

**NINETEENTH CENTURY IRISH EMIGRATION TO,  
AND SETTLEMENT IN,  
ARGENTINA.**

**BY**

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**M.A. GEOGRAPHY THESIS 1994**

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## APPENDIX 1

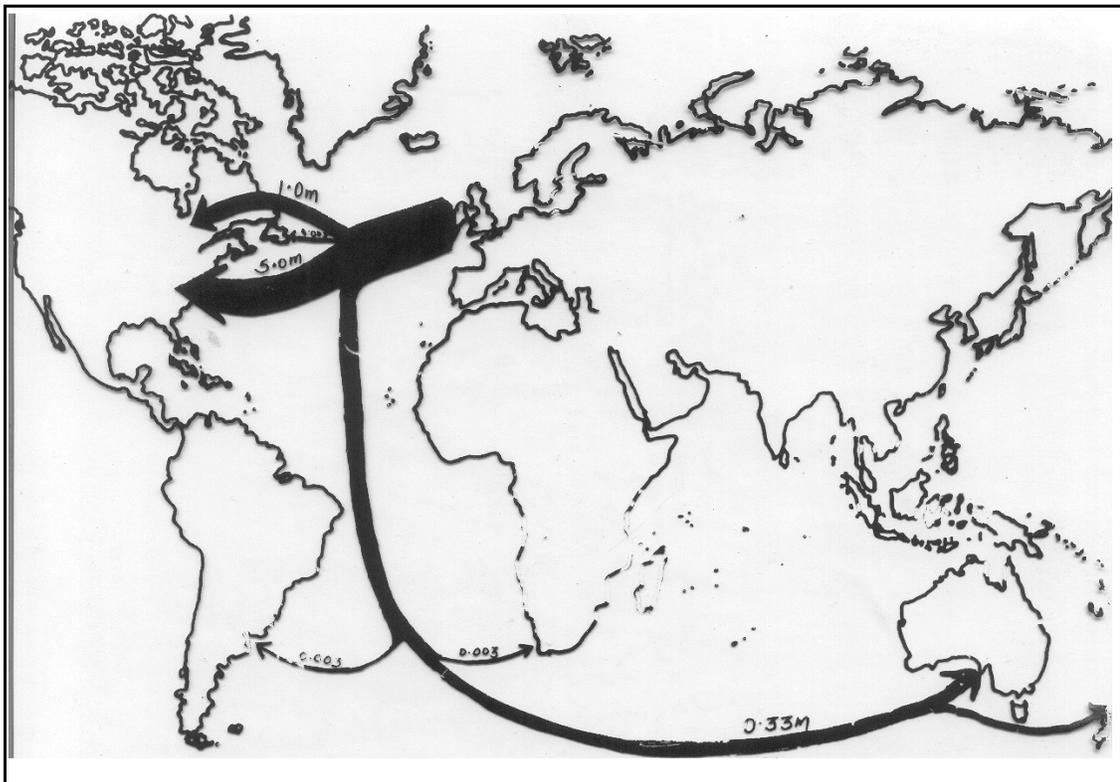
## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## CHAPTER 1.

### *NINETEENTH CENTURY IRISH EMIGRATION TO AND SETTLEMENT IN ARGENTINA.*

#### **A Global Perspective.**

By the start of the twentieth century about 7.5 million Irish had crossed the Atlantic to resettle in a new world which was being opened up for trade and commerce by European powers. In the case of the Americas, this new world stretched, unbroken, from the frozen wastes of northern Canada and Alaska through the equator until it again reached the great glaciers of southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego.



**Figure 1:1** Trans-Atlantic emigration from Ireland, 1720-1900

Beyond the Americas the New World spanned the African and Australian continents. The Irish, however, emigrated in an organized way, mostly, to very specific regions of this new world. The regions of the New World that the great majority of the nineteenth-century Irish emigrated to are located between the 30th and 50th parallel, both north and south of the equator. In addition their settlement was always bounded on at least one side by the ocean, or a large navigable river which linked the interior to the ocean. The reason why the Irish chose this relatively limited area, with easy access to the ocean, for settlement during the nineteenth century is apparent to the geographer. It was because the great grassland regions of the world are found within those parallels and it was not until the nineteenth century that those regions became the focus of European immigration. Settlement between the 30th and 50th parallel allowed the Irish settlers continue the type of agricultural production with which they were familiar, while access to the ocean allowed them trade their products for the European manufactured goods they were also familiar with when in Ireland.

It was not until the late eighteenth century, however, that the great grassland frontiers became important to the growing European mercantile and industrial powers, so that the conditions for mass Irish emigration did not occur until then. By the end of the eighteenth century emigration from Ireland to the grassland regions of Canada and New England had become well established especially among the Scotch-Irish around the ports of Derry and Belfast. By the early nineteenth century this type of emigration was also beginning to occur among growing numbers of the Catholic Irish population, especially among those of similar

class to the Scotch-Irish, the relatively prosperous tenant farmers.

### **Early Influences on Irish Emigration.**

By the second decade of the nineteenth century a series of events took place which greatly affected Irish emigration to the New World. England was involved in a European war against Napoleon. One major effect of this war was that growing emigration from Ireland to the New World was almost completely halted. Those potential emigrants who were forced to remain in Ireland not only created a notional population increase greater than it would otherwise have been, further adding to an already rapidly increasing population. The immediate consequences of this population increase and the lack of emigration were alleviated to some extent by the fact that Ireland was a major supplier of grain for the English troops. The wheat fields had to be ploughed, sown and harvested by manual labour, thus absorbing much of the labour supply, on a seasonal basis at least, for the duration of the war. When the war ended, however, a fall in demand for wheat led to an agricultural depression promoting a switch to cattle production by the land owners. This resulted in a rapid reduction in employment for labourers and a consequent large increase in emigration from the country.

Another important factor which facilitated the huge rise in Irish emigration when the war with France ended was that at about the same time the colonial trade in slaves was abolished by England. As a result most of the ships involved in the slave trade were tied up in Liverpool while their owners desperately searched for alternative sources and centres of

trade with new regions. The English looked especially to the great grassland frontiers of the southern hemisphere to increase their influence and allow a new expansion in trade. This expansion of commercial influence by the English had a large military as well as merchant navy content. Many of the soldiers and sailors involved in this expansion, together with ordinary merchant seamen, were Irish. Not all of those Irish soldiers and sailors returned home with their comrades. Many of those who remained in these new locations did however maintain contact with their families in Ireland. And thus, links were formed between small areas in Ireland and specific locations in the new world.

The link between Waterford and Newfoundland is one example where merchant seamen from the south east of Ireland settled on the other side of the Atlantic and began a chain which developed into significant emigration from the Waterford area specifically to Newfoundland. Buenos Aires is another example where soldiers, from Co. Westmeath, remained behind to form a nucleus which began emigration, from around Streamstown initially, to the Pampa of Argentina.

Thus a combination of factors began the great nineteenth century Irish exodus to the New World. Briefly these were, an expanding population and economic recession in Ireland, combined with the English need to develop new frontiers for trade together with an ample supply of shipping, capable of moving both the goods and the emigrants to the desired destinations. Consequently the nineteenth-century Irish emigrant was perfectly placed, in

time, location and circumstance to settle the new frontiers. Furthermore a rural lifestyle in Ireland based on heavy manual labour meant that the Irish emigrant brought to the New World the variety of skills necessary to integrate the new frontiers into the European mercantile system. A very good match therefore existed between a suitable surplus population in Ireland and a great shortage of just such a population in the New World. In addition to being ideally suited to the needs of the developers of the New World, the Irish were also the ideal outward cargo. Irish emigrants became a self-loading, fare paying ballast for the growing number of ships trading with the New World. For those reasons Britain, reluctantly at first, soon began to encourage in every way the outmigration of her surplus, potentially rebellious, Irish subjects to the new frontiers in the distant reaches of her empire.

#### **Argentina's Role in the British Colonial System.**

Argentina, though an independent Roman Catholic and Spanish speaking nation, was drawn into this British colonial trading system from very early in the nineteenth century and competed as an equal in the British market with the British colonies of Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand as well as the US. This trading relationship between Great Britain and Argentina continued from about 1815 until about 1960. It is therefore valid in terms of economic-geography, even if incorrect in strictly historical or political terms, to treat Argentina as a very important part of the British colonial outreach in the nineteenth century.

All the new great new grassland frontiers of the world were therefore being incorporated into the British colonial mercantile system, in one form or another, during the nineteenth century. All of those regions needed European labour to fully develop their economic potential within the then existing mercantile world. Consequently the regions were in competition with each other, not only for a share of the European market, but also for a share of the emigrants leaving Europe in search of a new start elsewhere in the world.

### **Ireland as a Source for Immigrants.**

Ireland was a very important source for immigrant recruitment for all of the British colonies, particularly as the Irish were the only significant emigrant group in the nineteenth century who spoke English and were legally British. This allowed the Irish greater choice than other European emigrants, because, in addition to settlement in the colonies, they had the choice of emigration to the industrial centres in England as well as an in-built advantage, because of their language, in seeking industrial employment in the United States. Furthermore, the Irish were always among the very earliest Europeans to emigrate to the new frontiers and, once the Irish became established, they encouraged further immigration from Ireland. They made up about 10% of the entire European Trans-Atlantic emigration, despite being about 1% of the European population<sup>1</sup>.

This competition for Irish immigrants afforded the intending Irish emigrant a wide variety of locations to choose from. Each potential destination had its own advantages and disadvantages for the emigrant. Some offered well paid industrial employment, others

offered the opportunity to the emigrant to acquire his own land. Some canters offered a large existing Irish community while others offered isolation. The Irish emigrant in the nineteenth century was in a position to weigh all those factors and choose the option which he felt offered him the best chance of success and fulfillment.

### **The Purpose of This Thesis.**

A great deal of research has been devoted to the Irish who emigrated to those areas which were English speaking. The Irish who emigrated to French-speaking Quebec, the only other significant non-English speaking, non-Protestant nineteenth-century Irish emigrant destination, have been written about to a lesser extent. Quebec however, being part of Canada was, by then, a British colony and therefore subject to British rule, though it maintained a French rather than a British legal system. The Irish in Argentina however have been largely ignored to date, being confined to footnotes or a few short essays by academic researchers. This group of emigrants, while emigrating to a quasi-British colony, had to establish themselves in a country, most of whose customs and laws in addition to its language, were alien to the Irish.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine specifically this group of Irish emigrants in the belief that this will redress the imbalance in research to some degree. Because no overall academic work exists about the Irish in Argentina this work will examine how emigration from Ireland

to Argentina began, why particular Irish emigrants chose Argentina, what type of person was attracted to Argentina, where they came from, where they settled, how they lived and worked, when they arrived, how they organized themselves as a community in Argentina and how they assimilated and integrated into the wider population in their host country. This work by its nature therefore spreads its nets wide rather than deep so that the broad parameters of Irish emigration to Argentina during the nineteenth century can be understood. It is hoped that others may examine in greater detail the different aspects raised here, together with the parallels that exist between this emigration and other Irish emigrations and deal with them more fully in other works.

### **Sources for this Thesis**

As no other academic study, of the geography of nineteenth century Irish emigration to and settlement in Argentina exists, it is necessary at the beginning of this thesis to examine the sources used in researching it. This will be done in Chapter 2. Furthermore, a brief description of the effects of the climatic and physical geography of the country on the settlement geography of Argentina, particularly in relation to the Irish community, is given in Chapter 3.

### **The Background to Irish-Argentine Emigration.**

Irish emigration to, and settlement in Argentina existed for nearly 300 years prior to the nineteenth century. Those earlier emigrants contributed to a very significant degree to the creation of the conditions that existed in Argentina at the beginning of the nineteenth

century. The background and a brief outline of this earlier Irish emigration and settlement will be given in Chapter 4. This is to show that Irish emigration to Argentina during the nineteenth century, while completely different in character to the earlier emigration and settlement, was, nevertheless, part of a continuum. This chapter will also show how conditions in Argentina altered at the end of the eighteenth century and how the type of Irish emigrant arriving in Argentina changed to meet those rapidly evolving conditions.

### **The Process of Emigration.**

Nineteenth-century Irish immigration was encouraged by the Argentine government from the very beginning of independence in 1815 because of a severe labour shortage in the country at the time. There was already a nucleus of an Irish labourforce in the country because some Irishmen were left behind in Buenos Aires after the failed British invasion of the River Plate in 1806/7<sup>2</sup>. Many of those former soldiers remained in contact with their families in Ireland. Those ex-soldiers were very highly regarded as workers by the merchants and estancieros<sup>3</sup> of Buenos Aires. They were also very popular among the ordinary citizens as many had deserted the British Army to fight with the Argentines in defence of the city during the invasion. Furthermore a number of Irish-born men who had emigrated as Spanish administrators held very senior positions in the newly independent Argentine military, naval and civil service at that time and they were to the fore in encouraging the new government to press ahead in its endeavours to encourage Irish immigration. The government was further encouraged by British and Irish merchants in Argentina at that time together with native

'Porteno'<sup>4</sup> merchants with names such as Lynch, Cullen, O'Gorman, Sarsfield etc. because they needed immigrants to work as flock owners/shepherds for the production of wool and tallow and to provide labour in the increasing number of slaughter houses by then growing up around the port of Buenos Aires. The various groups in Argentina promoting Irish immigration will be discussed in Chapter 5.

With this coalition working within Argentina to promote immigration from Ireland and because it was heavily dominated by existing Irish interest groups, some emigration from Ireland to Argentina in the nineteenth century was inevitable. Those promoting Irish immigration designed a specific settlement model which they believed would not only promote Irish immigration but would ensure that the Irish settled on and controlled the land in Argentina. They saw the Irish Catholic Church as the medium through which this model was to be implemented. A fuller analysis of how the model was implemented and what it involved will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Chapter 7 looks at how the intending emigrants organized their emigration to Argentina, the route they took together with the costs involved and how they financed their journey.

### **The Number of Emigrants.**

Chapter 8, analyzes the data available to estimate the total number who emigrated from Ireland to Argentina during the century together with the periods when the greatest and least

numbers arrived from Ireland. To explain the variation in the number arriving during the century a chronology of the political and economic conditions in the country is given for each period together with an explanation of how those changing conditions influenced the number and type of emigrant that settled in Argentina.

### **The Sending Areas**

Two areas in Ireland supplied about 80% of all Irish emigrants to Argentina. The largest area was in the midlands. It covered most of Westmeath, all of south Longford, and a small part of North Offaly. The second most important area was the Forth and Bargy area of Wexford. Almost all other counties, especially Cork and Clare contributed some emigrants. In addition the two main cities in Ireland, Dublin and Belfast, contributed a few urban artisan emigrants as well. Those issues will be discussed in Chapter 9.

### **The Demography of the Emigration.**

For emigrants to stabilize in their host country, during the nineteenth century, females as well as males had to emigrate. Furthermore the two sexes had to marry within the group and reproduce in their new country for a recognizably ethnic Irish community to emerge. Therefore, all the emigrants had to be within the reproductive age group. If they were single when emigrating, as the great majority of nineteenth century Irish were, both sexes had to emigrate to the same area, at the same time and marry each other in sufficient numbers to allow a recognizably Irish ethnic community of a viable size to form. Push and pull factors

had to affect the two sexes to a similar degree for the immigrant community to continue to grow and expand. All of those forces and their effect on the number of Irish, of both sexes, emigrating to Argentina during the nineteenth century will be examined in Chapter 10.

### **A Profile of Irish Emigrants.**

There was, however, more to forming a successful Irish community in a new land than a sympathetic government, favourable economic conditions, a large number of immigrants and an adequate sex balance. The immigrants had to be able to take full advantage of the economic opportunities offered in their new home in order to succeed as a community and the Irish, by any standard, succeeded in Argentina. Chapter 11, therefore, analyzes the effect of variables, (such as the date of arrival, the age on arrival, whether the emigrant was married or single when they arrived, and if married how many and what age were their children) in order to establish how those variables affected an immigrant's economic potential. The emigrants, together with their families, clearly understood the importance of proper management of those variables because the sophisticated way the great majority of emigrants managed those variables to maximize their individual chance of economic success is clearly demonstrated in this chapter.

### **Irish Settlement, Rural and Urban.**

When the Irish emigrated to Argentina a few remained permanently in the city. The great

majority, however, were to settle, as the instigators of the settlement planned, permanently in the countryside where they were soon acknowledged as expert sheep farmers. Initially they moved to the lands south of the city. As their numbers grew and as more fertile land became available to the north-west of the city, between the Parana and Salado rivers especially, they quickly began to move into and settle this area. At first the Irish generally congregated around existing military forts, but as the territory became more settled they were able to penetrate further into the countryside around those forts. The forts soon became small towns and many of the older residents in those areas, to this day, speak English with a recognizable regional Irish accent and can list their Argentine born ancestors back to the original Irish immigrants without including a non Irish name, for two, three, or sometimes four generations. Many, especially those over the age of 50, have remained as they say themselves 'pure Irish'<sup>5</sup>. With the help of census and genealogical data it was possible to map the spread of Irish settlement during the nineteenth century.

### **The Urban Settlers**

The city of Buenos Aires experienced continuous growth throughout the nineteenth century. Its population grew from 40,000 in 1810 to 95,000 in 1859. Between 1860 and 1880 the population tripled, growing to over 286,000. Buenos Aires city continued to expand rapidly reaching 660,000 in the census of 1895 and 1.5 million by 1914<sup>6</sup>. The Irish in Argentina were not, however, successful urban dwellers. The exception were a few hundred who

emigrated directly to the city of Rosario in the province of Santa Fe at the northern most tip of the Irish region in Argentina, in the late 1870's and early 1880's, to work in white collar positions in the British owned railway companies. The rest of the urban Irish immigrants either outmigrated to other Irish urban centres, usually in the United States, or disappeared into the wider, largely Italian, immigrant community of the city of Buenos Aires. The settlement patterns and lifestyle of the Irish in the different settlement areas, rural and urban, will be discussed in Chapter 12.

### **The lifestyle of the Immigrant.**

While some Irish remained in the city the great majority were rural settlers. Chapter 13 describes the conditions under which the early emigrants in particular worked. It explains how the Irish acquired first their sheep and later their land. It also describes the isolation and the dangers that they experienced while caring for their flocks and settling the new lands. A description of the homes they built, the clothes they wore and how they, as individuals, related to each other and to the, largely alien, surroundings they found themselves in is also given.

### **The Reorganization of the Irish Community post 1875.**

By 1875 the region of Argentina which up until then had been settled by the Irish was rapidly transforming from being a frontier country into becoming a highly efficient

agricultural producer on the outskirts of one of the most rapidly expanding cities in the world. Thomas Armstrong and Fr. Fahy had recently died and so a new leadership, with different objectives was in control, directing the future of the Irish community. The direction that Irish settlement took under their leadership is outlined in chapter 14.

### **Conclusion.**

An overview, in Chapter 15, draws together all the strands of the previous chapters and shows that nineteenth-century Irish emigration to, and settlement in, Argentina conforms to the general Irish emigration of the period, in that they were among the earliest arrivals and, for at least the first three quarters of the century, the most important group of European immigrant labourers in the country in economic terms, and rivalling the Italians for supremacy in absolute numbers until about the middle of the century.

The emigrants were attracted to Argentina by the availability of fertile land and the opportunity to make a fresh start doing something at which they were skilled, but were unable to turn to commercial advantage at home. They were able to arrive at their destination using established, reasonably convenient, trading links. They had prior knowledge of the conditions in the country from official channels, as well as from close family members or near, trusted, neighbours already resident in Argentina who were willing to recommend it as a place of opportunity. They were, for the most part, even from the beginning, going to an established Irish community, with Irish value systems, which was firmly linked into the

British colonial trading system. The majority were able to settle close to relatives or, at the very least, near neighbours and friends from Ireland. They were assured of steady employment which paid substantially more than similar employment at home. Most of the emigrants consisted of single, non-inheriting, sons and daughters who were faced with the choice of a considerable fall in status at home or the chance of success abroad.

The earlier in the century the emigrant arrived in Argentina, usually, the better they succeeded in economic terms. When conditions no longer favoured the intending emigrant or when they judged conditions better elsewhere they abandoned Argentina in the same way that many abandoned Canada and turned their attentions, usually, to the United States. Despite many similarities, between the Irish settlers in Argentina and those Irish who settled elsewhere throughout the 'English' colonial world there were distinct differences. Argentina was the only self-governing country where the language and customs of the country were of Latin rather than English origins. Even in Canada there was at least a choice for the Irish immigrant, within the country, whether to settle in an area where English or French traditions existed. No such choice existed in Argentina. The customs and laws of the country were fundamentally different to the system found in all other popular Irish areas. Finally, a subtle if informal, control on the number and type of immigrant was exercised by the organizers of the immigration, though not, it would appear, by the government, to ensure that only those who would operate within a strictly rural environment would settle permanently in the country.

The Irish adopted different economic and social strategies in Argentina to those they adopted elsewhere but even that adaptability forms part of the overall Irish settlement pattern because the Irish developed a different strategy in every destination, in order to take best advantage of the local conditions. Thus while Irish emigration to Argentina during the nineteenth century has unique features which merit study, it was, nevertheless, very much part of the general Irish nineteenth-century, trans-Atlantic outreach to areas tied into the Anglophone industrial and mercantile system.

## NOTES

1. Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth (1993), 'The Irish Diaspora: Emigration to the New World, 1720-1920, 340,

2. An interesting fact about the British invasion of the river Plate in 1806/7 is that the three instigators and leaders of the invasion, Popham, Beresford, and Beaufort were all Irishmen.

3. 'Estanciero' literally means 'estate owner'. In 1815 only a handful of men would have controlled all of the land in the territory around Buenos Aires city under the newly independent government of Argentina. Following intensive European settlement in northern Buenos Aires province from the middle of the last century, holdings in excess of about 1,000 hectares are also called estancias. Nineteenth century Irish estancieros, with one or two exceptions, fall into this latter category. Prior to the mid nineteenth century and even today everywhere outside northern Buenos Aires an estanciero is generally assumed to own tens, if not hundreds of thousands of hectares of land.

4. 'Porteno' which means 'a man from the seaport' was a term used to describe old established creole merchant families operating out of the port of Buenos Aires.

5. This remark was continually repeated to me by the older members of the Irish-Argentine community during my field trips to the country. Even a cursory examination of Coghlan (1987) would bear out the truth of their claim.

6. David Rock (1986) Argentina 1516-1987, 115,153,165.

## CHAPTER 2.

### *REVIEW OF SOURCE MATERIAL USED IN THIS WORK.*

#### **Introduction.**

The material used in researching this work comprises both primary and secondary source works. Some of the manuscript material was obtained in Ireland. This was augmented by other sources and primary field research conducted during the course of two field trips to Argentina, the first for ten weeks in September/November 1990 and the second, a much shorter five day visit to Buenos Aires city, in August 1992 following a conference at the University of San Paulo, Brazil.

#### **Primary Sources**

The primary sources consist of letters written at the time by immigrants to their families in Ireland, together with letters written by the leaders of the Irish community (mainly Fr. Anthony Fahy Irish chaplain, for much of the period), to the Archbishops of Dublin. Other primary sources consist of two unpublished journals together with articles, and advertisements published in local Irish newspapers, such as THE WEXFORD PEOPLE and THE WESTMEATH EXAMINER during the nineteenth century. In addition specialist newspapers such as THE AGRICULTURAL GAZETTE were also consulted.

On the Argentine side, THE SOUTHERN CROSS and THE HIBERNIAN were consulted to find out the concerns of the Irish community living in Argentina, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth. In addition during the field trips there were interviews conducted with elderly Argentine-Irish who could still remember growing up in the Irish community early in this century. The records of the Pallotine Order were also consulted for this work. A further important primary source is a photocopy of an original hand written manuscript obtained from the Irish embassy in Argentina during the first field trip to Argentina in 1990. This journal was written by John Brabazon, about his early life as an immigrant in Argentina during the period 1842/52. While this manuscript was written in chronological sequence it appears to have been written later than 1852 though no date is given.

In addition to visiting the Irish settlement areas of Argentina the four main regions, as described in the following chapter, were visited in October 1990. The observations made and descriptions given in Chapter 3., with the exception of climate and geological data, are the result of personal encounters and experiences together with oral information obtained locally, on that field trip.

### **Secondary Sources.**

Very little has been written on nineteenth century Irish emigration to Argentina and many of the works relevant to the topic are presently out of print, some for over a hundred years. Many of these publications are known only to a few specialist readers. An overall and persisting problem encountered in researching this thesis was the dearth of work on Irish-Argentine settlement and with the total absence of reliable maps from Independence until the 1880's when it became a major destination for urbanizing southern Italian migrants who were to provide the manpower during the country's industrializing phase.

Seven important secondary sources are employed in this study of Irish-Argentine emigration. Two volumes by William McCann first published in 1853 comprise the earliest published major source. Six volumes of the Handbook of the River Plate published by the Mulhall brothers between 1868 and 1893 are an important source of general statistical information on nineteenth century Argentina and are also a very good chronicle, when taken together, of the changing conditions in the Argentine countryside around Buenos Aires city over their publication period. Murray<sup>1</sup>, looks at Irish immigration from a historical perspective. This is the only effort to date at a historical overview of Irish emigration to Argentina.

A novel by Kathleen Nevin<sup>2</sup> is the only work in existence which examines Irish emigration and settlement in Argentina from a female perspective and is therefore the only source available which makes any attempt to chronicle an Irish woman's experience in Argentina. It

is for this reason that Nevin's work is considered here. Coghlan's works published in 1982 and 1987 form the basis for most of the statistical analysis undertaken in the thesis. Coghlan's 1982 work comprises passenger lists for the port of Buenos Aires for parts of the nineteenth century along with abstracts from the 1855, 1869 and 1895 census. He lists the name, the age occupation and area of residence of Irish immigrants. His 1987 work is a genealogy of the Argentine-Irish community based on about 3665 Irish immigrants. Finally a work by Korol and Sabato<sup>3</sup> who were the first to statistically analyze the Irish communities contribution to Argentina is also used. Much of this work though published prior to Coghlan was derived from Coghlan's (then unpublished) work.

While it is intended to discuss these authors' work separately in greater detail, it is worth pointing out here, that the reason almost all the works used to form the basis for this research are by authors of Irish origin is coincidental. It arose because these are the only important works available which look at Irish emigration, to Argentina, during the nineteenth century.

### **Detailed Discussion of the Sources**

Because the above works are known only to a few highly specialized readers it is proposed to discuss these sources here in a much more detailed fashion than would normally be the case. Those already familiar with the works will not find this discussion necessary in assessing their importance to this thesis.

## **UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL**

### **John Brabazon**

The major unpublished source used in this thesis is a journal written by an emigrant from Westmeath called John Brabazon. Brabazon wrote a of his experiences as an emigrant in Buenos Aires province between 1842 and 1852.

Brabazon was not a typical Irish emigrant in that he came from a well known Protestant family in Westmeath. Indeed it is only in the 1990's that the Brabazon family home and 300 acre farm went out of the Brabazon name to a nephew Mr. Greg. Potterton. That said, John Brabazon was typical of emigration from the area in that he left Ireland with his passage and very little money and was met by family members on arrival. Possibly because of his wealthy background, he was unprepared for life as a labourer in Argentina. An honest man, but no businessman, he drifted in and out of almost every kind of work done by Irish emigrants during the 1840' and 1850'. He bought sheep when they were dear and sold out when they were cheap. He describes the real dangers experienced by those early Irish emigrants from the lone gaucho, to renegade bands of 'soldiers' fighting in the, almost constant, civil wars of that period. He also describes how many Irish left Argentina for California during the gold rush of 1849 and how others availed of free passage to Australia, paid for by the British government, in the 1850 when the civil war, against the dictator

Rosas, was nearing its height. Mention of these out-migrations are otherwise unrecorded. They appear to have been passed through the Irish community at that time by word of mouth.

I drew greatly on this manuscript in describing the life of the Irish emigrant in the Pampa during the period 1842 to 1852. While it is contemporaneous with McCann it was written from a completely different perspective,- that of the emigrant trying to survive, often alone, and having to cope with his new life in a foreign language in strange, unfamiliar and very often hostile surroundings. His entries describe life as he saw it and his comments on native and Irish alike offer a very different perspective to that found in the published works of the time. Brabazon's journal is that of an individual dealing with unique situations. It cannot therefore be used in the same way as the more general published works. It is nevertheless a very important document in that it describes an emigrant's life, from personal experience.

### **Thomas Murray.**

I also obtained a diary of the voyage to Argentina in 1892 by an emigrant named Thomas Armstrong. This is the only account written by an Irish emigrant in my possession. While Murray travelled at a time when Irish emigration was almost finished, the route taken and much of his experiences would have been similar to earlier emigrants. This emigrant may well have been related to the author, Thomas Murray whose published work is discussed later in this chapter. To avoid confusion the Thomas Murray who kept the diary of his

voyage to Argentina is referred to only in Chapter 7. All other references to 'Murray' throughout this work refer solely to the author of the published work.

## **PUBLISHED WORKS.**

### **William McCann.**

McCann (1853) is the earliest published major source employed in this thesis. His work published in two volumes entitled Two Thousand Miles' Ride Through The Argentine Provinces, was commissioned by the British Government. It was to be a factual account of Argentina with the specific intention of informing both British capital and labour about the true potential of the country. The result is that his description of the countryside together with his comments on its settlement are an invaluable if biased source on contemporary mid-eighteenth century Argentina.

McCann, as the two volumes suggest, made two journeys through then-settled Argentina, on horseback, during the late 1840's. He spent much of this time travelling through the province of Buenos Aires, staying with important landholders (many Irish and English among them) and reporting on the countryside and its settlers. His work in many ways precedes the Mulhalls' handbook series though without the amount of statistical information which the later Handbook series contain. McCann's work is limited in that it lacks a spread of time that the Mulhalls' work contain, dealing specifically with the period between 1845 and 1850. It is

however the only reliable published work available for that period on Argentina. Brabazon and McCann when taken together give an excellent insight into conditions experienced by Irish emigrants who left Ireland for Argentina up to and including the Famine.

### **Michael and Edward Mulhall**

An important source for this thesis are the six editions of The Handbook of The River Plate by Michael and Edward Mulhall published between 1868 and 1892. The Mulhall brothers were publishers in Buenos Aires. In 1861, financed by the Duggans, (a very wealthy Irish emigrant family) they founded 'The Standard' newspaper which became the most prestigious newspaper in the country making the Mulhalls' a fortune and establishing them as the friend of several Argentine presidents.

Their Handbooks, some of which were commissioned by the Argentine Government, contain a considerable amount of official statistical data on the country for the period of publication, together with a description of the province of Buenos Aires county by county. Each edition is, in many respects, quite different in compilation, especially in the way it handles emigration figures so that direct comparison between one volume and another is often impossible. For example in the earlier editions, the Irish, Scottish and English immigrants are listed separately whereas in the later ones they are all included as British. Nevertheless, ratios of Irish to British residents are given and it is still possible to estimate the numbers of

Irish migrating though some margin of error must be allowed for. I was fortunate in that the Mulhall brothers, being Irish, report on the numbers and conditions of Irish residents living in the countryside in greater detail, than they often did other nationalities. The handbooks contain anecdotal material that does not lend itself to statistical testing. However they are contemporary with much of the period under examination and are designed to give an overall view in a way that Coghlan, for example, never could. They are, therefore, useful in two ways. Firstly they are a valuable source of statistical information not found elsewhere and secondly they can be used to test many of the trends derived from other data sources, especially Coghlan. In some identifiable instances the Mulhalls' figures are more accurate than those of Coghlan.

### **Thomas Murray.**

The only major historical work specifically on the Irish in Argentina was Thomas Murray's The Story of the Irish in Argentina which was published in 1919. Murray does have its limitations in that it is very much a product of its time. Published in the same year as the First Dail met in the Mansion House in Dublin, it was written during a period in Ireland's history which saw the Rebellion of 1916 and the emergence of a strident form of Irish nationalism. The writer, though Argentine born, had the perspective of an Irish Catholic nationalist.

Murray saw the Irish in Argentina as God fearing, hard working, simple folk evicted from their homes in Ireland by rapacious English, Protestant landlords who over the centuries had despoiled the country because of the steadfastness of the Irish people to the true Catholic Religion. The success of the Irish in Argentina, Murray believed, was proof that, given their freedom, the Irish nation would be equally prosperous and successful and be a beacon of faith and morality to the rest of the world. An idyllic view of Ireland which is still shared by many Irish-Argentines today. Murray did, however, make every effort to record accurately the nineteenth century settlement and the conditions experienced by the early Irish emigrants in particular. He is a reliable source for estimates of early emigrant figures which are not found in surviving, official Government sources. Murray is also an excellent source for the geographer as he carefully records the spread of emigration out from the city of Buenos Aires through the province during the century. He describes the importance of the pioneering emigrants such as 'Big Micky Murray' (no relation as far as I know) who moved quickly into new territories and encouraged other emigrants to follow. He is also an important source for much of the information on the role of the Irish Catholic Church in the formation and structuring of the Irish immigrant society in Argentina. He records in great detail the lifestyle of the early emigrants and how the community set about organizing itself into a cohesive economic and ethnic group, transplanting the Irish Catholic Church in the process and using it as the cement which held the entire ethno-economic system together. Murray does not make a distinction, however, between the pre-1860 and post-1860 emigrants. He sees the

post 1860 emigrants in the country as being at an earlier stage of economic development due to their shorter time in the country. He portrays them following in the footsteps of their earlier counterparts to the top of the economic ladder, rather than what they were, a group destined to remain the economic and social inferior of the earlier emigrants often deliberately kept economically dependant on the then established Irish landed elite.

Murray remains an important source on the nineteenth century Irish community in Argentina. His facts are well supported and he lived among and knew many of the people about whom he wrote. However, as more research is done on this emigration his interpretation of the emigrants and their motives will, I feel, be questioned.

**Kathleen Nevin.**

A major weakness of all the literature on Irish emigration to Argentina is the total neglect of female emigration and the contribution of Irish women to the formation of Irish-Argentine society. The only source researchers have on the subject of female emigration is a novel published in 1949 by an Irish-Argentine Kathleen Nevin, titled You'll Never Go Back. Nevin made no pretence to being a scholar, she did however realize that the contribution of women to the formation of Irish-Argentine society was being ignored and she used a novel, centered on three Irish girls in their late teens to mid-twenties, who left the Irish midlands in the eighteen seventies, as a device to record the experiences of women who emigrated from

Ireland to Buenos Aires around that time.

While Nevin's characters are not well drawn her perspective on emigration and Hiberno-Argentine society towards the end of the nineteenth century are very clear. While at no time does this novel by Nevin make any claims to scholarship or literary prowess, her work shows her as a very observant and unblinking woman for her time. As this is the only work which examines the values and mores of the then established Irish-Argentine society at the end of the nineteenth century from a female perspective and is the only work that makes any attempt to define the position of women or their role within that society, it is employed in this thesis to try and give some insight into female emigration.

### **Susan Wilkinson.**

Another novel written in a similar genre to Nevin's work is Sebastian's Pride by Susan Wilkinson. Wilkinson, a Canadian of Irish-Argentine extraction uses her own family history to write a romantic novel set in the Argentine camp during the nineteenth century. The central family in the novel, at the publisher's request, are supposed to be English. In fact they came from near Mullingar. They are untypical in that the first emigrant was Protestant and working in Dublin before he emigrated. Nevertheless the picture of camp life as experienced by the Irish in the nineteenth century is very well drawn. Like Nevin's work, Wilkinson never intended her work as an academic source and it makes no pretensions to scholarship. It

was written as light romance for a Canadian audience. Despite this limitation, drawn as it is from her own family's experience, it does illustrate very well how a man who emigrated penniless to Argentina and was determined to succeed, regardless of moral principle, was able take advantage of conditions in the country to acquire and keep a large land holding there.

### **Eduardo Coghlan**

The most important of all the publications to this thesis, is that of Eduardo Coghlan, retired judge, with a Ph.D in genealogy, who was able, because of his position as head of the Census Bureau in Argentina, to collect a vast amount of raw data on the nineteenth century Irish community. All of these raw data, which consists of two works, published privately in a limited edition in Argentina, was transformed into computer format by me. The analysis of them forms the basis of the statistical reports in this thesis. The two publications referred to are El aporte de los Irlandeses a la Formacion de la Nacion Argentina, published in 1982 and his 1987 publication Los Irlandeses en la Argentina. A copy of both are in my possession.

Coghlan's 1982 publication consists of a list of about 4,000 passengers who arrived in Buenos Aires between 1835 and 1875 together with abstracts from regional (1855) and national (1869 and 1895) census which provide 10,894 entries of 'Irish' and 'English' emigrants. His 1987 publication purports to be a complete genealogy of Irish-Argentine

emigrants. It was compiled from baptismal and marriage certificates as well as property records and passenger lists. These dependent records were augmented by census material. In the 1987 work Coghlan has published data on over 3,650 original emigrants together with a record of their descendants and marriage partners, in most cases, up to the present day. As such, it represents a unique and useful database for analysis of the Irish Argentine settlement and society. No comparable data set has been published for any other emigrant Irish community.

Coghlan (1987) does impose limitations on the geographer, however, in that it records only those migrants who left some record of their presence in their new country. It is a record of residuals. From a Darwinian perspective, Coghlan records only the fittest who went on to reproduce. His records and information on individuals improve as those individuals rise in importance within the community. In short, while Coghlan's records cover about 15-20% of the total estimated Irish emigration, it is not a random sample of the emigrants who originally left Ireland for Argentina in the nineteenth century, many of them only settling there for a short period before moving elsewhere in the Americas. What Coghlan's work cannot do is account for those considerable numbers who migrated either back to Ireland or to the United States, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Neither does it record those migrants who disappeared or who, soon after arriving, died during the many cholera epidemics which occurred in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. In only a

few cases does he record out-migration of some who, by the time they left Argentina, had already been recorded in marital or property transactions. Commenced in the 1960's, Coghlan's research is based entirely on surviving evidence and consists, in the main, of property owners and those who married within the country. Nonetheless it is an important, albeit biased, sample of upwards of one fifth of Irish emigrants to Argentina. As a description of the background of the present-day Irish-Argentine society it is less partially representative.

These limitations have to be borne in mind when interpreting his data. Coghlan nevertheless remains a very important source for the geographer, as it is by far the most complete record of a surviving Irish community anywhere outside Ireland. It is possible to obtain from his work information that can be used to measure population origin, movement, integration and assimilation in their host country. Much of that information confirms broad patterns found in Irish migrant communities elsewhere. It is therefore legitimate to use Coghlan as the core work when studying a homogeneous community within a broader settlement framework.

Coghlan's 1982 work consists of lists of 'Irish' names by district, age, nationality, marital status and occupation as recorded in the three census of the nineteenth century. Because very many Irish were recorded as 'English' all 'English' emigrants with Irish family names were included. Thus this record has to be to some degree subjective and its main weakness is that

it cannot differentiate between those who emigrated from Ireland directly and those first generation English who emigrated also.

Much of this difficulty can be overcome by very careful analysis of the data in the work, part of the reason for the confusion in differentiating between Irish and English lies with the census enumerators, who in many districts recorded all emigrants as English when other records clearly show, often the date, townland and parish in Ireland where they were baptized.

It would also appear, from looking at the records, that in some districts the enumerators may have been deliberately misled by the emigrants, possibly for reasons of status. In some areas all the estancieros are listed as English, while their labourers are given as Irish, though proof of the Irish origins of the estancieros is absolute. The converse is also found in other areas, where the property owners are given as Irish and their labourers as English though in this case proof of the Irish origin of these 'English' labourers is not so conclusive.

There is no doubt that some Irish did re emigrate from England and that English emigrants of recent Irish origin also entered Argentina. Their numbers, on balance, appear to have been very small as all were able to disappear into the various regional Irish communities. This would indicate that those few who emigrated from England and are counted as Irish may

have been attracted to Argentina from information supplied directly from close family members in Ireland, rather than from any tradition of emigration to Argentina from the English community in which they were living.

### **Korol and Sabato**

The work by Korol and Sabato (1981) Como fue la inmigracion Irlandesa en Argentina, was a brief synopsis drawn from the works discussed above. This work was published in 1981, a year before Coghlan's census material. Nevertheless Korol and Sabato, friends of Coghlan, had access to Coghlan's data prior to its publication. Their most important contribution was that they were the first to prove that only those Irish emigrants who arrived before 1865 had any real chance of acquiring land in the country. Living in Argentina they had access to records not available in Ireland. They are the source for numerical data on the size of Irish estancias at the end of the century, when they were purchased etc. Its perspective is different to this thesis in that it concentrated on the importance of the Irish community to the development of the Argentine economy by the middle of the nineteenth century. It was written for an Argentine audience. Consequently much of the work dealt with conditions in Ireland which obliged emigrants to leave. It is important in that it was the first to attempt to quantify the importance of the Irish emigrants to the emerging post (Spanish) colonial Argentine economy.

Published a year before Coghlan's census and six years prior to his genealogy and lacking the technology of the modern computer, most of the information since established by Coghlan and dealt with in this thesis was unavailable to the authors, though it is obvious that Coghlan was of great assistance to them in preparing their work. One difficulty with the work is that it assumes that in the three census Coghlan captured 100% of the Irish emigrants. On that basis the authors estimate the total number of Irish emigrants including those who re-emigrated at only 10,672 which I feel is a considerable under estimate. Other sources, as they arise, will be discussed in chapter endnotes.

## N O T E S

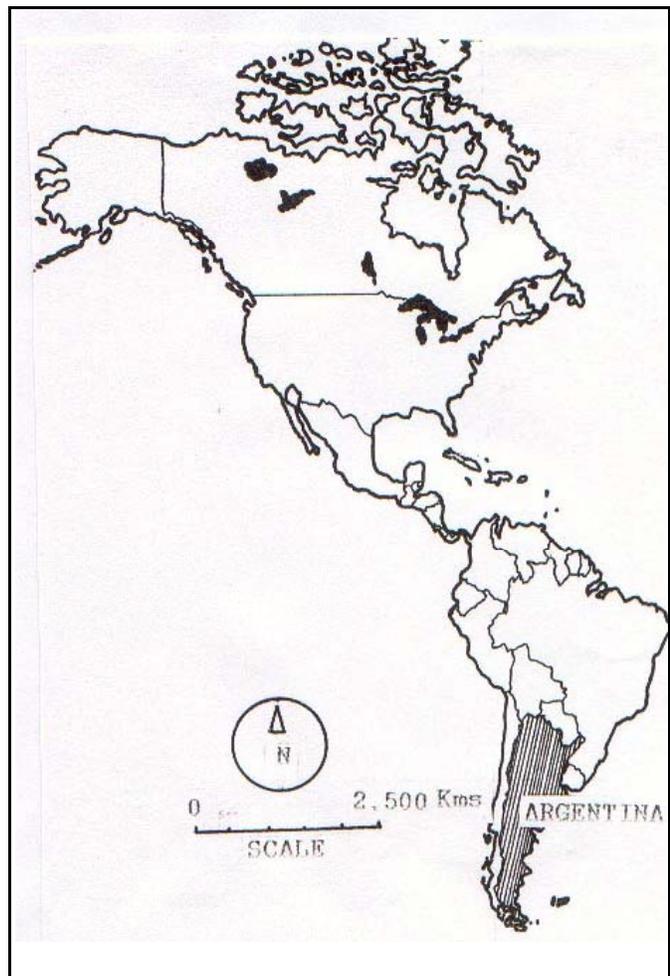
1. Thomas Murray (1919) The History of the Irish in Argentina.
2. Kathleen Nevin (1949) You'll Never go Back.
3. Korol and Sabato (1981) Como fue la inmigracion Irlandesa en Argentina.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE EFFECT OF PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE ON EARLY SETTLEMENT.

#### Introduction.

Argentina is located south of the equator and is the second largest state in South America. It covers an area of 2,791,810 km sq. and is situated along with Chile, on the southern peninsula of the South American continent. Argentina stretches from approximately the 22nd to the 55th parallel, measuring about 3,460 km in length. Its width, from east to west, varies from between 1,580 km in the north to about 220 km at the Straits of Magellan and even less further south in the territory of Tierra del Fuego. This gives the



**Figure 3.3** Modern Argentina

country its long tapering shape. Were it situated in the Northern Hemisphere, Argentina would stretch from Aberdeen in Scotland to the town of Tummoo on the border between Libya and Niger. On this map the city of Buenos Aires would be located in Morocco, roughly where Rabat now stands. On the North American Continent Argentina would stretch from the Belcher Islands in the Hudson Bay, to the City of Guadalajara in central Mexico. Buenos Aires city would be located about where New Orleans in the USA is now sited. Argentina therefore contains most of the variety in geology and climate found in Europe and North Africa and the north American continent.

### **Argentina, its Geology and Climate.**

Argentina's only mountain range, the Andes, lies along its western side from Bolivia in the north to the Straits of Magellan in the south, forming a natural border with Chile. Moving east from the Andes the country becomes a plain, devoid of any significant features of relief until it reaches the Atlantic. Consequently the east-west airflow is significantly affected by the country's mountain zone, whereas the north-south airstreams travel across thousands of kilometers over plains, unimpeded by any significant relief features. Therefore the cold dry polar wind has a marked effect in its sub-tropical zones, particularly in winter, while warm moist tropical airflows penetrate as far south as northern Patagonia, usually in summer, affecting that climate to a considerable degree.

Its geology and climate therefore make Argentina a country of many contrasts, with almost

every middle and high latitude climate known to exist on earth, occurring somewhere, over its vast length and including. active glaciation in the south, and lush tropical rain forest in the north east, On the same latitude, in the west and north west, the country contains arid desert sustaining little vegetation other than the giant cactus. Yet from the centre of the country, east to the Atlantic, lie the Pampa, one of world's largest and most fertile grassland areas.

### **Early European Settlement.**

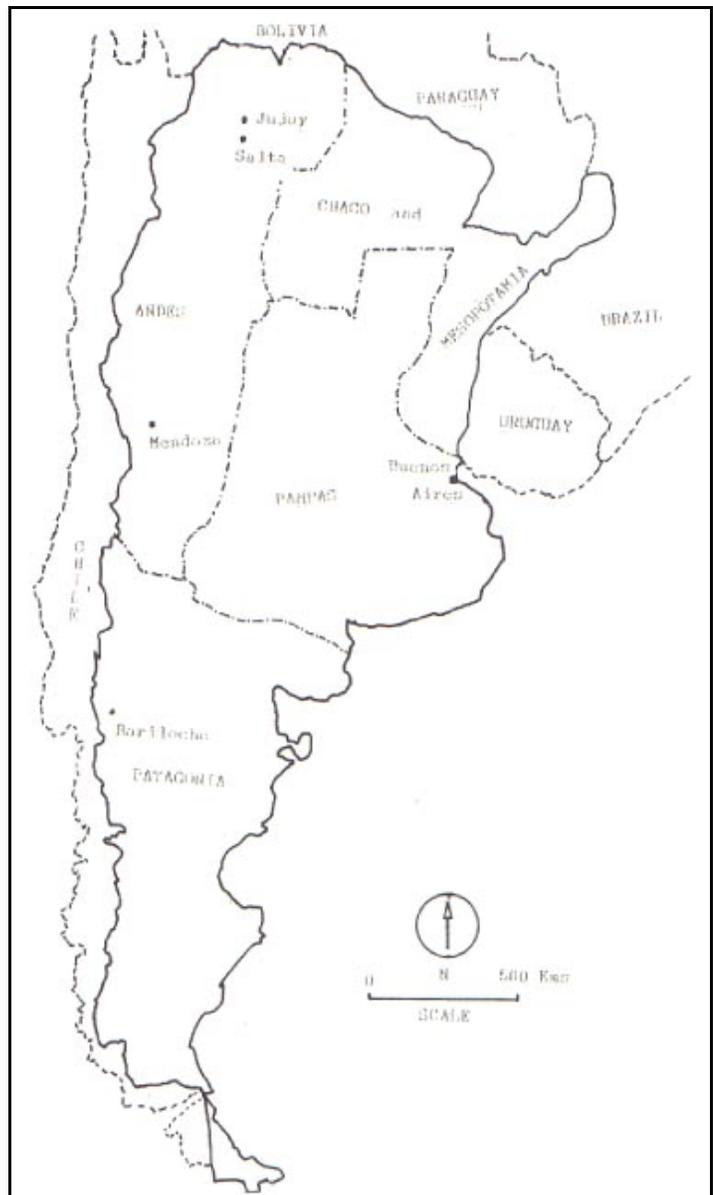
These variations in relief, geology and climate, considerably influenced settlement patterns throughout the country's period of human habitation. In the early period of European settlement of the Americas, Argentina was almost completely ignored as an area of systematic European settlement. This was because the country (despite its name Argentina - the Land of Silver -) lacked known mineral resources, such as silver and gold to any significant degree. All of the country remained beyond the reach of European law, with the exception of a small part of the north western Andes and the small settlement of Buenos Aires, located on the mouth of the River Plate in the east, together with a few small fortified towns on the road connecting these two settlements.

