lamport & Holt vessels sailed "from Antwerp under the Belgian flag, and call at Shouthampton, it being stated that they do not carry more than forty-nine passengers (emigrants)" (Board of Trade to Foreign Office, 15 April 1889).

Later in 1892, "the voyage direct, in 22 days, is not so amusing as when the steamer touches at various ports. In the former case Madeira is generally sighted on the fifth day, and Montevideo 17 days later. Nine times out of ten the sea is as calm as a mill-pond, except crossing the Bay of Biscay. The distance from Southampton to Montevideo is 6,126 nautical, equal to 6,739 English statute, miles" (Mulhall 1892: 67). Mulhall adds that:

"...Lisbon is reached on the fifth day from England, [...] the Canary Islands are 4 days from Lisbon, Cape Verds are 3 days from the Canaries, Fernando Noronha (a small, rocky island

used as a Brazilian penal settlement, and has a lighthouse) is sighted on the seventh day from Cape Verds, the first point of the continent visible is Cape San Roque, which juts out into the Atlantic, 200 miles N. of Pernambuco. [...] From Pernambuco to Bahia is only 36 hours by sea, distance 450 miles. Rio Janeyro is 860 miles from Bahia, the voyage taking 3 days. From Rio Janeyro to Montevideo is 1,100 miles, and takes from 4 to 5 days, according to weather. Stiff pamperos are sometimes met with off the mouth of the River Plate, where the numerous sandbanks made the navigation so difficult in the old times of sailing vessels that sailors called it Boca de Infierno. Even before land be in sight the colour of the ocean is changed by the volume of fresh water from the River Plate, 52 million cubic feet per minute. [...] Montevideo is seen to great advantage from the bay, the Cerro completing the picture. [...] At Buenos Ayres the customs officers are very polite, but will certainly charge duty on whatever may not be for personal use in the passenger's baggage (Mulhall 1892: 67-73)".

The records transcribed by Eduardo A. Coghlan (Coghlan 1982, Table I), show that almost all Lamport & Holt vessels carried Irish emigrants to Argentina:

<b>Ship (Lamport &amp; Holt)</b>	<b>Irish passengers 1851-1880</b>	<b>Years of Operation</b>
<i>Hipparcus</i>	60	1869-1873
<i>Tycho Brahe</i>	24	1870
<i>Flamsteed</i>	-	-
<i>Kepler</i>	39	1864-1868
<i>Pascal</i>	20	1869
<i>Copernicus</i>	54	1869-1873
<i>Biela</i>	51	1870-1878
<i>Agamemnon</i>	8	1870
<i>City of Rio de Janeiro</i>	7	1871
<i>Galileo</i>	37	1865-1874
<i>Leibnitz</i>	48	1867-1877
<i>Helvelius</i>	4	1876
<i>Maskelyne</i>	51	1877-1879

Other vessels frequently used by the Irish were the following (Coghlan 1982, Table I):

<b>Ship (other companies)</b>	<b>Irish passengers 1851-1880</b>	<b>Years of Operation</b>
<i>La Zingara</i>	581	1860-1869
<i>Raymond</i>	312	1861-1863
<i>Bess Grant</i>	170	1849-1861
<i>William Peile</i>	161	1844-1851
<i>Uruguay</i>	155	1863-1869
<i>W. Wilch</i>	116	1857
<i>Vanguard</i>	99	1849
<i>Istria</i>	89	1858-1866
<i>Crossdale</i>	81	1849
<i>Fortitude</i>	57	1829-1849
<i>Hamstead</i>	65	1866-1873
<i>La Belle Poule</i>	61	1859-1864
<i>Williams</i>	61	1838-1865

Before the 1880s, the most important ship in terms of quantity of Irish emigrants was *La Zingara*, the smallest vessel of Thomas B. Royden & Co fleet. She was built in 1860, in Liverpool, and was registered in the Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping in 1861. The rigging was a barque, sheathed in yellow metal in 1860, fastened with copper bolts (287 tons). The captain was George Sanders. John Murphy remarks that "passages on *La Zingara* are cheaper than other vessels like the *Raymond* from Dublin (Captain Sanders)" (Murphy to Murphy 1864).

The *City of Dresden* was the ship that carried "the largest number of passengers ever to arrive in Argentina from any one destination on any one vessel" (Geraghty 1999). This event was the outcome of a deceitful immigration scheme managed by the Argentine government agents in Ireland Buckley O'Meara and John Stephen Dillon, a brother of Fr. Patrick J. Dillon, founder The Southern Cross, National Deputy for Buenos Aires, and notorious leader of the Irish-Argentine community. The affair "became infamous and was denounced in Parliament, press and pulpit" (Geraghty 1999). These emigrants came from poor urban areas of Dublin, Cork and Limerick and most of the adults were city labourers and servants. Upon arrival, some were assisted by Irish-Argentine families well established in the country or found jobs in Buenos Aires, but most of them were deceived by unscrupulous agents and were abandoned in remote areas. Paradoxically, some of the emigrants (especially children) died in Argentina of hunger and related illnesses, which were typical of the miserable situation they left in Ireland. The bad press got by this sad events was enough to stop the Irish emigration to Argentina almost completely for some decades