The majority of the Europeans who settled in Argentina during the sixteenth, seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth century therefore, were those who for one reason or another, wished to live beyond the reach of European influence. Those settlers along with a tiny Spanish and Creole elite who lived in the towns, were responsible for providing leather, horses and mules for the silver mines of Potosi in nearby Bolivia. Many of those Europeans,

and escaped Negro slaves, intermarried with the native Indian population. The offspring of those unions, the gaucho, is legendary still, not only for his horsemanship but also his total contempt for all laws and formal institutions.

### The Main Regions

Argentina is usually divided into four major regions for descriptive purposes. Two of these regions, the Patagonian Plateau, including Tierra del Fuego, which incorporates the entire country south of the Colorado River and the Andes Region which includes Western Argentina north of the Rio Colorado, are areas of erosion. The two other regions, the Gran Chaco (Great Hunting Ground) which is included with the temperate rain forests to make up the northern part of the country, and central Pampa



**Figure 3:2** The four main regions of Argentina

region, combine to form the area of deposition created by the erosion zones of the Andes and Patagonia. Each region, partly because of their geological and climatic differences, has evolved a completely different type of settlement pattern. The settlement patterns also reflect the widely differing ethnic groups that settled in the different regions, all of whom combine to make up the Argentine nation.

### **The Andes.**

The north eastern region of the Andean zone, which separates the alitplano from the Chaco, originally formed the southern limits of the Inca Empire. In this region exists a substantial area with a sub-tropical micro-climate due to the effect of relief causing uplift on the moisture laden north-easterly airstreams blowing down from the tropics. This action results in substantially higher rainfalls in this part of the Andean zone. These air currents prevent air stagnation in that part of the region and combine with the cloudy conditions to prevent frost. Tucuman, the most exposed area, enjoys up to 900 mm of rain, most of which falls during the summer period when these air flows are dominant. Jujuy and Salta, which are more sheltered by the piedmont hills than Tucuman, have a lower rainfall of about 750 mm annually. In this part of the region modern settlement has brought with it the cultivation of sugar, tobacco, rice, maize and alfalfa. In contrast La Quiaca, which is located close to Bolivia, a little further to the north-west, is not affected by these airstreams, and experiences the dry arid conditions of the puna. All of this zone is still inhabited largely by Native Americans. The present provincial capitals of Tucuman, Salta and Jujuy were among the first Spanish settlements founded in Argentina. Together with Mendoza, they were all under

Spanish dominion before 1600.



**Figure 3:3.** Jujuy Province close to the Bolivian border on roughly the same latitude as Rio de Janeiro.

Due to its micro-climate and its proximity to the silver mines of Potosi this region was the most densely populated area of Argentina until the nineteenth century. The mines' needs were traditionally supplied from this area. Those goods which were not produced locally such as mules and slaves were purchased with silver from the mines. Even in pre-colonial times its population was highly organized and had good communication and trade routes with the centre of the Incan Empire to the north. Furthermore, because of its good organization under the Incas, this area was easier for the Spanish to subdue than other less

populated areas with poor communication and whose native population consisted of independent groups, each of which had to be conquered separately. For those reasons this area of the country was the first to be colonized by the Spanish in a systematic way. Resulting from this, the type of land holding structures which were created, to meet the local needs of the Spanish, and have since come to be associated with Argentina, began here. This system of land holding later spread from here throughout the rest of the country relatively unchanged in many respects.

The northern part of the Andes, together with the more remote northerly areas of the Chaco, is the only area in Argentina where the native American is still a significant part of the overall population. In Salta a noticeable subgroup, who are of unmistakable Native American stock, have blue eyes and more occasionally dark auburn hair. The Argentine explanation for this is that it resulted from intermarriage with Irish soldiers who landed in Buenos Aires, 1500 km. distant, in 1806/7. This story is based on the fact that Irish prisoners of war from the British army, were exiled to that part of the country after the defeat of the British in 1807. Very many of them later supported the Argentines against the Spanish, choosing to remain in this area rather than face an uncertain future at home following a career of fighting against both England and Spain. No research has been done to verify or discount these widely accepted claims and this remains for the moment, one of the intriguing if unanswered questions of Irish emigration.

The rest of the Andes zone consists of the Cordillera mountains and puna lying within them. Between these and the lower, more easterly Pre-Cordillera range is desert. All of the agricultural land in the Andean zone depends on the melt-water from the higher regions for irrigation. Mendoza, which is located near the south of the region and is the principal wine growing district, is a good example of this melt water dependence.



**Figure 3:4.** The Andes zone near Mendoza with Mount Aconcagua in the background.

Rainfall, which is uncertain throughout this weather zone, usually falls between October and May and severe droughts are common in areas where irrigation is not a feature. Settlement in the Andean zone, outside of the north east, is largely of Italian stock and is very sparse. The settlers depend mostly on vineyards for economic survival. This region never became an

important centre for Irish settlement despite Irish troops being exiled here on a number of occasions between 1780 and 1807.

### **Patagonia.**

Patagonia is the other great erosion zone in Argentina. It accounts for the southern half of the total length of Argentina and a quarter of its total area. It stretches 1,600 km from the Colorado River in the north to the Beagle Channel in the south. It was formed by sea bed uplift rising in a series of terraces beginning about 500 km. east of the Atlantic coast rising westward to the Andes. Its coastline, which is formed by one of these terraces, consists mainly of cliffs ranging in size from 60 m. in the north and south to 550m. at the centre just north of Comodoro Rivadavia. In some areas a narrow costal plain occurs or the range of cliffs is cut by a river valley. Patagonia is, however, mostly inaccessible, cut off on the east by the Atlantic cliffs and on the west by the Andes mountains. It is almost totally dependant on the Pampa region to the north for access to markets. This is a major reason why, even today, Patagonia remains one of the most under populated regions of the world.

The whole Patagonian region, which got its name from the fact that the native population were supposed to have very large feet, is an erosion surface being worn away by both water and wind. Winter winds with ground-speeds of 160 km per hour are commonplace in some of the more southerly areas. Rivers such as the Rio Colorado and the Rio Negro, fed by the snows high up in the Andes, have deeply incised the surface. They are now, for the most

part, misfit streams flowing at the bottom of large canyons.

Patagonia lies within a prevailing westerly air flow from the Pacific and is affected by the Southern Andean rain-shadow, which gives it a dry, cold climate with a low annual rainfall over most of its area. Because of the very low rainfall the species of vegetation growing there reflect a continental climate rather than a maritime one, despite the comparatively mild temperatures due to the close proximity of both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Vegetation also varies according to latitude and soil conditions, with the grassland in the north giving way to tussock grass and scrub to the south.

All of these factors when combined with a very poor development of lateral stream valleys resulted in the absence of a reliable supply of accessible surface water over vast areas. These factors together with its inaccessibility, delayed European settlement of this region while land in the much more hospitable Pampa region was available. An interest in Patagonia really only began when sheep farming could no longer compete with cattle and grain on the Pampa. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century it attracted some investment from Britain. Emigrants from the sheep farming districts of England Wales, Scotland and Spain, and a handful of Irish, who went to work as labourers on English company-owned estancias, settled its more sheltered canyons. The Welsh colony in Chubut was an early experiment at settlement.

This colony, never grew beyond a few hundred in size. The survival of this group of immigrants, as a separate community which was able to retain its language and culture



**Figure 3:5.** 'The Meeting of the Waters', Bariloche.

unaltered over several generations, was due more to its isolation than to its size or economic success. It never attracted further Welsh settlers to the region in the way the Pampas continued to attract the Irish and Scots who were emigrating at that period.

The Welsh settlers were never to amass the huge personal fortunes acquired during that period by some Irish and Scottish who emigrated to the Pampa. In fact the early Welsh settlers were often so destitute as to be dependant on the charity of the indigenous population to provide them with food to escape starvation during the harsh winter months. Some of the



premier holiday location throughout South America for winter sports such as skiing. German has almost the status of a second language here and can be heard regularly in the shops and on the streets. The houses and buildings are very similar in construction to those found in Switzerland, while the town itself consists largely of tourist hotels and family owned chocolate factories, with shops attached to sell their product to the tourists. These small factories combine to make Bariloche the premier chocolate producing region in Argentina and further add to this region's remarkable similarity to Switzerland.

One of the principle streets together with one of the main avenues in Bariloche are called O'Connor. The O'Connors were an important local creole family who emigrated to Bariloche from Chile and are credited with organizing the resistance to Spanish rule in that area at the time of independence. O'Connor was under the command of Juan MacKenna, who in turn reported to Bernardo O'Higgins, the great architect of Chilean Independence. Thus even here the Irish were an important influence on the eventual political destiny of the area.

### **The Gran Chaco**

The Chaco and the north-eastern provinces of Misiones and Corrientes combine to form the northern region. It stretches to the boundary between Argentina and Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil. The actual border owes its present shape to political conflict in the nineteenth century and not to any differences in natural features, which it shares in common with its neighbours north of the border. Four main rivers cross the Chaco in a south-easterly direction. They are the Rivers Pilcomayo, Bermejo and Salado, all of which flow into the Parana system and the

Rio Dulce which drains into Mar Chiquita. The largest of these rivers is the Pilcomayo which joins the Rio Paraguay at Asuncion. The Rio Pilcomayo divides the region in two, forming the northern border of Argentina in the process. This central region is separated from the Andes zone by the Rio Dulce. North of this river, in Tucuman and Salta the two regions merge imperceptibly.

The Chaco is a great lowland deposition plain which has been built up, as a consequence of wind and water action with detritus from the Andes, making it an unconsolidated zone and very subject to change. Most of the region is covered by savannah grasses interspersed with areas of scrub forest along with forests of some of the hardest timbers known to exist.

In local areas, depending on soil conditions and availability of water, semi-deciduous woodlands containing several species of palm occur. The soil generally is very impervious and subject to flash flooding in the summer months, especially in the eastern portion where rainfall is higher. This flooding is particularly severe, even in the west, when, occasionally, the polar airflows penetrate the region in summer. The resulting spectacular thunder-storms, and heavy rainfall, which ensues when these airstreams mix with the predominating subtropical air-flows, cause sudden overflowing of rivers and streams throughout large areas. These floods often combine with the unstable structure of the ground to cause major shifts in river beds, even the courses of substantial rivers such as the Rio Bermejo have been radically changed in this way. This often results in areas which were always fertile becoming arid

overnight while districts that were traditionally dry can become marshlands. The economic effects of these local changes can be catastrophic on an individual estancia or in a local area. Much of the area is suitable for cotton, flax and rice production and has valuable hardwood reserves. However its remoteness and general inaccessibility from the Pampa region has resulted in almost no long term European investment or settlement. The population, in large part immigrants from Bolivia and Paraguay, is still mostly ethnically Native American with very little European settlement. This whole region generally, both culturally and economically, gives the impression of being an area of transition between the European Pampa and Latin America to the north.

In the east of the region, Misiones and Corrientes contain sub-tropical rain forest. Politically part of Argentina, visually and geologically they appear more part of southern Brazil. This



**Figure 3:7** The Iguassu Falls on the border with Brazil and Paraguay.

area experienced almost no immigration since the time of Mendoza in 1537. Consequently Corrientes is a province of vast estancias owned by old established Creole families. Much of Misiones is a National Park and it too has a very small population. Because of its remote location on the border of two vast countries, Misiones it is cut off from both by distance and the fact that its only natural resource, temperate rain forest is ecologically fragile. Therefore tourism centered on the Falls has not been developed to anything like the degree that has taken place around the much smaller Niagara Falls which separate the US and Canada.



**Figure 3:8** The silt laden head waters of the Parana River flowing over the Iguassu Falls

The only settlement of interest is a small nineteenth-century Swedish colony which still speak Swedish with an accent similar to that heard near the border with Finland. This colony is similar in some respects to the Welsh colony of Chubut in that isolation ensured its

survival, though its existence appears to be much less known, even in Sweden. Misiones is best known because of the Iguassu falls, on the Parana River, located on the border with Brazil and Paraguay.

A feature to note however is the quantity of silt in the water, entering from Brazil. The Parana drains most of that country south of the Amazon Basin. Therefore much of the soil that has been eroded from southern Brazil enters the Parana, to be deposited further south when it joins the Uruguay River to become the River Plate.

When the Parana takes in additional silt from the waters of the Pilcomayo and Bermejo Rivers, just south of where these photographs were taken, one can get some idea of the scale of deposition that takes place in the flood plain of the Pampas.

### **The Pampas.**

The Pampa region of Argentina is one of the world's great grassland areas. It is the major deposition zone for the soil particles blown in from Patagonia and the Andean region as well as most of the silt from southern Brazil. It consists of aeolus and along its major river, the Parana, alluvium soil deposits. This makes the region a vast highly fertile, if visually featureless, plain. The prevailing winds from the west and south act as a sieve, filtering the soil particles, depositing the larger grains in the west and south of the region. These particles get progressively smaller until the very fine dust particles are washed out of the atmosphere when they come into contact with the moist Atlantic winds blowing in from the east. The finest soil is found in the area between the Parana and Salado rivers. The Parana and the

Salado, in the past, flooded this area and in turn deposited rich alluvium which mixed with the aeolous to create a highly fertile zone within this already fertile region. The whole region is interspersed with small streams which meander through the land until they meet to form small rivers and eventually find their way to the Atlantic.

Inland from the banks of the Salado river, to the west and south, the soil gradually becomes sandier making the land less fertile as it progresses towards Patagonia, the Andean region and the Chaco. Its fertility is further reduced as the warm, moist, Atlantic air currents have an ever

reducing effect on rainfall levels. As the land becomes sandier it also becomes drier. In addition the area to the south becomes progressively cooler with an ever increasing incidence of heavy frost and snow in winter. This process of deteriorating land quality continues very gradually until it meets the other three regions of the country.

This entire region, overall, has an excellent climate and ranks as one of the worlds great fertile temperate zones. Its only natural vegetation is grass. Because of its generally warm and almost frost-free climate, the locust and black ant eliminate all other vegetation with the exception of the odd lone ombu tree. The timber from this tree is of no use in construction or furniture making. It was allowed to survive by mankind because of its value as a landmark in an otherwise featureless countryside and because its long horizontal branches with a thick

canopy of leaves provided the only shade, for miles, for the weary traveller.

With the exception of a very small area around the port of Buenos Aires all this area remained in the control of the indigenous population until the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was not until near the end of the century that the whole area finally came under the control of the European population. The sheer weight of numbers of the European emigrants arriving in the country towards the end of the century finally swamped the declining native population where military force had largely failed over the centuries.

In this region the only Spanish settlement outside of the north west founded prior to 1600 exists. The colony of Buenos Aires was founded on the mouth of the River Plate in 1536 to prevent further Portuguese expansion from Brazil. This colony too was neglected. Despite being forbidden by law to trade with the outside world its inhabitants were obliged to sell hides and smuggled silver from Potosi, to anyone willing to trade with them, in order to maintain the defenses of the town and to survive as a population. This led to a taxation system, which depended largely on the duties levied on both imports and exports through the port plus a tradition of international trade based on the utilization of the land around the town. These traditions of agricultural production for export and the importation of European manufactured goods, together with taxing exports as well as imports, combined with an ability to circumvent the legal process whenever possible, survive and remain the mainstay of the Argentine economy and culture to this day, despite the best efforts of national and

international authorities alike to change these long held traditions.

The Irish were to be found in Buenos Aires from the very beginning, though their early contact was exclusively through Spain. The few Irish settlers who emigrated there prior to the end of the eighteenth century were always considered as Spanish nationals. There is no record of any direct links between Argentina and Ireland apart from the very odd ship, blown off course, docking in an Irish port to take on water and supplies to allow it continue its journey to Europe.

### **Conclusion**

The wide variety of physical and climatic conditions in Argentina greatly affected the timing, scale and the areas incorporated into the European mercantile trading system. The early Spanish colonizers were interested in the country only in so far as it could contribute to the efficient extraction of silver from Bolivia. Thus they were only interested in the north west of the country and in keeping a garrison on the mouth of the only navigable river in the country. The Spanish kept the garrison of Buenos Aires in the east, 1500km from their main settlement, to keep everyone else out rather than as a point of entry into the country. The rest of this huge territory was left almost untouched by Europeans until the end of the eighteenth century. By then wealth creation rather than extraction became the function of the colonies. Buenos Aires was thus transformed, almost overnight from one of the most remote settlements in the world to a very important centre of world trade and commerce attracting

the great merchant houses of Europe to its port. Where the merchants went the British military soon followed, bringing with them Irish troops, many of whom remained in the country after the British were defeated. And so the series of military and mercantile events occurred which comprised the European outreach to the Americas. The Irish were a part of this outreach from its very inception as an examination of the links between Europe and Argentina show.

## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **THE ORIGIN OF IRISH COLONIZATION**

#### **Introduction.**

The Irish were among the very first Europeans to explore and settle in the South Atlantic. The reason that they were not recorded as an individual group was because they went out in relatively small numbers in subordinate positions under the Spanish flag. The Irish had considerable contact with Spain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To understand fully why the Irish should reach Argentina so early it is necessary to briefly outline the background to the relationship between Ireland and Catholic Europe

#### **Irish Contact with Spain.**

The Irish contact with Spain goes back into legend. The Gaels, according to the Milesian legends, first settled in Ireland from Galicia in Spain. The Irish and Spanish considered themselves cousins, therefore the obligations of kin existed between them. These old legends were employed to mutual advantage following British invasions of Ireland in the seventeenth century. With the defeat of the Irish in 1601 and again in 1648, the Irish elite fled the country, often taking their armies with them. The great majority of the Irish settled in Spain and to a lesser extent France. However Irish were to be found all over Catholic Europe from Portugal to Russia. Other less important family members who lacked the resources to emigrate at that time found refuge in the province of Connacht in the west of Ireland. From there they were able to maintain contact with their European relatives through the port of

Galway<sup>1</sup>. Resulting from those wars the Irish population was reduced from possibly 2,000,000 at the beginning of the century to about 750,000 by the end of the seventeenth century. At the end of the seventeenth century it is estimated that about 50,000 'men' had fled to mainland Europe. Many of these were made up of soldiers in the armies of the various defeated chieftains. If one assumes that on average one woman or child left with each man then about 100,000 Irish emigrated to Europe during the seventeenth century. It would therefore appear that Meinig's map of population movement in Europe has to be amended to take account of this large population transfer<sup>2</sup>.

Some of the Irish elite, who were considered as princes by birth in Catholic Europe, arriving with their armies obtained senior commissions in the armies and administrations of their adopted land. Though it must be said that their soldiers fared much less well. A few of these elite emigrants rose to the very highest posts in the country, because as well as being very able administrators, coming from Ireland they were acceptable to all regional factions in their adopted home. Other Irish refugees opened merchant houses in the major sea ports along the Atlantic. The Lynchs are a prime example of such a merchant family. They opened merchant houses in Galway, Bordeaux, Lisbon, and Cadiz. By the eighteenth century they were also to be found in London and North American ports such as Boston, New York, and Providence. When an Irish merchant had become established in a new port he married into a leading local family and was, consequently, accepted as being a 'local' who was extremely well connected in the other major ports of the world. The Irish merchants therefore merged

very quickly into the community in which they settled. They retained however their traditional kin network wherever they settled in the world, but because they quickly established a kin network, through marriage, in their new country they were never seen as outsiders or threatening local interests. In fact they more than proved their worth for in times of war when normal trade between England and Spain, for instance, was disrupted, the Irish merchants were able to continue trading between London and Cadiz using family members in neutral ports (on paper at least) such as Boston, New York etc<sup>3</sup>.

### **Emigration to Europe**

These European families maintained contact with family members in Ireland and built up trade in leather, salt beef and wine between the west of Ireland and mainland Europe. Such was the extensive contact between mainland Europe and Galway that the non-inheriting sons of the still relatively wealthy Irish Catholics from all over Ireland, though largely from Connacht, continued to emigrate to Europe for an education and a career. This tradition only ended with the changes in the Catholic Monarchies in Spain and France towards the end of the eighteenth century and the introduction of Catholic emancipation in Ireland in 1829. With Catholic emancipation these Irish became administrators in the newer British colonies, especially India. In this way young Irish men, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rose to very high positions in the armies and civil administrations throughout Europe. By way of example; born within a few miles of Summerhill in Co. Meath, where this thesis is being written, a deLacy became the Commander in Chief of the armies of Peter

the Great, a Taffe became Chancellor of Austria and an O'Higgins rose to become viceroy of Peru, while several others from this area held less important though still very senior positions throughout the Catholic European establishment.

Many of those Irish, including all of the above mentioned, became national heroes in their adopted countries and were never seen as a threat to the established powers of Europe. While this is a tribute to their ability to integrate into the local community it may well be a major reason why relatively little research, on that highly important Irish emigration, has taken place to date.

### **The Irish in the new European Outreach.**

While some Irish rose to the highest rank in their adopted countries many Irish, or their European born children, re-emigrated to the New World colonies, often sent there as military or civil administrators. Arriving in America as part of the European colonial system they have, to date, been ignored as a separate group by academic research on both sides of the Atlantic. It is not possible in this chapter to report fully on even Spanish-sponsored, Irish re-migration of that period. However, a brief examination of Irish emigration to Argentina during the period of Spanish colonization is necessary to give some insight into why Irish immigrants were so sought after in Argentina following that country's independence. It is also necessary to give an understanding of the general milieu into which the nineteenth century Irish migrants settled on arrival in Argentina.

### **The First Irish in Argentina.**

The very first Irish, recorded as having set foot on what was to become Argentina, were from Galway. They were part of the crew on Magellan's voyage to discover a route to the Pacific through the straits which still bear his name, in 1520. Three set out on the voyage. One was named Guillen who was a 'grumete' or galley boy on the 'La Concepcion'. He died on January 25th of that year and so never saw Argentina. The other two were brothers, William and John, whose surname name is unknown. William was grumete on 'La Trinidad' John was 'paje' or trainee sailor on the same ship<sup>4</sup>. John and William are recorded as having served at the first Mass celebrated on Argentine soil on April 1, 1520, at the mouth of the river Santa Cruz in Patagonia<sup>5</sup>. While they were probably the first Irishmen to set foot on Argentine soil they did not settle there. They were ordinary seamen, recruited in Galway by the Spanish Navy.

The first recorded Irish to settle in Argentina were members of an expedition to conquer and claim the Rio de la Plata for Spain. Led by Pedro Mendoza, they sailed from Cadiz in 1535 arriving in the River Plate at the end of the southern summer February 1536<sup>6</sup>. Among those first emigrants were two brothers called John and Thomas Farel<sup>7</sup>, natives of San Lucas de Barrameda, Spain<sup>8</sup>. Other Irish names which appeared in Magellan's expedition were Colman<sup>9</sup>, Lucas<sup>10</sup>, Galvan<sup>11</sup> (a very common Argentine name<sup>12</sup>) and Martin<sup>13</sup>. The name 'Martin' occurs frequently throughout Europe as well as Ireland and Spain and it is therefore impossible to be certain which, if any, Martins were Irish. Other Irish names appear among

sixteenth century conquerors, such as Juan Fays (probably Hays) and also the first woman, Isabel Farrel, (possibly a relative of John and Thomas Farel) the wife of a Captain Hernando de Sosa, a colonist in Corrientes<sup>14</sup>.

Mendoza's expedition numbered about sixteen hundred and its members were mostly German in origin<sup>15</sup>. It was financed by German banks, as Charles V of Spain was also Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, which included a large part of Germany. The expedition brought with them cattle, sheep, horses and pigs. These were among the first of these species believed ever to reach the American continent. Mendoza built a fort on the southern bank of the River Plate. To honour the sailors of Cadiz who brought the expedition safely to their destination he incorporated their patron saint, 'Our Lady of Good Airs' into the name of the new settlement. Thus 'Puerto Nuestra Senora Santa Maria del Buen Aire'<sup>16</sup> was founded.

### **Early Irish settlement in Argentina.**

The expedition was beset by problems from the moment it arrived at the River Plate. In addition to landing in February at the end of the growing season which left them unable to sow crops for several months, they were trying to settle among the most warlike tribes in Argentina. Lacking sufficient provisions to sustain the entire group until the next harvest, they tried to exact tribute from the indigenous population which ensured constant conflict from the beginning. A small group (which included at least one of the Farels together with

Isabel Farrel and her husband) began exploring the river systems feeding the River Plate in search of a more peaceful place to settle. In 1537 they founded the settlement of Asuncion de Paraguay on the east bank of the Parana river about 2000 km north of Buenos Aires. By 1541 two thirds of the settlers of Buenos Aires had perished. The survivors abandoned the site leaving everything behind and joined their comrades in Asuncion. The animals abandoned from this settlement (and other settlements in the north east of the country) thrived in the Pampas and became the foundation stock of the 'native' Argentine horses, cattle and sheep. These herds spread rapidly across the Pampas as they had few natural enemies to restrict their growth in numbers.

About forty years later Buenos Aires was re-established from Asuncion on its present site on a more defensible area a few miles further up the river. The Farel's decided to stay in Asuncion and exercise their right as one of the original settlers to acquire lands near there. Murray<sup>17</sup> states that in 1588, Rafeal Farel a son of one of the original settlers, acquired lands and Indians near Asuncion in Corrientes Province just one year after it was founded. Corrientes is bounded on its west side by the Parana River which cuts it off from the main landmass of Argentina. It was, therefore, safe from attack from the plains tribes. In addition Corrientes was bounded on its eastern side by the Uruguay River which formed the furthest limits of Portuguese expansion. It was therefore important, from a strategic standpoint, for the Spanish to have the area permanently settled with sufficient numbers of its own citizens to enable it withstand further Portuguese expansion. There was no such pressure on Spain

however, to populate the vast Pampas lands west or south of the Parana/River Plate system with the result that very little settlement took place there until the eighteenth century.

When word of the fate of Mendoza's expedition reached Spain, together with the realization that there were no precious metals in that region, Spanish interest quickly waned in the River Plate area. The result was that during the next century only a few thousand Europeans settled in what was probably the most remote and backward part of the Spanish empire at that time. Those who did settle there during this period were from 'humble origins'<sup>18</sup>, and would have been confined to mule breeding and collecting ox hides for sale in Potosi. The vast bulk of Irish emigration to south America via Spain at that time appears to have been from the elite class<sup>19</sup> and they in turn made up only a very small percentage of the overall Latin American immigration. It is assumed therefore that very few Irish emigrated to Argentina during this period. Significant numbers of Irish names do not begin to appear until after 1776 by which time the Bourbon family had ascended the Spanish Throne. Some Spanish colonial settlement, however, did occur during the sixteenth, seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries, the period between the settlement of Mendoza and the ascent of the Bourbons. The importance of that form of settlement, which mostly occurred in the north west, was that it established the pattern of land tenure throughout Argentina.

### **The Growth of Buenos Aires City.**

With the ascent to the Spanish Throne of the Bourbon Kings the system of government in

Argentina changed radically. In 1776 Charles III divided the Viceroyalty of Peru in two, creating the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata to administer the southern portion of the Empire. Buenos Aires became the capital of this new Viceroyalty and, significantly, the silver rich Potosi region, though in decline by then, chose to be governed from Buenos Aires rather than Lima. This change in the political status of Buenos Aires meant that for the first time trade with Cadiz was unrestricted. Those changes created a release of pent up demand for goods of European manufacture previously either forbidden or prohibitively expensive. To pay for the goods a sudden demand was created for slaves to provide a labour force to produce tradable agricultural goods.

### **Eighteenth Century Irish Immigration.**

The changes brought about by the Bourbons necessitated a surge of emigration, from Spain, of civil and military personnel to govern the new Viceroyalty. A number of those officials were born in Ireland. Many of the Irish were to attain important positions in the administration of the country. One such Irishman to figure prominently in the new Viceroyalty was Michael O'Gorman. O'Gorman was born in Ennis in 1749, he was educated in France and then went to Spain where he completed his studies, graduating in medicine<sup>20</sup>. He left Spain for Buenos Aires in 1777, travelling under a Royal Order placing him in charge of the Sanitary Commission. In 1780 he founded the faculty of medicine in the city and remained Professor of medicine until his death in 1819. Another Irishman to arrive in

Argentina towards the end of the eighteenth century was Thomand O'Brien from Wicklow. O'Brien held the rank of Captain under General San Martin. He was highly regarded by San Martin and when San Martin became president later, O'Brien rose to the rank of General in the army of the new republic.

### **The New Enlightenment.**

At about the time the Bourbons ascended the Spanish throne the ideas known as the 'New Enlightenment' began to take hold throughout the colonies. Under this system the French economic theory of Physiocracy, which stressed commercial agricultural production as a measure of a nation's economic wealth, was an important plank in this theory. This encouraged the estancieros to put a much greater effort into improving the breeding and processing of their livestock which greatly added to the value of the herds roaming the pampas. Slaughterhouses were required to process cattle which up until then were slaughtered on the plain where the skin was removed, with the rest of the carcass abandoned to rot. An extra labour force, both skilled and unskilled, was required to obtain this extra value as were new technologies.

Between 1790 and the early eighteenth hundreds 22,500 slaves were landed in Buenos Aires<sup>21</sup>. This was to provide for the unskilled element in the labour force. Possibly because of the large Irish trade in beef and leather between Galway and Spain, the new Viceroyalty looked to Ireland for the technology and skill to complement the African and Brazilian slave labour.

One hundred Irish butchers and tanners were brought to Buenos Aires in 1785 and more were recruited over the next twenty years<sup>22</sup>. The new skills introduced by these Irish immigrants laid the foundation of the Argentine beef industry<sup>23</sup>. Very little is known, as yet, of those Irish immigrants or their origins. They appear to have been unmarried and being Catholic they assimilated into the local community of co-religionists. No research has been carried out, to date, on those Irish emigrants or what became of them on landing in Buenos Aires. None of them, as far as I can tell, reappear later as merchants, estancieros or factory owners. Nothing is known either of how they were recruited in Ireland or what their social position was vis-a-vis the slave population and the owners of the meat processing factories. This research was unable to directly connect this emigration with the nineteenth century emigration though the suspicion remains that the Clare emigration may be connected to it in some way. It can be asserted however that those men were the first of a new type and class of Irish emigrant who was emigrating in search of work in the New World, which was itself developing to meet the growing demands of the European industrial revolution. In that sense they fit in to the nineteenth century models of Irish emigration rather than the model of Irish Catholic emigration to Europe and Spanish America which took place during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

### **Irish Merchants in Buenos Aires.**

Another major consequence of the New Enlightenment was a sudden upsurge in trade from Buenos Aires. This sudden growth in trade was hampered by the unavailability of suitable

shipping. To overcome this shortage, the local merchants were permitted to purchase slave ships from third countries and, later, neutral ships were allowed to trade in the port. Irish merchants were particularly well placed to take advantage of the changing conditions. The Lynchs, among others, appear in Buenos Aires at about this time. Another of the better known Irish merchants in Buenos Aires at that time was Thomas O'Gorman a cousin of Dr. Michael O'Gorman the Spanish Protomedico. Thomas arrived in Buenos Aires from the French colony of Mauritius in about 1792. Mauritius was then a major collecting point for slaves for the Buenos Aires trade and a very important customer for the 'frutos del pais' as well as Argentine silver. O'Gorman was a former officer in the French Army and had connections in London and possibly Providence in the USA. Upon landing in Buenos Aires he quickly established himself among the important Porteno merchants by virtue of his cousin's prestigious position among the elite. He often acted as a middleman, going to the United States to purchase ships on behalf of other major Porteno merchants engaged in the slave trade. Other Irish names such as Cullen<sup>24</sup> appear for the first time in Argentina around then.

### **Free Traders.**

By the mid-1790s Buenos Aires had developed a considerable merchant fleet. In the city, guilds were forming and a substantial artisan class was growing up around the port. The situation however deteriorated as rapidly as it had advanced. 'Free Traders' gained access to

the port. The Free Traders were merchants trading from neutral ports who were allowed to trade in the Port as Spain was forced, for domestic reasons, to switch allegiance from England to France. Spain was no longer able to protect her own shipping and realized that by allowing Free Traders to operate in Buenos Aires they would quickly undermine the growing strength of the local merchants and industry. When conditions improved Spain hoped to restore the old Spanish monopolies and avoid the competition from a new and vigorous colony.

### **Irish Free Traders in Buenos Aires.**

The Free Traders came from all over Atlantic Europe. They were technically confined to carrying the same goods as the merchants but they were fluent in several languages and had better access to low priced manufactured goods from England and Hamburg, in short they were much more efficient smugglers. They were therefore quickly able to undermine and finally destroy the fledgling merchant investment by the Porteno merchants in Buenos Aires, who were beginning to develop an industrial base there, in a manner remarkably similar to the way free trade with England quickly ended the infant Irish industries. Those Porteno merchants who could, quickly switched most of their assets into modernizing their estancias around Buenos Aires turning them into commercial enterprises devoted to primary production only, though many did continue as merchants, all-be-it in a much smaller way.

### **The Consequence of The New Enlightenment.**

Far from satisfying the Argentines, the New Enlightenment further highlighted the conflicting interests between a rapidly declining colonial power on one hand and a new potentially vastly wealthy nation on the other. England was steadily becoming a much more important trading partner. By the beginning of the nineteenth century there was an ever growing number of English and Irish 'Free Trader' merchants arriving in either Buenos Aires or across the river in Montevideo. Those merchants were anxious to expand the agricultural base of the River Plate economy and to use this locally created wealth as a basis for trade. The Free Traders who replaced the merchants as the main traders in the port were typically of a lower social class than the merchants. They were very often ships' masters turned owners. John Dillon from Dublin is one such example. Arriving with his family in Montevideo he set about making his fortune by importing goods legally into Montevideo and then smuggling them across the river to Buenos Aires in a fleet of small river boats which he soon acquired. Within a few years Dillon became established as one of the leading Irish merchant families in Buenos Aires. There he expanded his business to include meat processing and started the first brewery in the country.

### **Irish in The British Invasion of 1806/7.**

Circumstances changed again with the British invasions of 1806/7. A high proportion of the troops were Irish, many of them deserted or surrendered at the first opportunity. In addition the Free Traders who openly sided with the British had to abandon the Port, yet Buenos Aires needed British trade more than ever. This created further opportunities for newer Irish

and English sea captains, where there was a surplus of shipping at that time. One such captain was William Brown from, almost certainly, Foxford in Co. Mayo<sup>25</sup>. Brown ranks along with San Martin as one of the great Argentine heroes of the independence era.

Other Irish attracted out at this time were two brothers from near Athlone. They were Thomas and John Armstrong who went to work in the Armstrong merchant house which was an important merchant house in the city. Thomas Armstrong was to become a central figure in the development of the commercial life of nineteenth century Argentina. His pivotal role in the nineteenth century Irish emigration to Argentina and his contribution to the country's economic development is such that it forms part of a chapter later in this work.

### **Argentine Independence.**

The 1806 invasion proved to the residents that even if the British were unable to capture Buenos Aires the Spanish were unable to hold it. Thus an independence movement quickly gained momentum. The Irish once again played an important part, at all levels, in the subsequent fight for independence, O'Brien on land and Brown at sea, were aided by a number of the Irish troops left behind after the 1806/7 invasions. The contribution of the Irish to Argentine independence, particularly as they never sought personal gain in land or high office for their services afterwards, resulted in a great affection and respect for Irishmen at all levels of Argentine society and contributed greatly to their acceptability as immigrants throughout the nineteenth century.

## **Conclusion.**

A remarkable feature of Irish emigration to Argentina was the speed with which it was able to adjust to the changing conditions within Argentina between 1780 and 1820. Until 1780 only the educated elite of the Irish population emigrated there. Immediately the conditions favouring their group changed to favour a lower social group the Irish elite stopped emigrating. They were almost instantly replaced by Irish Free Traders as soon as the new conditions favoured them. The Free Traders were replaced by labourers immediately conditions changed in the labourers' favour and against the Free Traders. All of those changes took place within the space of forty years. Thus Irish emigration to Argentina was able to span 400 years. One of the reasons continued for such a very long period was due the ability of the population in Ireland to adjust to meet the new conditions prevailing in Argentina immediately they arose and only send out the type of emigrant who had a genuine future in the country at any given time.

The Irish were to fulfill, in Argentina, Meinig's three conditions essential for the colonization of the Americas<sup>26</sup> that of seafaring, conquering and settling. They were present from the very beginning of the seafaring stage with Magellan in 1522. Equally they arrived in Buenos Aires along with the first conquerors, led by Pedro Mendoza in 1536, and finally, they were among the first to arrive during the two settlement stages, the first under the Spanish Bourbons and the second and really true colonizing stage which began in Argentina after independence, in the nineteenth century.

Further study of Irish emigration to Spanish America in general is essential in order to assess fully Irish emigration and settlement in Argentina and to understand the full contribution of Irish emigrants to making that country the nation it is today.

1. Some were also deported to the new British colonies in the Caribbean and New England.
2. Meinig, D. W. (1986) The Shaping of America, Vol. 1 Atlantic America, 1492-1800, 44, 47
3. I have a letter confirming these facts from Dr. Jerry Cooney of the History Dept. In Louisville University. Dr Cooney is currently researching the contribution of these Irish merchants in facilitating the trade of the period.
4. Peter Boyd-Bownan 1964 Indice Geobiografico de 40,000 Probladores espanoles de America in el Siglo XVI, 267
5. William McLoughlin (September 1992) The Southern Cross
6. David Rock (1986) Argentina 1516-1987. 10
7. R. de Lafuente Machain, (1937), Conquistadores del Rio de la Plata, 192).
8. William MacLoughlin (September 1992). The Southern Cross
9. R. de Lafuente Machain. Conquistadores, 129
10. R. de Lafuente Machain. Conquistadores, 346

11. R. de Lafuente Machain. Conquistadores, 220

12. Edward Maclysaght (1978) The Surnames of Ireland, 118, States that Galvan originated in Co. Clare and spread to surrounding counties. This would place it in the area of Ireland in greatest contact with Spain.

13. R. de Lafuente Machain, Conquistadores, 361-8.

14. R. de Lafuente Machain. Conquistadores, 193.

15. David Rock Argentina, 10.

16. David Rock Argentina, 10. According to Murray The Story of the Irish in Argentina, Mendoza named the site 'Santisima Trinidad Santa Maria de Buenos Aires'. 'Santisima Trinidad'- the first part of the name was in thanks to The Holy Trinity for having delivered them safely to their intended destination and the second part, 'Santa Maria de Buenos Aires', (the patron of Cadiz) was in honour of the sailors from that port who sailed Mendoza's ships.

17. Thomas Murray (1919) The Story of the Irish in Argentina, 7.

18. David Rock Argentina, 14

19. Micheline Karney-Walsh has written extensively on Irish migration to continental Europe during this period. THE IRISH MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION published some of her work during the 1960s and 1970s

20. Eduardo Coghlan,(1987) Los Irlandeses en la Argentina su Actuacion y Descendencia, 418.

21. Cooney 1986, 37)

22. Andrew Graham-Yooll,(1981) The Forgotten Colony, 32.

23. W. H. Koebel, Argentina past and Present, 134

24. The Cullens have been (and still are) one of the leading merchant families of the Canary Islands since early in the seventeenth century. One of the sons of this family, Patrick, (note not Patricio) founded the Cullen merchant house in Buenos Aires and a little later one in Santa Fe where the Cullens settled to become one of the leading landowning and political families in the country. Patrick was eventually executed by Rosas on account of his political activities.

I am grateful to Sr. Domingo Cullen, Senior Minister in the Argentine Embassy, London, who is a direct descendant of Patrick Cullen, for giving me much of the background to the Cullen family of Argentina.

25. Brown may have begun as a cabin boy on a United States ship from where he eventually rose to master and acquired two ships of his own. (Though unpublished and continuing research by Dr. John de Coursey Ireland indicates that Brown probably came from a wealthy Irish family and was very likely quite a senior officer in the British Navy). However, he traded between the United States and Buenos Aires once the port was open to free trade after Independence.

The Spanish, in retaliation against its former colony's independence blockaded the Port. Brown tried to run the blockade and lost his ships to the Spanish in the process. He managed to get to Buenos Aires, minus his ships, and immediately sought out the President, San Martin. He persuaded San Martin to give him two merchant ships armed with cannon to go after the Spanish and recapture his ships. With the two ships Brown managed to defeat the Spanish, end the blockade and get his own ships back.

San Martin persuaded Brown to remain on as Admiral and found the Argentine Naval service. Brown's seamanship is credited with having saved the Republic on more than one occasion

25. Meinig (1986,) the shaping of America, Vol 1.,7.

## CHAPTER 5.

### THE PROCESS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY IRISH SETTLEMENT IN ARGENTINA

#### **Introduction.**

Having won the goodwill of the entire Argentine nation, at a time when that country was desperately in need of the very labourforce that Ireland could supply, it was not unreasonable that Ireland became an obvious place for Argentine government, the portenos and merchants to look to as a source for immigrants. Nineteenth-century emigration, from Ireland to Argentina, therefore, was the result of a calculated strategy which was devised in Argentina by a number of groups, all of whom contained Irish members. All of the groups involved in encouraging Irish immigration had the common aim of promoting the economic welfare of the Buenos Aires region. A few had, in addition, the romantic notion of recreating the perfect Gaelic society there. Those groups formed a coalition to promote Irish immigration and designed a very specific settlement model for the Irish immigrants.

To that extent it was different from emigration from Derry to Canada and New England, or Waterford and Newfoundland which began as a spontaneous outward movement, from Ireland, along established trading routes to the New World. The groups within the coalition were made up of the Irish elite, the Portenos and the 'English' merchants. Each party had

different reasons for encouraging Irish immigration. However their individual motives and objectives in promoting Irish immigration were not mutually exclusive. As a group therefore they were able ensure that the resources, in organization and cash, were put in place to promote recruitment in Ireland. To better understand the different agendas of the various groups promoting Irish immigration a short outline of the motivation of different groups is necessary.

### **The Origins of the Irish Governing Elite.**

By the end of the eighteenth century the Irish governing elite in Argentina, while claiming noble Irish ancestry<sup>1</sup>, came from fairly humble backgrounds in Ireland. At that time, virtually any Irish youth of ability, with the resources to travel to and maintain himself, could receive an education in an Irish College in Europe. One such was at Salamanca in Spain. Some of the students educated in Spain, who were of exceptional ability, became senior administrators or army officers in the Spanish Service<sup>2</sup>. The achievement of Ambrose O'Higgins is an indication of how an emigrant of humble background emigrating to Spain could achieve the highest rank of authority as Viceroy of Peru<sup>3</sup>.

That type of emigrant, who did so well under the Spanish, was very conscious that similar opportunities for advancement were denied to them in their own country because they were Catholic. Their view of Ireland therefore, was of a country whose people were deliberately held back from reaching their true potential, by a foreign power, because of their

steadfastness to their faith. They believed, given the opportunity, Ireland could become as prosperous as any nation on earth while at the same time maintaining its Gaelic, Catholic values. The alternative to expelling the British foreign power from Ireland, which had been tried and failed many times, was to allow Irish, with those core values, a new beginning in a Catholic country where sufficient land was available to allow them acquire and own their farms free of rents and landlords. Argentina fitted this requirement perfectly. The elite emigrants believed, given the proper leadership in Argentina, new emigrants would build a true Gaelic society which would become a shining example to the world and proof of the superiority of Irish culture and values. A number of Irishmen who held such opinions were in very influential government positions in Argentina, at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They were, among others, Dr. Michael O'Gorman, General Thomand O'Brien, and an internationally respected surgeon of the time, Dr. John Oughagan, who appears to have acted as the secretary to this group.

### **The Portenos.**

Another important group in the coalition were the portenos, the original merchants in the port of Buenos Aires who by then had become estancieros. Among the most powerful of the portenos were the Lynchs, O'Gormans, Dogans, Cullens, O'Ryans and Butlers<sup>4</sup>. This group together with the majority creole estancieros, needed labourers and shepherds to develop their estancias and slaughterhouses to European standards. While the estancieros were willing to improve their cattle herds they were unwilling to go into wool production. Sheep

farming being a low status industry traditionally associated with the gaucho class. As there was an unlimited supply of unused land beyond the estancias which was still inhabited by hostile native tribes, the estancieros welcomed settlement in those areas by immigrants. Sheep farmers, therefore, could provide a buffer between the natives and the estancias as well as supplying those goods which the estancieros were unwilling to become directly involved in themselves. In fact they promoted such settlement to the extent that they were willing to finance the stock purchase necessary to graze the new 'camps'<sup>5</sup> while allowing the settler earn equity in the stock by contributing his labour. In this way the estancieros ensured that the land beyond their estates was settled by European 'small holders'<sup>6</sup> a social class unlikely to threaten their interests in the future. In addition the estancieros, who were often merchants also, benefitted from the profits derived as shareholders while not demeaning their status by personal involvement in the gaucho enterprise of sheep farming. Already familiar with the Irish ex-soldiers together with the butchers and tanners bought out at the end of the eighteenth century, they were very anxious to recruit labour of similar calibre and were therefore eager to employ immigrants, especially Catholics, from an already proven source. The fact that they were helping their fellow countrymen was an added bonus.

### **The Merchants.**

The merchants in the Port of Buenos Aires from the time of independence spanned the political/religious spectrum from Protena merchant such as Patrick Cullen and Patricio Lynch, through to free trader John Dillon, to Anglo-Irish 'Armstrong & Co'. to English

merchants some of whom founded a very powerful Lodge of Free Masons in the city. With such a wide spectrum of religious affiliation and political perspective, the merchants spun a seamless garment which at one extreme was highly Catholic and pro-Argentine nationalist (possibly even in favour of the restoration of the Spanish monarchy) while at the other, was virulently anti-Catholic and determined on the creation of a secular government based on British law, not unlike that of the United States<sup>7</sup>. The merchants however never allowed their political differences interfere with their primary objective, that of increasing trade through the port of Buenos Aires. On the contrary, they used this wide spectrum of political and religious belief, to show a Protestant face to the British Government and a Catholic Nationalist one to the Argentines, in order to promote their own interests to the greatest possible degree.

For the merchants, Irish emigrants provided a close-by and lucrative outward cargo from Liverpool. Furthermore when the Irish arrived in Buenos Aires they immediately became consumers and producers of the very goods traded by the merchants. The merchants, of all political and religious hues, therefore, had every incentive to encourage Irish emigration to the River Plate.

### **Irish Ex-Soldiers.**

The Irish ex-soldiers, the residue of the British army left behind after the failed invasion of the River Plate in 1806/7, were never part of this elite/merchant group. They were however

seen by all sections involved in promoting immigration as a sample of the type of immigrant available in Ireland, the very type of emigrant so badly needed in Argentina. It is therefore valid to consider them here. The ex-soldiers fell into two groups. Those who were condemned to internal exile (presumably the prisoners) and those allowed remain in Buenos Aires (presumably the deserters). The soldiers who were exiled, were sent to Cordoba in central Argentina and to the Andes Region around Mendoza and Salta, where they played no part in encouraging further Irish immigration. Those sent to Salta and Mendoza were apparently satisfied with their condition as they raised their own regiment of militia to fight for independence in gratitude to the Argentines for their good treatment. Some of the ex-soldiers who remained in Buenos Aires, according to tradition, settled in the city among the free Negroes in the area of San Telmo. This district is among the oldest in the city and is located along the river bank<sup>8</sup>. Those soldiers are believed to have worked deepening the port and using the stone which came in the ships as ballast for building along the docks. The remainder of the former soldiers who remained in Buenos Aires opted to work on the Creole estancias around the cities. It was those latter emigrants who appear to have played a major role in starting emigration from Ireland. The merchants were delighted with the urban settlers and the portenos were equally happy with the rural settlers.

### **The Origin of The Westmeath Connection.**

One soldier, turned rural settler, was John Murray from Streamstown, Co. Westmeath who obtained work on a creole estancia<sup>9</sup>, where he worked his way up to the position of

mayordomo. By 1880 the Murrays had moved to Santa Fe province where they settled on a large estancia, purchased for them by their former employers in gratitude for their loyal service. The Murrays still own that estancia and remain one of the principal Irish land owners in southern Santa Fe. While there is no direct evidence linking Murray with Irish emigration, the first recorded Irish emigrants who landed in Argentina in the nineteenth century did come from Streamstown. They were John Mooney and his son-in-law Patrick Bookey<sup>10</sup>.

Mooney and Bookey arrived in Buenos Aires in 1827<sup>11</sup>. What is certain is that Mooney and Murray, coming from the same parish and being about the same age, even if they did not serve in the same regiment, would have known each other from childhood and Murray's success could have been very influential in encouraging others from the same area to emigrate to Buenos Aires. Therefore the initial link that was established between Westmeath, the largest sending area in Ireland, and Argentina was through British military contact, though the growth and expansion of emigration from that area was due solely to the opportunities created by trade and commerce.

### **The First Links with Wexford.**

Emigration, from Wexford began at about the same time, however it did not have an obvious, direct, military origin. In 1826, the Liverpool bank of Dickson and Montgomery sent Patrick Browne to the River Plate to take charge of their interests, in place of his brother

who was returning to Liverpool from that position<sup>12</sup>. Patrick quickly realized that he would make his fortune in the salt beef business rather than as a bank manager and began his own business soon after his arrival. He sent back to Forth and Bargy for labour to work first in his salting houses, for usually about a year, and then to herd sheep on a shares basis for him. Thus emigration from Wexford began mainly from commercial contact between Wexford, Liverpool and the River Plate<sup>13</sup>.

### **The Need for Irish Immigrants.**

The necessity to recruit immigrants to Argentina following the country's independence in 1815 was due to a general shortage of skilled labour in the country which was heightened as Spain banned emigration of its citizens to Argentina in retaliation for the former colony declaring independence. By 1820 British investment in the country was being inhibited by the shortage of skilled labour. The problem of finding suitable labour had become so acute that the Argentine government was forced to intervene directly to encourage immigration.

### **The Process of Creating Irish Immigration to Argentina.**

Because Argentina was just one of a number of destinations competing for the growing number of Irish emigrants leaving for the New World, the government and the Irish-elite/merchant coalition had to market the River Plate region, in Ireland, as an attractive destination. In 1826 it was decided to send Thomand O'Brien back to Ireland to recruit Irish immigrants. Thomas Armstrong, the merchant also visited Ireland at the same time. His visit

was private, though when one considers the type of person who emigrated from Armstrong's home area in Ireland it is highly likely that his decision to visit Ireland at that time had much to do with recruiting labour more suitable to the merchants' immediate needs rather than the long term perceived needs of the Argentine Government and the Irish elites whom O'Brien was representing. The fact that two different classes of immigrants were being recruited from the very beginning, to fulfill different roles in Argentine society, was to have a significant bearing on the way the Irish community was to evolve during the century.

### **Written Communication**

The visits by O'Brien and Armstrong were followed up by letters from prominent members of the Irish community to the Archbishop of Dublin with the object of influencing him to put the Irish church behind emigration to Argentina rather than to the United States. The letters assured the Archbishop of the sponsors' determination to maintain Irish Catholic values, in familiar rural settings, in the Irish immigrant community. Their letters contrasted their proposed model for rural settlement with the reality of the Irish in the urban environment of the United States, many of whom were abandoning Catholicism. Dr Oughagan<sup>14</sup> wrote to the Archbishop on June 28th 1828<sup>15</sup> that...'North America is not a country proper for Irish settlers--These, their identity, their ancient faith, and the peculiar cast of their national character, in the mixture of many nations, is totally confounded and lost for ever'. In promoting Argentina he wrote, 'Thanks to Providence a very different destiny awaits them here. It would seem that Heaven had at length interposed to protect some few of her faithful

followers and created this new world, as the land of promise where harassed Irishmen may "pause from toil" and Christianity devastated of all its sects and impurities may flower again and become infallible....' Dr. Oughagan went on to state that 'this country, fertile and vast beyond limits, abounding with all that nature can furnish....will welcome (the Irish) with special preference and instead of being the drudges for the rest of mankind, may set themselves down in societies in various parts of these boundless plains.....'. This letter clearly shows that the Irish elites were determined that the immigrant Irish would never become an urban community as they had done in the United States. From the beginning they saw the Irish as forming isolated rural ethno-centric societies well away from the city, where the ancient Ireland of 'saints and scholars' which had been suppressed in Ireland, would, given the direction of an Irish clergy, re-create itself and flourish once again in the New World. At no time was there any attempt by the Irish elite to recruit Irish labour to meet the equally acute need for an urban workforce. From the beginning the Italian immigrants were almost alone in supplying that demand.

### **Pre-selection of Irish Immigrants.**

The Irish elites in Argentina, when agreeing to promote Argentina as a destination for Irish emigrants sent back one of their own to select only the type of emigrant that would suit their purposes. Part of O'Brien's remit was to recruit only 'moral and industrious' emigrants<sup>16</sup>. They came initially, from the more commercial areas in Ireland, e.g. Forth and Bargy and the margins of commercial areas in Leinster, mainly from around Streamstown in Co.

Westmeath. A great many of the early emigrants were the younger non-inheriting sons, and later daughters, of the larger tenant farmers and lease holders, often from farms which were in excess of 20 acres, and some were from holdings considerably larger<sup>17</sup>.

In a letter to the Archbishop dated Feb 22nd 1829<sup>18</sup>, the Irish chaplain Fr. Moran wrote, 'This My Lord is the country for the Irish farmer to emigrate to. The most productive soil in the world, the best horses & oxen. And a people, who will show themselves more friendly to Irishmen than to any other nation. They are partial to us'. From the beginning, the Irish groups in Argentina were intent on encouraging the formation of an Irish farming community in the country. There was no mention whatever of the existing quite prosperous Irish community in the city, largely 'Yankee Irish'<sup>19</sup> who ran their own business as tailors, cobblers coach builders etc. or the equally important need for an urban labourforce, to man the new industries springing up or the opportunities that existed for tradesmen and small merchants in the city.

### **Irish Labour required by Merchants.**

The merchants however were only too aware of those shortages. Recognizing the need for a rural peasantry as primary producers, and possibly because of the Irish elites' influential position within the government, the merchants apparently went along, on the surface at least, with the Irish elites. Nevertheless they appear to have gone about the business of recruiting

Irish labour to suit their own needs quietly and in parallel with the elites. They too recruited Irish labour but from a lower class than the elites. At that time Irish labour was more emigrant prone than European labour generally and therefore Ireland could not be ignored by the merchants as a very important source for the European immigrant labour they so desperately needed.

### **Recruiting Working Class Irish Labour**

The fact that the Irish elites appear to have been deliberately ignoring the needs of the merchants to recruit a class of immigrant who would be willing to remain permanently in the city as a labourer may well have been why Armstrong decided to return to Ireland at the same time as O'Brien.

The only region in Ireland to supply emigrants to Argentina which fulfilled that demand in significant numbers was the Ballymahon-Ballymore-Mullingar area which straddles the Westmeath-Longford border on its northern side. The Armstrong family were the local landlords and were (and still are) highly respected in that locality. The southern part of the area encompasses Streamstown with Mullingar roughly in the centre. Mullingar also contained a large British military barracks and would have been the recruitment centre for all of that area including Streamstown. It is worth noting here that in addition to being respected local land owners, Thomas Armstrong's father, Thomas St. George Armstrong, was an army colonel and the magistrate for that area. Farmer's sons, such as Nicholas Cunningham, also

emigrated to Argentina from that area also, but the majority appear to have been from a labouring background. As early as 1842 Brabazon records in his journal that many of the emigrants from the Ballymore area were of a different type to the rest of the emigrant community when he wrote that some of the Westmeath and Longford people were 'respectable' and that 'the Wexford people were all respectable people' (but) 'Ballymore people were such divils as ever filled the Jail of Mullingar'. He recounted how, when they got their wages on a Saturday night they would head for the pulperia<sup>20</sup> with their sticks 'specially sharpened' and one would shout for Ballymore (in Westmeath) and another for Ballymahon (about four miles distant in Co. Longford) or one would shout for his employer and another for their employer and the melee would begin. Brabazon also claimed that the Ballymore and Ballymahon emigrants mixed with the gaucho class (an unforgivable sin among the Irish community) drinking gambling with them, which itself inevitably ended in brawls involving knives as well as sharpened sticks.

The fact that so many emigrants from the Ballymahon and Ballymore area were of a lower social class than those emigrating from the rest of the country would indicate that the merchants looked to there for a labouring emigrant who was less likely to improve his status in Argentina and so could be depended upon to provide a long return on the investment in paying the fare out. But the merchants were very careful to match demand with supply by keeping the area in Ireland very small where they recruited such emigrants.

How Armstrong recruited labourers from that district prior to 1838 is unclear. However from that year the Poor Law relief was extended to cover Ireland. All of that area was formed into two Poor Law districts, Ballymahon and Mullingar, following the passing of the Poor Law Act. Unfortunately the entire set of workhouse records of the Ballymore district have been lost. Members of the Armstrong family were closely involved with the running of the workhouse until well into this century. It was not possible to conclusively establish if a formal agreement existed between the workhouse and Thomas Armstrong and/or immigrant agencies in Argentina. However the fact that such a high proportion of labouring class emigrants settling in Argentina came only from that particular poor law district, while very few labouring class emigrants appear to have come from outside that district, would indicate that some form of understanding must have existed between the workhouse, or some other agent in Ballymahon, and an agent or agents in Buenos Aires, with the purpose of securing working class immigrants<sup>21</sup>.

While Armstrong, Mooney/Bookey and Browne employed large numbers of those labourers in their meat processing premises, the greatest number appear to have been employed by Peter Sheridan from Cavan and his partner a Mr. Harrat from England. Sheridan refused to be part of the group sponsoring Irish immigration on the grounds that 'within a year they became masters themselves'. Sheridan's refusal to sponsor immigration is interesting to the degree, that despite being at least as wealthy as Armstrong and Browne, his home area of Cavan never became a source of Irish emigration to Argentina whereas both Armstrong's and

Browne's areas did. This would indicate that a guarantee of employment together with every opportunity for an emigrant to acquire land and sheep under very favourable terms was not sufficient of itself to attract many Irish emigrants to Argentina. There had to be, in addition, a determined effort on the part of potential employers in Argentina to recruit labour in Ireland. Furthermore the intending emigrant had to have knowledge of the potential employer prior to emigration. Thus communication links had to be forged in both directions, the employer sending back to the area he knew for labour and a knowledge of the sponsor of the emigration by the intending emigrant.

The fact that Cavan never became a source for immigrants, labouring or otherwise, would also indicate that some employers were unwilling to sponsor strong farmer immigration as they saw it as expensive and short term, from their point of view. Armstrong, the only Irish-Protestant merchant in Buenos Aires was clearly less subject to the Irish elites than the Catholic merchants such as Browne and Sheridan. The Catholic merchants clearly left it to him to bring in labouring class immigrants to work in their establishments on a long term basis but, for whatever reason, felt unable to do so themselves.

By mid century there were sufficient immigrants entering the country from southern Europe to fill the labouring posts in the city and as a result merchant recruiting in Ireland ceased from that time. However by then the early Irish settlers required a working class labourforce to work on their newly acquired properties. They would employ only Irish labour. From that

point existing Irish immigrants replaced the merchants as the main recruiters for Irish working class labour.

### **Opportunities for Immigrants with some Capital**

It was also stressed that an immigrant who had a 'small' amount of capital (£100 to £200<sup>22</sup>) of his own to bring out with him and if this was invested wisely in sheep then his future was secured from the beginning. A sum of that size was within the reach of some intending to emigrate to Argentina. An example is Nicholas Cunningham of Ballymore who on the 28th of March 1863 signed over his interest in the family farm to his brother John in return for his fare and some cash<sup>23</sup> probably about £100, to enable him to start a new life in Argentina. Nicholas, who was distantly related to both the Duggan and Feeny families, from the same area, arrived in Buenos Aires in the same year<sup>24</sup>. He married in Argentina but was back in Ireland by 1875 for the birth of his first child, possibly on a visit, as he returned to Argentina immediately following her birth and was recorded as a merchant in Buenos Aires city in the census of 1895<sup>25</sup>. Return visits such as Nicholas Cunningham's, were not that unusual when seen in the context of areas revisited by emigrants rather than numbers revisiting. Those visits were a very important factor in encouraging others to emigrate. Firstly only the more successful could afford, or would want, to return and a fairly steady stream of successful emigrants returning to a district, to show their success at home, was a very powerful statement of the advantages of emigrating to Argentina. It was also a way for neighbours and relatives intending to emigrate to discover for themselves, first hand, the conditions they

could expect to encounter in a potential destination and would go some way in explaining the rapidity with which the Irish were able to adjust their emigrating intentions in the light of changing conditions thousands of miles away.

1. In order to be admitted to the priesthood or the army officer corps, or an equivalent civil service position, the applicant had to be (a) a citizen of Castile and (b) be of noble family. For historical reasons all Irish noblemen were automatically given citizenship of Castile. Proof of nobility required a certificate, from the British administration in Ireland, that the applicant was of a noble family. By the eighteenth century such a certificate was available virtually on request.

2. These positions in Spain were reserved for the sons of noblemen from the province of Castile. However all Irish noblemen were automatically granted Castellan citizenship.

3. O'Higgins grew up on a 20 acre farm in Co. Meath at the beginning of the century. Through his uncle, who was Parish Priest in Summerhill, he was sent to Spain for an education. His exceptional mathematical ability, in trigonometry especially, gained him a commission in the Spanish artillery corps. He was posted to the Rio de la Plata where he was given the task of surveying a route through the Andes to connect Mendoza with Santiago. Prior to this all communication between Buenos Aires and Santiago was by sea, which entailed sailing south from Buenos Aires, around the Cape and then north as far as Valparaiso, a long and hazardous undertaking, or the equally hazardous overland route, through Bariloche in Patagonia. O'Higgins' rise in the Viceroyalty was swift, within a few years he was governor Chile and later became Viceroy of Peru, a post reserved for citizens of Castile by law. Much of his outstanding contribution to the southern part of South America is overshadowed by that of his English educated son Bernardo, born to an Chilean woman, who as liberator of much of South America fall outside the scope of this work.

4. Murray, (1919) The Story of the Irish in Argentina, 37

5. 'Camp' is an Irish-Argentine term derived from the Spanish word 'Campo' meaning 'Countryside'. It is exactly the same term in Argentina as the word 'Prairie' in North America and 'Outback' in Australia.

6. The term 'small holder' is relative. In Argentina a small holder would own less than about 1,750 hectares of land. Later on during the century the term 'estanciero' came to cover anyone with a holding in excess of 1,000 hectares in the Irish districts. The vast majority of Irish 'estancieros' were to fall into this group owning between 1,000 and 1,750 hectares of land. As will be shown later this was the minimum size of holding necessary to ensure the

settlement of a land owning family.

7. They were successful to the point that all foreign religious orders were expelled from the country in 1822 and their property confiscated. This law was enforced until 1828 and was a major reason for the fall of Rividavia in that year. It was not until the 1850's when Fr. Fahy found, and was allowed exploit, a loophole in the law that the orders were able to return in numbers. For a fuller account of this episode see Ussher 1952 Fr. Fahy.

8. The only written source that I could find for this statement was in the general tourist literature for the district. The Tourist Board's source was not referenced and despite considerable effort on my part could not be traced. It is however widely accepted among the citizens of Buenos Aires and rings true to the extent that penniless deserters unable to speak the language and without skills would in all probability begin their new life in the poorest area of the city.

9. I was given this information by his great granddaughter Sra. Elana Murray of Santa Fe, in Dublin in July 1993.

10. Thomas Murray, (1919) The Story of the Irish in Argentina,78

11. It is possible, though by no means proven, that Mooney was also a soldier who returned to Ireland as part of the recruitment drive for emigrants to Argentina which took place in 1827 and on returning brought out his daughter and her husband to continue his business. Mooney and Bookey were the most important employers of Irish labour in their saladeros in the early years of Irish emigration. It is unlikely that ordinary emigrants would surpass, in wealth, in a very short time the many merchants who were investing and working in the country for the previous thirty years.

12. The Brownes, a very prominent Catholic gentry family in Forth and Bargy, would certainly have known the Beresford family, the predominant Protestant family in that whole region who also live in the same area despite holding the title Marquis of Waterford. William Beresford the illegitimate son of Lord Waterford, having been responsible for the invasion of the River Plate and having been held there for a short period after the invasion was well aware of the commercial potential of the region. The Brownes, being Catholic, but of the class that moved very much in Anglo-Irish Circles (Castle Catholics) would have been an ideal choice for a British bank setting up offices in the River Plate. While I have been unable to make a positive connection between Beresford's

return from the River Plate and the Brownes' arrival, shortly afterwards, it does highlight the point, when considered along with the origins of the Westmeath emigration, that initial British military and commercial contact in the River Plate, as in other regions of the world were really the two arms of a single process.

13. The statement that the Westmeath connection originated from military contact and the Wexford connection was due to commerce is made here in the context of the first personal contact between nineteenth century emigrants with potential emigrants in their respective sending areas. Overall the military and commercial origins of nineteenth-century Irish emigration to Argentina overlap and intertwine to a large degree. The Armstrong Co., one of the foremost merchant houses in Buenos Aires in the 1820's, and the company which did more than anyone else to foster immigration from Ireland, had very strong connections with Westmeath/Offaly where the emigration began. However the Armstrongs were an old military family. Thomas Armstrong's father, also Thomas Armstrong, was a Colonel and the R.M. for the Streamstown area at that period. In addition very many of Beresford's troops would have been stationed in Athlone which is Armstrong's local town. It is virtually certain that Gen. Beresford knew Col. Armstrong, father and brother of the owners of Armstrong & Co. because part of the Beresford family were until, very recently, also a very prominent family around Mullingar. Armstrong & Co., was founded shortly after Beresford escaped captivity in Argentina and returned home. The Brownes being Catholic did not have a British military tradition but a branch of the Browne family is Protestant and hold the title Marquis of Sligo, their family seat is in Westport. They were a Naval family. Incidentally Westport is quite close to Foxford where William Brown (without the 'e') came from. Research currently being carried out by John de Courcy Ireland on William Brown indicates that William is very probably also related to the Sligos by blood at least if not 'officially'. The Waterfords and Sligos would certainly have known each other and it is not impossible that the Waterfords and/or the Sligos had some influence in the Brownes' appointment by Dickson and Montgomery to Buenos Aires where a Catholic would have been a much more acceptable ambassador of English capital than would a Protestant.

14. Murray and Ussher spell Oughagan's name 'Oughan' I am using the spelling Oughagan himself used when writing to the Archbishop of Dublin. It may well be that Oughagan used different spellings of his names at different times just as Fr. Fahy spelled his name 'Fahey' on occasion.

15. The original letter is in the archive of the Archbishop of

Dublin. A photo copy is in my possession.

16. Murray The Story of the Irish..., 53 Murray places the term 'moral and industrious' in quotation marks which indicates that he is quoting directly from an un-named source very probably the original document.

17. I came to this conclusion from several field trips to Westmeath/Longford and Wexford where I visited numerous relatives of Irish-Argentines that I met in Argentina. They in turn brought me around their localities pointing out farms which others had emigrated from. The great majority of the emigrants were recorded in Coghlan. With the exception of Ballymore in Westmeath almost all of the farms were still medium sized prosperous holdings usually still in the hands of relatives of the original emigrant.

18. All letters to the Archbishop of Dublin quoted in this chapter can be seen in the archive of the Archbishop of Dublin. Photocopies of all quoted correspondence are in my possession.

19. The term 'Yankee Irish' was used to describe the Irish immigrants who entered the country from the United States following a period of settlement there. The Yankee Irish immigrants were generally agreed to have arrived during the 1820's. While Murray agrees that the majority of Irish rural settlers were from Westmeath and Wexford his research would indicate that the artisans who remained in the city came from various parts of the country.

20. A low class drinking house

21. I was able to establish by field work in the Ballymahon area that relatives of Thomas Armstrong have lived near Keena, a small village just outside Ballymahon, since about 1780. It would have been most unusual for a Protestant gentry family such as the Armstrongs not to have been on the board of governors of the local workhouse. Furthermore a family member was the workhouse doctor there at the beginning of this century, so in more recent times, at least, the Armstrong family were demonstrably connected with the workhouse. Circumstantial evidence therefore points to a very high probability that Thomas Armstrong had access through his relatives to governors of the Ballymahon workhouse and through this connection he was able to recruit labourers willing to work on a permanent basis in the slaughterhouses and on the estancias of the merchants. This would also explain why John Brabazon, in his journal, recorded a lower class of emigrant coming from that area and not from any other. What cannot be shown however is if

Thomas Armstrong and his associates, or the workhouse, or both, paid the fares of those emigrants.

The Armstrong family was unaware of their connection with Argentina, when visited by me in August 1993. Protestant emigrants from the Westmeath area, in almost every case, appear to have become Catholic within a generation (or at the most two) of settling in Argentina. Their becoming Catholic appears to have led to an immediate severing of all contact with their Irish roots.

22. This 'small sum' rose substantially as the century progressed. the representative of the British Consul in Rosario, Santa Fe writing in the Wexford People, June 18, 1864 suggests 'a small sum' of £400-£800. It should be pointed out however that immigrants were sometimes able to borrow some of this capital locally, as will be shown in more detail in a later chapter.

23. The family are unsure as to the exact amount but they believe it to be in the region of £100. This information was given to me along with a photo copy of the original agreement by the grandson of John Cunningham, in Mullingar in November 1991.

24. Coghlan, (1987) Los Iralndeses.....,208

25. Coghlan (1982) El Aporte de los Irlandeses....,344.

## CHAPTER 6.

### THE ROLE OF THE IRISH CHURCH IN THE FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY

#### **Introduction.**

The various groups interested in promoting immigration into Argentina, as was shown in the previous chapter, were determined that the Irish would fulfill a specific function within the country. That of settling on and developing the great, almost uninhabited, grassland area, the size of France, which lay beyond the city of Buenos Aires. The Irish elites in particular were determined to create a prosperous Irish farming community which would remain ethnically separate while fully participating in, and benefiting from, the economic development of the country. They saw this Irish community, while obedient in every way to the laws of Argentina, as a separate, self-governing entity operating within a model designed by them and run by the Irish Church.

#### **The Irish Argentine Settlement Model.**

The settlement model created by the Irish elite in Argentina was fundamentally different to the settlement model in the other great grassland colonies which were under direct British rule. The British model reflected the British, Protestant, ethic of the self-reliance of the individual. It was up to the individual communities to create their own infrastructure from the bottom up. First came the settler with his deeds for his quarter section. This he and his

family tamed by their own efforts alone. As they progressed the settler combined with his neighbours to bring organized law and order, religion and local government to their region. They combined with other regions to bring a state structure and the various states combined to form a federal government which encompassed the whole territory, whether this was Canada, the US, Australia or New Zealand. The settlement model which the nineteenth century Irish found on entering Argentina was by contrast one which operated from the top down and while individual effort brought success or failure to the individual immigrant, at every level the immigrant operated within an established structure based on cooperation and the pooling of the group's resources so that the wealthy, to a great extent, subsidized the poor and the experienced immigrant resourced the new arrival.

The role of implementing this plan and ultimately regulating the community was to be entrusted to the Irish Catholic Church for two reasons. Firstly the Irish immigrant would only accept Irish Priests because of language and the fact that the practice of Catholicism in Argentina was completely different to the established practice in Ireland. Consequently Argentine priests fulfilled a different role in the community to Irish priests. Secondly the elites believed that it was Irish Catholicism that had preserved the true Irish culture against centuries of attack in Ireland, and therefore Irish priests were best placed to ensure its survival in that part of the New World which the Irish elites had already ensured was largely sympathetic to its continuance. The Archbishop of Dublin held similar views on the role of the Church in forming Irish society, and after Catholic Emancipation in 1829 set about trying

to create a similar society in Ireland. It is not surprising therefore that it was to the Dublin Archbishop that the elites turned when they went in search of an ally in Ireland to implement their plans in Argentina.

The elites and the Church, however were not alone in the desire to form a successful immigrant community. The business community in Argentina saw the Irish Church as a highly efficient vehicle which could operate at no cost to the merchants but would ensure that the immigrants remained an economically viable group able to produce sufficient goods for the merchants to trade. The merchants were indifferent to the way in which the Irish community was organized as long as it fulfilled its economic role. The Church, for its part, realized that an economically strong community was crucial if their plan was to succeed and saw the merchants as essential in providing the markets for the goods produced by the emigrants. Finally the government was satisfied that a Catholic community with a long history of resisting Protestantism was settling in their country, as this greatly lessened the chances of conflict between the new immigrants and the existing community.

There were many advantages for the immigrants themselves in placing the Irish Church at the centre of their community. The problems of isolation of individuals spread out over such a large area are obvious. The provision of some method of communication to maintain contact and a sense of community between the tiny and disparate Irish groups was essential for economic and social reasons. The Irish, after all, were attracted to Argentina to provide

the raw material for the merchants to process and export. Communication and a sense of community among the Irish was therefore necessary to allow commerce expand and to attract more emigrants. It would also give the Irish already there the confidence to build and expand their enterprises in the knowledge that they had markets and a secure future in the country. A church with Irish priests who spent their time travelling through the countryside seeking out and bringing their fellow countrymen together at regular intervals was the ideal vehicle for such a communication network. One can readily understand why a church which provided such a service to a scattered community living in an alien world, would quickly establish itself as the central unifying force in that community. The 'Irish Church' was the link between the individual and his neighbours, his commercial outlets in the city and above all a direct link with home in Ireland.

Without the Irish priests working with the Irish community it is questionable whether Irish settlement in Argentina would have succeeded or ever reached the levels it did. All groups therefore, not least the emigrants themselves, had a common interest in cooperating closely to ensure the welfare of the Irish community and each group, from its own perspective, saw the an Irish Church in Argentina as the ideal medium through which the Irish community could survive and prosper.

### **The Implementation of Irish Settlement.**

From the beginning the elites were determined that this Irish community would have their

own Irish physicians, chaplains and later schools and hospital. At the very beginning they obtained a promise from the Argentine government that the Irish would always have their own Irish chaplain and physician. Even when all foreign priests in the country were expelled in 1822, by Rividavia, this promise was honoured. An Irish priest was allowed to remain in the Dominican priory as chaplain to the Irish community. By way of added insurance when Thomond O'Brien was requested to return to Ireland 1826, to recruit Irish immigrants, he made it a condition of his participation in this undertaking that the Irish immigrants would be accompanied by their own chaplain and physician to be 'solely at their disposition and for their use'<sup>1</sup>.

By the late 1830's the Irish had spread across the camp, some were already becoming financially successful and were marrying into the local community especially around Chascomus, the first region settled by the Irish. It was essential therefore, if the Irish were to remain separate, that the plans for creating a distinctly Irish community were implemented quickly. Realizing the danger Archbishop Murray, of Dublin, approached his friend the Bishop of Ossary to persuade his (Ossary's) friend, the young and very able Dominican Prior of Black Abbey in Kilkenny, Fr. Anthony Fahy, go to Argentina and take on the work of forming an Irish community that reflected the values espoused for them by those interested in promoting Irish immigration.

Fr. Fahy, having previously had experience of Irish communities in both urban and rural

(largely Protestant) Ohio in the USA held identical views to both Archbishop Murray and the Irish elites in Argentina as to the desirability of keeping Irish immigrants both separate from other communities and settling them in rural areas as the only way of preserving their 'true' Catholic Irish identity. Fr. Fahy set down one condition before he would agree to take on this responsibility. This was that from the moment he stepped onto the boat taking him to Argentina he was to be exempt from all the rules of the Dominican Order including the wearing of Dominican garb, though still remaining a full member of the Order.

Why he placed such a condition was never explained fully, the unpopularity of foreign orders in Argentina may have been a factor. Whatever the reason, this exemption was to have a significant bearing on his success in keeping the Irish a distinctly separate community in Argentina during its formative years.

Upon arriving in Argentina Fr. Fahy did not, as one would expect, move into the Dominican priory or even live in a house provided by the Irish elite. Instead he headed straight for the home of one of the principle merchants in the city and family friend from Ireland, Thomas Armstrong. Whether because they may have been boyhood friends in Ireland or to keep an eye on the one man who was bringing in the 'wrong' type of immigrant we shall probably never know. Fr. Fahy was to live, rent free, in his own apartment in Armstrong's home for the rest of his life.

Fr. Fahy immediately set about organizing the Irish community to conform to the model

already agreed. From that point until the two men's deaths in the early 1870's they were the undisputed leaders of the Irish community and were in every way the personification of the Irish settlement model. They were the ones who developed the social and religious structure that would not impede in any way the complete economic integration of the Irish into the wider economy while building a separate and very distinct Irish community in the country. Fr.Fahy maintained contact with the Irish while Thomas Armstrong remained in the background from the immigrant's perspective. Armstrong's role was in dealing with the financial side of the equation; he dealt with the merchant community and the government.

It must be said that the Irish immigrants were more than willing to remain an isolated English speaking community even if they did not fully understand the aims behind this plan. The most effective way to explain the settlement model implemented by those two men is to illustrate how they as individuals came to control and organize the Irish community between 1843 and 1870.

Fr. Fahy began his work by creating a separate church organization for his scattered congregation. Having an ecclesiastical dispensation, from Ireland, excusing him from the rules of the Dominican Order he sought and was granted civil permission, from the Argentine authorities, to dispense with wearing clerical garb altogether. He gave as his reason for wishing to wear civilian dress the huge amount of travelling he had to undertake through the Camp to visit his congregation and the unsuitability of clerical dress under those

conditions.

The effect of this permission was to make him visibly different from the rest of the Roman Catholic clergy in Argentina. This 'difference' was recognized by not only by the Irish community but also by the Argentines and the, largely Protestant, English business community.

He quickly became to be seen as the 'English Priest' and head of the 'English Church' by all except the Irish who saw him as 'Padre Fahy' their priest, and one of their own, and their church as being the 'Irish Church'. Fr. Fahy further emphasized the separateness of the Irish Church by quickly finding his own building for the exclusive use as a church by the Irish community. He rented an imposing Spanish Colonial building one block away from Government House at the very heart of the business and political centre of the country. This building, the property of the Third Order of St. Francis, became quickly known as the 'Capilla de los Irlandeses' (The Irish Church). Even the interior of the church building was altered to bring it into line with Irish tradition. Seats were provided for all the congregation and an organ was installed to accompany hymn singing during Mass.

These were innovations quite unfamiliar to Argentine Catholics. Thus in every visible way possible Fr. Fahy made his Church different from the Catholic Church of Argentina. This

new church in the heart of the city caused quite a sensation. Not only was its rite obviously different from the traditional Argentine church rites but Irish men as well as women and children attended Church services there every Sunday. Thus the Irish community quickly came to be recognized as a quite separate and 'different' sect within the wider community while retaining their Roman Catholic Status. Fr. Fahy was always able to count on the full support of Thomas Armstrong, and through him the rest of the business community, in his efforts to build a distinct Irish community. While his Church may have been visibly different from the Argentine Church, emphasizing differences was not Fr. Fahy's aim. In fact the cornerstone of the success of the Irish in Argentina was due to his, and Thomas Armstrong's, ability to understand and mesh the cultures of the Argentines and the Irish for the benefit of the Irish and business communities. Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong married the existing traditions of the country and of the immigrants wherever possible to achieve their goal rather than look for radical change which had the potential for conflict.

### **The Early Capital Ownership Structure Of The Irish Community.**

The most important example of this ability to blend Irish and local custom when building their settlement model was the land and capital ownership structure which they developed.

### **The Background to the Settlement Plan**

Because of the huge distances involved in travelling it could take often two or three weeks journeying through open country without roads or bridges to make a round trip to Buenos

Aires. During this time a traveller's family and property were without his protection. This isolation meant the majority of the Irish were only able to travel to the city, possibly, once every two years. Fr. Fahy soon became their agent, conducting business in the city on their behalf, following one of his twice yearly visits to all of the emigrants.

Because he was a priest, and for convenience, the Irish allowed him to transact their business in the city in his own name. Having the immigrant's business transacted as though it were Fr. Fahy's had several advantages for both the individual immigrant as well as the wider Irish community. There was always a tradition (though never a law), in Argentina, that the Church, and by extension the priest, was never taxed on property transactions done on his own behalf. This tax was quite large, as the only means the government had to raise revenue was import, export and stamp duties on all written contracts.

Tax was due by both sides to a contract i.e. both buyer and seller. If the buyer or seller was Fr. Fahy, such taxes on his side were avoided. If, as was almost always the case, all of the assets owned by the immigrant were registered in Fr. Fahy's name, when one immigrant sold property to another it was seen as Fr. Fahy merely changing one tenant for another, therefore, no tax whatever was demanded and needless to say none was paid.

On a personal level having all his assets in Fr. Fahy's name ensured that as the emigrant expanded he avoided the considerable tax costs involved. It also ensured that his estate, in

the event of his death, was passed on to his heirs quickly, un-taxed and without, often huge, legal fees. In addition because Fr. Fahy 'owned' the immigrant's property the immigrant could not be easily cheated out of it by unscrupulous comen or by gambling etc., of which there was plenty in the camp at that time. Under all of those conditions it was perfectly logical for an immigrant, who was himself unsure of the customs in a strange country, to entrust all his financial and legal affairs to the one man best equipped to deal with that side of his business especially, as there is no record of Fr. Fahy ever charging for this service. That left the immigrant free to concentrate on the side of the business he knew best, finding good pastures and raising his sheep while at the same time avoiding all the costs, in time and aggravation as well as cash, normally incurred when transacting business at that time in Argentina.

### **The Benefits of Common Ownership to the Individual.**

The practice of, the great majority, of the immigrants holding all of their assets (their sheep and their cash and later their land) in common, in Fr. Fahy's name, had advantages for the whole Irish community, which were unseen by the emigrant at one level, yet taken for granted by him at another. Because all the Irish property was, in law, owned by Fr. Fahy he was considered to be the wealthiest man, by far, in Argentina. The emigrants soon came to believe this also. Therefore when land or sheep came to be bought and sold among the Irish, the price was fixed between the emigrants themselves, and as they all banked with Fr. Fahy, he was informed of the position during his next visit to that part of the country. Cash rarely

changed hands. If an emigrant did not have the cash to close the transaction he 'borrowed' the difference from Fr. Fahy and agreed the repayments with him. The seller left the cash with Fr. Fahy certain that it was secure with a man as rich as he.

All of this capital (plus the cash from the sale of sheep and wool to the merchants, by the Irish) was held in the Banco Provincia, Thomas Armstrong's bank. Armstrong therefore had a huge surplus available for investment in expanding the industries which were required to process the rapidly expanding Irish production. The effect of this tax free and fee free status was that the Irish had a considerable economic advantage over all other communities in the country when it came to acquiring and holding property. As this was an unintended benefit from the point of view of the Argentine government it was a remarkable achievement of Fr. Fahy that he was able to carry it off for almost thirty years, ending it only when forced to by the (by then) established Irish families.

### **The Benefit of Common Ownership to the Group.**

Another equally important effect of this policy of holding the entire capital base of the Irish community in common was that the surplus cash of the established emigrants was available, through Fr. Fahy, to finance the expansion of new emigrants. Cash which was surplus to the immigrants' needs was reinvested through the Banco Provincia in building up the infrastructure necessary to transport and process the ever growing production of the region.

This system as it evolved under Fr. Fahy is a very good example how he was able to adapt given local structures to achieve the overall goal. If the existing rules had been rigidly applied in their original unmodified form, the Irish would have carried the costs of tax, legal fees and bureaucratic delays on all transactions. The extra costs involved would have led to lower production by immigrants and would have greatly impeded the very rapid rural development of the Irish community. Furthermore the Irish Church, Fr. Fahy's first priority, would not have been able to root itself so deeply within the Irish community. By fully understanding the cultural mores of both the Irish and Argentine population Fr. Fahy was able to evolve his own structure which fully met the requirements of the elites and immigrants without alienating the host community. Thomas Armstrong and he were, therefore, able to achieve the goals set them with the full cooperation of all sides, albeit by a very liberal interpretation of the rules and the trust placed in them.

### **The Irish Communication Network.**

Fr. Fahy's immense local knowledge of the Irish community also ensured that the Church was the medium of all communication effecting the Irish throughout the province. With his constant travelling through the countryside he became aware almost immediately of the quality and potential of new areas of land as they were opened up. He was thus able to direct his congregation to suitable new areas where they could quickly expand their business, more often than not providing the 'loans' to finance this expansion. He knew who was looking for labourers, so when the next boat of emigrants arrived he was able to direct them immediately

to jobs in the country. By doing this he was removing the temptations of city life from the new immigrant's experience as well as earning their gratitude for finding them work and the gratitude of the employers for finding them labour. This had the double effect of strengthening the rural communities and preventing the growth of a viable Irish community in the city. By such efforts on their behalf Fr. Fahy soon gained the complete confidence of the Irish community throughout the province in all matters affecting their lives and won them over in the same way that he had all the other groups with whom he dealt.

### **The Expansion of The Irish Church.**

As the Irish community grew and spread over an ever greater area, more priests were required to minister to them. The education of twelve priests was paid for by the Irish community, to the Archbishop of Dublin, who oversaw their education in All Hallows in Dublin. Fr. Fahy was insistent that they were especially well-educated and paid extra to All Hallows for this. He even supplied Spanish textbooks to All Hallows so that the new priests could speak some Spanish before they arrived in the country.

By speaking Spanish when the ordinary immigrant could not, meant that the 'Padre Ingles' was also the interface between the Irish and the local establishment. It also meant that the Irish priests were able to socialize with the local community though the local clergy speaking only Spanish could never form the same relationship with the Irish. Fr. Fahy kept the new priests under his personal control by making them his assistant chaplains. As chaplains they

would have been equal in rank to him and therefore would have been responsible directly to the Archbishop in Dublin. As well as diluting Fr. Fahy's control, this would have created difficulties with the See of Buenos Aires, whom it must be said cooperated in every way possible with Fr. Fahy.

When the new priests arrived they spent some time in Buenos Aires with Fr. Fahy. Those he wished to keep he appointed as his assistant chaplains in heavily populated areas of the camp, initially around Chascomus and Dolores in the south and later north west of the city in Mercedes, San Antonio de Areco, Chivilcoy and other newly settled areas to the north west around the old military forts. When a new priest was given an area the boundary on the city side of his parish was fixed. The rest of his parish stretched as far as the furthest Irish settler lived. As the Irish population grew in the assistant chaplain's area another assistant would be appointed further out, and then the first priest would have defined boundaries for all of his area. This method of creating new Irish assistant-chaplaincies continued until large scale Irish settlement ceased.

The first task of each new assistant chaplain was to raise funds from the community to build a local church. The existing Argentine churches were never used by the Irish community except on very rare occasions such as weddings or funerals. They continued to hear the 'Irish Mass' on a centrally located Irish estancia until they had the funds to build their own church. The church building also contained a library stocked with books in English. Local Irish

newspapers such as the Wexford People and The Westmeath Examiner were also subscribed to by the libraries. The library was probably one of the few places in the camp where an immigrant was sure to find a complete pack of cards where he could play a game of forty five<sup>2</sup>. The card game allowed the immigrant to socialize freely with friends and neighbours of both sexes all and ages. Each little Irish church therefore became the local 'social centre' for emigrants for thirty or forty miles radius, where they would meet to hear Mass, read the local papers from Ireland, play cards, pass around letters from home and from their brothers and sisters in the United States and Australia or Canada and discuss current happenings with their neighbours. The libraries closed the circle within the overall model to the extent that the Irish community in rural areas of Buenos Aires province were insulated as much as possible from the real world of Argentina. They were able to continue to speak English, socialize exclusively among themselves, and with the libraries supplying Irish papers remain intellectually back in Ireland. The Irish community in Argentina was therefore often better informed about conditions in Ireland, the US, Canada and Australia than they were about conditions in much of their adopted land. Therefore, provided there was a reasonable sex balance and the community remained fairly concentrated in particular districts there was no incentive whatever to assimilate into the wider community.

Part of this infrastructure was a complete health and welfare system run by the Irish Church to take care of members unable to look after themselves, such as widows and orphans, together with an education system which was the model for other emigrant communities.

Because Fr. Fahy was banker to the Irish community he knew exactly how much each member of the community could afford to contribute to those charities. And the emigrant was in a very weak position to refuse, considering his respect for, and his personal obligations to, Fr. Fahy.

### **Thomas Armstrong's Role.**

The fact that Thomas Armstrong was banker to Fr. Fahy and had huge assets at his disposal for re-investment in the Buenos Aires economy enabled him to become one of the leading business figures in Buenos Aires. He was a founder of the Buenos Aires Stock Exchange, a director of the Banco Provincia which he made, in effect, the central bank of Argentina<sup>3</sup>. He was also the director and substantial investor in the major railway company and served on the boards of most of the major stock companies in the city. His connections with the creole community were also beyond reproach. He was married to Justa Villanueva the daughter of the Alcalde (chief officer under Spanish rule) of Buenos Aires of 1807. Being such a powerful business figure and because of his wife's connections Thomas Armstrong was also a very influential if unseen force in the political life of the country. He was the business counsellor and close friend of 'almost every Argentine governmental administration from the Directorship of Rodriguez to the Presidency of Avellaneda'<sup>4</sup> acting as 'honest broker' (amigable componedor) between the British and Argentine Governments in their commercial affairs for over 40 years<sup>5</sup>.

Thomas Armstrong and Fr. Fahy forged between them a link which made them probably the two most influential people in the country outside of political life and, such was their mutual trust and close friendship that no demarcation line existed between them in obtaining their objectives. Their influence overlapped to the point where Fr. Fahy was considered to be the wealthiest man in Argentina, while Thomas Armstrong's work on behalf of the Irish was legendary. To quote Murray<sup>6</sup>, whose dislike of the English was surpassed only by his contempt for the Anglo-Irish, 'He lived and died a Protestant, but no man ever did more to help and advance his Catholic fellow-countrymen than he'. Neither, Thomas Armstrong or Fr. Fahy, without the other's help and commitment, could ever have established and maintained the Irish as the highly organized community that they became. Without their combined efforts it is very unlikely that the Irish would have become such a prosperous rural community in that country.

The 'Irish' Church soon became recognised generally, as a separate entity by both the Argentine population and the 'Foreign Residents' including the Irish in Argentina. In guides and directories, which were commissioned by both independent sources and the Argentine Government during the nineteenth century, complete religious freedom was stressed, and it must be said practiced, by both the authorities and the population generally. To underline this fact and for general information the guides published principal clergymens' names and address for the various denominations in the country. Fr. Fahy was always listed as Irish chaplain as was the fact that the Irish had their own separate 'English' Church organization.

Fr. Fahy, happy in the belief that the Government and the business community, through Thomas Armstrong's influential position, was safely in his pocket, was able to concentrate on directing and leading the Irish community to a prosperous future based on the values and principles of the Irish Catholic Church. The Government and business community were willing to afford Fr. Fahy every cooperation in his quest, secure in their belief that through Thomas Armstrong's monitoring his every move, 'The Rev. Mr. Fahy' and by extension every Irish immigrant in the country was safely in their pocket. All sides, therefore, worked closely to benefit the Irish, happy that ultimate control rested with them. Such was the closeness of the understanding between Armstrong and Fahy and their joint commitment to the Irish immigrant community that the conundrum of who really was in charge was never put to the test.

Despite all his efforts Fr. Fahy's networking would come to nought unless he succeeded, in what was his primary function, of forging the Irish immigrants into a distinct Irish Catholic community. His parish, when he arrived in the country extended about 250km in length and was about 100km wide. The Irish even by 1842 were scattered all across it, though the great majority of those in the countryside, were located to the south of the city. Most of those at that time were 150km to the south around Chascomus. To visit all of the Irish community required a great deal of travelling and rough living. Fr. Fahy, in the early days therefore, had to divide his time about equally between the country and the city. He would send word on

ahead to each district stating when he would be in a convenient place, usually an Irish estancia. There he would say Mass for all the Irish that were in that district. Those that did not turn up for Mass on the estancia he would search out and visit. In that way he not only came to know his parishioners he also learned a great deal about life and how to succeed in the countryside. The knowledge he gained on a visit to one immigrant he was able to pass on to another so that he soon established himself among the Irish community as a very shrewd advisor in temporal as well as spiritual matters.

The Irish model of settlement therefore depended completely on the ability of Fr. Fahy, with the full cooperation and assistance of Thomas Armstrong, to devote his entire energies to caring for the Irish immigrant community. Because of the model's unique features it demanded at its centre a person who, firstly understood, and was in sympathy with, how it operated. Secondly the person at its centre had to have no outside commitments such as a family, that person had to be willing to devote a lifetime's work without any personal gain while seeing others prospering greatly from their efforts. That individual had to have sufficient education to deal with the complex issues of an immigrant community in an alien environment and have the personality to deal as an equal with every level of society, both immigrant and native. It was logical therefore, given the Irish and Argentine culture, to place an energetic priest at the centre of such a community. Given that Argentina was dependant on British capital, much of which was antipathetic to Catholic priests in general and Irish Catholic priests in particular, it was a master stroke of Fr. Fahy and the good fortune of the

Irish community that he was able to recruit to his cause an Irish Protestant merchant, who so well understood the Irish Catholic immigrants and who was in such sympathy with them.

### **The Relationship Between Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong.**

Probably the greatest gift Fr. Fahy had, was that he could communicate with people on their own terms, no matter what their social status or living conditions. He was always able to fit in socially, whether at a formal banquet in the city discussing the opera or philosophy with his host and fellow guests, or sitting on an ox skull, eating roast mutton from the point of his boot knife, while discussing the best remedy for foot-rot or sheep scab, in the company of a lonely shepherd who had not spoken to another human being since he last attended an Irish Mass. If there was single reason for the success of Anthony Fahy it was his ability to instill in his congregation a belief in themselves and a confidence that no matter how isolated the individual may have been, he was still very much part of a prospering and growing Irish community. His presence also made the immigrant acutely conscious of the fact that the Irish Church was the cement which held the whole structure together.

Thomas Armstrong, because of his business and political connections had access to privileged information such as the effect of political developments on trade. He passed this insider information to Fr. Fahy who in turn passed it on to his parishioners. Once armed with this knowledge the immigrant was very well placed to sell out or buy up livestock ahead of the rest of the market depending on whether a blockade was about to be imposed or lifted,

etc. They were also often the first to know exactly where a new railway line was planned with the result that they were able to take advantage of sudden massive rises in land prices in a particular area.

Through Thomas Armstrong the merchants were also in a position to know the quantity and quality of goods coming on offer well in advance of the actual market and were therefore able to plan well ahead to process and market those goods, giving them a competitive advantage as well as a sure source of supply. This arrangement also benefitted the merchants in another way, as the Irish became financially stronger and they had a tendency to hold their surplus capital, with Fr. Fahy in the Banco Provincia, in the form of cash balances. This provided the merchants with an ever growing supply of cash for investment in the infrastructure necessary to increase their business. The extra capital not held in the bank was invested in livestock and thus provided the increased throughput necessary to justify the extra investment made by the merchants. The Irish also benefitted by the fact that their cash was deposited in one of the few really secure banks in the country and which was investing it in additional industrial capacity, which was in turn necessary to absorb the ever increasing supply of their produce.

When one looks at who benefitted most from the settlement model operated by the Irish in Argentina one sees that a very high proportion of Irish shepherds, who arrived during Fr.

Fahy's and Thomas Armstrong's time, became estancieros. They were without doubt the most financially successful group of Irish emigrants in the world at that time, and certainly the most successful group, by a wide margin, in Argentina. Thomas Armstrong made a huge personal fortune as did a great number of his merchant colleagues and Fr. Fahy built an Irish Church and an Irish community modelled on the values of nineteenth-century Catholic Ireland which is still functioning, in Argentina over a century after his death.