The *City of Dresden* arrived at Buenos Aires from Queenstown (now Cobh) and Southampton on 15 February 1889, with 1,772 passengers on board. According to Fr. Gaughran, they

were allowed to land on Saturday when the authorities well knew there was no accommodation for them. Many hundreds of these poor people had not received orders for the [Immigrants] hotel before leaving the ship, and weary hours were spent in the struggle to get to the table where these orders were issued. Then, the orders obtained, strong men could fight their way through the throng of Italians [who arrived the same day in the *Duchesa di Genova*] into the dining hall, but the weak, the women and children were left supperless. It was soon evident that unless some special arrangements were made even the shelter of a roof could not be obtained [...]. Men, women and children, hungry and exhausted after the fatigues of the day, had to sleep at best they might on the flags of the court-yard. To say they were treated like cattle would at least provide them with food and drink, but these poor people were left to live or die unaided by the officials who are paid to look after them, and without the slightest sign of sympathy from these officials. I am told that as a result a child died during the night of exhaustion. In England those responsible would be prosecuted for manslaughter, but in this land of liberty no one minds' (Murray 1919: 443-444).

The British chargé d'affaires in Buenos Aires, George Jenner, reported that "the Argentine officers are mainly responsible for the mismanagement of the Irish immigration. Their offices in Ireland have, in more than one instance, allowed the propaganda for emigrants to fall into the hands of totally untrustworthy persons, who have recruited numbers of worthless characters, including prostitutes and beggars, and many shiftless individuals and families utterly unfit to carry on the struggle for existence in the Argentine Republic" (Jenner to Salisbury, 21 February 1889).

Due to bad press created by the "Dresden Affair" and to the financial crisis of 1890, during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, relatively few Irish emigrants selected Argentina as their final destination. In the 1920s, there was yet a new peak of arrivals from Ireland (76% of 1900-1929



Ireland-born passengers arrived in the 20s), in which the majority of immigrants were educated urban professionals, with a high proportion of Church of Ireland religion. This increase may have been a consequence of political, social, and economic turmoil in Ireland. However, it ended in late 1929, as a consequence of the global financial crisis that seriously affected economic growth and employment rates of Argentina and other countries.

By this time, the sheep-farming opportunities of the 1840-80s decreased due to changes in wool prices and the international markets, in which cattle and cereal became the increasingly dominant agriculture export. Irish-Argentine ranchers began hiring immigrants from other countries, Italy in particular, as tenants to till their land. At the same time, Irish-Argentine families joined the urban elites of Buenos Aires and other cities in an acculturation process that would last until the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas War between England and Argentina. As a result of social and economic factors, migration flow changed its direction and is today increasingly growing from Argentina to Europe, North America and other regions. In the twenty-first century, some Argentine descendants of the Irish immigrants are re-emigrating to Ireland. Owing to the remarkable technical changes in the intercontinental journey after World War II, and the severe restrictions to immigrants in Europe and other regions, their major struggle is to gain legal and social recognition in the so-called first world.



*Figure 10. Patrick Cavanan (center) and brothers on board back to Europe circa 1890 (Bernard Cavanan collection, 2002).*

## Conclusion

During the first half of the nineteenth century, in order to reach Dublin, most of the Irish emigrants from the Midlands bound to Argentina used a combination of Bianconi coaches and Royal Canal barges. From Dublin, they took the steam-ship service to Liverpool. Emigrants from Co. Wexford would sail directly from Wexford town to Liverpool. After a short staying at Liverpool's boarding houses, those emigrants bound to Argentina would take sailing vessels to the Río de la Plata. Fares were relatively high, and in some cases were paid by Irish employers in Argentinian sheep-farms.

From 1851, the railway was the preferred mean of transport from the Midlands to Dublin. More or less at the same time, steam replaced sail in the South Atlantic seaway. In this way, the journey shortened to little more than one month, and turned more secure for passengers. This facilitated the higher rates of emigration in the 1860s and 1870s. After that, in 1889, the "Dresden Affair" almost put an end to Argentina as

a destination of the emigration from Ireland, with unimportant numbers at the turn of the century and a small peak in the 1920s.

This paper explored some material aspects of the transportation means used by the emigrants. Other findings await the researcher of the Irish emigration to Argentina. The pioneering work done by Eduardo Coghlan (1982) in establishing a data base of almost five thousand passengers for genealogical purposes has not been exhaustively integrated into any further cultural-historical study. Other passenger lists, including those of CEMLA database (Centro de Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos), add up to seven thousand passengers. These lists can be explored with a focus on relations among passengers, including kinship, friendship, class, profession, gender, and religion. I suggest that the material and social links that supported the immigration traffic disclose the pertinent experiential features of the emigrant's world.

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