Fr. Fahy did not just look after the existing immigrants. He saw in Argentina a huge potential to attract Irish immigration which offered a better alternative for the immigrant's spiritual and material well being than the slums of North America. He sent word home at every opportunity extolling the opportunities available to emigrants willing to undertake hard labouring work similar to that experienced on small and medium sized farms in Ireland. He also constantly encouraged women of a similar social class to emigrate to provide wives and a stable Irish family atmosphere among the predominantly male immigrant society.

To ensure their safety and immediate assimilation into the Irish community Fr. Fahy made certain that the Irish emigrant was received into the Irish community the moment they set foot on the quay side. Every ship containing Irish emigrants was met at the port by Fr. Fahy or one of his aides and the emigrants were offered lodgings in suitable Irish boarding houses. The men were then contacted by relatives or found work in the merchants' meat processing plants or on estancias. The females often stayed in the boarding house for a month or two

while they decided whether to marry or seek suitable work. There was constant pressure on female immigrants to marry. Those who sought work were looked upon, to an extent, as someone who could not get a husband or who was snobbish and impossible to please.

To have a self-contained self-supporting society it was necessary for the Irish community to have a framework that supported the medical, educational and welfare needs of the community. Much of this infrastructure was not provided by the State and was left up to the various communities to organize for themselves. Here again Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong organized such a system for the Irish. By using his influence and family contacts in Ireland Fr. Fahy was able to recruit the personnel he needed to run those institutions. He used the good offices of one of his sisters in Ireland, who was prioress of the Carmelite Convent in Loughrea, to convince the head of the 'Irish Sisters of Mercy' Order to open a school and run an Irish Hospital in Buenos Aires. His step-sister was later to give the family home in Loughrea to the Mercy order to found a school in the town. Fr. Fahy's overriding objective was to give every child of Irish parents an education in English in the best run schools in Argentina regardless of their parents' ability to pay. The rich paying high fees, the poor paying little or nothing. Though the very wealthiest families did not send their children to those schools in later years, they were still expected to contribute generously to the school system.

Having won over the Argentine Church and the business community Fr. Fahy and Thomas

Armstrong saw to it that the Irish community also had as many friends as possible in the Government of the country without being aligned to any particular faction. During Rosas' rule it was said that Fr. Fahy could get any favour he wished from the Dictator. One concession he did get was that Irish immigrants, or their property were not harmed by the army and during times of unrest. To ensure that this latter agreement was carried out Rosas decreed that any property flying the British flag was given full protection even in times of civil strife. Rosas was as good as his word, even when Argentina was at war with England in the 1840's the Irish suffered no ill effects from the Dictator, who was in fact a great admirer of the way in which Irish community thrived and prospered in Argentina. As they prospered their contribution to the Argentine economy became more important to the point that by the mid-sixties they were probably the most important group of primary producers of wealth in the country and, as such, no Government could afford to do without them particularly as the Irish kept their side of the bargain in that they never flexed their undoubted economic muscle against any government regardless of political shade.

This system worked perfectly until the late 1860's when Fr. Fahy's advancing years and failing health meant that he was no longer able to pursue the overall welfare of the immigrants with the same energy as he had previously. He no longer travelled through the countryside meeting his parishioners. His chaplains looked after their everyday needs. His older parishioners began to visit him during their visits to the city. He, or Thomas Armstrong, never groomed a successor to take over from them when they were no longer

able to look after the community. He concentrated his declining energies on improving the hospital, schools and orphanages for the community. However these needed money and his constant requests for funds, while he was getting more and more out of touch with his community, led to disaffection especially as he was perceived to have such enormous personal wealth at his disposal. In addition he was looking for funds from those who could afford it most, and therefore the least likely to benefit from his charities. The Irish he knew best, were becoming wealthy and more self-assured and more independent of him. With the changing economic conditions in the country the Irish community began to split into two communities one based on capital and the other based on labour.

The disaffection got to the point in 1868, during the cholera epidemic in the country, when demands on him and consequently on the wealthy Irish were so great, that he was forced to publish a letter in the national newspaper outlining his true financial position, which was that he always had been penniless though personally liable for the debts incurred by him on behalf of the community. This caused a national sensation and had the desired effect, for a short time among the Irish community, in that the wealthy Irish realized that they would have to provide the funds to ensure the welfare of the labouring Irish community. With the realization that the wealthy Irish had to pay came the realization that they and not the Irish Church could control the Irish community. After his death in 1871 there was no one of stature in the community to take over from him though many fought each other for the opportunity. Between his declaration in 1868 that he had no personal wealth and his death in

1871 he had handed over clear title to the assets he had held in trust to the owners. Thomas Armstrong made up the undisclosed shortfall out of his own funds.

Thomas Armstrong died within four years of Fr. Fahy. The deaths of those two men ended an era of Irish emigration to Argentina. The grand coalition that they put together, though never formally ended, no longer worked to the benefit of the majority Irish community. Sectional interests began to replace the common goal. The capital previously held in common was now held individually. Each estanciero made his own arrangements with individual merchants. A new emigrant had no Fr. Fahy to turn to, to borrow the funds to purchase land. If he had the money he had to cope with the local bureaucracy and pay his taxes, like everyone else. He no longer had the advice, based on the knowledge of the entire community, on where to settle or purchase land. In short the old settlement model which was so hugely successful was being quietly abandoned, and was being replaced by a version of the English model, in that individual effort alone from that point on was the arbiter of success. However the new immigrant was not given the means to establish himself as he had been in the true British colonies.

The Irish community changed radically after the deaths of those two men. Though Fr. Fahy is still revered almost as a saint by the Irish in Argentina today Thomas Armstrong is completely forgotten. The expansion of the Irish community ceased with their deaths. Rather than building on their success and continuing their work of settling the Argentine Pampas

with prosperous Irish farms, those who followed and who claimed to be working in their name, through a combination of lack of vision among some and sheer self interest among others, set themselves a completely different agenda. Theirs was one of consolidating the existing position rather than continuing with the work of expanding the Irish community. Just as all, including Argentina, had benefitted from the work of Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong, all, with the exception of a few very rich Irish families, were to loose out heavily, in the long term, by this change of direction in community settlement.

## NOTES

1. Murray 1919, The Story of the Irish....., 266
2. The shorter versions of this game 'twenty five' and 'fifteen' are still played in rural Ireland.
3. The Banco Provincia failed in the late 1870's about five years after Armstrong's death. By that time most of the Irish community appear to have withdrawn their assets from it and were therefore largely unaffected by its failure. As it falls outside this work I don't know to what extent the Irish contributed to its failure by withdrawing their assets. The current Banco Provincia in Argentina has very little connection to Armstrong's bank other than the name. The Banco Nacional would be its real successor as it was formed out of the ashes of Armstrong's Banco Provincia. I am grateful to the Argentine Ambassador to Ireland Sr. Juan M. Figuerro for supplying me with much of the information for this note.
4. Murray 1919 The Story of the Irish...., 394
5. Coghlan 1987 Los Irlandeses....., 12
6. Murray, 1919. The story of the Irish....., 394.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE JOURNEY TO ARGENTINA.

#### **Introduction.**

*'Dec. 12 1845. I arrived here in the big Filomena 300 tons registered, Captain Robert Bell, a good fellow, we arrived here after 3 months voige from Kingstown Ireland to Buenos Aires; we ankird in the outer roads; and come the next day to the beach in a boat. Then we were met by a one chafter cart when we got on the disvalci or coach we went up to a boarding house that was kept by Michael (surname unreadable) where we were met by my brother and other friends from the old country.'*

**Extract** From the Diary of John Brabazon.

Those were the opening remarks of John Brabazon when beginning his account of his life in Argentina. They are typical of Irish emigrants descriptions in that they list the name, weight, captain, and date of arrival of the ship. Where they boarded the ship and the account of the journey out are never mentioned. Brabazon was also very typical of Irish emigrants in that he emigrated to a destination where his close family members and friends had already emigrated to; he was met on the quay side and brought to reliable lodgings. He speaks in the

plural 'we were met..., 'we went up to....' implying that he had emigrated as part of a group.

The only detailed account by an Irish emigrant, in my possession, took place in 1892 when Thomas Murray<sup>1</sup> emigrated to Argentina. Murray's account is very similar to accounts written by English travellers between 1880 and 1900 and those of the Mulhalls which appear in various editions of the Handbook series.

The most popular time to begin the journey appears to have been in August or September. The emigrant left Europe during the autumn months and arrived in Argentina at the beginning of their summer. Every account except Murray's record the weather as being extremely rough at the outset with the passengers suffering terribly from sea sickness. Once past the Bay of Biscay however the weather becomes calm and presumably by then the passengers had acquired their sea legs so that the rest of the journey was remarkably uneventful. Boredom and irritation by fellow passengers being interrupted occasionally by sight of land or the occasional stopping off at a port on the way.

### **Route Taken.**

The shipping route appears to have remained largely unchanged throughout the century despite the introduction of steamers. The ships continued to sail as close to land as possible for the duration of the voyage. 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. The simplest method of recording the route taken by the emigrants is to follow closely Murray's

record of this voyage

### **Murray's Account of the Voyage.**

Murray's account commences on the 1st. of September 1892 when his ship (un-named) left the port of Liverpool. ' 4 O'clock pm passing Land's End rough sea and a cold evening. The next morning, at 9, the French coast is in sight. By 7.P.M. that evening they are in the mouth of the 'Garrone' (Gironde) and 'cast anchor at a place pronounced by the sailors as "Poliack"



**Figure 7:1** The route taken by Thomas Murray in 1892.

(Paulliat) at 10.PM. and rest here for the night. Murray then describes the passengers on board without numbering them. A Scotsman whom he describes as being 'long lean and garish and dangerously cunning' Englishmen whom he 'thinks will turn out nice fellows' and then goes on to report 'Naturally my own countrymen are to me most enjoyable'.

The ship sails at 3p.m., on the 3rd., with additional passengers 'men women and children chiefly from France and Spain with a few Arabs, very strangely dressed, Shabby looking things they are all eat together on deck'. On Sunday the 4th., Murray records strong gale and heavy sea, 4pm. in sight of Spanish coast'. At 'nightfall' the ship anchors in Corunna. They leave Corunna on the 5th., at 10 a.m. on a 'beautiful morning' with 35 new passengers. Sailing 'close to the coast' the docked in Vigo at 8 pm., that evening. They left Vigo at 10 the next morning with no new passengers. The ship arrived in Lisbon on the 6th., at 3 p.m., and departed on the 7th., at 11pm., with a further '30 or 40 passengers'.

Murray at no time suggests that passengers disembark in these ports though there is no reason why some should not. Why Arabs and Spaniards would travel to Bordeaux (Paulliat) to make a longer and more expensive journey to Buenos Aires is not explained. One cannot rule out therefore the possibility that some at least of those passengers were travelling from France to the Iberian Peninsula so that the overall number of passengers on the ship may very well have remained the about same throughout the voyage. The 8th of September Murray records as 'the first whole day without seeing land'. On the 10th the ship passes in

sight of Tenerife but does not dock there. The 11th. is Murray's 'Second Sunday on se' - feeling more homesick today than any (time) since I left Ireland'. Just after midnight on the 13th they docked in St. Vincent on the Cape Verde islands to take on fresh water and they leave again at 'half past four'. On the 16th they are 'supposed to be crossing the line (equator) -weather altogether different from what we expected, no heat at all often felt it much hotter in Ireland'.

They arrive off the coast of Brazil on the 18th., sighting St. Ferdinand Island (Fernando deNoronha). On the 22nd the ship rounds Cape Frio which Murray records is 'Something like Howth Head'. On the 23rd they are in quarantine on the Rio Grande so presumably some passengers are entering Brazil. On the 24th Murray 'went through fumigation' He stated that it was a 'frightful ordeal... it reminds me of hell, although I have not seen that place, unless it be that part of ....(word unclear) around the docks. But accounts I have read and heard of hell say that it is a place of terrible torture and that it has a sickening bad smell, also that the concern is run by black fellows. Our fumigation at Rio Grande was in every way similar to this. We leave tonight and I wont be sorry'. The 25th was Murray's fourth Sunday on board, it was spent anchored off Rio de Janeiro. Murray writes 'Rio is as Patterson says of Kilorglin " a beautiful place to view"'. The ship sailed from Rio on the 26th and arrived in La Plata at nightfall on the 29th. On the 30th., all passengers were landed on Flores Island where they were quarantined for eight days.

The 'quarantine part (of the island, was) about half a square mile in extent. The other part is kept as a hospital and a burying ground. The public have no access to this part'. Murray complains, as do other writers of the period 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'. The plates and spoons were never washed. Two blankets, again unwashed and 'full of vermin' were issued to each passenger. The third class passengers numbered 'over a hundred' and were from 'almost every country in Europe and many parts of America'. Some were 'well and tenderly reared and others were the lowest of the low'. Every night they were all herded into one long shed 'without regard for age or sex and without the light of even one candle'.

Murray writes that it was 'pitiable nay killing, to see the condition of some of those poor people, delicate women young girls and little children. He stated that there was no sickness of any sort on board their ship and therefore there was no need for those precautions in their case. He goes on to blame the authorities on the island together with the government of Uruguay and above all the English shipping companies for allowing their passengers to be so 'outraged and persecuted' during their quarantine. The passengers set sail again on the 8th., at noon, arriving in Montevideo at 6.30 pm., and left immediately for Buenos Aires where he landed on the 9th., The journey took thirty nine days in total.

On the 10th., Murray attended the Irish Mass at the great Irish church of Holy Cross in the city. There he met a number of Irish people. On the 11th., he obtained a 'protection' (his foreign status papers) from the British consulate. On the 12th., he departed Buenos Aires by the 7am., train and arrived at his destination 'Creevy's house' at 5pm. that evening. His journey appears to have been typical of the Irish emigrants' experience throughout the century in all but the quarantine. He sailed from Liverpool, stopped off at several destinations along the European Atlantic coast and at least one of the Atlantic islands before sailing for the nearest point on the Brazilian coast. Murray's ship then sailed down along the coast of Brazil, stopping only at Rio de Janeiro and continuing on until it reached Montevideo before entering Buenos Aires port. On landing Murray immediately headed for the Irish Church where he contacted other Irish immigrants and within a few days left the city for a rural destination in an Irish district.

Quarantine does not appear to have been enforced until the 1880's by which time the Irish emigrants had ceased arriving in significant numbers. The conditions experienced by those immigrants would certainly have greatly impacted on female emigration from Ireland especially as by then females had better alternatives for employment in the United States. However the Irish were sufficiently well organized and wealthy in Argentina to change those conditions if they wished to continue Irish emigration to Argentina. Those conditions therefore may have added to the growing reluctance of the Irish to emigrate to Argentina in

the 1890's but the conditions experienced in the quarantine station would, on their own, not have been sufficient reason for ending Irish emigration to there.

The fact that Irish emigration had virtually ended by 1892 is illustrated in another entry in Murray's diary. When describing the passengers he stated that 'I'm the only one of them that hasn't travelled this route before. They are used to traveling and take things easy, they appear to be the most sensible men on board'. What Murray is recording is the custom which sprung up among some of the wealthy immigrants by the 1890's and lasted in some instances until the 1950's. The custom was that of purchasing, or retaining, property in Ireland and spending half the year in Ireland and half in Argentina. They would leave Buenos Aires in mid autumn in March, arrive in Ireland in April and remain there until September when they would return again to Buenos Aires and remain in Argentina until March of the following year.

#### **Other Sources on the Journey to Argentina.**

Regardless of where they originated in Ireland, the vast majority of emigrants, from the 1850's at least, used Liverpool as the port of embarkation and most disembarked in or near the port of Buenos Aires<sup>2</sup>. The journey lasted about three months<sup>3</sup> on the sailing ships and about one month on a steamer. Very few descriptions were ever written about the voyages out. They never captured the folk-memory in the way that the much shorter journey to the United States did. Yet in letters home many gave the long voyage as their reason for never being able to return home.

There is circumstantial evidence that the emigrants prior to the mid-1840's, and possibly later, reached Argentina via the United States rather than direct from Liverpool. McCann states in his Two Thousand Mile Ride..... which he began working on in 1842, that the great majority of emigrants were Westmeath men and that they came via the United States. He also records that very few were arriving directly from Ireland at that time. Why only Westmeath people left the US for Buenos Aires is not addressed by him. Murray (1919), who searched through all available passenger lists and property records of the period found that most of the 'Yankee Irish' remained in small business in the city while Coghlan's work would indicate that the Yankee Irish came from all over Ireland. Graham-Yooll in the Forgotten Colony claims that the 'Yankee Irish' were attracted to Argentina by the report written for the US congress in 1819 by Theodoric Bland. If Bland's report was the reason some Irish left the US for Argentina it is unlikely that it would have been read only by Westmeath emigrants.

The most tenable explanation is, that as there was relatively little trade between Liverpool and Buenos Aires at that time and there was considerable trade between Ireland and the United States and between the United States and Argentina. A considerable number of the first Irish emigrants, who were travelling under sail, may well have travelled along the established trading routes between Ireland and the United States and then used the trading

route between the US and Argentina to complete their journey<sup>4</sup>.

This was hardly an efficient route especially for the sponsors of the emigration as the leakage in the US would, in all probability, have been considerable. Furthermore as trade between Liverpool and Buenos Aires expanded particularly after 1852, more frequent sailings would have occurred between the two ports and Irish emigrants would have found it easier to avail of the more direct route between the two ports. This was certainly the case during the steam era of the 1860's when Irish emigration to Argentina was at its height. It is possible that some early emigrants to Argentina sailed on ships trading between Liverpool and Australia as there is some evidence that British ships en-route to Australia took on fresh food and water at Buenos Aires.

### **The Cost of the Fare**

The cost of a third class ticket from Liverpool to Buenos Aires was £16 (<sup>5</sup>). A similar ticket from Ireland to North America cost £4 Pre-Famine and as little as £2 after the Famine (<sup>6</sup>). There is general agreement among the sources that many of the emigrants' fares were prepaid in Buenos Aires by earlier emigrants or potential employers. William McCann had such an immigrant recruiting agency in Buenos Aires city by 1860. The shipping company of Latham Brothers in Liverpool also worked very closely with Fr. Fahy in securing emigrant passages all through his tenure in Buenos Aires. Sailing tickets from Ireland could be

purchased from Latham at £15 cash in advance or £17/10/0 to be paid by the immigrant six months' after arrival.

### **Newspaper Advertisements and Correspondence.**

Newspaper advertisements offering passage to Buenos Aires appeared during the 1860's when Irish emigration to Argentina was at its height. Agents who were placing the advertisements for Buenos Aires in the local papers such as the Westmeath Guardian and the Wexford People, were also placing advertisements offering passage to the United States and Canada in the same editions. Their advertisements, see Figure 7:2, for Argentina were more promotional in tone than those for the US and Canada however. They stressed the availability of land and guaranteed employment as well as the assistance of Fr. Fahy combined with a character reference for the Agent, a reference which was not deemed necessary when advertising North America. Another feature of the advertisement, which was run unchanged in the Wexford People throughout the 1860's, was that the cost of the passage was not given. Presumably as it was twice, to two and a half times as expensive as the fare to North America it was decided not to publish it. The agent preferred instead to get the intending emigrant into his office where he could offer credit via McCann or Latham to suitable candidates. The People newspaper, while carrying the advertisement, tried to give a balanced picture of the life the emigrant might expect on arrival. A very good example appeared in the edition of June 18th., 1864, a letter addressed to P. O'Rourke M.D., Enniscorthy from Thomas Hutchinson in the British Consulate, Rosario was published,

which stated that immigrants needed to have between £400 to £800 as well as having 'strong hands willing hearts and temperate habits in order to ensure success in Argentina.

This letter was written following 10 years of unprecedented boom when fortunes had been made from very small beginnings and talk of easy money to be made in Argentina was widespread in the sending areas.

**Westmeath Guardian,**  
**NEWS-LETTER**

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 1865.

River Plate Steam-Ship Company.  
 STEAM FROM LIVERPOOL  
 FOR MONTEVIDEO and BUENOS AYRES  
 DIRECT.  
 Calling at Madeira, with Passengers only.

THE undersigned intend despatching a LINE OF  
 PACKETS monthly to the River Plate, and are open  
 to engage Passengers at the following moderate rates.  
 The attention of Emigrants is specially requested to this  
 opportunity. The following are the names of the Vessels  
 composing this line, viz.:-

Ship	Register	Tons Borden	Date
LEDA	750	1000	Sept. 8, 1865.
URUGUAY	1214	2200	—
CORDOVA	1300	2600	—
PARANA	1146	2200	—
UNA	1300	2000	—
PARAGUAY	1380	2500	—
LA PLATA	1196	2000	—

RATES OF PASSAGE,  
 Including Provisions, but without Wines or Liquors,  
 which may be had on board:—

Saloon Cabin	£35
Second Cabin	25
Third Class	16

Children under Twelve Years, Half-fare; Infants free.  
 For further particulars, and to secure Berths, apply to  
 S. W. KELSO & CO.,  
 3, Tower Buildings West, Liverpool  
 or to their Agent,  
 WILLIAM MULVHILL, L. Ballymahon.

**Figure 7:2** An advertisement in The Westmeath Guardian.

Circumstances had by then changed in Argentina and this was an effort by the British consulate and the Wexford People to inform intending emigrants of the changed position despite the attractive advertising.

The personal letters to families in my possession date from 1868 or later and are therefore much too late to assess their impact on increasing emigration. On October 1st. 1868 Nicholas Murphy, formally of Muckranstown, Tagoat Co. Wexford wrote to his brother (un-named) stating that following his six months in the country he had purchased a half share in a flock of sheep for £115 from John Murphy also of Wexford.

He was writing to his brother to lend him the money to pay for the sheep. His instructions were to pay £60 to Martin Murphy of Hayslands Co. Wexford, John Murphy's brother, and send on £70 via The London and River Plate Bank, and to do it immediately as 'I will be paying interest for the same until such time as it arrives'. Nicholas went on to report that he did not much like the country and could go nowhere because of the language. He would remain until March 1869 and if he still did not like the country he would sell out and leave, as the prospect for making money was not very good. All the letters in my possession express the view that by 1868 Argentina was no longer a land of opportunity unless the emigrant had several hundred pounds to invest in addition to his labour. Those letters back to Ireland reporting on the changing conditions, but never mentioning the quarantine, certainly had their effect as emigration which had been increasing every year until the end of the 1860's, began an irreversible decline and ending completely by 1895.

## NOTES

1. Thomas Murray may have been a relative of the author of The Story of the Irish in Argentina but he was a different Thomas Murray.

2. Some Irish disembarked in Montevideo and then crossed the river to Buenos Aires. A few appear to have landed in Quilmes, now a suburb of Buenos Aires, but then a small port about 5 miles south of the city.

3. **John Brabazon** writing in a diary, which he kept, about his life in the Pampas between 1845 and 1855 a copy of which is in my possession.

4. I have discussed this theory with Dr. John deCourcy Ireland who, as part of his work on Adml. William Brown, researched trade from Buenos Aires, to both Liverpool and the United States and he fully agrees that the likelihood is that much of the early Irish emigration to Argentina would have been via the US because of the trading links then existing.

5. Westmeath Guardian Newspaper advertisement August 10th. 1865.

6. **FREEMAN T.W.** (1957) Pre-Famine Ireland, 40. Freeman also makes an un referenced statement on p.40. that fares to the US fell to 15/= after the Famine.

## CHAPTER 8.

### THE SENDING AREAS.

#### **Introduction.**

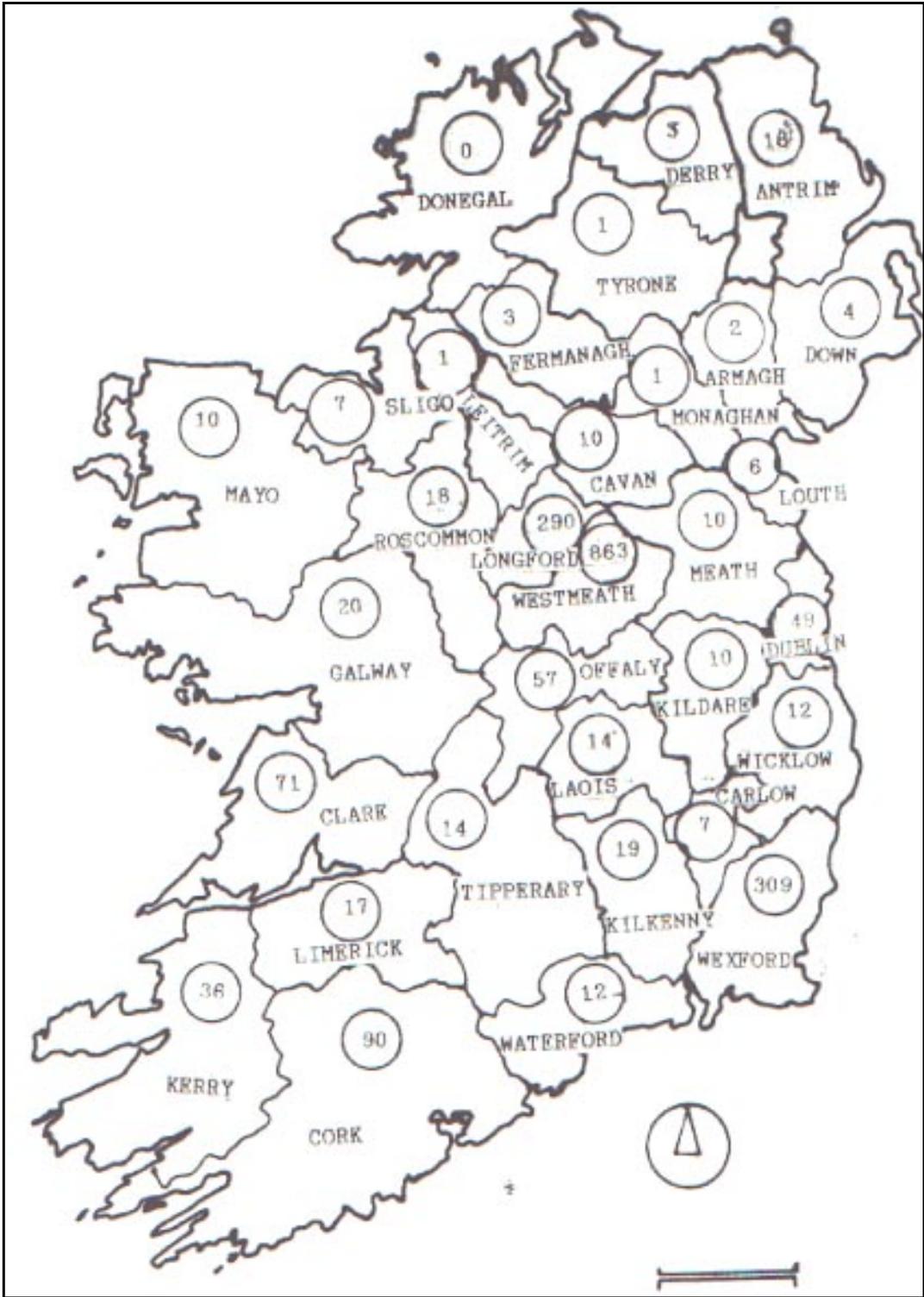
In this chapter the sending areas in Ireland are defined from the data provided by Coghlan. In addition the sex ratio of those emigrating within the sending areas is also analyzed. As the database was constructed from the residual, settled Irish population which appears in Coghlan's 1987 genealogy, the findings must be seen as referring to that section of the Irish emigrant community.

Nevertheless, as the great majority of Irish who emigrated to Argentina during the nineteenth century never returned to Ireland, it can be reasonably assumed that when leaving Ireland, all the emigrants intended to remain in Argentina and only re-emigrated from there when the country failed to live up to their expectations. This assumption is a plausible one when it is remembered that the fare to Argentina was considerably more expensive than that to the United States and Canada and furthermore internal continental migration to the US was much more difficult and expensive than migration from Canada to the US. Therefore while the database records only the Irish who settled in Argentina permanently and formed a community there, the same push and pull factors can reasonably be assumed to have applied

to both short- and long-term Irish emigration to Argentina.

When considering emigration from Ireland to Argentina it is important to remember that Ireland was the first grassland region incorporated by Britain into her colonial mercantile system. The province of Leinster is Ireland's premier grassland area and Westmeath and Wexford, are located at opposite ends of the province. The Westmeath area is bounded by the River Shannon on its western side, which cuts it off from the province of Connaught while to the north it forms part of the boundary with the province of Ulster and it is bounded on its southern side by the bog of Allen.

Thus the main sending area is located in the north western edge of the province. Approximately 100 miles to the south east, on the opposite corner of Leinster, lies the second major sending area, Forth and Bargo in Wexford. This area is located in the very south-eastern toe of the Ireland, roughly, south of the road connecting Wexford town on the east coast to Wellingtonbridge on the south coast and consequently is bounded on three sides by the sea. As the two populations were located on the margins of the premier grassland region, expansion into surrounding areas of good land was therefore impossible. Improving farmers from those regions, consequently, had to look beyond Ireland for additional land if they wished to continue to pursue a rural farming lifestyle. Both areas were aware of the opportunities for acquiring land which existed in the grassland region of Argentina, because the main sponsors of the emigration on the Argentine side (Thomas Armstrong and Patrick Browne) came from those areas.



**Figure 8:1.** Distribution of Nineteenth Century Irish Emigration to Argentina.

It would appear also that, in the beginning at least, Armstrong and Browne were very probably the only sponsors of emigration from those two areas to a grassland region within the British colonial system. Consequently, during most of the early part of the nineteenth century Argentina was the only option open to intending emigrants, if they wished to continue their current rural, farming lifestyle.

Between those two centres of Irish-Argentine emigration are several counties with well established traditions of emigration to all of the other grassland areas of the British colonial world, while at the same time just a handful, possibly only the members of one extended family emigrated from those intermediate counties to Argentina. This is further evidence that nineteenth century mass emigration from Ireland was a mosaic of small personal, family and neighbourhood contact with specific regions of the New World rather than a general unplanned out movement of population to random destinations within the British Empire.

#### **Findings from the Database.**

The database records people emigrating to Argentina from thirty one of the thirty two counties of Ireland, Donegal being the only exception. (see table in Appendix 1) The neighbouring counties of Tyrone, Leitrim and Monaghan only produced one emigrant each while Fermanagh, located in the centre of this group of counties produced just three emigrants. This region, in contrast to Leinster contained much of the poorest land in Ireland together with a much higher population concentration. What the data base does highlight

however is that by far the heaviest concentrations of emigrants to Argentina were from the regions in Ireland where the population was skilled in the use of fertile land while, due to their location, they were unable to expand within their surrounding area. Consequently the population from which the emigrants came proved to be very acquisitive of land when they had the opportunity in Argentina and furthermore they had the skills necessary to gain the maximum economic returns from such a rich resource. An excellent match therefore existed between needs of the main sending communities and their destination

The numbers, together with the ratio of males to females, emigrating to Argentina varied enormously throughout Ireland. By far the heaviest concentration (61.05%) of permanent settlers came from the Westmeath area. The emigrants from this 'Wexford' region accounted for 15.59% of the total who emigrated from Ireland and settled in Argentina. As the two areas, when combined, account for 76.64% of the total, settled, emigration they were the only regions where Argentina was seen as a major counter attraction to other competing destinations in the British colonial mercantile system. In fact up to about 1880 'Buenos Aires' rather than 'America' was very probably the destination of first consideration for the core region between Ballymahon and Ballymore in the Westmeath area<sup>1</sup>.

### **The Westmeath Area**

The Westmeath area comprises the region north of the Brosna River, east of the Shannon and

south of the town of Edgeworthstown (Mostrim). This area incorporates north-west Offaly, the western half of Westmeath and southern Longford. The reason north Offaly and south Longford are included is because, together, they form part of the natural hinterland for the towns of Mullingar and Athlone. This hinterland formed the emigration area for the 'Westmeath' emigrants, with the greatest number of emigrants, about 6% of the total from Ireland, coming from Ballymore, which is located roughly in the centre of this hinterland.

The area where the heaviest emigration to Argentina occurred was the point where the central grassland region touches the Bog of Allen to the south, Connacht to the west and the drumlin counties of Ulster to the north. This fact can be seen in the topography of the countryside. It is a land of little lakes and eskers, patches of bogland interspersed with veins of first class land. This area is bounded on its east side by Mullingar, a market town connected to Dublin by canal, rail and road, and thus integrated into the commercial life in Ireland from the middle of the eighteenth century. Mullingar, with its easy communications with Dublin to the east and its strategic midland location was thought sufficiently important to Britain to have a large military barracks maintained there.

On the western side, Athlone, located on the Shannon, was a major water route connecting the centre of Ireland to the rich Golden Vale of Munster and to the Atlantic, for that reason Athlone also had a large British military presence. The result was that because of its good communication network and strategic importance, this region was very much in contact with

the outside world, notwithstanding the fact that this part of Ireland was geographically furthest away from any sea port and potential outside influence.

For the local inhabitants, British military service was a realistic, if not always voluntary, alternative to life on a tiny patch of land. Service in British regiments, opened up to the general population of this area, a knowledge and an interest in parts of the world that would otherwise have been denied to it. In addition, because of its good communication network, and the high quality of the land around Mullingar, it became a major collecting point for cattle, sheep, wool and horses for British military campaigns overseas. Thus the larger land holders were incorporated into the British colonial mercantile network, in direct competition with the great grassland regions of the New World, and were therefore acutely aware of its potential. All levels of society therefore were becoming ever more aware of the opportunities and conditions in the British colonies and quasi-colonies like Argentina. Provided they were given a realistic chance to avail of the economic opportunities in other parts of the world, and had the resources to get there, many of the inhabitants were more than willing to emigrate.

### **Wexford.**

Wexford is a maritime county located in the south east corner of Ireland, and like Westmeath, its major economic activity was, and still is, agriculture. Emigrants left for 'Buenos Aires' from all over county Wexford. The core area was however, much smaller. It

was confined to the Forth and Bargo region.

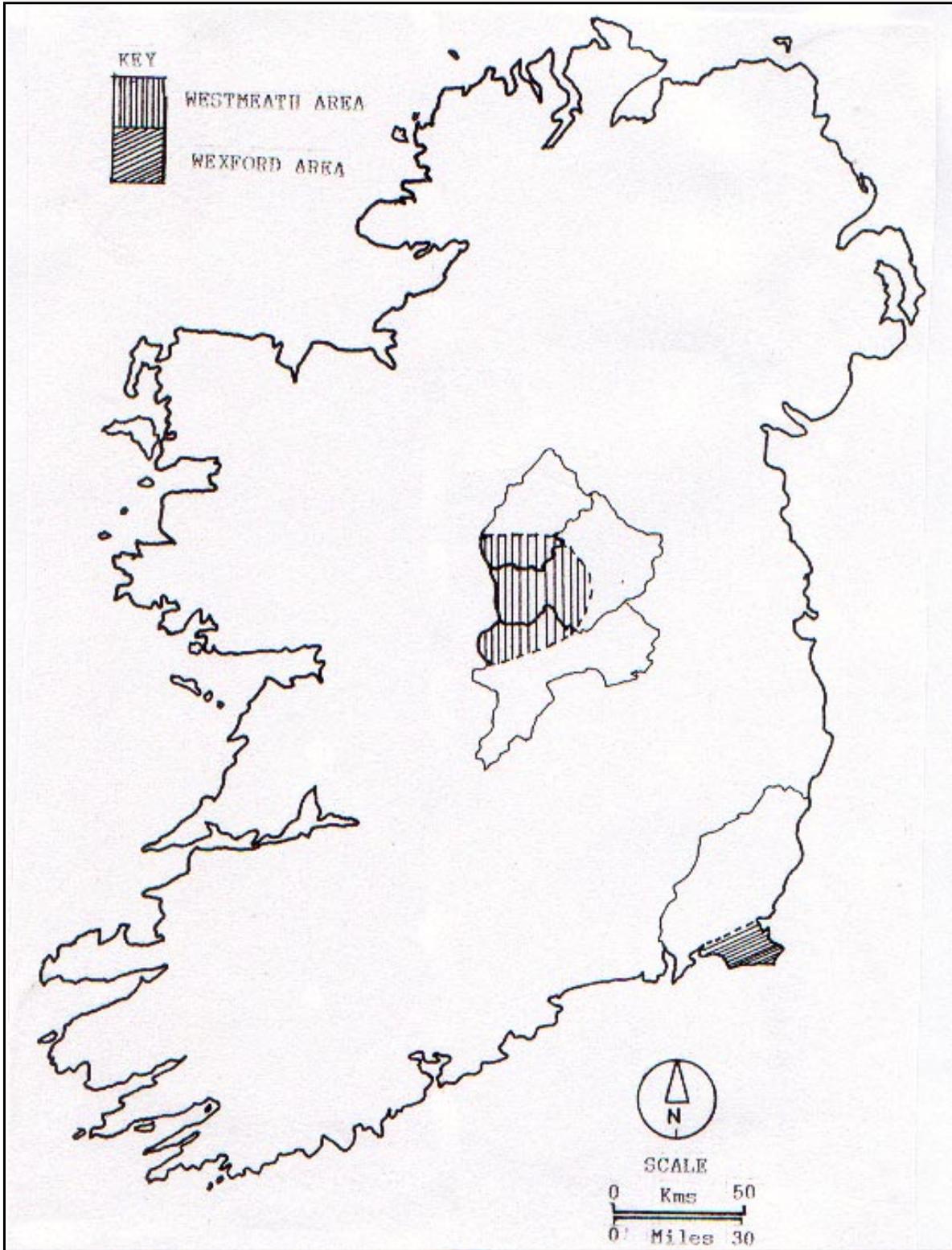


Figure 8:2. The Two Main Sending Areas.

This small area of Ireland was noted for its highly efficient and prosperous small farmers<sup>2</sup>. Forth and Bargo traditionally looked east and south, to England and France, rather than towards the rest of the island for its economic models in agriculture. Its population is different from the rest of the country, having its own language 'Yola' ('equally incomprehensible to both English and Gael') until the eighteenth century<sup>3</sup>.

During most of the nineteenth century it was one of the most prosperous and advanced regions of Ireland outside Dublin. It was the area of Ireland most integrated into the commercial world, having direct trading links with Europe stretching back for almost 1,000 years. Its population was the result of continuous inward, mostly peaceful settlement for all of that period. This almost constant inward settlement can be seen in the names of old Forth and Bargo families such as Devereaux, Rossiter, Pierce, Furlong, etc. Forth and Bargo was recognised as having the most advanced agriculture in Ireland in 1841, being singled out in report after report to the British Parliament as the example for the rest of Ireland to follow. There was still domestic industry there in 1861 with flax being grown. Wool was woven to the garment stage and there were no native travelling beggars in area, something which was almost unique in Ireland at that time<sup>4</sup>. The soil is ranked among the most fertile in the country, suitable for all forms of agriculture and horticulture. It also enjoys the best climatic conditions on the island. The farms, though small, were very well run, their owners being aware of the needs of a modern commercial world. They continually kept up to date with modern farming methods and technology and had one of the highest literacy rates in the

country ranking seventh overall in 1841. Consequently, by the nineteenth century, Forth and Bargy was the most advanced corner of one of the richest parts of Ireland.

It is also appears that Wexford people in general and 'Bargy' men in particular were more pioneering than most of their fellow countrymen in seeking out and settling in less traditional areas of Irish emigration such as Texas in the US as well as Argentina. While from the early eighteenth century Wexford together with Waterford was closely involved with the Newfoundland trade. The Wexford emigrant therefore came from a tradition where knowledge of the conditions far beyond his own shores was widespread and was aware of several alternatives when deciding on where to emigrate.

#### **Similarities Between 'Westmeath' and 'Wexford'.**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century both those areas had significant numbers of reasonably well off tenant farmers who were anxious to ensure that all their children would have an acceptable standard of living. While the Westmeath farmers were less efficient than the Bargy men as a general rule, many of the emigrants came from land holdings that were considerably larger than those found in that part of Wexford. Further subdivision of holdings, within this group, and the resulting fall in status for their heirs was not seen by them as a desirable consequence of retaining the extended family system. The alternative chosen by that class was the same one chosen by their Scotch-Irish counterparts in Ulster seventy five years earlier, emigration to a grassland area which was integrated into the

British colonial system. That is why, in the beginning, the emigrants came mostly from that class. The only difference between the Catholic and Protestant patterns of emigration was that the Catholic farmers followed the pattern of remaining on their farms in Ireland and sending out their non-inheriting sons and daughters. Again, like their Protestant countrymen, their choice of destination was a function of reliable information on regions suitable for settlement combined with an existing kin or near neighbour network already in situ and prospering there. Both the Westmeath and Wexford emigrants replicated to a remarkable degree the patterns and trends found by Elliot<sup>5</sup> among the Protestants from north Tipperary who emigrated to Canada. In the Canadian case the emigration began initially as a result of sponsorship by the British Government. In the case of Argentine settlement it is very likely that Armstrong and Browne advanced the fare to the emigrants. The original emigrants, once established themselves, often required labour and they in turn sent back for relatives to join them.

### **The Clare Emigration.**

As can be seen from the above map only three counties contributed more than 290 migrants. Two other counties, Cork and Clare, contributed 90 and 71 respectively. The origins of the Cork and Clare migrations are less obvious and need further research. At this point the explanation of the origins can only be considered as tentative. The Clare emigrants first appear in the data in the mid 1850's and they may have emigrated as a direct result of the famine, unlike the emigrants from Westmeath and Wexford. However they settled as a large

family group, most of whom were named Carmody, far away from the rest of the Irish immigrants across the Salado river in the partido of Veinticinco de Mayo, (25th of May) it was not until the general Irish settlement reached that area that they integrated with the rest of the Irish community, or possibly spoke English.

Prior to then they almost certainly spoke Irish. It is possible that there may have been some connection between the Carmodys and the earlier elite emigrants from Clare such as the O'Gormans, or possibly the butcher emigration of the 1780's, but to date no written record has surfaced which could shed light on this most unusual emigration. The Carmodys were initially quite slow to integrate into the wider Irish community, probably because of their geographical and probable linguistic isolation. They either married within their own small group or sent back to Clare to their own family, for wives until the 1870's. Sadly their descendants, who by now have integrated completely with all other Irish immigrants, have lost all knowledge of their Clare origins. Their folk memory of Ireland is confined to their Westmeath and Wexford ancestry.

### **The Cork Emigration.**

The origins of the Cork emigration are somewhat clearer than those from Clare, though further research too is needed here. The first recorded emigrant from Cork, T. Murphy, was married in Ireland to a Casey from Westmeath. A very large number of the Caseys, including several brothers and sisters-in-law of Murphy all emigrated to Argentina. Murphy in turn

encouraged a number of his relatives to emigrate there also. Thus a large number of the first Cork emigrants were part of the Casey extended family. Other, later Cork emigrants arrived on the 'Dresden' in the early 1880's. Their experience is recounted in a later chapter.

### **Urban emigrants.**

The largest number of urban emigrants came from Dublin, where definite records exist for 49 emigrants. The Dublin emigrants, together with others from Belfast, were generally merchants, tradesmen or in the professions, who for the most part remained in the city of Buenos Aires. Their awareness of the opportunities in Argentina differed from the great majority of Irish emigrants to the extent that they were largely uninterested in farming. In addition Dublin and Belfast, being port cities, had some slight contact with Buenos Aires due to direct trade. There was, in addition, constant contact with Liverpool and through it to all of the ports in the southern hemisphere.

### **The Rest of Ireland.**

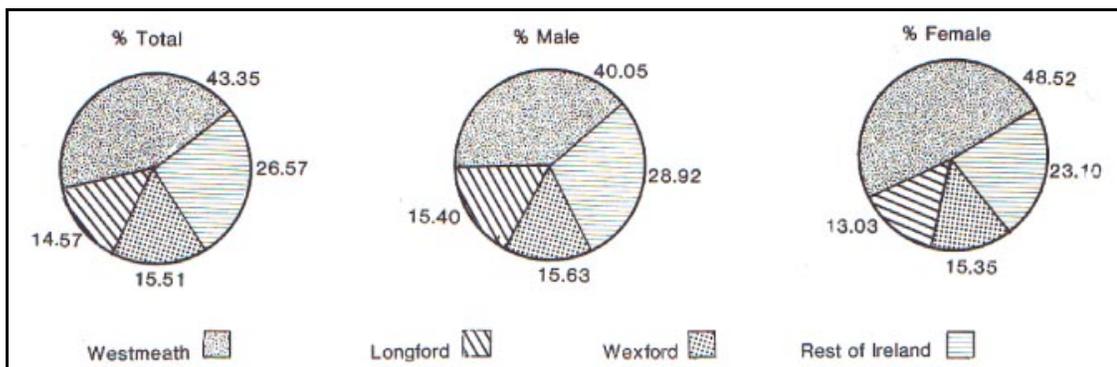
Emigration to Argentina, from Ireland was not confined to those few small areas. Very small numbers, often just one or two families from an individual county, emigrated from the other counties in rural Ireland. Those individuals or at most small family groups from outside the sending areas discussed above, on which information currently exists, who emigrated to Argentina, were often related to emigrants from areas where a tradition of emigration existed, such as the only emigrant from Monaghan who was the wife of a Westmeath man. A

doctor emigrated from Armagh and a number of his relatives followed him out. Fr. Fahy tried unsuccessfully to encourage emigrants from his native Galway, though a few did make the journey. In this way individuals or family groups arrived in Argentina from outside the usual areas. For whatever reason they never successfully encouraged significant numbers to follow them despite, sometimes, their own success and the opportunities available to all Irish emigrants especially between 1830 and 1865 when the emigrants from the major sending areas, were as a group, amassing considerable fortunes.

### SEX RATIOS IN EACH SENDING AREA.

#### Emigration by Gender from Each Area.

When the data is analyzed on a regional basis significant differences in the ratios of males and females emigrating are found. The sample in the data, while adequate for studies of emigration to Argentina cannot be taken as definitive for emigration to other regions of the world. However it does raise some issues which merit further research in other work on regions elsewhere.



**Figure 8:3** The proportion of emigrants from the major sending areas in Ireland

One of these issues is the ratio of Irish emigrant males to Irish emigrant females. The data on Argentina would strongly suggest that female emigration was highly dependent on male emigration from the same area. The greater the number of males emigrating from a given area in Ireland to Argentina, the higher was the proportion of females willing to emigrate from the same area to settle in the new area settled by males.

The data shows that while males from 'the rest of Ireland' accounted for 29% all of males emigrating it only accounted for 23% of females emigrating to Argentina, while the 'Westmeath' area which accounted for 55.5% of the total male emigration accounted for 61.5% of the total number of females who emigrated. For Wexford the percentage was about equal with males making up 15.63% of the total male emigration and females accounting for 15.35% of the total female emigration. The 'Westmeath' area which includes a part of south Longford and north west Offaly was closest to unity with a ratio with 1 female to 1.3 males. Whereas for the 'Rest of Ireland' ratio of was in excess of 1:2. In addition female emigration almost always began several years after male emigration which is further evidence that females were unwilling to emigrate until they were satisfied that there was a corps of males from their area already established in an area. This evidence is further strengthened when time series data is examined. Female emigration does not exceed male emigration by any significant amount in any year.

Male emigration commenced in 1806, whereas female emigration was not recorded until

1824. Another important element was that, when looked at over time, female emigration had a slower decay line than male emigration, indicating, that once emigration to an area became established females were slower to abandon it. This gave a steadily rising number of females as a proportion of the overall population over time, though in the case of Argentina the Irish female emigrant population never overtook the Irish male emigrant population in absolute numbers. This finding also holds up when the data is recalculated for the three Irish 'regions' of Westmeath,

### **Wexford and the Rest of Ireland.**

When the Irish community became established, in Argentina in the latter half of the nineteenth Century, the evidence is that females could travel more freely and a more independent female emigration took place. By the time that such a society was established in Argentina the numbers emigrating had greatly reduced and the emigration had, for all practical purposes, come to an end. Therefore by the time that the numbers emigrating from Ireland showed women in the majority, Argentina was no longer considered an option by intending emigrants.

All of the findings, when taken together, indicate that females were willing to emigrate, once males, who were known to them, became established in a potential settlement region. Furthermore females may well have been more willing than males to emigrate once those conditions were met. This could be a major reason why female emigration from Ireland

exceeded male emigration to the traditional Irish areas of the United States by the end of the nineteenth century and it would also explain why those encouraging female emigration to Argentina were never completely successful despite their constant efforts. Male emigration, to Argentina, never reached the level where the breakthrough of large scale independent female emigration was possible. While there is insufficient data here to show conclusively what the minimum size a community of male emigrants needed to be to ensure independent female emigration, the findings are sufficiently strong to merit further study on this subject.

### **Conclusion.**

The sex ratio of emigrants to Argentina appears to be a function of an existing corps of male emigrants from a particular area, with the greater the number of males the higher the proportion of females from the same sending found in the immigrant community. Further research is needed however before this finding can be fully confirmed. As will be shown in a later chapter a higher proportion of males than females re-emigrated from Argentina and as those who re-emigrated, usually, do not appear in the database it is possible that significant errors may be contained within the database used here when analyzing figures on the sex ratio.

The database together with all other sources agrees that Irish emigrated to Argentina from all over Ireland during the nineteenth century and that over three quarters of the total came from the Westmeath and Wexford areas of the country. The two areas are located on the extreme

corners of the main agricultural region of the country. This meant that even if the local inhabitants had the cash, they did not have the land to expand locally, and in common with most of the better off farmers in the country did not see further sub-division of their farms as an economically viable option. One alternative was to encourage their non-inheriting children to emigrate to a part of the world where good land was freely available. Both areas had local knowledge of the farmland region of Argentina through British colonial expansion. For them, therefore, Argentina was a logical region to look to, where they could continue their farming activities. Emigrants from other rural areas were also attracted there, but their regions lacked the mercantile and personal contact which existed both in Westmeath and Wexford and so significant emigration from those areas never took hold.

Even the Clare emigration, which does merit further study, if only because it appears to have been a totally Irish speaking community for a generation after arriving in Argentina, was just one extended family. It must be pointed out however that the data shows that, once landed, emigrants from the rest of Ireland succeeded as well as the emigrants from Westmeath and Wexford.

Urban to urban emigration also occurred during the nineteenth century and while it too was a function of British colonial expansion, its origins appear to have no connection with the rural to rural emigration taking place at the same time. Urban emigration arose out of contact with Buenos Aires largely through mutual contact with the port of Liverpool and some limited

direct contact with Buenos Aires through the ports of Dublin and Belfast.

Overall, therefore, emigration from Ireland to Argentina was part of the general Irish overseas resettlement in the grassland regions of the world which were being incorporated into the British colonial system during the nineteenth century. The reason emigrants from parts of Westmeath, Longford, Offaly and Wexford comprised such a high proportion of the overall total was because those particular areas had a greater knowledge of Argentina's potential. In addition their existing links with the area enabled larger numbers to emigrate earlier and those larger numbers in turn further strengthened the ties between those particular areas and Argentina

## NOTES

1. This statement is based on William Bulfin Rambles in Eireann which was written in the 1880's and as a result of my own field work. When a general question is asked about nineteenth century emigration in Ballymore, for example, the reply invariably is 'from around here they all went to Buenos Aires, very few went to America'. Whereas in Forth and Bargy in Wexford one gets a more general answer, such as ..'the United States, but a lot also went to Argentina especially around Buenos Aires'.
2. It was said in reports to the British Parliament that an Irishman needed 10 acres to support his family in comfort but a Bargy man could do it on five.
3. Fr. Patrick Corish, former Professor of History in Maynooth, in a conversation with me in October 1991. Professor Corish, a Wexford man, is the acknowledged authority on Wexford history, and took a special interest in the 'Yola' people of Forth and Bargy.
4. For a very good description of the conditions in Ireland and how an area compared with the rest of the country up to 1841 see T.W. Freeman, (1957) Pre-Famine Ireland.
5. Elliot, Bruce S., (1988) Irish Migrants in the Canadas, 83-115.

## CHAPTER 9.

### THE NUMBER OF IRISH IMMIGRANTS

#### **Introduction.**

This chapter will look at data on the number of people who emigrated to Argentina during the nineteenth century, with the aim of quantifying the emigration and showing the periods during the nineteenth century when greatest/least numbers emigrated. It will also give a general overview of the major influences on the emigration throughout the century.

#### **Estimate of the Numbers Emigrating.**

There is no definitive record of the total number of Irish who emigrated to Argentina during the nineteenth century. The general consensus is that the Irish community, including Argentine born children, had grown to 30,000 during the period, depending on the sources, between 1853 and 1861<sup>1</sup>. The total Irish community, in the country appears to have grown to about 50,000 by 1878<sup>2</sup>. Out-migration of Irish, principally to the United States appears to have well exceeded immigration during the 1880's reducing the overall Irish numbers back to about 30,000 by 1895<sup>3</sup>.

Mulhall<sup>4</sup> states that 30,030 'British' landed at the port of Buenos Aires between 1861 and 1891, with a further 10,200 arriving via Montevideo giving a rounded total of 40,200 as having emigrated from the British Isles during that period. Murray, Graham-Yooll and

Mulhall all agree that about two thirds of all 'British' emigrants came from Ireland.

This gives a figure of 26,800 Irish emigrants landing during that thirty year period. If one accepts that the 30,000 Irish in the country prior to 1861 comprised 10,000 Irish born adults and 20,000 Argentine born children, then, at a very minimum, 36,800 Irish emigrated to Argentina during the nineteenth century. This figure does not allow for mortality or out-migration before 1861 and therefore has to be assumed to be an under-estimate of the true figure of emigrants. Based on the above figures, and allowing for mortality and some out-migration, a reasonable estimate is that around 40,000 to 45,000 Irish emigrated to Argentina during the nineteenth century. Because the pre-1861 figures are subject to a large degree of interpretation, and the post-1861 figures are based on the assumption that two thirds of British immigrants were Irish, any overall estimate of the total numbers emigrating to Argentina must remain highly speculative and subject to major revision, either way, as more information becomes available<sup>5</sup>.

### **Irish Emigration pre-1861.**

No systematic records, of the numbers of Irish in Argentina, exist before 1858. Therefore one has to rely on the figures estimated by the Irish chaplaincy and the British consulate on the numbers of Irish in the country for the years prior to 1858. All sources agree that the Irish remained a very close knit community in Argentina during that period, therefore the Church and Consul records must be a fairly reasonable guide for the estimation of the numbers of immigrants. What the figures do not allow for, however, is out-migration pre-1858 and to

date I have been unable to quantify the numbers that out-migrated during that period. Out-migration did certainly occur at that time. Some Irish left to join the Californian gold rush of 1849<sup>6</sup>. Others who had come down from the Irish colony on the Amazon<sup>7</sup> returned there, and still more undoubtedly availed of the offer by the British Consulate of free passage to Australia during the political upheavals of the 1840's<sup>8</sup>. In addition, during that entire period there was a continual two way movement of Irish emigrants between Buenos Aires and the east coast of the United States.

The earliest estimate of the size of Irish population resident in Buenos Aires is 'a little less than 500' in 1824. This figure was stated by the British Consul, Woodbine Parish, and was based on his own reckoning of the British population living in the River Plate in that year<sup>9</sup>. In 1832 the Irish Chaplaincy estimated that the Irish community had grown to about 1,500<sup>10</sup>. This figure may include the emigrants' Argentine born children. McCann estimates a figure of 3,500 Irish in the country 'prior to the Anglo-French intervention' in 1842<sup>11</sup>.

By 1853 the total 'Irish' colony in Buenos Aires was estimated by Fr. Fahy in a letter to Archbishop Murray of Dublin as being 30,000. As this figure did include the Argentine born children of the emigrants the actual number of Irish emigrants would have grown to about 10,000 by 1853. This may be an over estimate, by Fr. Fahy, to increase pressure on the Archbishop of Dublin to provide extra priests for the Irish community. It has to be borne in mind however, that there was a considerable acceleration in trans-Atlantic emigration, from

Ireland, due to overpopulation and famine, for some of those years<sup>12</sup>. Even assuming that Fr. Fahy did over-estimate the size of his congregation in 1853 and that the Irish continued to arrive in numbers exceeding those who were leaving throughout the 1850's, it is reasonably certain that there were 10,000 Irish immigrants resident in Argentina by 1861<sup>13</sup>. Allowing for mortality and a fairly low out-migration over the previous thirty years, a reasonable estimate for Irish emigration up to 1861 would be somewhere in the region of 12,000 to 18,000<sup>14</sup>.

### **Number of Irish Immigrants post-1861.**

An Argentine Government<sup>15</sup> pamphlet of about 1866 states that '.... about 28,000 are Irish, forming about 5,000 families, and residing in the country, where they occupy themselves in rural pursuits and the tending of sheep'. This publication lists the 'British' population at 32,000 of which the Irish make up seven eighths at that period. As this was at a period when Irish immigration was at its height, this ratio of Irish to British would help confirm the view that over the century the Irish were responsible for between two thirds and three quarters of all British emigration to Argentina. In 1868 the Mulhalls<sup>16</sup> give the 'foreign population' at 250,000 of whom he states 30,000 are Irish, yet in their 1872 edition<sup>17</sup> they list the official government figure for 'English' (by this they mean all British) at 10,709.

This would give the Irish population at 9,370, based on official estimates for that period of a proportion of seven eighths of the 'English' residents of Argentina. The difference in Mulhalls' figures for 1867 and 1872 can be reconciled if, as is almost certain, the 1868 figure included

Argentine born children of immigrants. If the Mulhalls' estimates that one third of the Irish community died during the cholera epidemic of 1868 are correct then one can assume that there were about 15,000 Irish resident in Argentina by 1867. This would seem a reasonable conclusion and would confirm trends discussed later that the 1860's saw the greatest influx of Irish emigrants. The rise in population would also confirm the scant data which exist for that period, that immigration substantially exceeded emigration during the 1860's. The cholera epidemic would explain the sudden disappearance of large numbers of Irish immigrants from the official figures by 1872. Based on all the estimates of the numbers of Irish given in the data therefore a reasonable figure for Irish immigrants must be in the region of 40,000 to 45,000 spread over the whole century.

### **The Time of Arrival.**

Numbers emigrating, from Ireland, varied widely during the century due to conditions both in Ireland and Argentina. Official records of immigrant landings in Argentina before 1880 are at best incomplete and for many of the years before 1860 they are non-existent<sup>18</sup>. In order to establish the periods of greatest and least emigration from Ireland the only source available is the data base derived from Coghlan's genealogy. What the data-base tracks is the time of arrival of that portion of emigrants who, for the most part, remained in the country as a distinctly ethnic Irish community.

Because there is no data available on the time of arrival for the total emigrant group it is not

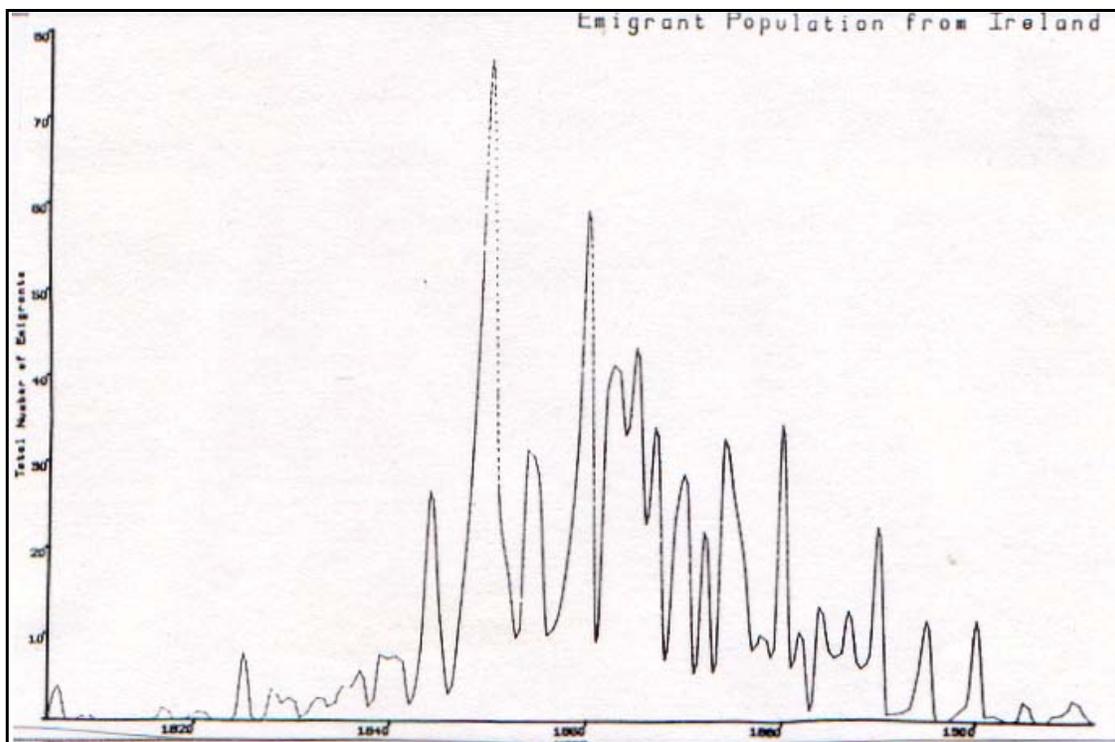
possible to compare the two to see if Irish emigrants arriving at different periods during the century settled in the country to a greater or lesser degree. The findings from the data base<sup>19</sup> show that 51% of Irish emigrants arrived in Argentina between 1850 and 1869. Yet the other sources given above show that the total 'Irish' population grew very slowly throughout this period. This is a very good example of the way the two sets of data are tracking different events. Mulhall's figures, together with those of Latham, Parish and Fr. Fahy deal with the total population present in the country at a particular time, whereas the data-base records those Irish emigrants who settled permanently in the country over time.

#### **Findings of the data-base.**

The computer data base constructed from Coghlan's genealogy<sup>20</sup> contains information on 3,663 emigrants. This data base covers the years 1806 through to 1948. Out of the total figure, an arrival date exists for 1,134 emigrants. Of that figure 1,105 or 97.4% arrived in Argentina during the nineteenth century. As this work is concerned with nineteenth century Irish emigration and settlement the remaining 2.6% in the data base who emigrated during the first half of the twentieth century are ignored.

A number of problems were encountered when analyzing the data on landing dates which created 'noise' when trying to graph the emigration on a yearly basis. One such problem was a large degree of rounding of dates particularly around year ending in '0'. To a lesser extent rounding also occurred in years ending in '5'. Between 1820 and 1910 the year starting every

decade showed a larger number of immigrants than did the years ending in '9' or '1'. In fact those years (9 and 1) were usually considerably lower than for all other years in the decade. The second problem encountered was that most of the emigrants arrived during the summer months, which in the southern hemisphere are December, January and February. This fact caused disturbance with the collating of annual returns, because a ship making an annual trip could technically arrive at the beginning of January and return again at the end of December thus doubling the number of passengers landed in that year, and consequently, giving a zero return in a different year which could either precede or follow the year in question.



**Figure 9:1** Annual Emigration Figures.

**Source:** Coghlan 1987.

A third problem encountered was that for any one year during the century, the number of emigrants in the data base only varies between a maximum of seventy seven when emigration was heaviest, to zero towards either end of the emigration period. Therefore a decision by a small group of say, three or four, to defer emigration for personal reasons significantly affects the data for not only the deferred year but also for the year in which they arrive.

Another good example of 'noise' in this graph is the exceptional fall in emigration for 1861. The only apparent reason for this feature appears to be the effect of rounding on the previous year 1860<sup>21</sup>.

What is interesting about this tendency to round is its timing. A high tendency to round is often one of the indications of a low literacy level. By the 1860's there was a growing demand for emigrants who would be satisfied to remain as labourers and waged shepherds on the rapidly growing numbers of Irish owned estancias. The findings in the data help support other evidence that the increase in emigration during the 1860's was due to an increase in immigration by a lower socio-economic group from Westmeath and Longford.

On the following page figure 9:2 comprises a table listing the number of emigrants by decade for the nineteenth century for whom an arrival date exists in the data base. (Twentieth century emigrants are the last entry listed in the table and cover the first fifty years of the twentieth century). An extra column was added to the table to show how the immigration in

each decade fitted into the overall context of Irish immigration during the century.

### **Analysis of Figure 9:2.**

From Figure 9:2 it can be seen that for the first decade, while the country was still under Spanish rule, very little permanent Irish settlement took place. That is not to say that there were just 5 Irish immigrants, among them John Dillon and Thomas O'Gorman. We know, from other sources, during that period the English invaded with large numbers of Irish troops some of whom remained in the country. The soldiers however did not become part of the 'Irish' community, most if not all assimilated into the local communities in which they settled. The 'Irish' community of that period were found among the governing elite and in the 'English' merchant class in the city. They saw no reason to admit common soldiers to their circle. They were sufficiently impressed with those soldiers, however, to make every effort to recruit others from the same part of Ireland. It is also a very good example of how imprecise the collection of data was in the early years of the nineteenth century.

### **1810-1819**

The decade 1810-1819, saw Argentina emerge as an independent state. It was also a decade that saw almost continuous civil strife in the country, first between the locals and Spain and following independence between various factions within the country, with Irish (as usual) fighting on both sides. This civil unrest held back investment and only two Irish, Thomas Armstrong and his brother John, are recorded as settling in Argentina during that decade.

10 YEAR PERIOD	NUMBER	% 19CENT	% TOTAL	MAJOR INFLUENCES ON IRISH EMIGRATION TO ARGENTINA
1800-1809	5	0.4	0.4	SPANISH RULE
1810-1819	2	0.2	0.2	INDEPENDENCE AND REVOLUTION
1820-1829	16	1.4	1.4	RAPID INCREASE IN BRITISH INVESTMENT
1830-1839	32	2.9	2.9	SIGNIFICANT RURAL SETTLEMENT BEGINS
1840-1849	154	14.0	13.5	IRISH COMMUNITIES BEGIN TO FORM
1850-1859	262	23.8	23.1	IRISH BEGIN TO PURCHASE LAND
1860-1869	315	28.6	27.8	IRISH LANDOWNERS NEED LABOURERS
1870-1879	166	15.0	14.7	ECONOMIC TRANSITION AND URBANIZATION
1880-1889	108	9.7	9.5	IRISH URBAN RAILWAY IMMIGRATION BEGINS
1890-1899	45	4.0	3.9	MASS EUROPEAN URBAN IMMIGRATION EXPANDS
1900-1949	29		2.6	20th CENTURY IRISH IMMIGRATION
TOTAL (19CENT)	1105	100.0		19th CENTURY IRISH IMMIGRATION
TOTAL	1134		100.0	TOTAL RECORDED IMMIGRATION

**Figure 9:2.** Date of arrival of Individuals for whom personal records exist  
**Source:** Derived from Coghlan (1987).

This decade saw the end of an Irish elite arriving from Spain who were pre-appointed to important positions in the administration of the country. From that point on those Irish who did arrive with professional qualifications had to compete locally for whatever positions were available.

Consequently the influence of the Irish in government began to wane noticeably. In fact a fundamental difference between the Irish who emigrated to Argentina before and after Argentine independence was that the nineteenth-century Irish opted out completely from political affairs in Argentina. This opting out was done by means of maintaining their foreign status within the country. The advantage to the Irish was that by being classed as non-national they were exempt from military service and were treated as non-combatant by the various warring factions during the almost constant civil strife which beset the country until about 1880. On the debit side the Irish began to look to Britain rather than Argentina as the ultimate guarantors of their security and considered themselves as British and outsiders, interested only in their own narrow economic future and playing no part in the wider community. This perception of being outsiders, established after independence, remained in the Irish community long after its positive effects had ceased to exist and continued to isolate the community in Argentina up to the present and is only now breaking down among those born after about 1950.

### **1820-1829.**

By the 1820's the various factions in the country were all agreed on the necessity for the exploitation of the

great grassland region around the city of Buenos Aires which covers an area roughly the size of France. There was also complete agreement by all sides that neither the capital nor the manpower existed locally for this development. Europe was seen as the source for both, with England, especially, being seen as the primary source for capital. It was during that decade, 1820-1829 that the first positive efforts were made to recruit the type of labour needed to bring about the necessary transformation of the Pampas in order to integrate the Argentine economy into the wider British colonial trading system. Irish labour began to be actively recruited by 1826/7 in Westmeath and Wexford as part of this plan. This was the watershed in Irish emigration to Argentina. From the 1820's Irish emigration was seen in terms of large numbers of labourers and small land owners who would play an important part in rural development, rather than a small number of governing elites. By mid-decade, Woodbine Parish estimated the numbers at less than 500. This is probably as close as one will get to an accurate estimate of the number of Irish resident in the country at that period. Because of the practice of the Irish of that period to marry into the local elites this figure almost certainly does not count the Argentine born children of those emigrants.

Such was the determination of successive governments in Argentina to promote rural development that in 1829 the then dictator, Rosas, revived an old law conscripting into the armed forces all men up to the age of 45 who were not working on the land. This decree had the desired effect in creating a flight from the city into the countryside, Irish included. To be fair, substantial profits were already beginning to be made from sheep farming for those who could get sufficient, suitable labour and significant numbers of Irish were already leaving the city to invest their capital and labour in sheep farming. The decree however did focus the mind of others on the many advantages of a rural life. Because of the acute shortage of suitable labour the

agreements made between the shepherds and the flock owners generally favoured the shepherd. This remained the position until the late 1850's so that those Irish who emigrated during that period were better able to accumulate capital than those who arrived during the second half of the century.

### **1830-1839.**

Thus a combination of the legal decree and a genuine desire among the Irish to become involved in sheep farming saw the first large scale movement of the Irish into the countryside by 1830. The Irish moved far into the country, especially to Rosas' own area around Chascomus south of the city, and north-west from that point along the banks of the Salado river. This settlement continued throughout the 1830's. It was not a fixed settlement, however, in that it was up to the shepherds to find the best pastures for their flocks on open land. As more emigrants arrived in the area, they moved further out from Chascomus, up along the Salado river and as they found better pastures the earlier emigrants followed them. The Irish, at that period, were travelling, itinerant style, across the camp grazing their sheep for a time in one place and then moving on to better pastures elsewhere. Very few were to settle permanently around Chascomus, though Murray records that those who did remain became large prosperous property owners in the area. It is very possible however, that, as the Irish were still overwhelmingly a young male population, many married into the local community and were lost to the 'Irish' group, in the same way that the butchers and soldiers of earlier generations were lost<sup>22</sup>. The numbers recorded as settling in that region may therefore be underestimated. The figure of 1,500 Irish emigrants given by the Irish chaplaincy, which until the arrival of Fr. Fahy in 1842 was confined to the city of Buenos Aires, therefore may be open to question on two counts. Firstly it is very possible some Irish may have travelled directly to relatives around Chascomus over 150km away without reference to the Irish

community in the city and therefore would not have been included in the figures and, secondly, the Irish chaplaincy always appeared to have counted the Argentine born children to Irish parents as part of the Irish community and thus overestimated the number of Irish emigrants actually in the country. However at that point in the emigration the evidence is that very few Irish women were emigrating and therefore the number of children which the chaplaincy would count as Irish should be small. On balance therefore 1,500 would appear to be a reasonable guide to the number of Irish immigrants in the country by 1832.

### **1840-1849**

From the 1840's on the numbers emigrating from Ireland to settle in Argentina began to increase rapidly. From 1840 to 1879 over 80% of all the Irish who settled permanently in the country arrived<sup>23</sup>. With the increase in numbers of Irish arriving in Argentina the assimilation of the predominantly male immigrants into the local community was very clearly a worry to the sponsors of Irish immigration in Buenos Aries, because by 1842 they had recruited an Irish priest who would spend the next thirty years ensuring that such assimilation would no longer occur<sup>24</sup>.

Fr. Fahy arrived in the country just as the number of Irish emigrants had grown to 3,500, according to McCann who based his figure on Irish chaplaincy estimates. This figure again would appear reasonably accurate as there were relatively few Irish women in the country and therefore the number of Argentine born children of Irish parents would have been small. However, there were sufficient numbers of Irish in the country, grazing flocks of sheep, to allow the formation of little, highly mobile, overwhelmingly male, Irish communities to emerge, initially around Chascomus and along the eastern bank of the Salado river to the

north west of Chascomus<sup>25</sup>. This decade also saw the great famine in Ireland, and Argentina like the U.S. witnessed the biggest single annual intake of Irish emigrants in 1849. This increase, like the one in the US, was not sustained. However, such was the poor condition of the emigrants landing in Buenos Aires, as well as the success of the earlier Irish immigrants, that the Irish began what was in effect their own welfare service and in addition they were able to send over £400 to the Archbishop of Dublin for Famine relief in Ireland<sup>26</sup>. The setting up and running of an exclusively Irish welfare service was a major milestone for Fr. Fahy in his attempts to forge an easily recognizable homogeneous Irish community in Argentina.

### **1850-1859.**

The 1850's saw the Irish community beginning to move north-east, leaving the Salado river to settle along the Areco river, which was to the north of Buenos Aires but nearer the city, and graze their sheep around the military forts of San Antonio de Areco, Carmen de Areco and Mercedes. A few Irish had moved to that general region from the very beginning, but as the 1850's progressed the Irish became more numerous in those areas and were starting to form isolated local majorities in the countryside opening up around those little towns. This was the period when the Irish immigrant was able to settle permanently for the first time in the countryside. This was because secure tenure became established in law in 1852. This radical change in land tenure coincided with the government policy of selling off, on very attractive terms, the lands the Irish sheep farmers had been renting. An important reason why the Irish were able to purchase land at that time was that it was possible to acquire small plots of under 1,750 hectares<sup>27</sup>. This opportunity was ideally timed for Irish immigrants. It came shortly after the famine in Ireland when emigration was taking a firm hold among all sections of the community and at a time when the Irish community was well organized in

Argentina, following 10 years of Fr. Fahy's efforts, and it also came at the beginning of an unprecedented boom in wool prices which began in 1852. It is not surprising therefore, that many who entered the country during that period were to become the great land owners of the Irish community and a few were to rise to feature among the wealthiest families in Argentina. Because the Irish were not generally involved in the land speculation which took place towards the end of the decade, buying only what they could afford, they as a group survived the depression of the early 1860's remarkably well. In fact the Irish were very probably considerable net beneficiaries of the depression as it enabled very many more to purchase land and become established during that period than would have been the case had the land prices remained high.

It was during that decade that the first census was made of the province of Buenos Aires and while it appears to have been confined mainly to the city and the nearby country areas, missing the great majority of the Irish in the process, enough Irish (613) were recorded to enable some insights of the community to be gained.

SEX	FREQUENCIES	PERCENTAGES	AVE. AGE
MALES	355	57.9	30.675
FEMALES	258	42.1	27.798
TOTAL	613	100.0	29.450

**Table 9:3.** Sex Ratio and Ave. Age of Irish Immigrants in 1855.

**Source.** Coghlan 1982.

It can be seen from the census that even in and around the city, the males outnumbered females by roughly 3:2. It can be assumed that in the countryside, beyond the reach of civil administration, the ratio of males to females was much higher. It is also shown that on average the emigrants were aged 30 which indicates that in 1855 the Irish immigrant population was young and therefore the majority had arrived fairly recently, so

that the immigrant population was in effect still expanding. The size of the under estimation of the Irish community can be understood when one remembers that in 1853 Fr. Fahy wrote to the Archbishop of Dublin that his congregation now numbered 30,000 Irish. This latter figure however has to be qualified in two respects, one, this figure included all the Argentine born children of Irish parents, possibly 15-20,000 as female emigration was by then well established and the Irish emigrants were the most fertile of all communities in Argentina<sup>28</sup>.

The second qualification is that this overall estimate by Fr. Fahy may have exaggerated the number of Irish in his parish. On this latter point it could be argued however that re-emigration may have begun equalling immigration among the Irish at that point and that this a major reason why the remaining immigrants appeared so successful as a group. Those who remained and succeeded, in the main, valued the acquisition of land and sheep higher than a better lifestyle for themselves in Argentina. It was not unusual for this generation to own land and livestock which in some cases at least equaled the local creole estancieros and yet remain living in conditions as primitive as their gaucho neighbours. It was more often than not their children who used the income from their parent's thrift, to substantially improve their living conditions rather than continue to spend it expanding their capital base. It is therefore quite reasonable to argue that those who were unwilling to remain living in conditions at least as primitive and deprived as those they had left in Ireland very probably re-emigrated during this period, despite the huge long-term financial rewards that resulted from living in such primitive conditions in Argentina. On balance, however, it is far more likely that the Irish were just as well informed of the conditions in Argentina before they left, as they were on conditions elsewhere and that only those who valued the opportunity to own and stock an unlimited area of

land above everything else, were in the main, those who emigrated there during that period. On balance therefore it is reasonable to assume that Fr. Fahy exaggerated the actual number of Irish and their families living there, to some degree at least.

### **1860-1869.**

During the decade 1860-1869 the Irish continued to emigrate to Argentina in ever increasing numbers, enthused by the reports reaching Ireland of the huge fortunes being made by their relatives and neighbours already there. The new landowners were happy to encourage further immigration as they were desperately in need of extra labour to increase production from their estancias, as one way of overcoming the fall in wool prices. The fall in land prices during the early part of the decade, if anything, benefitted the Irish as they were able to compensate for the fall in wool prices by increased numbers and improved breeding. This meant that they were getting a heavier clip of better quality wool from greater numbers of sheep. Individual shepherds were able to continue buying land until nearly the end of the decade when economic conditions again changed and only those with very large holdings, who used their existing land as collateral, were able to issue bonds on the stock exchanges in Buenos Aires and London, to buy the huge tracts of land being sold off by the government from that point onwards. This was the decade when the Irish began to abandon Chascomus and Dolores, in the south to purchase and enclose their farms to the north-west of the city in very large numbers.

With the extra livestock on the camps, stock control became more important. The estancias had to be fenced

in, wells had to be dug as a protection against drought. A constant supply of water on the estancia had become critical as the land over which a flock of sheep was allowed graze became restricted. Thus in addition to shepherds, labourers were urgently needed to carry out those tasks, as well as shearing the, roughly, 20 million sheep owned by the 28,000 Irish, comprising 5,000 families, at the end of the decade<sup>29</sup>. The new emigrants were employed under very different conditions than the earlier emigrants. With the huge rise in the value of both sheep and land combined with a growing immigration from southern Europe the land owners were able to negotiate contracts with the shepherds whose terms favoured capital rather than labour. The traditional the half share in the flock which the owner gave to the shepherd for herding the flock of sheep quickly became a third and then a quarter and finally a fifth share during that period<sup>30</sup> as the balance of advantage of the agreements swung steadily in favour of the land owner and away from the shepherd. Because the flocks had become far more valuable, due to both the general rise in price together with improved breeding, land owners began employing shepherds on a wage rather than a share basis. By the end of the decade herding a flock of sheep on shares, regardless of how small the shepherd's portion, had almost disappeared.

The very large increase in immigration during the 1860's was reflected in the census returns for 1869.

SEX	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	AVE. AGE
Males	3,306	65.2	31.286
Females	1,767	34.8	29.8
Total	5,073	100.0	30.757

**Table 9:4.** Sex Ratio and Ave. Age of Irish Immigrants in 1869.

**Source.** Coghlan 1982.

Part of the reason for the apparent nine-fold increase in the Irish population in the 14 year period between the two census has to be due to the fact that the 1869 census gave returns for many more of the remote districts in the province. What it does highlight however is that when the returns for the whole province are examined, males outnumber females by almost 2:1. Over the same period the average age of males increases by only 0.5 years. This would indicate that a substantial growth in numbers of Irish entering Argentina during the past 14 years did occur, but that this was counterbalanced to some degree by Irish men in particular re-emigrating after a period of years in Argentina. A probable reason for lower female re-emigration would be, that given their lower ratio, women in general tended to marry the more successful male immigrants and therefore had a greater incentive to remain. It would also point to the fact that it was, in the main, single male emigrants who re-emigrated from Argentina until 1869 at least. By 1867 there were possibly 15,000 Irish born adults in Argentina though the records show that possibly as many as 5,000 were to die in the cholera epidemic that swept through the area in 1868 which devastated the Irish community. This must be part of the reason why the Irish ceased emigrating to Argentina so quickly. The fact that the economic conditions in the country also changed radically shortly afterwards meant that Irish emigration never recovered from that shock.

### **1870-1879**

The 1870's witnessed the start of what was to become a huge immigration, to Argentina, mainly from southern Europe, especially Italy. Between 1871 and 1914 some 5.9 million emigrants arrived on its shores of which 3.1 million remained<sup>31</sup> Ironically that was the decade when the numbers of Irish emigrating to

Argentina began falling significantly. While the initial reduction in Irish immigration may have been due to the shock of the cholera epidemic, the main reason for the continued decline in settlement was that the Irish emigrating to Argentina consisted largely of rural, self-employed settlers. By the 1870's, however, Buenos Aires was in transition, from being a largely rural province, to one which was becoming a settled, typically urban, wage-earning society. In addition to those fundamental changes that were beginning to take place in the province of Buenos Aires, the Irish community lost the two main organizers of Irish immigration: Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong, had died by 1874. The Irish organisation which followed them was very much in the mould of the new Argentina. The wealthy Irish immigrants were not interested in continuing the settling of the frontiers by new waves of Irish settlers; very many coveted this new land for themselves. There were by then sufficient emigrants in the country to reproduce and, provided the labourers were discouraged from integrating into the wider community by subscribing to an 'Irish' value system, there was a sufficient Irish population already there which was capable of providing a reliable, honest and loyal labour force for the foreseeable future. The surplus Irish labouring population posed no difficulty because they were unemployable outside an Irish estancia by virtue of the fact that they spoke no Spanish. They were forced instead to re-emigrate to the United States to settle among English speaking, urban Irish communities there. Significant numbers of emigrants were still arriving but their chances of ever being able to make sufficient wealth to enable them own their own property was almost nil. A comparison between the 1869 and 1895 census demonstrates that for every Irish emigrant who arrived in Argentina during that 26 year period at least one emigrant left<sup>32</sup>.

## **1880-1900**

From the 1880's to the end of the century there were great changes in the Argentine economy, brought about by a very large increase in European immigration together with massive investment of British capital. Some of this new investment was in railways which was essential in order to move the huge increase in goods produced in the pampas to the markets in Buenos Aires. The change over to the railways as the premier mode of transport destroyed the labour intensive carting trade together with its ancillary rural services, which in turn fundamentally altered rural employment opportunities. Irish immigration declined further during this period and new permanent Irish settlement showed an even greater reduction. The railways did, however, provide employment for a small Irish urban immigration in Rosario and to a lesser extent Cordoba. This new urban immigration was outside the direct control of the Irish land owning elites, though the rural Irish of southern Santa Fe and the urban immigrants of Rosario did mix to a small degree. The Irish urban immigration came about because the English investors preferred to employ Irish clerks and middle-management rather than depend on southern Europeans. The Irish however played no part in the construction of the railways. The task of laying tracks over the pampas plains was carried out almost exclusively by Italian immigrants.

By 1890 the small numbers of Irish arriving in Argentina were of no significance in the context of the overall immigration statistics. By then the majority of those travelling to Argentina were close relatives of earlier emigrants who were being brought out with the promise of a secure future, if not inheritance, in a family business or estancia. The emigrants who had to make their own way in the world had ceased to consider 'Buenos Aires' as a country of opportunity. The following table underlines the great change in the structure of the Irish immigrant community which had taken place by the 1895 census.

SEX	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	AVE. AGE
Males	3,037	58.5	42.07
Females	2,159	41.5	39.99
Total	5,196	100.0	41.183

**Table 9:5.** Sex Ratio and Ave. Age of Irish Immigrants in 1895.

**Source.** Coghlan 1982.

The 1895 census shows that the Irish population only increased marginally in the 26 years following the 1869 census despite the fact that roughly 27,000 Irish appeared to have emigrated during that period. Most appear to have re-emigrated again within a few years. The census of 1895 would indicate that the overall Irish population in Argentina remained static during that period while ageing by, on average, around 11 years in that time, indicating that it was the newer emigrants who decided against settling. This is confirmed in figure 9:5 which used the database derived from the genealogy. The pattern of more recent immigrants re-emigrating appears to have been a major change from the pattern observed pre 1869 when it would seem that it was the older immigrants who left.

The out-movement of immigrants shows that once economic conditions turned against the Irish, they were willing to re-locate to other destinations where they perceived a better economic climate to exist. This fact underlines the very high mobility of nineteenth century Irish emigrants generally and shows that mobility, among the Irish, was not confined within the political borders of their adopted country, but occurred between Irish communities located in the New World regardless of where in the New World those Irish communities existed.

The ratio of males to females did, however, show a substantial improvement from 2:1 to 3:2. The number of males in the country dropped by 269 whereas the number of females increased by 392. When it is remembered that throughout the period more males than females arrived in the country, this is further evidence of the fact that males had a higher tendency to re-emigrate than females.

### **Conclusion.**

Murray's statement that the great majority of the Irish emigrated to Argentina between 1840 and 1880 proves that his sources were reasonably accurate. When compared to the trends graphed from the data base it can be seen that large scale emigration began in 1837 which is very close to Murray's estimate. His assertion that immigration had virtually ended by 1880 however is less robust. Emigration from Ireland to Argentina continued, albeit in lower numbers, until 1903, though the graph would indicate that after 1893 Argentina ceased to be an important destination for Irish immigration.

It is easy to see why Murray made this error, however, when the overall immigration figures for Argentina are looked at. During the 1860's, the decade when Irish immigration was at its heaviest the total number of immigrants to Argentina, including Irish, averaged 18,450 per annum. During the 1870's when Irish settlement began to decline the average number of immigrants to Argentina increased to 43,210 per annum. By the 1880's as Irish settlement continued to decline, Argentina saw immigration in excess of 108,960 per annum, reaching 260,000 in 1889. With such a dramatic rise in immigration it is easy to see how a declining number of Irish were lost among the other newcomers. When the numbers of Irish arriving in Argentina after 1880 is viewed in proportion to the overall immigration, then Murray's contention can be redefined as

meaning that Ireland ceased to matter, to Irish-Argentines as a source for labour by 1880, and by 1893 Argentina had ceased to matter as a destination for the Irish in the traditional sending areas though a few did continue to emigrate there for a further 10 years.

## NOTES

1. All the literature is agreed on this. Murray, Latham, Mulhall, McCann, Fr. Fahy etc. It does appear however that they may all be using the same source ie official estimates, probably British, prior to 1861. While there appears to be no reason to question this estimate, I have been unable to prove, or disprove its accuracy. The post 1861 data is more certain in that it does lend itself to a reasonable amount of cross checking.
2. Mulhall, M.G., & E.T., Handbook of The River Plate 1883 ed. 14. However letters from the Archbishop of Buenos Aires the Archbishop of Dublin written in 1878 estimate the number of Irish including their Argentina born children at 15,000. This however may be a confusion between the terms '50' and '15' when translated into Spanish.
3. The two census of 1869 and 1895 confirm this as will be shown later in this work.
4. Mulhall Handbook of the River Plate Vol.6 ,6
5. Koroll and Sabato (1981) Como fue Los Irlandeses..... calculate that 10,672 Irish emigrated to Argentina during the nineteenth century, 7,080 prior to 1870 and 3,592 between then and 1895. Their calculation, which appears in full in Appendix 1 of their work is based on the assumption that Coghlan (1982) captured 100% of the Irish emigrants in his work on the census of 1869 and 1855. They analyzed 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.
6. John Brabazon in his journal discusses this in some detail as members of his own family were among those who left for California.
7. Murray, (1919) The Story of the Irish in Argentina. According to Murray there was a small emigration to Brazil, from Ireland in 1832. This colony appears to have no connection whatever with Irish attempts to colonize Brazil between 1612-1628.
8. John Brabazon's journal contains the only reference of this offer, by the British to their citizens in the River Plate. There

is a tradition in Rosslare in Co. Wexford that Irish emigrants from Buenos Aires worked as labourers laying a railroad northern Australia though this appears to have been somewhat later.

9. Murray The Story of the Irish....., 59

10. Ussher, J, (1952) Fr. Fahy 27

11. McCann, William. (1853) Handbook of The River Plate Vol 1, 196. He gives Fr. Fahy as the source for this figure, which he states 'includes all ages and sexes' though he points out that 75% are single men. Assuming that women and children were about equal in number roughly 3,200 of the total were born in Ireland. As 1842 was the year Fr. Fahy arrived in Argentina this figure was probably given to him ( fr. Fahy) by another, unstated, source.

12. The number of Irish which Coghlan found in the official census comprising the city and province of Buenos Aires in 1855 is just 613. This figure is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9 and is almost certainly far too low as districts such as Chascomus and Dolores, where the great bulk of Irish immigrants were settled at that time were not included at all in that census. McCann vol 1 ,67, writing on Chascomus in 1842 states, 'The Irish population is very dense in this neighborhood,....'. Coghlan's work on this period therefore is not considered here.

13. By then the Argentine government had taken the gathering of statistical information seriously and were in a position to publish reasonably accurate figures.

14. The assumption that there may have been low out-migration between 1853 and 1861 will be discussed later in the work. Briefly, this was the period when Irish emigrants could make vast fortunes with surprising ease. It is unlikely therefore that many left. If Fr. Fahy' figures for 1853 are correct out-migration had to equal in-migration during this period, making the top estimate of 18,000 the more likely figure.

15.FORD Mr. (Secretary of the British legation) Report on the Financial Condition of the Argentine Republic. 1866. This report appears in its entirety as an appendix in Latham (1868) The States of The River Plate 345-381.

A very similar report also appears as under the name of H. G. MacDonnell as Remarks on The River Plate Republics as a Field for British Emigration British Parliamentary Papers 1872 vol 25 15.

It also reappears on page 48 in The River Plate..... as a Field for Emigration... (for the complete title see bibliography) published as an anonymous pamphlet, probably paid for by the

Argentine Government in London about 1866

Again it must be borne in mind that all these publications may well depend on a single source.

16. Mulahll, M.G., & E.T. Handbook..... Vol 1, 1869, 14

17. *ibid* Vol 2, 16

18. This was confirmed to me by Dr. Alicia Bernasconi, Director of the Institute of Immigration Studies, Buenos Aires, during my second field trip in September 1992.

19. This was derived from Coghlan's Genealogy published in 1987.

20. Coghlan, Eduardo. (1987) Los Irlandeses en la Argentina.

21. The same tendency to round also occurs when data on emigrants' ages is looked at later in the chapter. An interesting feature of the rounding of age data is that, especially for women, the age on emigration dip for the 0 and 5 age groups while they peak at 8 and 3. The largest age cohort is 28.

22. Murray (1919) The Story of the Irish.... also suggests this.

23. Figures from the database derived from Coghlan (1987)

24. This tradition of only marrying 'Irish' was to remain for a full century until the 1940's by which time the Irish community had become so inbred that the Irish priests were forced to intervene and literally overnight reverse insistence on Irish marrying only Irish. This was told to me, during both my field trips to Argentina, by several elderly priests who were themselves involved in the decision by the Irish Chaplaincy to reverse its stance. Despite the opposition of the Irish clergy, a high proportion of Irish continued to marry within their own community until the 1960's. Many others not willing to go against the church but who were unwilling to marry an Argentine of Italian or Spanish descent simply remained unmarried.

25. For a very detailed account of the development of Irish settlements see Murray (1919) The Story of the Irish...., Ch XIII and XIV, 199-265.

26.

place copy of famine draft here

27. Rock, David. Argentina 1716-1987, 134.
28. Korol and Sabato, Como fue los Irlandeses..... 34
29. Mulhall, M.G & E.T., 1872 ed. Handbook of The River Plate 62
30. Latham, W. (1868) The States of The River Plate, 2nd ed., 233.
31. Rock. Argentina, 1516-1987, 141. Rock also states that Argentina absorbed 10% of all European immigrants to the Americas between 1830 and 1950.
32. There is as yet no figures on the number of Argentine born children of Irish emigrants who left the country during that period. It is beyond dispute that many did leave. Some of the wealthier ones returned to Ireland and purchased large country estates which were being sold off following the encumbered estates act. In Meath, Westmeath and Longford especially. In the folk memory of Westmeath and south Longford many families claim that their grandparents returned from Buenos Aires to marry and settle in Ireland. William Bulfin also records in his Rambles in Eireann that there were large numbers of returned emigrants especially in Westmeath. It must be assumed however that the great majority who left Argentina resettled in the United States.

## CHAPTER 10.

### GENDER ROLES IN IRISH EMIGRATION TO ARGENTINA

#### **Introduction.**

Probably the greatest difficulty encountered in researching this thesis was caused by the lack of information on female emigration from Ireland to Argentina. Women were only referred to in passing and then in the context of male emigration, such as the difficulty for 'emigrants' in finding Irish wives, and how the lack of family life was sapping their initiative. Women by their absence were blamed for 'emigrants' spending their time and money drinking, gambling, fighting and generally associating with the gaucho class in the pulperias.

This dismissal of women emigrants in their own right, in all the literature, was not just confined to their numbers it also extended to reporting on their employment opportunities and their lifestyle in Argentina both before and after marriage. Before marriage a woman was seen, by the chroniclers of the Irish emigration at least, as marking time until she found a husband and after marriage it was assumed she found complete fulfillment in being a wife and mother. Both Graham-Yooll and Rock agree that sheep farming encouraged family settlement in the camp. This was an essential element in the form of settlement that evolved in the pampas during the nineteenth century to the point where it merits a separate study in its own right. Yet nothing in the literature of the time, or since, has ever even hinted at a role for women other than as a wife and mother. Even among the present day Irish-Argentine

women, the contribution that their female forbearers made outside the marital home is something that has been forgotten except in a few individual cases where exceptional women were responsible for amassing the family fortune, working through their husbands as it was just not possible, given the structure of society in Argentina then, for women to accumulate capital in their own right.

The sponsors of the immigration however seem to have been well aware of the importance of women to their plans. They made every effort to encourage only those women willing to live in the countryside and who were of the farming class, most used to hard farm-work, to emigrate to Argentina. All of the success however for the type of settlement that occurred in rural Buenos Aires has been credited solely to Irish men. The possibility of family life, together with the viability of small permanent settlements of little towns and villages supporting individual families located in their hinterland, is seen solely in terms of the male contribution. To be fair to the chroniclers of the Irish immigration to Argentina they were reflecting the universal custom of failing to acknowledge the important role women had in determining type of settlement which took place. The effect of their failure is that the vital contribution that nineteenth century immigrant women made to settlement together with their experiences has been largely lost.

The fact is that female settlement in northern Buenos Aires contributed to the area becoming the most densely populated rural region in the country. Surpassing the north-west of the

country around the old Inca kingdoms for the first time ever. The land holdings while still huge by Irish and European standards were generally small in comparison with those found throughout the rest of Argentina. Nevertheless the production from that relatively small area of the country became the economic engine which transformed Argentina from being one of the remotest regions on the globe in the 1780's to being the eighth richest country in the world by 1920. Without female, and with it family, settlement this transformation could never have taken place. For evidence of this fact, one has only to compare the development of this small area with the rest of Argentina where significant family settlement did not occur. Throughout all of the rest of Argentina, there is a complete absence of exploitation of the almost unlimited and easily accessible natural resources, including the vast areas of fertile land in the Dry Pampa especially. This contrast shows that family settlement was essential for the rapid, and sustained, economic development of northern Buenos Aires during the nineteenth century. Probably the major reason why the Irish were to benefit to such an extent from that development was because they were the first group to settle in family units in that area in a relatively concentrated fashion.

### **Economic Opportunity for Irish Women**

Female emigration to Argentina, though vital for the successful exploitation of the resources in Argentina, never became the independent self sustaining emigration that it achieved in other Irish emigrant destinations such as the United States and Great Britain. One obvious explanation for this is that in Argentina Irish emigration began and remained, for all practical

purposes, a rural to rural emigration. Women typically worked in the city for a short period after arrival as a means of supporting themselves and saving some money until they married. There was therefore never the same economic opportunities for female emigrants to achieve a long term independent existence in Argentina as in other destinations. In Argentina the only career opportunities open to women were as cooks, domestic servants, or dairy maids, and when the negro population declined, as washerwomen. In a few cases if they were well educated and of good family background they might find a position as a governess or a housekeeper in charge of a number of native servants or as matron in a girls' school. The reason Irish women were able to obtain positions as domestics immediately on arrival in Buenos Aires was that English was very much the language of the upper classes in the city. For a Creole family to have an English style household with an English speaking staff was the badge of social success. In addition the wealthy English and Irish families in the city, naturally, employed English speaking staff. While working in the city the Irish domestics were under constant pressure from their peers to marry into the Irish community, so that relatively few remained single for any length of time following their arrival in the country. Because the English emigrants did not have the all-embracing community structures which the Irish had in place, English women immigrants who could compete against the Irish for such employment were unable to emigrate to Buenos Aires with the same degree of confidence. Consequently the Irish were the only English speaking domestics available to employers in the city and were therefore, virtually, not only guaranteed employment but were able to choose between potential employers. Despite the demand for Irish domestics,

however, it would appear from the census data reported on below that very many women chose to remain dependent on other family members prior to marriage. That is not to say that those women lived a life of idle luxury on their brother's, or father's, estancia. In all probability it meant that, just as in Ireland, those women were engaged in unpaid domestic work in the family home, fulfilling all the roles of maid, nanny and washerwoman that their urban counterparts were being well paid for.

### **Occupations Followed by Irish Women In Argentina.**

In Coghlan's (1982) publication on the census of 1855, the total number of Irish female immigrants he recorded in Argentina was 258 of those only 82 were self supporting. The table in figure 10:1 below lists the variety of occupations they were engaged in.

**IRISH FEMALE OCCUPATIONS IN BUENOS AIRES IN 1855**

<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
DOMESTIC SERVANTS	69	84.1
ESTANCIERA	2	2.5
COOKS	6	7.4
SEAMSTRESS	5	6.0
TOTAL	82	100.0

**Figure 10:1.** Source 1855 census data Coghlan (1982).

The above table shows the limited employment opportunities for female immigrants from Ireland even by mid-century. With the exception of the estancieras, who were widows who inherited the property on the death of their husbands, all the other women were engaged in

very low grade employment. Working in those jobs would never allow a woman to amass sufficient capital in her own right to enable her become an independent economic entity, or indeed save enough to ensure an independent retirement when she had passed working age. Tradition has it in Argentina that the Creole upper classes paid higher wages to English speaking domestic staff than the English or Irish householders, but that the Irish immigrants were dissuaded from accepting those positions as their 'virtue' was also less assured. Many Irish women did work in Creole households but they always maintained very close contact with the Irish community. If they did not appear regularly at the Irish Mass and attend frequently at Irish social functions they were visited by the nuns, or other women from the Irish community, and alternative positions were found for them where they could remain and socialize within Irish society. This served two functions: one was to ensure that the marriageable women remained within the Irish community but it also ensured that young Irish women were secure in the knowledge that if they emigrated to Argentina, they could count on the social and moral support of the Irish community at all times.

Irish female immigrants were to remain totally dependant on domestic service in one form or another i.e. nannies, governesses, clothes pressers, washerwomen etc., as a means of independent support throughout the nineteenth century. While the number of different job titles which they were recorded as occupying in the later two census increased, they were still engaged in cleaning, cooking, sewing or minding children, except in a few isolated instances in the countryside where a handful of individuals became schoolteachers or were

allowed to continue their husband's or father's occupation after his death, such as shepherd or tenant farmer and in one case a farm labourer.

### **Careers Followed by Single Women.**

Because on marriage a woman assumed her husband's economic status her fortune, and her family's were identical to her husband's from that point. It was decided, therefore, to examine the economic opportunities of single women, over 14, the age at which most began an independent economic existence, to see what opportunities they could expect to find on arrival in Argentina. The data shows female dependency on servants/cooks positions was 84% in 1855. This figure falls to 41.2 (51% when missing values are excluded) in 1869. In the above table 159 or 32.2% of Irish women are listed as dependents (when missing cases are excluded this figure rises to 40.7%) in 1869. This shows that a very high percentage of immigrant women did not in fact work prior to marriage. Instead they lived with family members until they married.

This was borne out when data for the 1869 census was analyzed. In the more settled partidos single women, sometimes aged into their mid-thirties were recorded. Those women were almost invariably the Irish born daughters of immigrants who had by then become estancieras. Because of the financial security of the family, the daughter often, was not obliged to work as a domestic servant in the city. Neither, it would appear, did she marry another immigrant until it was clear that his financial status could match her own, even

during the mid-'50's and 60's when it was relatively easy for an immigrant to acquire wealth.

Thus the family's wealth limited a woman's marriage prospects, in the exactly the same way as in Ireland: A landed man's daughter almost never married a labourer, despite the opportunities for advancement by immigrants in Argentina and the shortage of Irish women of marriageable age in the country. That fact is an indication that class distinction on the basis of wealth existed among the wealthier Irish emigrant families regardless of whether the family had achieved success in the country, or had brought out sufficient capital to rapidly establish themselves. Overall however female marriage rates were high.

**OCCUPATIONS OF SINGLE IRISH FEMALES AGED OVER 14 IN  
ARGENTINA IN 1869 AND 1895.**

<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>No. 1869</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>	<b>No. 1895</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
SERVANTS/COOKS	204	41.2	203	38.7
ESTANCIERA	2	0.4	1	0.2
SMALL FARMER	0	0.0	1	0.2
SHEPHERD	2	0.4	1	0.2
RURAL LABOURER	1	0.2	0	0.0
RURAL TEACHER	3	0.8	12	2.3
*RENTISTA	0	0.0	7	1.3
INDUSTRIAL WORKER	3	0.6	4	0.8
SEAMSTRESS	2	0.4	4	0.8
RELIGIOUS	15	3.0	70	13.4
DEPENDENTS	159	32.2	116	22.2

MISSING VALUES	103	20.8	104	19.9
TOTAL	494	100.0	523	100.0

**Figure 10:2** Source: Census data published by Coghlan 1982.

\* A RENTISTA is a woman who lives on rental income from property. Usually the title is reserved for substantial property holders.

In those partidos where there were no old Irish immigrants or Irish born children recorded in a particular census and where the numbers of Irish were small, it can be assumed that such a partido was a pioneering area, from an Irish perspective at least, then it was usually the case that every female in those pioneer districts, over the age of twenty was married.

From this it can be inferred that it was only in areas where the Irish community was established and all the available land had been settled that the community reverted to traditional Irish marriage patterns. In the pioneering areas, women married young or moved into the area immediately on marriage. With the establishment of an Irish community the same pressures that were experienced in Ireland began to be felt by the Irish community in Argentina. All the land was occupied and as only those who occupied the land could accumulate capital, to marry a landless man meant that the woman's economic well-being and that of her children were greatly diminished. Whereas in the pioneering areas where land was not a limiting factor, a young, capable man willing to work hard was at least as good an economic bet as an older man who owned a large area of undeveloped camp.

### **Female Dependency in 1895.**

By 1895 22.2% (27.7 when missing values are excluded) of all single, female Irish

immigrants over the age of 14 were dependant. When the overall size of the population of the city of Buenos Aires is considered and the fact that there was a chronic shortage of such labour one is forced to conclude that those women, together with their families, were unwilling to accept such low status positions. This is further evidence to support two other conditions reported earlier (a) that the status of a high proportion of the Irish emigrants to Argentina was higher than the general status of Irish emigrants to other destinations and (b) that the folk memory of the present population that very many of their female ancestors never worked outside the family unit is correct.

Finally when considering economic opportunities, the numbers were recalculated to exclude Irish members of religious orders in Argentina. The logic for this was that nuns who emigrated to Argentina, did so on direction from the mother house in Dublin and were free to leave Argentina only when directed to by Dublin. When nuns are excluded, together with family dependents and the missing values, it is found that women who wished to be self supporting were 94.4% depended on domestic service in 1855. The figure was 94.0% in 1869 and 87.1% in 1895. A woman therefore intending to emigrate to Argentina had two choices on arrival: she either worked as a domestic servant or lived with a family member as their dependent until she married. Those two stark choices for women would explain why Argentina was not as attractive as other competing destinations, which were equally available and less expensive to get to, for Irish women during the nineteenth century. It is worth noting here that the resistance among a high percentage of female emigrants to taking

up domestic work was not confined to the rural areas. The census for Rosario and Cordoba frequently records a household of a young clerk supporting not only his wife and children but often unmarried sisters of his own or his wife as well. It was not that unusual to find one salary supporting three, four, five or even more adult dependents, in addition to children. From this it can be inferred that resistance to domestic work was fairly widespread among emigrants of even quite modest means.

### **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEN.**

Irish males emigrating to Argentina by the middle of the nineteenth century had a much wider choice of career than had their female counterparts. There were growing opportunities for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the city and the new towns springing up all over the province of Buenos Aires. Settlement in the city of Buenos Aires was different from the rural pattern of settlement in that there is evidence of two quite separate types of Irish settlement taking place. The major one was temporary settlement, that of emigrants using the city as a staging post for eventual permanent rural settlement. There was also a small permanent urban settlement taking place. Those permanent urban settlers were usually urban to urban immigrants, merchants processing and trading agricultural goods.

There were a corps of Irish who had emigrated from urban areas such as Dublin and Belfast who had no apparent contact in Ireland with the much more numerous rural Irish emigrant. They were often tradesmen, businessmen or in the professions, though quite a number were domestic servants (male and female) cooks and grooms. Others bearing Irish names such as

Langan, Murphy, Hogan, etc. gave Liverpool, London or Bristol as their origin.

It is impossible to know from the data if they were the English born children of Irish parents or if they were re-emigrating from England to Argentina or just giving the port of embarkation in answer to the question of where they came from. By the 1860's there was an ever increasing demand for labour in those categories which were dominated by the Irish in the United States at the same period, such as construction (both urban and rail), carting and stevedoring, and low level white collar work in the gift of the town hall, as well as male domestic servants. In Buenos Aires those jobs were filled, in the main, by Italians. However, the few Irish who took up those jobs in Buenos Aires were never able to form a recognizably ethnic Irish community in the city. The great majority of immigrants irrespective of the time of arrival opted to settle permanently in the rural areas, some distance away from the city and were totally dependent on agricultural production.

This fact was confirmed by the data from the 1869, nation wide, census which revealed that 82.1% of the Irish male immigrants were living in rural Buenos Aires. By 1895 when immigration from Ireland had, practically ceased and the community stabilized, 74.1% were still engaged in rural occupations with the balance of 25.9% located in the city and larger towns centered in areas of significant Irish settlement, in the provinces of Buenos Aires, southern Santa Fe, and eastern Cordoba. A significant portion of that 25% however consisted of retired estancieros, wool merchants, etc., as well as a considerable number of children

from the camp who were in full time education. In addition, it should be pointed out, that if under recording was taking place it was far more likely in the countryside than in the city. Even if 25% of the Irish community were urban dwelling, the reality was that within that group a significant proportion were still solely dependent on the rural economy for their maintenance.

By about 1865 the immigrants were beginning to move into the areas such as Mercedes, San



Figure 10:3 Signposts north of Buenos Aires City.

Antonio de Areco, Chivilcoy etc., in large numbers. It was the success of those settlers in acquiring very large land holdings there that villages such as Duggan, Kenny, Murphy, Gahan, etc., were built by the settlers solely for the purpose of housing Irish labourers brought over to work on their estancias. It is impossible to know precisely, with existing data, exactly how many Irish emigrated directly to those areas during the next twenty years. Comparison between the 1868 and 1895 census however show that re-emigration from those villages was very high. By 1870 Irish males' career opportunities were just a rural, male version of female employment in the city. The prospect of rising beyond labourer, well-digger, wire- man, etc. were almost non existent. It would appear that the Irish quickly realized this and re-emigrated to the United States as soon as they had saved the fare, leaving no trace behind them of ever having been in Argentina.

### **Irish emigration to Santa Fe Province**

Irish emigration to Santa Fe province was, for the most part, an overflow emigration from Buenos Aires. The southern portion of the province, roughly as far north as the frost line, was settled from Buenos Aires province by immigrants interested in rural settlement along identical lines to the settlement taking place in the province of Buenos Aires.

By the mid 1870's however, when southern Santa Fe was being settled by the Irish, a different type of emigrant was also finding employment in Argentina. The new type of Irish

settler was one who had been educated to a reasonable level, in rural Ireland, by the Catholic secondary schools then spreading across the country. Those particular emigrants had sufficient education to enable them to enter white collar positions which were being offered by the growing number of British companies establishing in Rosario. Many British companies, particularly the railways, often chose Irish workers to fill clerical and lower management positions over the far more numerous immigrants from southern Europe by then in the country.

Their main reason for employing Irish clerical workers was because the company records, management directives and general administration could be conducted through the medium of English. This enabled the English upper management to retain overall knowledge and control of their companies without having to socialize with the labouring immigrants, or be fluent in Spanish. The Irish, in their capacity as lower management were the ones to learn Spanish and became the interface between the owners and their Spanish and Italian speaking workforce. That type of Irish immigrant was committed to living and working in an urban environment. They were not interested in herding sheep or spending their lives in small 'Irish villages' located in isolated areas of northern Buenos Aires. They headed directly for Rosario city in Santa Fe with a few moving to Cordoba city. The reason this urban small group of about 200 Irish were able to settle in Rosario and Cordoba and remain largely independent of Buenos Aires and therefore beyond the control of the existing Irish establishment was due to the particular political situation in Argentina during the 1870' and 1880's.

### **Origin of Urban Irish settlement in Santa Fe and Cordoba.**

For domestic political reasons Rosario was developed as a port on the Parana River to allow the interior of Argentina to trade with the outside world with relative independence from Buenos Aires. The railway system for the entire Republic therefore, with the exception of Buenos Aires province and the virtually uninhabited Patagonia, was centered on the port in Rosario. It was only later that this rail system was connected to the railway system of Buenos Aires. Rosario therefore became the gateway to the world for the interior of Argentina. The old capital of Cordoba, because of its location in the centre of the country, became the main communications hub for onward movement of goods to and from Rosario, requiring some railway administration and consequently a few Irish settled in that city also.

The importance of the small Irish urban settlement in Rosario, and the even smaller one in Cordoba city, is that they demonstrated that a distinctly urban Irish community could establish itself and survive in a non-English speaking location such as Argentina in the nineteenth century, even with very small numbers. The argument that the Irish who settled in Rosario and Cordoba were able to work through the medium English would also hold for similar white collar workers in Buenos Aires, where the great bulk of British investment was located, but no such settlement became established. Furthermore the formation of an Irish urban community was possible with far fewer numbers than existed in the city of Buenos Aires at the same time.

The only striking difference between Rosario-Cordoba and Buenos Aires was that the two successful smaller urban communities were formed and located beyond the reach of the Irish community structure of Buenos Aires. In fact the immigrants who settled in Rosario and Cordoba would have had to pass through Buenos Aires on their way to take up their positions. By passing through what was the existing area where the Irish community was settled and starting a smaller urban nucleus outside that larger community's influence, gives much weight to the general impression that the newly emerging land owning Irish elites, responsible for the formation of the rural settlement in Buenos Aires, did not just ignore Irish urban settlement, in Buenos Aires, but worked steadily to undermine such settlement wherever they could. They were assisted in their objectives by the fact that Irish women were confined to domestic service while in the city and consequently were scattered in small numbers through the wealthier parts of the city. Whether by accident or design Irish women were unable to compete with other European nationalities for employment outside domestic service in the city of Buenos Aires. Those women and men who wished to remain in an urban environment were unable to compete with the immigrants from southern Europe.

The failure of the Irish to urbanize successfully and form a viable urban working class is amply demonstrated when the data from the genealogy is compared to the data from the census. The comparison shows that the only group to show an increase, in absolute terms, in the genealogical table is the estanciero class, whereas the urban skilled, and unskilled

labourer declined both in absolute and percentage terms.

## The Formation and Settlement of the Irish Community

GENEALOGY 1895 1869 1855								
OCCUPATION	GEN	%GEN	No95	%95	No69	%69	No55	%55
ESTANCIEROS	609	42.1	546	12.0	404	8.8	32	5.7
SMALL FARMER	251	17.4	412	9.1	220	4.8	17	3.0
LABOURERS	357	24.7	1264	27.8	1811	39.4	94	16.7
BUSINESSMEN	108	7.5	241	5.3	92	2.0	21	3.7
SKILLED	30	2.1	246	5.4	80	1.7	46	8.2
UNSKILLED	20	1.4	409	9.0	359	7.8	155	27.6
PROFESSIONS	70	4.8	146	3.2	53	1.2	9	1.6
DEPENDENTS	*	*	1286	28.2	1576	34.3	188	33.5
VALID CASES	1445	39.5	4550	87.5	4595	90.5	562	91.7
MISSING VAL.	2211	60.5	652	12.5	484	9.5	51	8.3
TOTAL	3656		5202		5079		613	

**Figure 10:4.** Source: Genealogy derived from Coghlin 1987, Census: Derived from Coghlan 1982.

\*Dependents in the genealogy are included in missing values

Table 8:1 clearly illustrates that the Irish community in Argentina was structured in such a way that its ability to form a viable community was dependent on the economic success of the immigrant within a few years of his arrival. The estancia was the basis of Irish immigrant settlement. The genealogy shows that two thirds of the Irish immigrants who remained to form the Hiberno-Argentine community either owned or worked on an estancia. When the immigrants who did not achieve 1,000 hectares watershed, but came close or were able by specialization such as pedigree breeding of livestock, to increase the added value of their output are included, then almost 84% of the Irish who settled in Argentina did so on the basis

of rapid capital accumulation. The majority of those who did not make money appear to have re-emigrated within a few years. Even the 24% of labourers, who did not themselves own capital, were necessary to ensure the success of the estancias and just sufficient remained, or were kept on for this purpose. The fact that no place was found for surplus Irish labour following the restructuring of the Argentine rural economy in the 1870's is demonstrated by comparing the 1869 census with the census of 1895. The only two groups which declined in numbers were the rural labourers and dependents. Rural labourers declined by one third. The drop in the numbers of dependents can be fully accounted for by the fact that the age of the general Irish population increased by about 11 years during the same period therefore the number of Irish born dependant children was much smaller. When the age data is compared in the two census it can be shown that those who re-emigrated were predominantly in the 35-45 age group thus the ageing of the Irish community was the result of a combination of a large decline in immigration and the re-emigration of younger immigrants. Therefore it was the labourers who were re-emigrating and the genealogy shows conclusively that this was the case.

### **Conclusion.**

Primary settlement by the Irish in Argentina was entirely male driven. Being a rural settlement based on primary agricultural production, female settlement was seen solely by the Irish in general in the context of providing wives and mothers whose duty it was to look after their husbands' domestic requirements and provide him with an heir and a large domestic workforce. In reality however the type of settlement which took place was

dependant on adequate female settlement. Female immigration was dependant on prior male immigration from their sending area in Ireland to the area in Argentina which they intended to settle. Women as a group therefore never became the independent economic force which was possible in the urban, industrial environment of the United States. Prior to marriage a female Irish immigrant had two alternatives, that of general domestic service, including farmyard enterprises, or dependence on a male relative. Those reasons go a long way in explaining why independent Irish female emigration to Argentina never achieved the importance in Ireland that it was to attain for female emigration to the United States.

Male emigration from Ireland centered on the development of the agricultural land in the province of Buenos Aires and southern Santa Fe to the exclusion of almost everything else. With the exception of small settlements in Rosario and Cordoba cities, which were the result of British investment in the railway system, almost no Irish urban settlement took place. The Irish men who emigrated to Argentina only remained there if they could acquire enough property to ensure their marriage and their family's financial independence. If, after a few years, they failed to make the necessary financial breakthrough they re-emigrated, usually to the United States. Though some who were determined to own their own land appear to have emigrated to Australia/New Zealand and the South Africa/Rhodesia areas also.

Re-emigration by the Irish, though it always existed, became very prevalent from about 1870 onwards following the completion of settlement of the land between the Parana and Salado

rivers and the restructuring of the Argentine economy which replaced sheep in that area with cattle and wheat. Because the Irish consolidated their existing settlement structures and did not adapt to the changing economic conditions, post 1870, there were no longer the opportunities open to Irish immigrants to settle the new land that had existed up until that point. Because the Irish reacted to the changes in the Argentine economy by emigrating elsewhere rather than continuing to extend their settlement into the Dry Pampa which was then beginning to be opened up in the way the Irish area north of the city had been opened up during the previous 15 years, the settlement area as well as the structure of the Irish society in Argentina and the roles of the various sub-groups within the Irish community fossilized from the 1870's.

## **CHAPTER 11.**

### **PROFILE OF THE EMIGRANT.**

#### **Introduction.**

The purpose of this chapter is to show the type of Irish emigrant that left for Argentina during the nineteenth century and how that profile arose as part of a strategy to improve their chance of economic success when they arrived in the country. The profile of emigrant is built up using, largely, data derived from Coghlan, 1982 and 1987. The date they left Ireland, together with their age, marital status, and, if married, family size are reported on to show how those variables affected an emigrant's ability to succeed. The results presented below show that those variables did significantly influence an emigrant's chance of success and that emigrants were aware of this and as a group managed those variables in a sophisticated way to maximize their chances of success.

What this chapter cannot, and does not, attempt is to consider the background leading to the emigrant's decision to emigrate and how this may have influenced their eventual success, why, say a thirty five year old married man with five children, all under the age of ten, emigrated compared to why a thirty five year old single man emigrated at the same time. All that can be achieved here is to compare the eventual success of the two men ignoring such predetermining factors such as, say the married man emigrating because he had inherited an estancia from an unmarried uncle while the single man emigrated penniless because he failed

to inherit a farm at home after postponing emigration for possibly fifteen years in the expectation of getting the farm from an unmarried uncle in Ireland. Despite this limitation the data set is large enough to show very definite trends which yield very clear insights into how differences such as age, marital status and the date of arrival influenced the eventual overall economic success of emigrants.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA.**

### **Emigrant's Age when Emigrating.**

The initial and simplest task was to determine the average age at which Irish emigrants entered Argentina. As the age at which the emigrant arrived was not given in the data and the date of birth and the year of arrival was, the age was calculated by subtracting the date of birth from the date of arrival. The average age for all emigrants was 21.7 years. When this was broken down by sex the average age for males was 22.7 years and 19.8 years for females. The average age for all emigrants may be understated slightly because all emigrants, especially females in their late twenties and early thirties, to understate their age somewhat. The age of emigrants ranged from under one year to over seventy years old. Within this spectrum two distinct groups emerge. These are termed here as 'involuntary' emigrants and 'voluntary emigrants'.

### **Involuntary and Voluntary Emigrants**

Involuntary emigrants are those who emigrated at an age when their decision to emigrate

could be reasonably assumed to have been taken by another family member, acting as their guardian. A child or an elderly parent therefore are considered as involuntary emigrants in this work. Voluntary emigrants are those emigrants who are at an age when it can be assumed the final decision of when and where to emigrate was taken by themselves. Analysis of the data shows that involuntary emigrants were aged under 14 or over 51. When those two groups are removed from the age series data the average of voluntary emigration rises to 26.28 years. This figure looks remarkably high when placed against the literature of the period. To reconcile this problem the data was recalculated separately for married and unmarried emigrants to see if the high age was the consequence of treating these two, possibly separate, groups as one. The results given below demonstrate that this assumption was correct.

<b>EMIGRANT'S AVERAGE AGE CATEGORY</b>	<b>AVE AGE</b>	<b>STD. ERROR</b>	<b>SAMPLE SIZE</b>
TOTAL FOR ALL EMIGRANTS	21.727	0.416	980
MALE	22.709	0.514	643
FEMALE	19.760	0.705	240
TOTAL VOLUNTARY EMIGRANTS	26.276	0.310	707
MALE	26.498	0.385	486
FEMALE	25.787	0.519	221
SINGLE VOLUNTARY EMIGRANTS	23.338	0.289	479
MALE	23.864	0.344	360
FEMALE	21.748	0.491	119
MARRIED VOLUNTARY EMIGRANTS	32.484	0.562	221
MALE	34.125	0.802	120

FEMALE	30.535	0.737	101
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**Figure 11:1** Average Age For Different Categories of Emigrant.

**Source** Data derived from Coghlan 1987 and significant to at least five standard deviations.

There was, on average, a nine-year difference in the ages of married and single people emigrating. The wide difference in the age of married and single emigrants is evidence that economic considerations attracted the great majority of Irish to emigrate. Had large numbers of emigrants married and immediately emigrated to make a better life for themselves then the age difference would not have been as great. In addition, on average, married couples emigrated with 3 or 4 children. This would indicate that married couples postponed emigration for a number of years following marriage despite the added disadvantages of relocating small children. It can be safely assumed from the data therefore that when an unmarried person decided to emigrate marriage was not an immediate concern. Rather it was a lack of confidence in the long term future of the Irish economy combined with a knowledge of much greater opportunity elsewhere that was the primary motivation for emigration.

The data for the nineteenth century was also looked at separately for different periods to see if the average age of the emigrant changed over time. The periods chosen were the three census periods in Argentina, namely pre 1855, 1856-69 and 1870-95 together with specific periods such as the famine, the land clearances in Ireland and the cholera epidemic in Argentina. The average age varied by no more than 0.5 years either way over those periods. This figure is very close to the standard error occurring naturally in the data so that such a

small variation is of no significance and shows that throughout the nineteenth century the age at which emigration took place remained virtually constant.

Throughout the century, therefore, emigration was the option chosen by a growing number of the population from early youth. The increase in numbers emigrating from Ireland did not affect the age structure at all when one would have expected a rise in the number of younger emigrants as they began to leave for established Irish colonies in Argentina. The most popular age for emigrating remained between 20 and 25 for males and 18 to 25 for females throughout the century.

The reason why the age of the emigrant remained constant throughout the century was because emigrants who were aged between 21 and 25 on leaving Ireland stood the greatest chance of economic success. Thus the data shows that emigrants chose not only the destination which would give them the greatest chance of success but also emigrated at the beginning of the period in their lives when they stood the greatest chance of maximizing their individual economic potential. Once this course was decided upon by the intending emigrant and their families, the intending emigrant left home at the point in their life most likely to maximize their individual economic potential.

### **The Influence of the Time of Arrival on Settlement.**

With the age of arrival remaining constant throughout the century, the data was looked at to see if emigrants arriving at different periods during the century tended to follow a different settlement pattern in the same way as in the United States where the emigrants who arrived early in the century tended, as a rule, to settle in rural areas whereas the majority of emigrants who arrived later in the century were urban settlers.

The data confirms the literature that settlement by the Irish at the beginning of the century was urban based and merchant class. It was those merchants, among others, who began rural Irish settlement in Argentina. Post 1826, when the great majority of Irish emigrants arrived, Irish settlement rapidly became, almost exclusively, a rural, land based settlement and this remained the case for the rest of the century. Though it should be noted that those very few emigrants who arrived post 1870, such as the Feenys and the Nelsons, and who were to become very wealthy in Argentina were urban based merchants, rather than estancieros<sup>1</sup>. The great majority of Irish who emigrated to Argentina post 1830, and remained there, settled in rural areas and depended directly on agricultural production for economic survival.

### **The Influence of the Date of Arrival on Economic Success.**

The date of arrival was looked at to see how it impacted on the success of the Irish emigrants who were to settle permanently in Argentina. This was done by cross tabulating the date of arrival with the final career of the emigrant. The total number in the sample comprises 467 individuals, 435 males and 32 females. It must be remembered however that it is only the head of household that is recorded as evidenced by the huge discrepancy between men and

women, therefore the sample, when dependents are included, represents about one third of the entire data base and is consequently large enough to be fully representative of those Irish who settled permanently in Argentina.

Because the result of cross tabulating every career with every year of arrival would create a set of tables so large as to render their interpretation impossible it was decided to group the years in units of five and to group the careers under two main headings, urban and rural. The rural occupations were placed under three subheadings; estanciero, chacrero and labourer. There are four subheadings for urban settlers; merchant, skilled, unskilled and the professions.

Because of the tradition among the Irish merchants in Argentina of investing their surplus cash in land rather than in expanding their business beyond a certain point, (John Dillon, Thomas Armstrong, Patrick Browne, William Mooney and James Nelson are just some examples), almost all of the merchant group were estancia owners and could validly have been classified as estancieros. Conversely very many of the very wealthy Irish estancieros, like Bernard Duggan, were often the owners of extensive mercantile operations. Bernard Duggan was to become one of the largest wool merchants in Argentina. Furthermore as only the most successful Irish qualified for either of those classifications, it is legitimate to amalgamate those two groups to see how and when the Irish accumulated capital during the century.

**Explanation of the Table in Figure 11:2.**

Column one of Figure 11:2 gives the date of arrival under examination. Column two shows the number of emigrants which data exists for, while column three shows the figures in column two as a percentage of the total group arriving for the five year period. Column four shows the size of the group as a percentage of the table and column five gives the cumulative percentage of the merchant-estanciero group for the period 1826-99.

**TABLE FOR ESTANCIEROS AND MERCHANTS COMBINED. (POST 1825)**

<b>DATE OF ARRIVAL</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>ANNUAL %</b>	<b>TABLE %</b>	<b>CUMULATIVE %</b>
1826-30	5	83.4	2.1	2.1
1831-35	4	80.0	1.7	3.8
1836-40	12	85.7	5.4	9.2
1841-45	17	54.5	7.1	16.3
1846-50	49	70.0	20.5	36.8
1851-55	36	67.9	15.0	51.8
1856-60	31	51.7	12.9	64.7
1861-65	27	47.2	11.3	76.0
1866-70	21	54.7	8.8	84.8
1871-75	13	36.2	5.1	89.9
1876-80	10	34.5	4.2	94.1
1881-85	7	58.3	3.0	97.1

1886-90	1	7.7	0.4	97.5
1891-95	4	100.0	1.7	99.2
1896-99	2	25.0	0.8	100.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	239		100.0	

**Figure 11:2. Source** Derived from Coghlan 1987

Thus reading across the table in figure 11:2 for 1846-50 we see that 49 emigrants arrived in Argentina who were eventually to become estancieros or merchants. Those 49 represent 70% of the emigrants for that period in the sample. They account for 20.5% of all Irish estancieros or merchants in the sample and the final column shows that 36.8% of all emigrants in the sample who eventually became estancieros or merchants had arrived in Argentina by the end of 1850

**Analysis of the Data in Figure 11:2.**

Reading down column three it becomes obvious that the earlier an emigrant arrived in the country the greater the chance of their success. The only exception is the unusually large drop in the success rate for the 1841-45 period. This was a period in the country's history when civil strife was general throughout the Irish settlement area and while the Irish were never directly involved in it, it clearly affected the ability of those who emigrated during that period to prosper.

The rise in the chances of an emigrant entering the estanciero-merchant class between 1866-

70 can be partially explained, at least, by the cholera epidemic which devastated the Irish community in 1868. Murray and Mulhall both record that it was not unusual to see flocks of sheep abandoned in the Irish areas of the camp because entire families had been wiped out by the epidemic. Those flocks were soon incorporated into the flocks of the surviving emigrants who benefitted considerably as a result. As a consequence some were able to acquire assets during the last few years when it was still possible to do so. During the period immediately following the cholera epidemic, one man's misfortune was literally another man's opportunity.

The tables also shows that between 1846 and 1865 was when most of the Irish accumulated their capital. This was when land was easiest to obtain and the growth in the number of Irish emigrating to Argentina was steepest. Seventy percent of the entire estanciero-merchant class emigrated to Argentina during that twenty year period. Post 1881 when an emigrant stood no realistic chance of acquiring land by his labour alone, the number of Irish entering the country declined rapidly. That was at a time when the Argentine government began to take their national statistics seriously and their records had improved. Therefore one can expect a much more complete record of the actual number entering the country and a consequent reduction in the apparent success of the overall group. However, by then the Irish had ceased emigrating to Argentina in significant numbers. The extraordinarily high success rate of the very few Irish who emigrated during the 1890's therefore, underlines the fact that by then the great majority of Irish who were emigrating to Argentina were emigrating to

inherit property rather than to accumulate it by their own efforts. The tables bears out the literature that the earlier emigrants had better chance of succeeding, by their own efforts, than had the later emigrants.

### **Age On Emigrating as a Factor in the Success of an Emigrant.**

The emigrants' ages were then cross tabulated with their eventual success to see if the age at which an emigrant arrived was a further factor, in addition to the date of arrival, in determining an emigrant's success. The earlier analysis shows that the great majority of single emigrants had arrived by the age of forty so it is reasonable to treat the 16 to 35 age group as single emigrants and the 0 to 15 and 36 and over as a separate category. When the data is analyzed on that basis the trends become clearer. The single voluntary emigrants who were most successful arrived in the country in their 20's. The under 25's were the more successful as land owners while the over 25's fared slightly better merchants. When taken together both those groups were equally successful. Those who arrived in their thirties did progressively less well. The emigrants who arrived in the 36-40 age group did worst of all. They were usually married with very young families.

The data also shows that those who arrived with 0-4 children did progressively worse as the number of children increased. Typically their children were very young when they arrived in Argentina. Their children, in turn, were the least likely of the under 15 group to enter the estanciero-merchant category. The 41-45 did remarkably better, they however tended to

arrive with children in the 11-15 age group, the group that were the most successful of the under 15 category. Furthermore the 11-15's were the least likely of all to remain labourers.

### **The effect of Marital Status on Emigrants' Success**

When the figures for the married and children groups are taken together analysis shows that if a married man arrived with a very young family he and his children were the least likely ever to acquire sufficient capital to make the breakthrough into the merchant-estanciero group and furthermore even as his children got older, and were able to contribute their labour, their family never recovered the lost initial momentum that appears to be so necessary for success when an emigrant first enters a country. A similar effect of loss of momentum, it will be remembered, was noticed among the emigrants who entered Argentina during the civil unrest of the 1840-45 period. They too never recovered from that initial check and were passed out, in terms of financial success, by the immigrants who arrived during the following five years.

The 41-45 group who arrived with older children, by contrast, did exceptionally well. This was due to the fact that they had the labour of their older children in addition to their own labour in invest in the early years. This extra investment in the beginning not only paid the parent, their children in turn, inherited the extra resources which further enhanced their achievements in the subsequent generation. The remaining group the 46-50 did worst of all the groups measured, by a very wide margin. They appear to have lost the advantage of their

children's assistance and they were competing for resources with other groups half their age. Another reason why this group may have scored so badly was, because of the settlement pattern of Irish emigrants to Argentina, that of remaining only if they achieved rapid success. This pattern may not have applied to that age group to the same degree as it appears to have applied to younger immigrants. It is reasonable to argue that due to their age, immigrants in the 46-50 age group were less likely to re-emigrate and start afresh somewhere else. Their lack of success therefore may be, to some degree, more apparent than real.

### **The Probability of Emigrants Remaining as Labourers.**

The data was further analyzed to record the proportion of emigrants from each age category, whose final occupation was recorded as labourer, to see if a relationship existed between the age of arrival and a failure to make any economic progress upon arriving in Argentina. Analysis of this data shows that there appears to be a negative correlation between the age of arrival and the eventual success of the emigrant. The older the emigrant is on arrival the harder it is to break out of the labouring category. Interestingly here too the younger children found it considerably more difficult to eventually break out of this category than the 11-15 age group. Though further research is needed on this point, part of the reason for this apparent lack of success may be a reluctance of young children who grew up in Argentina to re-emigrate. Much more importantly, however, there is circumstantial evidence that in many cases the younger brother continued to follow the practice in Ireland of those who did not re-emigrate or become a priest, remaining on in the family home where they were categorized

as labourers. The management of the property in many cases appears to have been carried out by the older brother despite the fact that under Argentine law all children inherited equally. Korol and Sabato found that the first generation Irish Argentine community, which would be a valid comparison here, had the lowest fertility rate of all immigrant communities in the country, despite their parents having the highest. Thus, as in Ireland, the younger children who remained on the family farm usually did not marry. Instead they appear to have followed the pattern so common on the larger farms in Ireland, at that time, of becoming, often unpaid, workmen and women with a much lower status than the oldest brother and sister. This in turn further explains why the 11-15 age group prospered to such a degree as in many cases they continued to have family labour to invest in expanding the family farm. Another possibility which must not be overlooked, though no data exists for it here, is that emigrants in the 41-45 age group who were emigrating with their, larger and older, families must have had considerable resources to be able to pay the family fare out in the first place. A higher proportion of that group may well have either inherited property in Argentina or had capital of their own addition to extra labour to invest when they arrived. This would further enhance their prospects for success. As a general rule however the younger an emigrant arrived, the greater their chance of success.

### **Conclusion.**

The success of an emigrant depended on a number of variables, the age at which they emigrated, the date they arrived in the country, whether they were single or married and if

married the size and age of their family when deciding to emigrate. If single, the emigrant stood the best chance of success if they emigrated in their early twenties and if married, when their children were still young enough to be dependent but old enough to work. As a general rule however, emigrants fared better economically if they were unmarried when they emigrated.

That the Irish emigrants were very sophisticated in their management of the optimum moment to emigrate is amply demonstrated in that they, as a group, maximized every opportunity under their control. The typical emigrant was unmarried, between the age of 20-25 and emigrated during the period in Argentina's history when they had a real opportunity to succeed. This is clear evidence that, for the Irish at least, emigration was a very well understood phenomena which they used to best advantage to maximize their own potential.

## NOTES

1. With the sole exception of the Nelsons the post 1870 merchants were importers, in that sense they were different to the pre 1826 merchants who made their fortunes exporting. The Feenys and others were large importers selling their goods to the Irish community through large general stores in Buenos Aires city. Kellys in Paraguay St., in the city centre, is still in existence though now it caters exclusively for the foreign tourist market selling mainly souvenir items. Those latter merchants, while being the most successful by far, of those who emigrated post 1870 were very much the exception to the general rule. Only three or four families achieved that level of success post 1870.

The only notable exception to the above merchants were the Nelsons. They were originally butchers in Dublin who obtained a contract to supply the British garrisons in the city with beef. The Nelsons soon discovered that it was cheaper to import the meat from Argentina than to purchase it in Ireland. In the 1870's therefore they moved to Argentina. Their business flourished during the Boer War when they also supplied the British troops in South Africa. At one time they owned the largest meat packing plant in the world. They soon expanded into shipping and so the Nelson Line was founded. The Nelsons though not arriving in Argentina until 1870's were the only Irish family late in the century to follow the pattern of the earlier, pre 1830, merchants.

Coming, like John Dillon, from Dublin they developed their existing trading contacts with Britain based on their particular skill in the butchering trade.

## CHAPTER 12.

### PATTERNS OF IRISH SETTLEMENT IN ARGENTINA.

#### **Introduction.**

The Irish who settled in Argentina during the nineteenth century formed part of a settlement model that at one level was imposed on them, and at another level they created to meet their own needs.

The early settlers, those who arrived pre-1855 or so, adapted the existing settlement pattern to their own needs and then, once they became established, reverted to the original, if slightly modified, latifundia system of settlement. Those who arrived post 1865, when all the new lands that the Irish were to settle in small units was fully occupied, became part of the final Irish settlement pattern. The later arrivals were the acceptors rather than the innovators of the final Irish settlement pattern.

This chapter will examine briefly how the existing settlement was altered by the Irish immigrants during the nineteenth century. The later Irish immigrants, certainly those who arrived after about 1865, usually lived as labourers in purpose built villages on the estancias of the earlier emigrants. Those who were surplus to the needs of the Irish estancieros usually re-emigrated and so played no serious part in the formation and consolidation of Irish

settlement in Argentina.

### **Choice of Settlement Pre 1855.**

When male emigrants landed in Buenos Aires they had a number of options open to them. They could obtain work in the city in domestic service, in the saladeros or in the building trade or they could move directly into the countryside. Those few who had brought sufficient cash, such as the Geoghegans (see below) could buy existing estancias in relatively settled areas close to the city. Those emigrants who had less resources could purchase a share in a flock of sheep and move deep into the countryside to graze their new flock. While those emigrants who had no cash and still wished to settle immediately in the countryside could obtain employment on an existing estancia, digging wells and ditches. For females their options were limited to domestic service or dairymaids. The great majority of females (as was shown in the chapter on gender) found domestic employment in the city prior to marriage.

The great majority of men who landed before about 1855 usually spent about one year in Buenos Aires city working in saladeros owned by the merchants such as Armstrong, Mooney, Bookey, Browne and many others. During this period they learned the language and saved some money towards the purchase of a flock of sheep and very probably repaid their passage, to the owners. There is also some evidence to suggest that many of the early emigrants who brought out cash with them also worked for about a year in the city prior to

investing their personal resources in sheep or land. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that emigrants with cash still looked for assisted passage and were therefore obliged to work for a period. Elliot, in his work on Protestant Irish emigration to Canada, found emigrants turning up, with their families, in Canada who had, fairly recently, been denied an assisted passage there despite their having made very persistent representations and pleading extreme poverty to gain assisted passage. The census shows also that some men, usually the domestic servants, remained for the rest of their lives in the city. The later emigrants generally moved directly onto an, almost always Irish owned, estancia.

### **Classification of the Settlement Zones**

Irish settlement was not uniform either in the type of settlement which took place or in the type of settler that chose a particular region to settle in. The area in which the Irish settled can be divided into four zones, based on the length of economic development, covering five different types of settlement. The different settlement zones were already in evidence by the first official census of the province in 1855. Because of low numbers of rural Irish recorded in the 1855 census and, despite four years of endeavor<sup>1</sup>. My inability to obtain a map of the province for that period, it was impossible to accurately map the exact boundaries of each zone in 1855. Nevertheless a general model can be constructed. In addition, as the economy of the country developed the settlement areas would have to be reclassified possibly every two or three years between 1850 and 1870.

### **The Basis for the Classification.**

The classification for the model of settlement used here is based on the prevailing ecosystem and is ranked in order of its dependence on European style human habitation for survival. Under this classification urban areas which by definition are European creations and incapable of any natural renewal whatever are classified as Zone 1. Rural areas whose ecosystems are the result of human husbandry on the European style and whose survival, while depending on natural renewal, is conditional on continuing human intervention are classified as Zone 2.

In Zone 4, by contrast, the ecosystem is termed 'natural' or 'virgin' in that it has not been modified to any serious degree by European habitation. And Zone 3 is the transition zone between Zones 2 and 4 where the ecosystem is undergoing intensive modification by European style cultivation. Thus Zone 3, and to a lesser extent Zone 4, under this classification, were where the Irish settled, in large numbers, during the nineteenth century.

In a general work such as this it is not necessary to record and reclassify the changes between the zones in detail as they occurred, except to point out that all of the area between the Salado and Parana rivers and as far north as Venado Tuerto in Santa Fe, should be classified as Zone 3 or 4 in 1855 and that by 1900 all of the pampas area where Irish settlement took place should be considered as Zone 2 under this general classification.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE ZONES TO THE 1855 CENSUS**

### **Zone 1. Irish Urban Immigrants.**

In Zone 1, the city of Buenos Aires, there were a total of 361 (187 males and 174 females) Irish recorded in 1855. In the 1855 census the city was broken up into eleven districts ranging in an Irish population of 3 in La Piedad to 98 in La Merced. In the parish of San Miguel there are 22 Irish resident of which 20 were domestic servants or grooms. David Suffern, a resident in the country for 9 years was a merchant and 78 year old Bernard Kiernan lived on the income from property he has rented out (rentista).

In the parish of La Merced which is located in the commercial centre of the city, near the Parliament, 98 Irish lived. Here one finds evidence of skilled trade among the Irish. Bricklayers, a shoemaker and a seamstress from Wexford, coopers from Belfast and Liverpool as well as tailors, hoteliers and merchants, in addition to domestic servants and grooms. It is notable that the origins of the Irish tradesmen living there were all given as major port towns in Ireland and England such as Belfast, Bristol Liverpool, London, Wexford, and Dublin. It is here that Fr. Fahy lived along with his 70 year old domestic servant, Constantine O'Rourke and 60 year old house boy Patrick Culligan. There is no record in the census of Thomas Armstrong or his family, though Murray and Mulhall both state that Fr. Fahy lived in rooms in Armstrong's house. The real importance of La Merced, however, is that it demonstrates that Irish, with resources, who were willing to emigrate were highly mobile during that period and furthermore they were willing to relocate a number of

times, regardless of distance, wherever they saw an opportunity. A very good example of this was Francis Langan. It would appear that Francis first emigrated from Ireland to Liverpool in his twenties, married about 1834 and made some money there. Following his success in Liverpool he emigrated with his family to Buenos Aires in 1848 where by 1855 he had acquired substantial property interests in the city. Other examples, in La Merced, of high mobility among better off married Irish emigrants are three medical doctors, John Leslie from Belfast was recorded as a resident in the country for two years together with his Liverpool born wife and 3 yr old Manchester born daughter. The two other doctors who were also recorded as living in La Merced for 2 years were Henry Kennedy from Philadelphia and a Dr. Conyngham, almost certainly from Slane Co. Meath who was there with his London born wife and their Montevideo born children. As well as demonstrating high mobility among wealthier Irish emigrants, La Merced also shows that trading links were very important in encouraging artisan emigration.

### **Rural Irish Immigrants in Zone 1.**

Murray's and Mulhalls' contention that very many of the immigrants from Westmeath and Wexford lived for a time in the city before obtaining employment in the countryside is borne out by the 1855 census. The type of employment taken up by the rural male immigrants and the areas in which they tended to live were different to male immigrants from Irish cities. The rural males lived mainly in Barracas al Norte where there were 87 Irish resident by 1855. Barracas al Norte contained a large meat processing plant which was a large employer

of Irish labour. With the great majority of Irish living in that district were resident in the country for less than 7 years and worked as labourers in the meat plant. This was obviously the place where Fr. Fahy obtained work in the city for newly arrived Irish labourers, before they left to go inland. The most notable resident there was Adml. William Brown, who lived with his wife and married daughter Martina Reinecke and her family. Brown is a perfect example of the Irish in the higher social classes in Buenos Aires and their children, not marrying Irish partners, Brown's wife was the daughter of a wealthy English merchant, while Brown's own daughter married into the Argentine elite. With the exception of Brown, who was from a rural area in Ireland too, all the Irish emigrants in this district were labourers while the residents in La Merced were mainly from an urban background and were, usually, self employed and enjoying a higher social status in the city. One can infer from this that even in 1855 there was social stratification among the Irish and presumably little if any social contact between the two groups.

The other districts of the city including its suburbs all contained a few Irish immigrants, mostly domestic servants, male and female, cooks and grooms. Irish immigrants from rural areas living in the city in 1855 were in the main resident there for a shorter period than the immigrants from urban areas and rural Irish immigrants pre-1855 at least, took up menial jobs in the city for a short period as a method of training themselves in the language and mores of the country, in relative safety prior to permanent settlement in the countryside. For them, settlement in Buenos Aires city was a transition phase from their old Irish lifestyle to

their new Argentine one.

### **Zone 2.**

Pilar and Ensenada lie within Zone 2 in this model. Pilar is located immediately north of the densely populated district around Buenos Aires and Ensenada is located immediately to the south. According to the 1855 census there were 26 Irish residents in Pilar, eight of whom were estancieros, two were labourers and the balance of 16 were dependents. If the age of the youngest Irish born child, minus one year, is taken as a proxy for time of arrival then 16 of the 26 immigrants arrived during 1854. This consisted of two family groups, the Geoghegans together with Jerome and John Casey, their wives and children. Geoghegan and Jerome Casey are listed as estancieros. There is no occupation listed for John Casey which probably means that he was living with his brother, he may even have been a partner in the estancia.

It is an important fact that the Geoghegans and Casey together with their families appear to have emigrated with sufficient capital to purchase and stock estancias close to the city, in addition to paying the fares for the entire family. This strengthens the folk memory in Argentina, that some emigrants arrived with substantial resources from Ireland. Some caution should be exercised before accepting the census record of children's nationality as conclusive evidence in every case, as it did happen on occasion, that census enumerators counted Argentine born children of Irish parents as Irish rather than Argentine citizens. In

this case, however, because the older children are recorded as Irish and the younger children are recorded as Argentine, the balance of probability is that the Caseys and the Geoghegans did bring out capital with them. Furthermore as Jerome Casey is aged 30 and John Casey is aged 28, it would have been a remarkable achievement to have married, supported a young family and accumulated enough capital to enable them to purchase a large property in a well established area near Buenos Aires in roughly 8 years.

It should also be noted that by buying property close to the city in an area where all the land was already settled they demonstrated a very understandable reluctance for new immigrants with small families to settle further out from the city where much better and far cheaper land was available but for all practical purposes law and order was non-existent. This would indicate that concern for the safety of their young families was a major factor in deciding where to purchase an estancia and is a good indication that they were unfamiliar with life in Argentina and therefore did in fact purchase their estancias with money brought out from Ireland. There is of course the point that Geoghegan and the Caseys may have inherited their properties from uncles who died prior to 1854, we simply don't know. On balance however, it is more likely that the Geoghegans are a very good example of Irish who emigrated with sufficient resources to purchase property in Argentina.

### **Zone 3.**

The districts in Zone 3 where the great majority of the Irish settled were located mainly to

the north-west of the city such as Lujan, Mercedes, San Antonio de Areco, Carmen de Areco, Giles. Those districts were originally military outposts along the road between Buenos Aires and Cordoba cities. Because of a large military presence the land close to the forts could be more intensively used. The estancieros, Irish and creole, who owned the land there were anxious to benefit from the profits being made from sheep. By a policy of burning off the surplus vegetation and deliberately over-stocking their land with native breeds of cattle, the coarser grasses, unsuitable for the European breeds of sheep especially, were eliminated. This improved land was then rented by the Irish shepherds to graze their flocks which were, usually, part owned by the estanciero. Soon large numbers of Irish had settled within that general area, those not employed as shepherds finding work as shearers, well and ditch-diggers, peons and puesteros.

### **Factors Influencing Irish Settlement.**

Because of the system in Argentina of each child inheriting an equal share in all property, portions of the very large blocks of land owned by the creoles were regularly sold. Because many of the Irish were determined to settle in an Irish area and because they were probably the most cash rich of all immigrant groups living in the countryside by 1855 they were able to outbid all other groups interested in owning land in an 'Irish' area. Such was the determination of the Irish to settle in an Irish area that they regularly paid record prices for land. This further encouraged many of the creoles to sell off large parts of their estancias and repurchase much larger properties further out in Zone 4, confident that within a generation

their new and now distant estancias would be worth as much per hectare as their existing properties.

By a combination of purchasing government land and almost all land coming up for sale in Irish areas, Hiberno-Argentines claim today that, by 1900 it was possible to ride from a few miles outside of Buenos Aires city to the province of Santa Fe, admittedly by choosing a fairly circuitous route, without the horse ever putting a hoof on other than Irish owned ground<sup>2</sup>. By the mid-1860's however the new Irish immigrants were beginning to move directly into a highly organized Irish community which had become established in zone 3 north of the city. This quickly eliminated the need to spend time in the city to prepare of a rural lifestyle, it was no longer necessary to learn Spanish or to understand the customs of the country to any thing like the same degree as the earlier immigrants. Furthermore large numbers of Italian labourers were beginning to arrive in the city and they were willing to work for lower wages than the Irish so that as the demand for Irish labour was increasing in the country it was decreasing in the city.

This denied the later Irish immigrants an apprenticeship where they could learn the language and social skills necessary to enable them to adjust to their new environment. They were much less prepared therefore for life in the camp outside the shelter of the Irish community which in turn left them totally dependant on the existing Irish land owning elite. If they were unable to find satisfactory employment on an Irish estancia they had very little alternative

but to relocate to another English speaking area which meant in practice leaving for the United States or another British colony.

### **Post 1855 emigration.**

The evidence is that many of the emigrants who arrived during the 1855-1869 period were brought out by existing, established Irish emigrants. That was the period when the Irish settlement area was rapidly developing from a Zone 3 classification into a Zone 2 style settlement. They were brought out specifically to work on estancias and to herd sheep on a waged basis or on ever more unfavorable partnerships with the Irish estancieros. At this period the established Irish immigrants 'were bringing them out by the ship load'<sup>3</sup>. Those emigrants were emigrating to known areas where the patterns of life were already well established. They were filling the labouring positions created by their pioneering predecessors. Consequently this fourteen years between the census of 1855 and 1869 which saw such a change in the economic development of the Irish region of Argentina also saw a change in the type of emigrant from Ireland. The new immigrants went directly to the villages built by the estancia owner on his estancias solely for housing his labourers, similar to the landlord villages in Ireland. The pioneer emigrant that was so evident in the earlier census was still emigrating to Argentina but by then the majority were emigrants who wished to be part of an established Irish community.

Very many were unwilling to venture too far out into the new lands of Zone 4. In fact such

was the determination of the Irish then arriving to settle in an Irish area at that time that it became a major limiting factor on the economic progress of the Irish community as a whole. Consequently there was heavy overstocking and unjustifiably high prices being paid by the Irish for land in existing core areas.

This feature of Irish settlement is highlighted in Fig.2 where the core partidos have a much higher population densities than partidos further out with equally good land. Part of the reason why the Irish were reluctant to continue their existing pioneering settlement pattern was due to the fact that once Rosas was removed from power in 1852 the native American no longer felt bound by the treaties agreed with him and more to the point did not respect the military capability of the new democratic regime to anything like the same degree. Consequently they re-took much of the area to the north west that the Irish would have realistically expected to continue to settle.

By the time the native Americans were finally defeated, the established Irish immigrants had consolidated their position as overall controllers of the Irish community. The land, by then was being sold off by the government in far too large portions for all but the wealthiest Irish to purchase. It was no longer possible for an immigrant to make the essential breakthrough from shepherd to land owner unless he had brought a very substantial amount of capital with him from Ireland or was fortunate enough to inherit or marry into an existing property. The latter course being virtually unknown.

Attacks on Irish estancias by Native Americans and gaucho bands was only part of the reason why the Irish were no longer settling new areas of the country, the Irish community was itself changing from a pioneer community into a more settled group. More emigrants were coming out who valued regular employment for good wages, and a settled community. The pioneer who dreamed of riding his horse for a day, in any direction, over his own land, living in conditions at least as poor as in Ireland, in order to purchase more land and livestock, had ceased to be the typical emigrant by the mid 1860's.

The areas in Zone 3 which were located next to zone 4 such as Monte give a good insight as to how the majority of Irish immigrants progressed from landless labourers to become men of property. In Monte in 1855, emigrants with very young Irish born children all held the poorer positions of puestero and peon. Those who were in the country longer, judging by their Irish born children's ages, had more capital and their older children's labour available to them. They were therefore better able to look after larger numbers of sheep, accumulate more capital and were in a better position to purchase land in Irish areas as it became available. The 1855 census and the literature of the period support the view that the emigrant with no capital coming out from Ireland progressed along a defined route of rural economic advancement. This was first as waged labour (peon) then to a stage where some of his income was derived from wages and some from land as a puestero or a tercero and then independently as a shepherd in the remoter areas of the countryside which were suitable for

sheep grazing, and finally as a land owner himself, more often than not in a recognizably Irish area.

Once the Irish emigrants ceased to spread across the pampas this progression in status among the Irish ceased. The pattern then reverted back to the old creole system of estanciero, mayordomo, captaz, puestero and peon with a new classification of criador (shepherd) occurring between the peon and puestero. What the literature does not show is how many were able to make the full progression in status during their own lifetime and how many succeeded more quickly because they were able to skip the lower grades due to capital brought from Ireland or inherited from older relatives who had emigrated earlier to Argentina and worked in the lower occupations passing on their wealth and experience to the later emigrant.

A very good example, though not from Monte, is the founder of the Duggan empire. He is recorded as having arrived in Argentina in 1865 with only 30 shillings in his pocket<sup>4</sup> and started from there to build an empire based on land which employed 2,500 Irishmen and was estimated to be worth over one hundred million pounds sterling in 1910<sup>5</sup>. However Coghlan shows that an uncle of his was resident there since 1845 and some members of the Duggan family in Ireland are of the opinion that his uncle actually went out to an uncle of his who had deserted from the British Army in 1806/7.

Thus Bernard Duggan had the experience of at least one and possibly two generations of living in the country, together with probably their accumulated assets to build on. One has to wonder if he did not have that advantage when he arrived in the country first, would his undoubted exceptional business ability have borne such outstanding results. A striking feature of all the emigrants from South Longford who did so exceptionally well in Argentina, such as the Duggans, the Hopes, the Hams etc. was that the 'original' emigrant who is credited by the family, in Argentina, as the founder of the family fortune, when Coghlan (1987) is consulted, all went out to an unmarried uncle in Argentina who had emigrated up to twenty years earlier. This fact has been completely discounted and usually forgotten by the family. While the great majority of Irish emigrants had to succeed in one generation the really large fortunes were, in fact, made over at least two.

#### **Zone 4.**

Arrecifes is a very good example of pioneer settlement in what was up until the late the 1850's a Zone 4 area of the camp. Some of the less risk averse immigrants were tempted that far afield by the prospect of cheaper land, which by then could be purchased from the Government. Because this was still virgin land, it was much less productive in the short term and the risks of loss to both life and property were far greater. Between typically 1855 and 1868 the estanciero would have cleared more and more of his estancia of the thistles and the coarser pampas grasses.

The finer pastures he might initially rent to the growing numbers of Irish shepherds if he did not have the cash to purchase sheep flocks himself. As the rents came in he would purchase flocks in partnership with the shepherds until almost all his estancia was devoted to the grazing of sheep. With the extra money from the rents, together with his share of the flocks, the estanciero wired in his estancia, had ditches and wells dug, which gave further employment to the growing numbers of Irish labourers entering the country. Only then would he, his children, build a fine estancia house, usually in the Spanish style, though some of the wealthier Irish built what can only be described as great 'English' country houses.

### **The Advantages of Being an Immigrant.**

Despite the fact that relatively few Irish settled in Zone 4 areas they did have a decided advantage over creole estancieros. Being non-combatants, due to their foreign status, during the constant political upheavals, the Irish suffered much less than the creole population. Their livestock was left largely untouched, more importantly their sons who were over the age of 12 or 13 were not kidnapped and conscripted into the army of one of the factions. Apart from depriving an estanciero of his heirs the fact that his sons were all fighting for 'the other side' would lead to automatic confiscation of his property when political conditions altered. The confiscated estancias were usually given as payment to the victorious army officers, many of whom promptly sold them to Irishmen as their title would be canceled as soon as the other side gained the upper hand in the conflict. The Irish owner could claim

non-combatant status and therefore hold onto the property if the political tide turned.

### **The Irish and Creole Estancieros**

To overcome this obstacle of arbitrary seizure many creole estancieros remained in the city and employed Irish as mayordomos on their estancia. The wealthier creoles also owned estancias in Uruguay and moved their families there during periods of upheaval. By the device of having an Irish mayordomo and holding their sheep in partnership with Irish shepherds living on the estancia, they ensured that the estanciero stood a much better chance of keeping his livestock and land. This was possible because the mayordomo, in the estanciero's absence, fulfilled all the duties of an estanciero and soon came to be regarded locally as the estanciero. The Irish it must be said held a reputation for scrupulously furthering their employer's interests when managing their employer's affairs regardless of whether the employer was Irish or creole.

The creole very often recognised that the Irish in effect enabled him not only to hold onto his property but often to greatly improve its worth and efficiency during possibly several years of his enforced absence. The relationship between the estanciero and the, usually much younger, Irish mayordomo often developed over the years to the point where a very deep bond grew between them. The estanciero often came to look upon the mayordomo as an adopted son. The estanciero was often genuinely very concerned that the years spent by the young 'Irlandeses' in the estanciero's service would not limit the Irish man's or his family's

future. He often repaid the mayordomo's loyalty by, purchasing outright or at the very least helping him with the purchase of his own estancia post-1860 when the country settled down to a more peaceful existence and he could afford to let his mayordomo go. Thus a few Irish acquired property by that method such as the family of the ex-British soldier, Murray, from Streamstown. In this way, Zone 4 districts became developed and modernized sometimes in a decade or less and became major Irish districts.

### **The Decline in Irish Land Ownership**

The decline in Irish land ownership in the twentieth century was largely due to a combination of high living by later generations together with the law in Argentina which insists in the compulsory equal division of the property among all of the children. Thus within two generations a highly profitable farm of say 5,000 hectares could be reduced to less than 100 hectares, which in Argentina is well below the poverty line. In fact many of the larger Irish estancias still existing in Argentina today are due to the fact that an unmarried man is able to leave all his property to one heir. Thus a nephew can inherit from an uncle and so the subdivision of the property skipped a generation. Many of those smaller lots were sold off to later immigrants, mostly Italian, by heirs who preferred to work in the city than to follow an uncertain existence on a small area of land in the countryside. This process of erosion in the Irish areas is more noticeable the further out from the core area of San Antonio/ Suipacha/ Mercedes. Within that Area names such as Kelly, Garahan, Geoghegan,

Casey, Clancy, Murphy, Gerty etc., are commonplace.

### **Conclusion.**

Irish settlement in Argentina, during the nineteenth century followed two models. The earlier pioneering model which lasted until around 1865 was of a largely nomadic population who lived in the more remote areas of the country, then under the control of the Buenos Aires government. They left no permanent record of their being there. There are almost no Irish descendants in Chascomus or Dolores for instance although they were the very first areas settled by the Irish. Those very early Irish emigrants simply followed the pasture land as it became accessible. The evidence is that they lived in small dispersed, almost totally male, communities. Almost all of the emigrants were to be found in a few small areas in the south initially. One reason why so few of the Irish settled in the areas first settled was very probably because, being pacified, all the land was occupied, even if not owned in the strictly legal sense. As the land to the west and north of the city opened up, the Irish were then able to purchase this land for themselves. Because there was no limit on how much land an individual purchased and no strict rule applied to how intensively the owner worked his new holding, some of the more astute emigrants purchased as much land as they possibly could. Some even continued to work as a mediero for someone else while gathering the resources to stock their own estancia. The majority however were satisfied with more modest holdings of under 2,000 hectares. When labour became more plentiful and the price of both land and sheep increased dramatically during the 1850's those emigrants who by then owned land and

sheep copied the Spanish system of land management. They operated their estancias along military lines with their labourers, peons and puesteros under the control of a captain and a number of captains, depending on the size of the estancia, being responsible to the owner or his representative the mayordomo.

By 1869 the Irish community had consolidated its shape and form. It abandoned its earlier model of settlement and adopted a settlement system of capital employing labour. The Zone 4 type settler was to be found only in the very north of the province and in southern Santa Fe, though within a few years this area became fully developed also. By the early 1860's the Irish community had sufficient wealth to begin forming a completely closed community with their own education and welfare system as well as providing employment for all the immigrants who wished to remain in rural areas. It became very rare for an Irish immigrant to work for other than an Irish employer. As the countryside progressed economically and what were Zones 3 and 4 rapidly developed into a Zone 2 region, the Irish community's outlook changed too. After the early 1870's they did not continue the pattern of fresh settlement in the Zone 3 and 4 regions. They changed within four or five years from being the pioneers, bringing in a new economic system and moving onto and settling new areas into a society which was content to consolidate their existing position. Fresh Irish settlement had effectively ceased by 1880 and the newer lands were settled in the main by the Italian community who began to enter the country in ever increasing numbers for the remainder of the century. The new lands were farmed in huge lots all of which were owned by a small

oligarchy, a tiny number of whom were Irish. The chapter in Argentina's history which allowed Irish immigrants the opportunity to convert their labour, first into livestock and then into land had finally ended.

## NOTES

1. The Argentine embassies in Dublin and London were contacted by me as well as the military archive in Belgrano, Buenos Aires city, together with several private contacts with individual senior military and government officials in an effort to acquire maps for 1855 and 1869. In addition the Argentine ambassador in Dublin 1991/3, Sr. J.M. Figuerro, a former Army officer and foreign minister made every effort on my behalf also, for which I wish to thank him.

2. I have been unable to examine the records to verify this claim. It is however universally believed by the Irish community. Even if not literally true, for such a claim to be so widely believed shows that the Irish came to own a vast area of land in northern Buenos Aires within seventy or eighty years of mass immigration.

3. This is a direct quotation from a private briefing, which I have had sight of, by a retiring Irish ambassador in Buenos Aires to his successor. It was written in the 1950's. The Ambassador's sources were the sons of the families directly involved in bringing out the immigrants.

4. This information was given to me by his granddaughter Senora Luisa Duggan de San Martin y Herras, during my visit to Buenos Aires in October 1990.

5. The valuation of Duggan's estate, which is widely accepted in Argentina, was given to me in conversation with his grand nephew Mr. Lawrence Feeney in Mullingar in January 1993.

## CHAPTER 13.

### LIFE FOR THE IRISH IN THE CAMP.

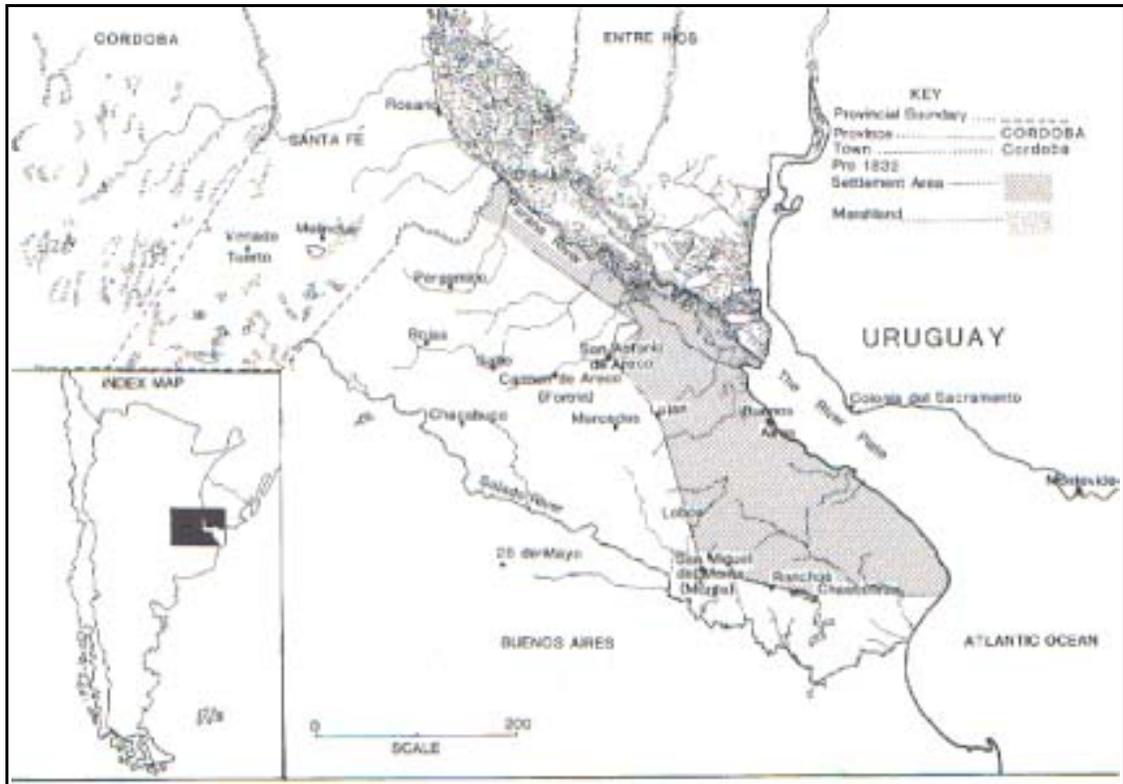
#### **Introduction.**

No work on the Irish who emigrated to Argentina during the nineteenth century would be complete without some description of the life they led and the conditions the emigrants experienced when they arrived in Argentina and how they adapted to those conditions. While their experience merits a much deeper study than is proposed here, nevertheless to understand the emigration more fully a brief outline of the immigrants' lives is essential to show their experiences and the type of character an individual required to enable him to survive and prosper in Argentina, especially during the pioneering days. All of the illustrations used in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are taken from Tito Saubidet (1958) Vocabulario y Refranero Criollo

#### **Lifestyle of an Immigrant in Zone 3.**

Until 1833 the area under the control of the Buenos Aires' Government was comprised of the countryside north of a line which ran along the bank of the Rio Salado from the Atlantic inland through Lake Chascomus until it reached San Miguel del Monte (Monte). It then turned north-west to Junin and on to San Antonio de Areco. From this point the line ran roughly north-east until it came to within a few kilometers of the Parana River where it again

turned north-west following the river at this distance until it reached San Nicholas de Arroyos. The towns of Carmen de Areco (then known as Fortrin), Rojas were at that time just military forts, deep in Indian country, protecting the road from Cordoba (1).



**Figure 13:1** Irish Settlement Area in Argentina.  
**Source:** Murray, 1919 the Story of the Irish.....

**Early Rural Settlement.**

In 1833 all of the territory between the Salado and Parana Rivers, which until then was considered Indian territory, was annexed by Rosas who was by then Dictator of Argentina. The fertility of the soil improves as one progresses north of the city. The most fertile land is

located in northern Buenos Aires and southern Santa Fe Provinces within the flood-plain of the Parana River (See chapt 3.) The Irish, therefore, had every incentive to migrate northwards as the land was cleared. Not only was the quality of the land improving, the distance from Buenos Aires was reducing as its hinterland was being cleared of Native Americans. Thus they had the double benefit of better land and closer access to markets. The Irish followed immediately behind the soldiers renting the land from the government or from soldiers who were given it as grants and did not wish to farm it.

The first of the new lands to be settled were located around the military forts which served as the centers of communication for the surrounding countryside. These centers were to become important towns in the province of Buenos Aires. Later emigrants settled the land in between these towns so that a certain amount of 'leapfrogging' took place in the settling of these regions, though the progression was steadily northwest. These towns today are still settled by families bearing Irish names. San Antonio de Areco settlers have mostly Wexford names such as Casey and Devereaux whereas nearby in Suipacha, Westmeath names Lawlor, Kelly, Garahan, and Geoghegan still predominate.

The Irish had an advantage over the native Argentinean when it came to settling the new grassland areas. A native born Argentine was subject to military service between the ages of seventeen and forty five, though in practice boys as young as 12 or 13 were conscripted into military service. Yet a condition of the land grant was that it had to be worked by the owner.

Therefore even when the Creole owner wished to retain his land he was in practice obliged to use Irish immigrants as shepherds. A point to note here is that the Argentine born children of Irish emigrants, who were legally Argentine citizens, regularly avoided military service because very many could only speak English or at best very poor Spanish and were able to convince the authorities that they too were immigrants. By remaining as 'immigrants' the settlers were barred from voting and thus were excluded from influencing political direction in Argentina.

This non-combatant status saved the immigrant community from the bloodletting which was almost continuously raging around them. It had a negative effect also in that it prevented assimilation and integration of the various immigrant communities into a single group which had common aims and aspirations as was the case in the United States. The result was that the immigrants, together with their Argentine born children and grand-children, continued to see themselves as Irish, there to exploit the country. This attitude was universal among the European settlers. It meant that each group competed (or conspired) with each other to extract as much as they could from the country while putting as little as possible back in the form of re-investment for the future. This attitude among Argentines, which is only now beginning to change, was at the root of many of their economic and political difficulties.

### **Land Ownership.**

With the estancia/hacienda system of agriculture already established, settlement on the North

American model proved impossible to implement, except for a few, little more than token, settlements during the latter half of the century, despite an almost unlimited supply of suitable land. Some attempts were made to settle areas of land especially in the very north of the province and just over the border in the state of Santa Fe in the 1870's and 1880's - some by Irish owners. A major reason for the poor success of this type of settlement was poor communication and accessibility to markets due largely to government neglect due to constant political upheaval along with a lack of support for those colonists involved during their start-up years. In addition the Irish, in particular, preferred to play for the much higher stakes that were on offer in the province of Buenos Aires. The estancias, because of their size, were more able to financially withstand the political upheavals. They also had sufficient land to enable them to withstand natural catastrophes such as drought, flooding and locust infestation. Also, as the settlements were governed from the top the settlers did not have the freedom to establish their own communication and commercial systems as they did in British colonies or the in United States.

### **Early Sheep Farming**

Once the early Irish immigrants had mastered the language and customs of the country, they moved out of the city and began herding sheep in the Chascomus district about seventy five miles south of Buenos Aires city. The reason for choosing this region was the greater the distance from Buenos Aires the cheaper and more freely available the suitable land became and prior to 1833 Chascomus was the most distant area under the control of the Government

of Buenos Aires, close to a constant water supply. The sheep were herded on a "shares" basis often for the same merchant for whom they had worked in Buenos Aires. Some emigrants worked for native Creole estancieros.

This system, which was unknown in South America outside the province of Buenos Aires, was very similar to both the Metairie system of France and to the system of tenure in Ireland under the native Brehon Laws. It is not known how the system originated around the port of Buenos Aires. Being beside the only port with European contact it is probable that the system came from Europe, whether that was France or Ireland I have been unable to establish.

The system operated as follows. Flock owners with about two thousand sheep would go into partnership with the immigrant. Under the contract the owner would agree to supply the flock for a specified number of years (usually four). In the very early days the shepherd obtained his share in return for his labour and the financial cost of maintaining the flock, renting pasture etc. When the agreed number of years had expired the shepherd and the owner would divide the flock, the owner getting back his 2,000 sheep plus an agreed percentage of the increase (usually 50%) as well as his share of the price obtained for the wool clip during the contract period. By this time the flock, under good management, would have grown to 10,000 in number. The shepherd would then having returned the 2,000 original sheep to the owner and dividing the remaining 8,000 equally with him, become the

sole owner of up to 4,000 sheep. He would then divide his flock into, say, two flocks of 2,000 and hire shepherds on a similar type of contract to one he had worked. In this way one emigrant brought out his brothers and later his cousins and neighbours and so a highly regional specific chain migration began.

There is evidence in folk memory that the established Irish drove much harder bargains with the new immigrants than did the Criollo estanciero. The Irish flock-owner expected the emigrant to purchase his half share in the flock while keeping the other conditions mentioned. As the sheep became more valuable the Irish owners in particular modified the arrangement so that if the new emigrant did not have the cash to purchase his share he became a "Tercero" (a one third man) rather than a "Medianero" (a halves man). The tercero however was provided with grazing, stock pens, etc. free of charge by the flock owner at the beginning. Those conditions were dropped in the mid 1850's as sheep and wool continued to rise in value. At the end of the contract period the new immigrant could become a medianero by using the share he was then due, to buy his half share in a new flock. This had the effect of doubling the period of years that the shepherd had to work for the owner to achieve the same return as the earlier immigrant.

Many of the immigrants who arrived after about 1855, were to move directly into the countryside to find employment as shepherds. By the late 1850's when sheep became very valuable and shepherds more plentiful, many of the established herd owners began to employ shepherds on a wage basis.

The shepherds retained on the old system saw their percentage share become steadily smaller and the number of years of the contract increase. If in addition to herding he was also responsible for protecting a portion of the estancia he was then a 'puestero' or (sentry) 'post' man. Thus by 1860 Irish immigrants began to take over the role of the gaucho on Irish owned estancias, being responsible for the livestock on a portion of the estancia in return for a small portion of land where he was able to raise some sheep. Later immigrants were also in great demand to dig ditches and wells on already settled land. They earned on average £30 per year for this work (<sup>2</sup>).

### **Life on the Pampa.**

Life was not easy for the immigrant, It wasn't just a matter of riding off into the sunset with two thousand of someone else's sheep and returning four years later a man of worth. Many never returned, or returned broken in body and spirit, sometimes insane from years of almost complete solitude. A broken leg or a fall from a horse frequently meant a lingering death from thirst or starvation. Life was cheap among the Gauchos and Indians. Usually they were not interested in killing the shepherd for his sheep, but for his provisions and clothes - a dead victim was less likely to seek to recover his possessions than a live one. John Brabazon recalls how his first wife Honoria and her sister were stabbed to death in Brabazon's home by a passing gaucho who was looking for food and money, while he was nearby tending his

sheep.

The land too had to be tamed. Over vast areas the vegetation consisted of tall coarse grass which the sheep could not eat and thistles which were taller than a man on horse-back. The thistle-thorns got entangled in their wool and left it worthless for shearing, as the main value of the sheep was its wool: worthless wool meant worthless sheep and wasted effort. The emigrant had to search for a large area of land with sufficient suitable grass for his flock to graze. The land, particularly Chascomus, was generally more low lying and grew a finer grass than other areas but was subject to flash flooding in the spring months.

Suitable land was also available further into the interior. However it was subject to prolonged drought in the summer. These were not annual occurrences but would take place usually once or twice in a decade. In a drought, rivers and streams dried up altogether and the sea of lush pasture which had stretched to the horizon and beyond shrivelled and died, leaving the shepherd to witness his flock, which was the culmination of his life's work, choke on the dust and blind themselves on the long thorns as they tried to eat the last of the surviving thistles.

An emigrant could lose the result of ten or fifteen years hard work in a single night's thunder storm and flood, or in the south a blizzard, or watch them die of thirst over several weeks while he struggled vainly against the inevitable end. If the flock ran off, due to

thunderstorms, hail or blizzards and the survivors became scattered through other flocks, the shepherd often found many of them impossible to retrieve. The other shepherds regarded his 'carelessness' in losing his flock when they kept theirs together as his problem and their good fortune. The fortune of one well known Irish family is said to have been made by the founder rounding up all the sheep grazing on the camp at weaning time, putting his own brand on the unbranded lambs and allowing the owners retrieve only the clearly branded ewes.

#### **Life in the More Remote Districts in Zone 4.**

Life was even more primitive further out in Zone 4, where there was very little European settlement. There the native cattle and horses were the only commercial animals capable of foraging on the coarse pampas grasses, though native sheep could also be grazed on the very finest pastures on the estancia. Despite the immigrant owning from 50,000 to several hundred thousand acres of land his success was far from assured. The immigrant estanciero lived in a rancho little better than his gauchos. Even if Irish, he employed few Irish staff, in the beginning. His main enterprise was the native cattle and horses who were herded in the traditional manner by the more experienced gauchos, hence the much higher proportion of estancieros among the Irish in Zone 4 areas such as Arrecifes in 1869.

In summer, the tall pampas grass were smothered by thistles which had grown to three meters or more in height making the camp a dense forest intersected by small cattle tracks. The hot sun and lack of water completely dried out the vegetation making it tinder dry. An

ash from a cigar or a spark from a camp fire could start a brush fire that would destroy everything in its path for 100 sq miles or more, within a few hours. The law, such as it was, would normally be one day's ride away at the very minimum. The estanciero survived by becoming in effect the local law enforcer and final arbiter in all disputes that affected him in his locality. He maintained his position by keeping the local law officer (the alcalde) in his debt and by keeping the local gauchos under his control. The debt owed by the alcalde was usually personal rather than financial.

### **Obligations Between the Estanciero and Authority.**

At election time, although the Irish estanciero, being a foreigner, had no personal vote, if he wished to remain the alcalde's friend, he was expected to get the local vote out. As voting was by acclamation and usually took place at the local pulpreia, the estanciero aided the alcalde's re-election by paying for all the food and drink consumed by the alcalde's supporters on voting day. He also used every means open to him to prevent any vote being cast against the alcalde. One way the estanciero discouraged the alcalde's political opponents was, that when they turned up to vote he would line his gauchos around the walls inside the voting station. Then he would pass around ammunition to his, probably drunken, gauchos who were always allowed to carry guns but not ammunition, before the electors declared their vote. It was under these conditions that individuals had to shout out their vote.

Such favours ensured alcalde was in the estanciero's debt when a dispute arose with a third

party. A killing could be put down to defence against trespass, even if the trespasser was retrieving his own stock or placing the boundary marker in its correct position on the line between the two estancias. With the death of the neighbouring estanciero it was often a simple matter to purchase the property from his heirs. The estanciero would generally sort out local differences between himself and a gaucho or between his gauchos and third parties. The alcalde would be most reluctant to interfere and insult such an honourable and respected gentleman as his esteemed friend, the estanciero, by doubting the absolute truth of any statement he made to justify his actions.

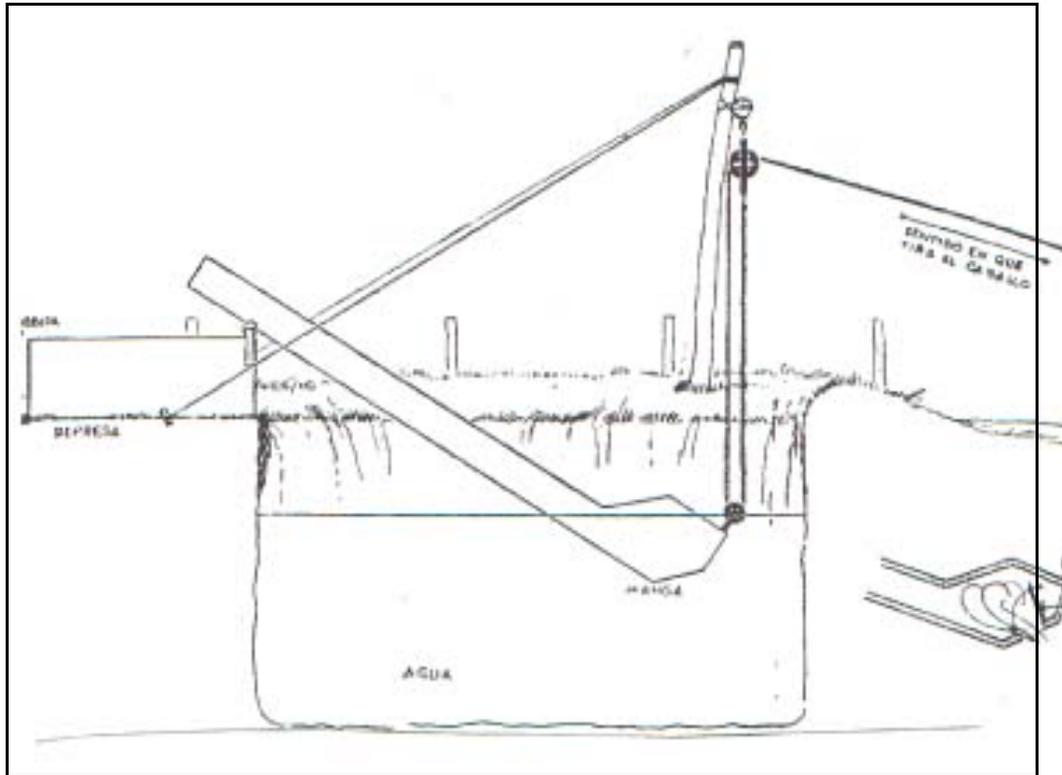
To reach that trusted position the immigrant had, first, to earn the respect of the local gauchos. This was usually done by a mixture of intimidation and bribery. The immigrant had to be able to defend himself in a fight, though for the most part gauchos tried to maim rather than kill their opponents<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless the immigrant could not afford to lose a fight or he would lose respect in the neighbourhood and then everything he owned would be carried off.

In addition to being able to look after himself, the immigrant, by virtue of being a large local land owner and therefore rich by comparison to the gaucho, was expected to be generous when he sold his cattle or wool and, within reason, was not expected to count his livestock too closely. Traditionally if the gaucho killed an estanciero's sheep or steer he would leave the hide and take only the meat. In that way the gaucho was demonstrating that he was killing for food and not for profit as the hide was the most valuable part of the animal. That

was acceptable behaviour in the camp at that time. Furthermore the estanciero could place the gaucho under obligation to him by interceding with the alcalde or a neighbouring estanciero on the gaucho's behalf, bringing his gun with him if necessary. If, for example the gaucho killed another in fight the estanciero would try to intercede for him by claiming that the fight was fair and that he was acting in self defence and by paying some compensation to the victim's family. Or he could intercede with the alcalde to allow the gaucho dodge conscription.

While huge fortunes were to be made by settling deep in the camp very few immigrants were equipped to prosper under those conditions. Those that tried and survived were to amass huge fortunes within fifteen to twenty years. The introduction of wire and railways together with the ever spreading work-hungry European population allowed them to rapidly transform what had been a wilderness into a highly productive agricultural region in which they were able to keep for themselves the resulting capital gain.

## The Importance of Water to Settlement.



**Figure 13:2.** Illustration of a well suitable for supplying water to sheep.

Probably the single greatest obstacle the early settlers in the camp faced when deciding where to settle and graze their sheep was the availability of water. The Irish very quickly discovered that it was possible to overcome the water shortage by digging wells.

This meant that proximity to a constant flowing river was no longer essential for sheep grazing. This allowed the Irish to move their flocks deeper into the interior. In a dry period all of the water for the sheep had to be raised from the well. A sheep drinks about two gallons of water per day, so a large flock of sheep would require about twenty thousand

gallons of water daily. The shepherd drew the water by lowering a water container, made from horse hide, into the

well by a rope, the other end of which was attached to the saddle of his horse. He then walked his horse away from the well filling the skin and raising it in the process. The water container was so designed that when it reached the top of the well it poured out the few gallons of water into a shallow channel from which the sheep drank. The shepherd and his horse then walked back towards the well lowering the empty skin back into the well as he returned. He and his horse continued to walk, over and back, hour after hour, in temperatures often approaching 40 degrees celsius until all the sheep were satisfied.

In the evening when his sheep were safely penned for the night the shepherd cooked himself a meal of mutton. To kill a lamb would have been wasteful, the meat from an old ewe was valueless and therefore could be eaten, provided the hide, wool and fat were kept, as his partner's share. After his meal the shepherd then set about skinning any sheep that died that day; while their carcass was worthless the hide and wool could be sold. This done he was then free to rest.

### **The Shepherd's Home**

The shepherd lived in a one room mud cabin (rancho), roofed with rushes and the strong Pampas grasses. His rancho was distinguished from that of the gaucho by having a chimney

and a ladder attached to the gable end to allow him avail of the roof as a vantage point to keep in visual contact with his sheep. There is some dispute in the folk memory about the claim that the immigrants had chimneys in their ranchos. Some, including Bulfin, argue that chimneys were not built. They describe a hole in the centre of the roof. This it is argued, was because the roof, made of rushes, soon became a haven for every insect in the region, the smoke rising up unhindered into the roofing material acted as an insect repellent and allowed the rancho to remain habitable. Such an argument is however largely academic as the tradition in Argentina, as in most fairly low latitude countries, was to build the cooking fire outside. Temperatures were usually such that shade was far more important than heating. Despite the fact that the Irish immigrants would have known well how to construct a weather proof dwelling from Ireland, William Bulfin once remarked, that the Irishman's roof kept the rain out in fine weather<sup>4</sup>. In wet, stormy weather the lambs were penned in the rancho for protection and to deter the ewes from running off leaving their lambs behind. The shepherd remained outside with the ewes during the storm, calming them, until it abated, so he only occupied the rancho on a fine night or during the extreme mid-day heat for siesta if his flock had sufficient water not to necessitate his working through the mid-day sun.

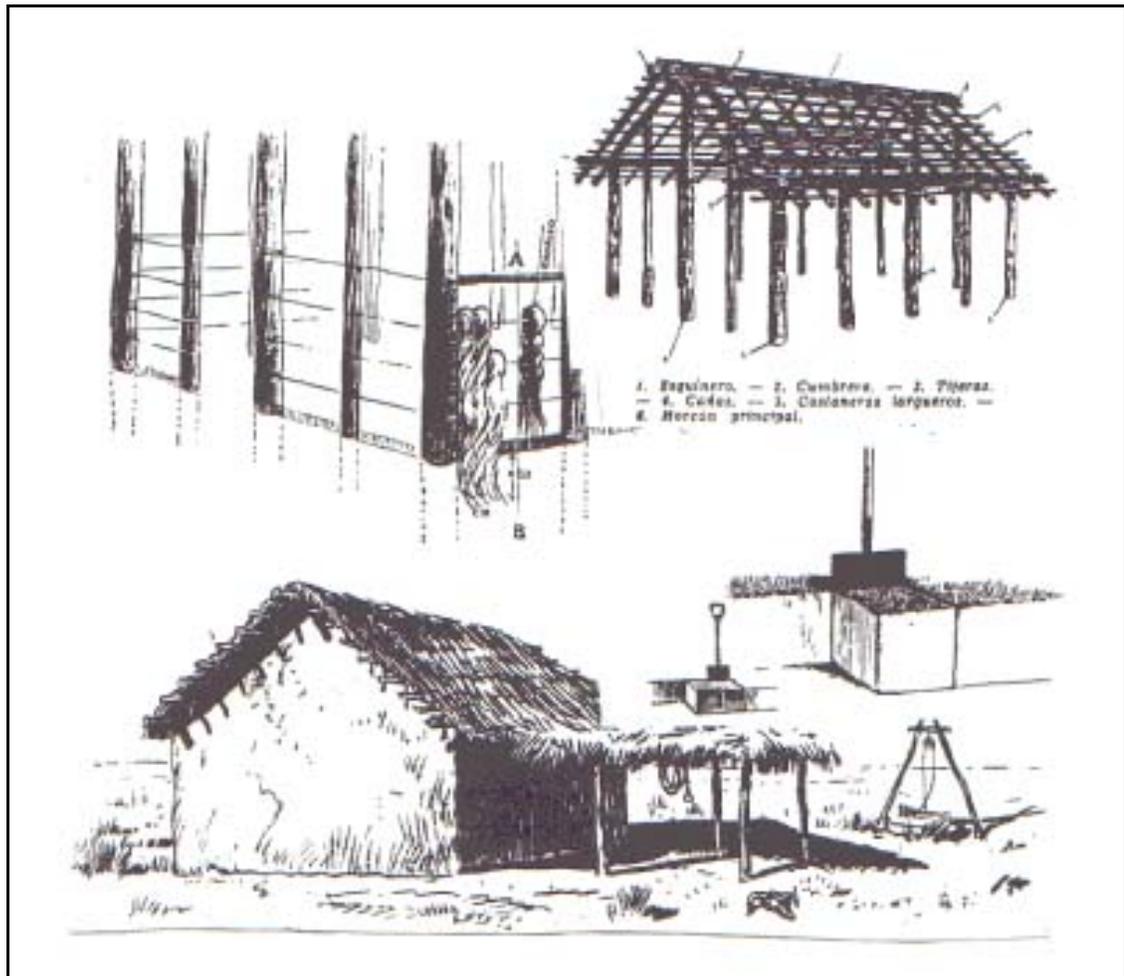
### **The Construction of a Rancho.**

The rancho itself was built with sods of earth placed on top of each other supported by a frame of vertical posts reinforced by lateral tyings of wattle, and later wire, covering an area of about 4m x 2.5m (12'x 8')<sup>5</sup>. The sod walls were plastered by a mortar which was

traditionally made of a combination of horse manure and grass. However the Irish substituted the horse dung with a more convenient and simpler method for them. They cut the long pampas grasses with their wool shears, chopped it into smaller pieces and shook it to a depth of a few inches over the floor of a specially dug pit. Then they corralled their sheep as tightly as possible into the pit. The combination of urine, droppings and the chopped grass being trampled into the soft clay underneath, by the sharp hooves of the sheep, produced a sludge-like mortar which was then used to plaster both the inside and outside of the dwelling. The mortar would soon dry hard under the strong Argentine sun leaving a rock hard weather proof surface.

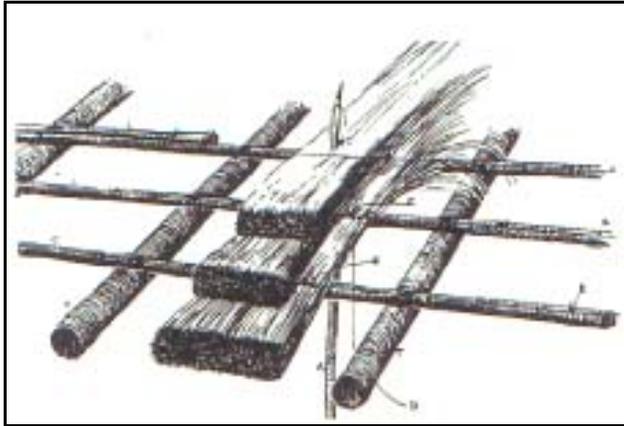
Stronger grasses were used to cover the roof, which was thatched in a similar fashion to the method in Ireland except that the thatch was sewn on with the long tail-hair from the horse.

Often the roof was extended beyond the walls of the house on the northern side to form a veranda as a protection from the strong summer sun. The height of the walls were directly



**Figure 13:3.** Building a Rancho.

related to the height of the occupant. All that was necessary was that he could stand upright suddenly without inadvertently driving his head through the roof. If, when the structure was complete, the floor rose too much in one corner or the roof sagged in the centre, it was just a matter of taking out the spade and lowering the floor in the offending place until the desired



**Figure 13:4** The Roof of the Rancho.

height was obtained.

There was generally one opening into the rancho across which a horse hide was hung to serve as a door. The interior was sparsely furnished. The

shepherd slept on wool, or a horsehide

which was stretched across a timber frame if he could afford the timber. His blanket was a sheepskin. In the centre of the room, suspended by a rope was a bag which contained camp biscuit, underneath this, on the floor, an upturned chest was placed which contained tea, sugar and some yerba leaf which was made into a drink, in the same way as tea, called mate (<sup>6</sup>). This chest was always surrounded by a shallow channel or fosse which was kept filled with water during the summer months, otherwise black ants would carry off its contents in a matter of hours. This chest also served as a table.

A chair consisted of an ox skull whose large curved horns served as the back rest. On one gable wall about 2m above the ground an iron bar was driven in, which extended about 1m into the room. From this was hung his meat rations, usually a carcass of mutton. Other shorter pegs held his kettle, frying pan, cooking pot, candle maker, sheep brand, wool shears and a few odds and ends of riding gear. Against the opposite gable rested his ladder. The

floor consisted of trampled grass which, according to Bulfin, was shared with the odd flea together with the occasional passing frog or snake. The building was lit by a home-made tallow candle. The candle-stick was generally an empty gin bottle.

If the occupant was an estanciero he would build a second, more modest, structure that was much more sparsely furnished, which served as the sleeping accommodation for his workmen. This structure consisted solely of a roof and four walls, the occupants' bedding was their riding tack. The estanciero, being a wealthy man, would have a horse-hide bed. This was, in all probability the only such luxury for at least twenty miles. Another difference in the estanciero's dwelling was that being a rich man he very probably had a strong wooden door which could be locked and barred from the inside. A few year's prosperity brought the planting of some trees, for shade, firing and pen construction, together with some improvements in the rancho. It was the following generation usually who built the fine estancia houses which still exist on the Irish estancias today. The original immigrant generally considered it far better business to invest his cash in more land and sheep.

As the immigrant began to prosper and could afford to marry, he had to improve his home. The first sign of his improving wealth was a wooden door. The timber had to be imported into this vast treeless plain and was therefore very expensive. It was essential however to protect his wife from being attacked while she was alone in the house. Windows were the next addition followed by the extension, which was usually a little grander than the original

building. It usually faced in the same general direction as the original house, though sometimes it was built at roughly right angles to it.



**Figure 13:5** The south side of the Clancy estancia house showing the original Rancho. Photograph for Figure 13:5 and 13:6 taken by kind permission of Sr. Oliver Clancy.

The Irish shepherd was not always an expert builder nor was he, unlike his Scottish counterpart, who usually arrived with more resources, noted for being house proud. As the family prospered further buildings were added until the estancia house formed a square enclosing a patio. The buildings on all four sides were one room wide. Windows were placed in the outer walls and a large door was built in the wall facing the patio. There was no connecting corridor between the rooms. One walked across the patio to get from the living

area to the

sleeping area. An excellent example is the estancia house of Sr. Oliver Clancy, in San Antonio de Areco. The Clancys, unlike most Irish immigrants, retained a great pride in the fact that they succeeded from very humble origins in Argentina. They have preserved each section of their house through the generations exactly as the original builder designed it, with



**Figure 13:6** The front of the Clancy estancia house. Built around 1885. About 15 years later than the rancho.

the one compromise that the original grass roof on the rancho has been replaced by corrugated iron. Simply walking around their estancia house one can clearly see the progression from rancho to fine estancia house. One fine enough for the president of Argentina to break his journey when travelling between his own estancia and Buenos Aires

in the 1890's.

In the Clancy house the original rancho has two rooms with an inside door connecting the two. Only one room has a door into the patio. This was because the 'inner room' was the womens' bedroom and the 'outer room' was the mens'. The reason was that when a house was attacked by renegade soldiers or gauchos, rape as well as robbery was generally the motive. In the ranchos built for families during the 1860's-1880's the potential rapists had first to fight their way through the mens' quarters before gaining access to the womens' quarters. As the house grew larger each wing had a separate function. The imposing front of the house contained the reception area with one of the two wings built at right angles to the front comprising the sleeping quarters and the other the living quarters. The rear buildings which enclosed the square contained the kitchen and laundry. The patio itself was usually a flower garden where the owners and their guests could relax and eat during the warm weather. On the larger estancias the kitchens opened out onto a second patio.

This was the vegetable garden with the staff quarters ranged around it. At the end of this part of the house, opposite the kitchen, was the dairy, the coach house the hen house etc. This sometimes opened onto a third patio which could be described as the farmyard with the traditional farm buildings arranged around it.

### **The Dress of the Immigrants.**

The Irish immigrants also adapted their mode of dress to suit their new living and climatic conditions. They quickly copied the gaucho form of dress in almost every respect. The older men usually wore long beards which they occasionally clipped with their sheep shears,

while most young Irish immigrants grew long Spanish style moustaches. They covered their heads with a wide brimmed hat and around their necks they wore a bright scarf. They also began wear the 'poncho'. This rectangular woolen garment which was worn loosely about the



**Figure 13:7** The Chiripa and Bombachas.  
Photograph of bombachas taken with the kind permission of Sr. Eduardo Gaynor.

upper body offered protection against the strong sun in the daytime and served as a blanket at night, while in a fight, if wrapped around the left arm it could defend its owner against stab wounds leaving the right hand and arm free for attack.

The 'chiripra' or lower garment was of similar design and served a similar purpose for the lower body, one end was tied around the waist, meeting at the front and the garment was then brought up between the legs to the front and secured by means of a strong wide belt. Thus the legs were not restricted in any way by tight fitting clothes. This garment was not widely worn by the Irish. They preferred 'bombachas' which were lightweight trousers with very loose pleated legs. The bombachas have become the accepted form of dress for Camp dwellers especially the estanciero class in modern times.



**Figure 13:8.** The 'Bota de Potro' or 'Boot from the Colt'

The boots were made from the skin from the legs of a young colt. As soon as the colt was

killed the leg was immediately skinned. While the skin was still warm the immigrant put it over his own leg placing the heel where the knee joint in the hide was located. When the skin dried it formed the perfect shape of the leg and foot. The main difference between the Irish and the gauchos was that the gaucho left his big toe exposed to place into the stirrup when riding his horse whereas the Irish generally placed his foot into the stirrup therefore the Irishman's boot covered the whole foot.

### **Post 1850 Irish Settlement**

The 1850's began great changes in Argentina which were to have a profound effect on the Irish though it was not until the early 60's that those changes were being universally implemented. The overthrow of the dictator Rosas and the formation of a democratic Government ended the British and French blockade of Buenos Aires Port. This opened up markets in continental Europe, especially Germany, as well as Great Britain and the United States (7).

The demand for wool and sheep soared, especially for the merino breeds which were mainly owned by the Irish. In addition the new government changed from a policy of renting the land, it captured from the Native Americans, to one of selling it outright. The timing from an Irish point of view, was perfect.

The shepherds were cash rich after several years of high wool values and soaring sheep

prices. Consequently they were able to outbid the Creole estancieros for the best land. The English merchants were also in competition with the Irish in purchasing large tracts of land to build lavish country estates at this time. However, they valued aspect and view as well as land quality whereas the Irish valued land quality alone. This twisted an old comment from Ireland to "the Irish got the best land while the English got the best view"<sup>(8)</sup>.

### **Post 1850 European Settlement.**

Another consequence of Rosas' fall was that European immigration to Argentina grew very rapidly. These immigrants came mostly from the Mediterranean basin, especially from southern Italy and Spain. Buenos Aires city grew, with a resulting demand for building land and land for the production of food for domestic consumption. Land prices close to the city soared and many Irish sold their recently purchased properties near the city at huge profits and could then afford to buy and develop much larger estancias further out in the province. The railway network also expanded at that time. This brought remote areas to within a few hours travelling time from the city. The land prices near the railways rose rapidly benefiting, sometimes for the second time, some of the shrewder, Irish land owners.

### **Effect of Land Enclosure.**

The 1850's brought unforeseen changes which were to fix the destiny of Irish migrants over the next forty years. The fencing of land, on a large scale, became possible with the introduction of wire to Argentina. This made feasible the restriction of livestock and allowed

large areas to be ploughed and unsuitable grasses replaced by more productive European strains. There was widespread replacing of native grasses with alfalfa. Alfalfa has a much deeper root system and was therefore much more resistant to drought. Alfalfa however cannot sustain the close grazing caused by the heavy stocking of sheep, it can nevertheless sustain heavy grazing by cattle. This, combined with a growing demand for beef which was by then possible to ship refrigerated to Europe, meant that it became more profitable, as the century progressed, for large landowners to devote more of their land to beef production. Those changes greatly increased the productivity of the land which in turn brought about great differences in wealth and social status between immigrants. An immigrant's standing in the community from the early 1860's began to be judged more and more on his acreage owned rather than the size of his sheep flock.

By the 1870's the change over to alfalfa production was being widely implemented. It took five years of intermediate tillage production. By then a system had developed whereby the land owner would rent a section of virgin, fenced, land to an immigrant for five years. The immigrant would clear the rough grass off the piece of land and sow wheat for the period of the tenancy. When the soil was brought up to the condition where it was ready to grow alfalfa the tenant and his family had to vacate the land and begin again elsewhere. Irish immigrants were not prepared to accept such terms.

This work was mainly carried out by southern Italians many of whom had emigrated to

avoid military service in their own country and who intended returning there as soon as they were past military age. They were willing to work for a relatively short period in Argentina before returning to Italy with sufficient funds to purchase a property there. Wheat was, initially, a by-product of the changeover from native grasses to alfalfa production and this is how Argentina, quite by accident at first, became a major wheat producer. The majority of Irish immigrants however intended to settle permanently in the country.

This form of shifting settlement did not appeal to them. An Irish immigrant wanted to own his own land. Those who did not wish to own their own land preferred to work for a regular wage. The Irish therefore rarely became associated with this form of cultivation and when this type of cultivation was at its height in the 1880' and 1890's the Irish simply stopped emigrating to Argentina, preferring instead the regular wages in the factories of the United States and England.

## NOTES

1. Murray, (1919) The Story of the Irish..... ,12.
2. Mulhall M.G & E.T (1869) Handbook of The River Plate. C Chapter 1.
3. To kill an opponent was considered very bad luck for a gaucho as it meant, if apprehended, being executed by having his throat cut, or serving several years in the army. At best, if he made his escape he had to live in exile for several years until his victim's friends were all dead or bought off.
4. William Bulfin was a journalist in Argentina who wrote in the 1870/90's about the lives of the early Irish migrants under the name of 'Che Bono'. Most of his work appeared in the Irish emigrant's newspaper 'The Southern Cross' around that period.
5. William Bulfin in Murray, (1919)The Story of the Irish....., 144.
6. Mate (pronounced mat-ay) is the South American equivalent of tea or coffee in Europe and the U.S.
7. **John Brabazon** writing in a diary.- a copy of which is in my possession-.
8. The evidence for this is anecdotal but generally accepted among the Irish-Argentine community

## CHAPTER 14

### **THE CONSOLIDATION OF THEIR POSITION BY THE IRISH ELITE.**

With the deaths of Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong a new era of Irish settlement began. This new era coincided with the beginning of a huge influx of immigrants from southern Europe very many of whom settled in the city of Buenos Aires, replicating to a remarkable degree the Irish settlement model in the large cities of the United States.

With this huge influx the city of Buenos Aires expanded rapidly. Consequently much of the property purchased in the city by Fr. Fahy and used by the Irish community, soared in value over the next ten years. Cannon Dillon, Fr. Fahy's successor, totally lacked his predecessor's vision for the community and presided over the change in the Irish Church from an organization for action into one of reaction. He was easily tempted by the huge prices offered by property speculators into moving the Irish institutions further out into suburbs. He never understood that a far flung rural community which did not speak the language was were unfamiliar with the old city, much less the new bustling expanding one, needed institutions which were centrally located, and near each other, to maintain contact as a community. He and his peers equated creating lavish monumental buildings with progress.

The change in the objectives of the Irish community was not confined to selling off the old

Irish centres and the abandoning of the new immigrants' welfare. Fr. Fahy's and Thomas Armstrong's successors never fully understood the broad agenda which had to be followed to ensure the success of the community in the first place and had neither the vision nor the intellect to be able to carry on their work. The original vision of creating a new Gaelic society with the spirit and values of the old pre-British Ireland based on the pooling of resources had long gone but so too had the ideal of creating in Argentina a real alternative for the thousands of Irish leaving Ireland every year to work in the industrial centres of the English speaking world. The successors to Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong, like the much of the rest of society in Argentina lacked that pioneering vision that had been so much part of life a generation earlier. Britain was reaching her zenith as a colonial power and was by far the greatest investor in the Argentine economy. By definition almost the British system of doing things was accepted as superior to all other systems. It never appeared to occur to those in control of Irish society that the Irish Catholics, as a community manifestly failed to form successful rural settlements anywhere the British model of settlement operated whereas they had been hugely successful in Argentina operating their own model. From the early 1870's in Argentina, Capitalism and the creation of quick paper wealth rather than individual effort yielding long term prosperity became the economic goal for almost all, including the Irish, then in the country.

With this shift in emphasis an overall decline in the general values of the community rapidly followed. This soon came to the point where the Argentine Church became very concerned

about both the general and spiritual welfare of the Irish community in the country. Because of the independence of the Irish Church, and the total allegiance of the Irish community to it, coupled with an acute shortage of priests in the Argentine community itself, meant that the Argentine Church was powerless to intervene directly. It did try indirectly, however, by writing to the Archbishop of Dublin, (three times without apparently any reply the three letters were almost identical) dated, Oct.5th 1877, March 27th and Aug 6th 1878<sup>1</sup>. But by then Archbishop Murray was also dead and his successor Cardinal Cullen did not share the vision of the creation of a new Gaelic Age either. In the three letters signed by the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he writes 'It is a painful fact that the Irish people are changed from what they were once;'.. .....'ignorance is on the increase as, they (the youth) seldom or ever receive any religious instruction, added to the want of Catholic schools where the English language is spoken'.....'The position of members of Irish families, from the large fortunes they have amassed, calls for special attention. If they are left without religious instruction, it will not be difficult to foresee the future that awaits them. Vanity in some, insubordination in others, joined to their peculiar habits and customs, give room to vice among the more ignorant, especially those who have no religious principle, which I fear are not a few'.... He then requests priests and nuns, both to found schools and to augment the existing 10 Irish priests in their pastoral work, to go around the Irish community giving 'missions'. The Archbishop concludes his letter by writing 'Should your answer be favourable, as I expect it, on the first notice I receive, I shall see about furnishing the necessary expenses for the voyage out and also the installation of the missionaries in this

Archdiocese. In the same manner the requisite means would be provided for the Religious Ladies who would be willing to devote themselves to education'. It is to be noted that it was the Archbishop and not Fr. Fahy's successor, Canon Dillon, who wrote those comments to Dublin and looked for additional clergy and moreover offered to meet their expenses. Times had radically changed in the six years since the death of Fr. Fahy.

In fact I have seen no request from the Irish chaplaincy for additional members, much less an offer to pay their expenses and provide living accommodation after Fr. Fahy's time. That is not to deny that some of the leaders of the Irish community were most anxious to continue in the traditional pattern. They themselves made an agreement with the Passionists, whereby the Irish community would finance and maintain Passionist priests to minister, especially retreats, among the Irish community. The Passionist order accepted the funding but sent out Italian and English priests claiming that the Catholic Church was a universal Church. This further split the Irish community and embroiled it in such deep divisions that eventually the dispute was sent to the Vatican in the early 1900's for resolution. The rural Irish in the main claimed that they had paid for Irish priests and were cheated while the urban Irish, mostly female domestic servants, in Buenos Aires backed their new English priest. The real damage of this split was that it cut off the, large male rural community from the largely female urban community. The men ceased to go into the city and the women were abandoned by the rural Irish.

The consequence of all of this was that the rural community was first cut off from the city community and secondly the rural areas were cut off from each other. Successors with the vision of Fahy and Armstrong would surely have continued with immigration and used the resources of the Irish community to acquire the large tracts of land being offered for sale by the government, farther out in the Dry Pampa, subdividing it up among the immigrants rather than allowing it fall into the hands of the emerging oligarchy of which not a few were Irish who owed their prosperity to the very system created by Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong. The fact was that the early emigrants had by then become established and realized that it was in their long term interest to assimilate into the elite of the wider community. At the same time they needed an Irish labour force, whom they could depend on to work their estancias. It was not in their interest to have their labourers leaving after a year or two to penetrate further into the Camp to compete with them in the marketplace for land and a share of the markets for the produce of this new land, nor was it in their interest to have new immigrants working for them who were imbued with the theories of Davit and the Land League in Ireland. By discouraging further immigration and fragmenting the Irish community they were able to control it and ensure that their own interests were protected.

By the 1870's the wealthy Irish realized that it was in their interest to maintain the status quo, freezing the development of the Irish emigrant community in the process. The wealthy Irish had no opposition to this change as the old Irish elites had ceased arriving in the country following independence sixty years earlier and the Irish Church had no one of stature

capable of taking them on, while the merchants were quite satisfied to do business with the existing wealthy land owners. The only one not content with the new situation was the Argentine government who were most anxious to continue Irish immigration along the old model. To this end they chartered a ship The Dresden to go to Ireland and recruit further emigrants. The Dresden arrived in Cork in 1883. By then word had long filtered back to Ireland that Argentina was no longer the land of opportunity for the Irish. They attracted only a few passengers. To avoid sailing back with an almost empty ship the organizers recruited off the streets in Limerick and Cork. They attracted unemployed townspeople and not a few petty criminals and prostitutes who agreed to emigrate on condition that charges against them, in Ireland, were dropped. When the ship arrived back in Buenos Aires at Christmas the Irish would have nothing to do with it. The passengers were disembarked onto the quay side in the blazing summer heat and left without food or water over the holiday period. Some of the weaker ones, including children, died of thirst and sun stroke before they were allowed land. Their suffering was not over even then however as the Irish community still refused to accept them. They were then shipped to Bahia Blanca, a port on the borders of Buenos Aires province and Patagonia, to an institution run by Presentation nuns. This was the furthest possible point away from where the Irish were settled in the province of Buenos Aires. There they were left to fend for themselves as best they could melting into the local community. The treatment of those emigrants led to such an outcry in both Ireland and Buenos Aires that no further attempt was made to recruit Irish emigrants by the Argentine government. This episode brought to a final end all emigration from Ireland to Argentina

except for a few close relatives of existing emigrants who were able to secure their future.

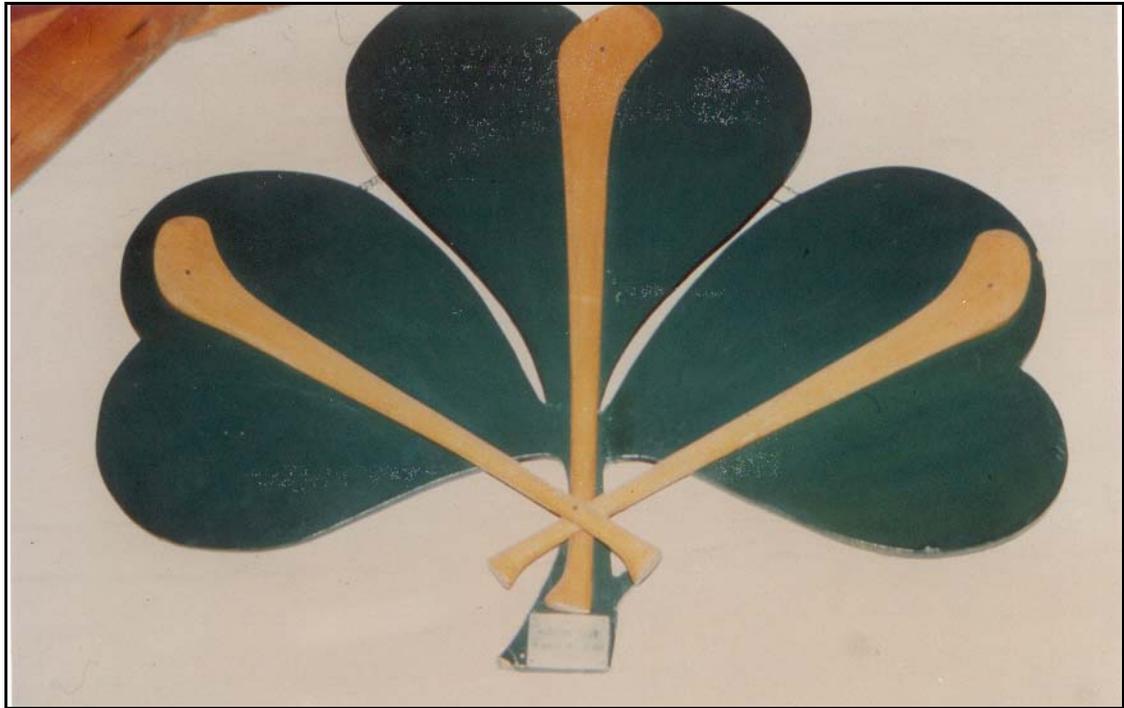
From that point on the existing status quo was consolidated. The new settlement model was no longer seriously challenged. It was a matter of organizing the community in a way that this position was maintained. There were now two Irish communities living side by side in Argentina often closely related by blood but divided by wealth. The wealthy Irish wished to retain a labour force with traditional Irish moral values while many of the labourers still preferred to remain in secure employment in an Irish environment, or lacked the funds to re-emigrate. The merchants had no further interest in Irish labourers as Italians were willing to settle in the city and work for less wages, so it was left to the Church as developed by Fr. Fahy to maintain the balance in the community.

To this end Fr. Fahy's successor Canon Dillon brought in further innovations. The best known was the founding of the Irish emigrant newspaper the Southern Cross, which still remains the newspaper of the Irish community in Argentina (though since the 1960's it is published mainly in Spanish). The newspaper replaced the local Irish newspapers in the camp libraries. In a real sense this newspaper was a reflection of the change in the Irish community since the time of Fr. Fahy. The Standard newspaper which was also founded by Irishmen, was run by the Mulhalls and financed by the Duggans, probably the wealthiest Irish family anywhere in the world at that time. Prior to the launching of The Southern Cross it had been the newspaper for all the English speaking community. However by the mid

1870's it was seen as the newspaper of the wealthy Irish immigrants only.

The upcoming Argentine-born generation did not have the same interest in local Irish events as their parents. Therefore the Southern Cross was needed to reflect as well as to form the outlook of the first generation Irish-Argentines, while keeping the continuance of the perception of the Irish being a separate community. The Southern Cross was totally controlled by Canon Dillon and financed until it became viable, by the wealthy Irish community and reflected their views. Issues of land availability were never discussed for example, whereas Canon Dillon's Sunday sermon was regularly reported in full, often on the front page.

With the loss of the old meeting places in Buenos Aires some means of contact had to be put in their place to preserve a common Irish identity among the disparate communities. While Irish land may have stretched unbroken from outside Buenos Aires to Santa Fe. The Irish labourers who worked on those lands were living in villages often fifteen to thirty miles apart. To maintain a social contact which was exclusively Irish a great emphasis was placed on Gaelic traditions among the Irish population. Hurling was fostered with each Irish community having its own hurling team and the 'Hurling Club' was founded in Buenos Aires and affiliated to the GAA in Dublin.



**Figure 14:1** The emblem of the hurling Club which is sited in the main entrance hall of the Building.

Only the labouring Irish took part in such community activities. The wealthy Irish, who saw their future in assimilation into the wealthy British merchant and Creole class, preferred polo and joined the Jockey Club. So stratified had the Irish community become that no wealthy Irish would cross the door of the Hurling Club unless by special invitation and as an honoured guest. Even today this situation still pertains. Though the wealthy Irish continued to financially support the Church run schools, they sent their children to the Protestant St. Andrew's and St. George's for their education. Those who desired a Catholic education for their children sent them to the more expensive Colleges in Ireland such as Castleknock and Blackrock.

Ironically the ultimate losers in this system were the great majority of Irish estancieros, those with less than about 5,000 hectares of land. They could not afford to have their large families educated at St. Andrew's or St. George's, nor indeed would their children have been accepted. Consequently their children received little or no formal education. Being unable to speak Spanish they were cut off from the real changes taking place around them. Nevertheless they had the money to afford a lavish lifestyle. Being locked in an Irish mind set where their fathers and grandfathers came from twenty to fifty acres of land in Ireland they were content with their divided inheritance 200 or 500 hectares of land, which was after all 500 to 1,000 acres. Large as this may seem in a European context it could not support a lifestyle that a similar size holding in Ireland would ensure, and could certainly not support further subdivision by five or six in the next generation. The owners were not sufficiently educated or well informed to evaluate those changes. Consequently their children were, for the most part, not sufficiently educated to enter the professions where they could earn sufficient outside farming to maintain their new status and sustain the lifestyle they had been brought up in. As a result much of the land so hard won by the immigrants was sold off by the next generation to maintain a lifestyle they could not in reality afford.

With the death of Thomas Armstrong the Irish did not have the vision or the tradition to continue to invest their vast resources in the growing industrial base around the city. Thus their country was starved of the resources necessary to form a home grown industrial base.

Instead many of the Irish lived for a generation like princes. Conspicuous consumption was the order of the day, they bought the most expensive European consumer goods, while the wealthiest owned apartments in the swankiest areas of Buenos Aires, London and Paris, selling land whenever necessary to meet the bills. Their households and children were cared for by 'Irish', ie. first generation Argentine, domestic staff while their estancias were run by 'Irish ' labour. The good times lasted until the great depression and by the 1940's when Peron first came to power the era finally ended.

A few of the shrewder and the very wealthiest families avoided those pitfalls by being better educated and ordering their affairs in such a way as to ensure that their farms were not split up on their deaths. They did this by investing their surplus cash in city property and ensuring that their younger children entered the professions. The O'Farells are one of the leading law firms in Buenos Aires today. The Kavanagh Building dominates the skyline of downtown Buenos Aires and was built by the Kavanagh family as an investment one of their daughters. Morgan Seeds, the international seed company, is another example of an Irish family diversifying and investing their assets and, in that case, creating a further asset and very well paid employment for their



**Figure 14:2**  
The Kavanagh Building in down-town Buenos Aires.

family members. There are others, for example the Duggans are still one of the wealthiest families in Argentina, but on the whole the Irish missed a golden opportunity to own and farm most of the land in the Pampas region. In addition had their leaders the vision of Fahy and Armstrong they could have made additional fortunes for themselves by encouraging Irish urban immigration to Buenos Aires making that city a counterweight to North America and Britain. They could have invested their surplus cash in local

production and employed the Irish emigrants who were leaving Ireland in their thousands for the United States and England to produce the very goods that the Irish in Buenos Aires were importing from those countries, making fortunes for others in the process. With such foresight they could have replaced both the Spanish and British as the wealth creating elite in Argentina within a generation, something they had within their grasp between the mid-1870s

until about 1910.

### **Conclusion.**

Economic conditions in the country were already beginning to change by the mid-1860's towards the last years of Fr. Fahy's and Thomas Armstrong's life and certainly during Canon Dillon's tenure. The death of Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong heralded the end of their highly successful settlement model. With the abandoning of the cooperative form of settlement the dynamism and the sheer energy of the Irish community evaporated. The Irish community were never again to have such a clear focus on what they could achieve. From that point on the Irish community leaders became an instrument of consolidation rather than expansion. They allowed the wealthy Irish to split the community and gain full control of the wealth of the group by becoming in effect the paymasters of the Irish Church and so neutralize the one force that had, up until then, held them in check. The Irish community quickly fossilized and no longer did the emigrant from Ireland, unless already well connected, stand much chance of advancement in Argentina, notwithstanding the millions of acres of suitable land available for colonization in the Dry Pampa. However it was allowed to become another commodity which was bought and sold purely for speculation rather than being used, in a similar fashion to the land in the Humid Pampa, as an asset for wealth creation. Much of the shell of the organization which Fr. Fahy created remains to the present day. The Irish still remain a large minority in the areas to the north west of Buenos Aires province and until the 1940's continued as a separate English speaking community within the

country, retaining many of the customs and traditions of nineteenth century Ireland. But the community had ceased to renew itself with fresh immigration and was overtaken in financial power as land owners assimilated into the elites and by the newer immigrant groups who pored into the country up to the mid-1920's.

1. The originals are located at Archbishop's House, Drumcondra, Dublin., and photocopies of the 1st and 3rd. letter are in my possession.

## CHAPTER 15.

### **AN OVERVIEW OF IRISH EMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT IN ARGENTINA.**

Given the high propensity of the nineteenth century Irish to emigrate and for large Irish settlements to occur in all the great grassland regions of the British Empire, Argentina, because of its incorporation into the British Empire's global trading system, was a logical place for Irish emigrants to settle, even allowing for differences in language and customs that were unique to that one destination. The Irish settled in Argentina for the same reason they began settling in all the regions of the British colonial world in the nineteenth century, to own and farm their own land while remaining within the British mercantile system.

The main difference between the emigration to Argentina and the better known Irish destinations is that the second wave of Irish emigration to the main industrial centre, which grew up in all of the grassland regions following roughly a generation of European settlement, never occurred in Buenos Aires. Nineteenth century Irish emigration to Argentina, therefore, never evolved from a rural to rural emigration into a rural to urban emigration as it did to the other, better known, Irish emigrant destinations.

As a consequence the numbers of Irish who emigrated to Argentina never approached anything like the numbers emigrating elsewhere during the nineteenth century. Nineteenth

century Irish settlement throughout the New World can be divided into two phases. The Irish in the first phase of the emigration were for the most part bringing skills and technology with them which were unobtainable in the grassland areas regardless of where in the New World those were situated. Furthermore they were rural to rural emigrants. During the second phase of emigration the New World countries had surpassed the Irish homeland in technological innovation and it was characterized by rural to urban migrations. These different phases were often characterized by different settlement patterns of the Irish emigrants. Irish emigration to Argentina experienced both phases. The main difference between Irish settlement in Argentina and the official British colonies, was in the second phase of Irish emigration. The second phase in Argentina had a unique settlement pattern because the Irish formed no large urban settlement in Buenos Aires, in contrast to every other New World middle latitude to which the Irish emigrated.

One reason for this difference was that in Argentina the owners of capital who were recruiting Irish labour were rural based rather than urban based. That said the rural labourers in Argentina lived in a village setting on an estancia so that small numbers were in effect living close together in small town settlements rather than large urban conurbations. In Argentina therefore the second phase Irish immigrant urbanized as much as they could, given the constraints under which they were operating. However in other respects the type of emigration was similar. In phase one the Irish emigrated to rural areas with the sole intention of acquiring their own land, while in phase two Irish emigrants, whatever their intentions,

had to work as wage earners for the owners of capital.

### **Phase One Rural Settlement.**

Because Argentina was different to the other Irish destinations in the New World, in that it was not under British administration, the form of Irish rural settlement was also different. In Argentina there were almost no formalized colonization schemes run by the Argentine government, in contrast to the position taken by the British administration, of giving everyone a similar sized farm in a given area. This meant that an emigrant had to purchase his land, either from the government or a third party independently. Thus when an immigrant wished to settle permanently he was, typically, in the country for a number of years and was in direct competition with others wishing to occupy the same property. Even in areas where colonization along similar lines to those which were so successful in Canada were operated and where those land grants was undertaken by Irish Argentines such as Eduardo Casey, the Swiss, Austrians and French were far more successful colonists than the Irish immigrants. The Irish in Argentina were most successful as pastoralists eventually owning large tracts of land, devoted to livestock production, rather than traditional small units given out in the colonies where mixed farming was necessary for survival. The phase one settler in Argentina, however, did replicate the Canadian 'colonial' settlement pattern to the degree that, by and large, the immigrant opted whenever possible to settle in an area where his neighbours and friends from Ireland settled. Thus in San Antonio de Areco there is a greater preponderance of Wexford names while in the neighbouring area of Suipacha, Westmeath

names predominate.

Another major difference between emigration to Argentina and elsewhere in the New World was that, there was a double filter on Irish emigration in Argentina. A potential immigrant had to be relatively well off before he could afford the fare to emigrate to Argentina and secondly he only remained there if he was successful in acquiring land. In the rest of the New World, with the exception of Canada once an Irish emigrant arrived he generally remained regardless of what success he achieved. Therefore the permanent settler in Argentina tends to consist of only those Irish immigrants who were particularly successful there.

#### **Other Factors Predetermining Irish Success in Argentina.**

In addition to the double filter, local circumstances in Argentina favoured the Irish immigrant over all other groups, especially between 1825 and 1870. The existing Irish elite in the country up until about 1827, were determined that before the Irish immigrants arrived there would be a system in operation whereby they would have a head start on other immigrant groups when it came to acquiring land. In addition the practice in Argentina of conscripting their own citizens while exempting foreigners ensured that the Irish had an advantage over native Argentines when it came to acquiring and holding onto their property. The way in which the Irish Church, under Fr. Fahy, implemented this system of land acquisition, further enhanced the chances of Irish immigrants out-competing other

immigrants in settling the land. Under this system the Irish were exempt from all taxes associated with the normal course of business in the country. All of their resources were held in common which not only ensured that it was available to the whole community as it was needed. In addition it enabled the community organize an infrastructure which equipped them to take best advantage of opportunities as they arose. Surplus cash was invested, through Thomas Armstrong's bank, in increasing the processing capacity for the expanding Irish production.

It is not surprising that the Irish in Argentina were so successful when it is remembered that, by and large, only those emigrants who already knew how to accumulate capital arrived. Of the arrivals, only those who were successful remained and they had in place when they arrived the most efficient structure of all the immigrant groups to enable them to succeed. Such was the success of the model created by the elites and implemented by the Church that even today there is no section of the Irish community which could be termed working class.

### **Pre Nineteenth-Century Irish Emigration.**

Prior to Argentina being a British colony it was under Spanish colonial rule for almost three hundred years. Because the Irish always identified much more closely than Britain with mainland Europe, they never saw themselves as an island community cut off from the Continent, forced to compete against the rest of Europe for survival. Consequently when the British overthrew the Irish elites during the seventeenth century, these Irish easily settled into

Catholic Europe and became part of the European ruling classes.

The more junior members of the family left behind in Ireland very often accepted British rule, converted to the New Religion and retained the family lands. By accepting English titles and taking over family lands which were until then held in trust for all the clan, they were regarded as usurpers by the rest of the community. They were accepted into the English elites and became in turn just as important to English colonial outreach as their cousins were to the Spanish outreach. Bearing all this in mind, therefore, it should not be surprising that colonial elites with Irish names were found in the service of the French in Canada, the British in New England and the Spanish from the Sierras in north America to Tierra del Fuego in the south. In fact anywhere a major colonial power raised its flag on a new territory you can be sure that the Irish were not too far behind.

When researching Irish emigration to Argentina therefore the first task was to go back through Spanish records to find the earliest Irish contact. Those records show that the Irish were among the very first Europeans to set foot on Argentine soil. Magellan's explorations brought the first Irish into contact with Argentina, while the first Irish settlers arrived with the first European settlement expedition to the River Plate, led by Pedro Mendoza.

Because of the type of settlement favoured by the Spanish, there never was the opportunity for mass Irish emigration to Spanish America. European settlement, including the Irish,

consisted solely of the governing elite. Those that did settle were very much part of the Spanish colonial outreach. Despite their being relatively few in number, they comprised the elite and exercised a very large influence over the European human geographical impact on the areas in which they settled. This Irish influence was further increased with the ascent of the Bourbon kings to the Spanish throne.

By then, however, it was not just the elites that were emigrating, from Ireland, to Catholic Europe. Any Catholic who could claim kin to those elites, a relatively easy condition to fulfill in a clan-based society, and who had the resources, could emigrate and become highly educated in specially run Irish colleges. On completing their education they were, by virtue of being considered citizens of Castile, eligible for all government and military positions in the Spanish Court on an equal basis with Castilian citizens.

With the greater interest being shown by the Spanish Crown, at the end of the eighteenth century, in their colonies and the consequential increase in demand for Spanish administrators to represent them, a number of those highly educated Irish emigrants, from relatively humble backgrounds, arrived in Buenos Aires in the Spanish service. Thus when the British replaced Spain as the dominant influence in Argentina following independence early in the nineteenth century and incorporated Argentina into their colonial system, existing Irish emigrants were conveniently considered 'British'.

They were in a position to use their influence to ensure that the immigration of labourers, who were needed under the British structure to further their industrial revolution, would include a large number of Irish among them. The Irish elites went further and set up a structure designed to ensure that the Irish element of the new labourforce were in the best position to gain control over the vast fertile land around the city of Buenos Aires. They did this by ensuring that the type of emigrant attracted out, the 'moral and industrious', were recruited from commercial farming areas in Ireland and by bringing out the Irish Church and delegating to it the task of organizing the Irish immigrants in such a way as to take full advantage of those opportunities on arrival.

In that way the Irish governing elite then in Argentina intended to use the land based financial success of those emigrants to recreate their vision of the true, if English speaking, Gaelic Ireland in Argentina.

The Irish elites were aided in their efforts to recruit Irish labour by the commercial interests in Argentina, namely the merchants and portenos, because they needed a labourforce capable of exploiting the Pampas without overthrowing the existing political structure. The desire for Irish labour was further enhanced by the fact that Irish butchers and the tanners who had been brought to Argentina towards the end of the eighteenth century had been effective in creating the existing beef and leather industry in the country and the Irish soldiers who remained behind after the British invasions of 1806/07 had also proved to be an ideal and

popular workforce. Allied to this was the fact that the Spanish banned Basque emigration following independence and Ireland was one of the very few alternatives that the Argentines had to recruit European labour on a large scale at that time.

Because of the military and commercial contact that existed between Buenos Aires, Westmeath and Wexford, the first Irish emigrants of the nineteenth century were recruited from those areas. While the Irish emigrated to Argentina from all over Ireland during the nineteenth century, the Westmeath and Wexford areas remained the core areas supplying about 70% of all the emigrants during that period. Those two areas in Ireland were already integrated into the British colonial agricultural system and were already producing the type of raw material required as inputs for the industrial revolution. Much of the surplus population in those areas therefore had the all skills the Argentine groups deemed necessary to develop the Pampas region of Argentina. Furthermore there was an ample supply of ships, nearby in Liverpool, to transport the emigrants to their destination. For the shipping companies carrying emigrants to the colonies was a profitable outward cargo.

The incentive for the British to encourage Irish emigration was that there was a rapidly increasing population in Ireland at that time with no prospects of employment. The country was in depression following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and its rising idle population was seen as a threat to the stability of the United Kingdom. When resettled in the colonies however the Irish were proving to be highly efficient producers of the goods the British

needed and high consumers of the goods they produced. It was in everybody's interest, therefore, to encourage a skilled surplus population in Ireland to emigrate to an area where those skills were badly needed and where the emigrant would also have the opportunity not only to contribute to the wealth of the area in which they were arriving but in the process achieve genuine and lasting economic prosperity themselves and cease to be a threat due to unemployment at home.

That the Irish were anxious to participate in this overall plan there is no doubt, they emigrated to the New World at ten times the average European rate. However, despite their adoption of emigration to the New World as almost a rite of passage to adulthood during the nineteenth century, emigration for them was not a random choice. The record shows that the intending emigrant gave a great deal of thought to the type of life they wished to follow before they chose, from a menu of available options, the destination they felt gave them the best opportunity to achieve the lifestyle that they desired. The options that the emigrant had to choose from varied throughout Ireland and were based on prior knowledge built up by earlier emigrants from their area. Thus particular areas that were rapidly industrializing and could immediately absorb immediately very large numbers of emigrants such as Boston, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia soon established contact with very large areas throughout the country, whereas areas that were developing an agricultural economy which grew much more slowly, such as Canada, New England, Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina attracted a much greater proportion of their emigrants from smaller specific areas

in Ireland. This was because emigrants in the main chose those areas where they themselves had family or near neighbour contacts. So that while the Irish as a nation emigrated to all the great grassland regions of the colonial world, emigrants tended to choose only those areas where they felt sure that they, as individuals, could continue to use the local networks their families had built up in Ireland over generations. For Argentina those trans-atlantic family networks began in Westmeath and Wexford. It was for that reason that Irish emigrants to Argentina originated mainly in those two small areas.

It would appear from the records that about 40,000 to 45,000 actually left Ireland for Argentina during the nineteenth century, of that number 25,000 to 30,000 appear to have re-emigrated, between 5,000 to 10,000 appear to have died in Argentina without marrying or disappeared into the wider community and the remainder, about 4,000, were to form what we know today as the Irish Argentine community. Those figures are very general because in the absence of accurate documentation in Argentina for most of the nineteenth century. They should therefore, with the exception of the 4,000 core population, be considered subject to major revision in the event of more information coming to light in the future.

This work shows that the emigrant maximized their opportunities to increase their potential for success. The data base in this work illustrates that they emigrated, usually, in their early twenties, when their economic potential was highest. Single emigrants, became more prosperous than married emigrants this is why the great majority of Irish were single when

they emigrated. They were also well informed when deciding which destination to emigrate to and used this information objectively to choose which one offered them the best opportunity. As soon as conditions changed in a region they were able to react to that change by immediately re-ordering their preferences in choosing the destination most advantageous to them.

Thus when the opportunity to acquire land in Argentina was greatest, the greatest number of Irish emigrated to there. Furthermore, when in a region, the evidence is that they continued to keep themselves informed on conditions in the other regions on their menu and if opportunity became greater in another destination, often in another country, then they immediately re-emigrated to there. This would indicate a deliberate policy by large families to maximize their overall potential by the strategy of encouraging individual members to emigrate to different destinations, in the expectation that the siblings would keep in contact with each other, as well as with home, and by first hand experience in several destinations the family could then collectively choose the most suitable final destination for all, or most of the family, and thus maximize the family's chance of success in the New World.

This would explain to some degree at least, why some emigrants entered Argentina from Great Britain, Canada and the United States while others left Argentina for those destinations.

The Irish emigrants that remained and settled in Argentina, from 1830 onwards were overwhelmingly rural settlers. Those who arrived between 1830 and 1860 formed in the main, shifting, predominantly male, communities located almost exclusively on the alluvium rich soil between the Salado and Parana rivers, moving from pasture to pasture grazing their sheep. Their first settlement was around Lake Chascomus, in the southern already settled, part of the region. From there they moved north-west along the banks of the Salado and as soon as they discovered that the general water table was only a couple of meters below ground they began to move inland as they could easily dig wells in the soft stone free soil.

By about 1855 there was a growing community of wealthy Irish in the country able to purchase outright the highest quality land in the country to the north west of the city as it was cleared of the Native population. The next fifteen years was the high point of Irish immigration, when the Irish community began to fulfill the destiny that was planned for them by the old Irish elites, of gaining control of much of the new land being settled. Their community structure was by then highly efficient and organized for the mutual benefit of the whole community which maximized in every possible way their ability to out-perform all other immigrant groups in the acquisition and the development of the land resources. This ability to maximize their economic potential for the benefit of the group only really benefitted one generation of emigrants.

As soon as they became established they began employing working class Irish immigrants, or 'the common Irish' as they referred to them, on their estancias, they saw no reason to

extend to that class the benefits of a communal society that was so effective in their own case. They took full advantage of the deaths of Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong to fundamentally change the structure of the Irish community.

The land in the Humid Pampa had all been settled by then and the land in the Dry Pampa was being sold in very large lots, far beyond the reach of a new emigrant with limited financial resources. The fact that the Irish failed to adjust to the new conditions in Argentina from about 1870 was due to the fact that in time both the Irish Church and the merchants ceased to promote new Irish immigration and allowed the structures developed by Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong for rapid land acquisition, to die with the two men in the early 1870's.

The merchants ceased to be interested in Irish immigration from that point because sufficient numbers of southern Europeans, willing to remain in the city and work for lower wages than the Irish were arriving. Control of the Irish community was effectively taken over from the Irish Church by the Irish large land owners, who by the 1870's were well established in the country. This divided the Irish community in the process into two separate groups based on wealth. It must be said that this division of status would appear to have existed right from the beginning. The difference was that from the 1870's on, there was no mobility between the two groups. That was a major reason for the decline in Irish settlement post 1870.

Not all Irish emigrants who landed post 1870 failed to prosper. They however were to succeed as merchants rather than land owners. The Feenys are one example of immigrants who arrived during the 1870's. They did not acquire land but became merchants, they were also closely related to and were next door neighbours of the Duggans in Ireland, so their connections were with the wealthy and are an example of where downward mobility was also to a degree prevented. It was possible for them to succeed by virtue of the Duggan organization purchasing the goods they needed for their vast estancias and thousands of employees in the Feeny stores. This ensured that the Feeny brothers had sufficient custom to make their business viable from the beginning. Thus while the Feenys may have arrived with little or no resources and had to work hard to build their extensive business, their eventual success was almost guaranteed by virtue of their close connection to the Duggan family.

The large Irish landowners did not dispense with Fr. Fahy's structure altogether. They kept the closed ethnic aspects of Fr. Fahy's structure and imported social aspects of the post-famine Irish society to reinforce those parts of Fr. Fahy's structure which emphasized Irish separateness, introducing Irish dancing and hurling to allow their workers to socialize without coming into contact with the rest of the community, as had been happening until then with their major social event of horse racing. Horse racing, and later polo became the leisure activities of the wealthy Irish only. This allowed that class to socialize and intermarry into the English community and later into the old creole families. Irish separateness, among the lower classes was reinforced by ensuring that English was the only language permitted in

the Irish community. Their schools taught through English and followed an English, rather than Argentine or even Irish, curriculum. And when the first generation Irish-Argentines became a significant force within the Irish community, The Southern Cross was founded to reflect and mould the views of the Irish community, particularly the working classes and the smaller landowners. This paper quickly replaced local Irish newspapers such as The Westmeath Examiner and The Wexford People as the main source of community information and played a major factor in isolating the working class and small farming Irish community in Argentina for a further two generations.

Thomas Armstrong's contribution, together with Armstrong's memory, was allowed to wither and die among the Irish community, to the point that today his name, much less his contribution, is forgotten by the Irish, whereas Fr. Fahy's memory has been almost deified. Armstrong was essential to Fr. Fahy's, and the Irish governing elite's, plans for the success of the Irish community. In fact Armstrong would have as a very young man in Argentina known and socialized with most of the Irish elite. His marriage into the creole elite replicated their own pattern of assimilation into the country and would, in all probability despite his religion, have been approved of by them as forging a very necessary three sided link between the creole elite, the Irish community and the Protestant merchant class in the city.

Thomas Armstrong's contribution was that of banker to the Irish community. He made it possible for Fr. Fahy to hold all of the Irish owned property in the country in common in Fr.

Fahy's own name. This ensured that all surplus cash held by individual immigrants was either re-lent to other Irish immigrants to expand their production or invested in improving the industries which processed the Irish created produce. Being a stockbroker, and in charge of what was in effect the Argentine State bank as well as being on the board of directors of most of the major commercial companies in the city meant that he was in a unique position to raise extra capital on the London and Buenos Aires exchanges. His used those positions in commerce in the city to become the senior economic advisor to successive Argentine governments while working with the British to improve their economic influence in the country. This access to both governments and to outside resources ensured that there was always sufficient processing capability and markets to deal with the rapidly increasing Irish production. Furthermore because the assets of, almost, the entire Irish community were held in the name of a priest, though quite clearly controlled to a significant extent by Armstrong, all the taxes and legal costs as well as the delays that were a normal part of doing business in Argentina, were totally avoided by the Irish community. Those considerable hidden savings to the Irish community were also invested in extra production which allowed a more rapid wealth creation than could otherwise have occurred by the Irish immigrant community. Had the economic structure developed by Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong lived on after their deaths in the same way that the social structure remained then the vast resources available to the Irish community could have continued to be invested in land in the Dry Pampa and Irish settlement could not only have continued but would have increased at the same rate as settlement by the other immigrant communities in Argentina post 1870. The Argentine

government by their attempts in the 1880's to bring out Irish immigrants on their own together with the appeals by the Argentine Church for more Irish priests and nuns to work with the Irish community, clearly shows that the Argentines were most anxious that the old system of Irish immigration and settlement should continue. Instead the resources were spent on conspicuous consumption of imported goods and on fabulously lavish lifestyles, often in Paris or London, for as long as the money lasted, making Argentine estancieros a by-word, in Europe, for enormous personal spending between the end of World War One and the Great Depression of the 1930's.

Female emigrants, in the main, appear to have only considered emigration to an area where males of their own age and from their own areas were already established. Because the number of males in Argentina was never very large, by Irish standards, female emigration always remained considerably lower than male emigration. Because the Irish community did not urbanize the only economic avenue open to women who emigrated to Argentina was dependency or domestic service. Irish women were therefore unable to operate in the wider industrial development of Buenos Aires. Only in the United States where emigration from Ireland was so universally established and urbanized, were women were able to remain within the Irish community while working in the industrial sector. It was notable that it was only in the United States that independent female emigration exceed male emigration in a significant way during the nineteenth century. The lack of female emigration to Argentina was another important factor which inhibited family settlement in the country and was one of

a number of reasons why there was substantial re-emigration by Irish men during the nineteenth century.

The lifestyle of emigrants to Argentina was for a great number never the romantic existence portrayed in much of the records of the time. Life for the most part was hard, cruel and dangerous for the immigrant. Many overcame those difficulties and prospered but many did not. Loneliness was probably the greatest obstacle the immigrant had to face and overcome. It should be remembered that the literature of the time, which universally presents the picture of hard work and scrupulous honesty among the Irish, leading inexorably to prosperity and a happy home, may well be an accurate record for many emigrants during that period. It was far from being the whole story however, morality, under the conditions experienced by the Irish emigrants, was often very different from the morality which tends to be ascribed to them in retrospect. The loneliness from isolation eventually broke some immigrants' spirit, causing insanity, often aggravated by excessive consumption of alcohol, some then declined to the point where they were no better than the animals they looked after. Others were robbed and sometimes murdered for their property or their heirs cheated out of their inheritance by their more rapacious and unprincipled countrymen. Those are extreme cases of failure however and it would appear were the exception. Equally exceptional was the success of such families as the Duggans, The Hopes, the Hams the Gaynors etc. There was a wide spectrum on the scale of success and Irish emigrants were found on every point.

Overall however, the popular conception of an Irish emigrant arriving before 1865, and remaining in the country, acquiring a viable land holding and those who entered after 1870 working for those land owners is a reasonably accurate one. Each emigrant entering the country had a different experience and the main purpose of this work is to report on a wide variety of those experiences and to explain their background, in the hope that a better understanding can be achieved of why the Irish emigrated to Argentina and how they shaped and reacted to the conditions they found in the country.

The very important Irish contribution to both British and Spanish colonial expansion, as distinct from nineteenth century-style Irish settlement in the British colonial world, have to date never been properly researched from an Irish perspective. It comes as a surprise therefore to many when they find Irish names at all social levels, in both British and Spanish records, playing a very important part in European colonial expansion from the very beginning of the European colonial outreach. Furthermore due to this lack of basic research even such distinguished scholars as Kerby Millar worked on the assumption, that because the nineteenth century patterns of emigration from Ireland to the New World did not exist prior to the Ulster emigration to Colonial America in the eighteenth century, that the Irish were not emigrating, when the Irish have in fact been emigrating and re-settling within the European world, old and new, since the beginning of the sixteenth century and probably, in the case of Europe, well before then. Where Millar is correct is that mass emigration on a sustained scale, did not begin until the Scotch-Irish began emigrating to North America.

Whether such mass emigration was possible before then, as he argues, is problematic and further research will have to be published on Irish emigration pre-1780 before that point can be resolved. Permanent emigration before 1870 however, as Chapter 4 shows, was certainly well accepted if not the norm, among non-inheriting members of the wealthier Catholic classes in Ireland. In fairness to Millar, an American scholar, even the existence of a large wealthy Catholic class in Ireland during the penal times has barely been acknowledged much less been researched or recorded. Millar is far from being alone in his assumption. Meinig too, due to the lack of the same basic research, ignores Irish Catholic emigration to Europe and its consequent hugely important effect on the eventual form and shape of the Americas, while showing the Protestant Huguenot movements within Europe and their equally important contribution to the human settlement of the Americas.

It is not the function of this work to report on the overall Irish contribution to the general European outreach, or the possibly pioneering contribution of the Irish elites of that period to trans-Atlantic trade which was briefly mentioned in Chapter 4. Neither is it the function of this work to report on the role the Irish played in the unique achievement of bringing Argentina into the British colonial system while managing to deny British ambitions to rule in the colony. Those are subjects which urgently need serious study in their own right elsewhere. More research also needs to be carried out to measure more fully the effect Irish leadership's policy had on the failure of the Irish to urbanize in Buenos Aires. One major reason why the Irish in Argentina have not been studied until now is that they failed to form

a large urban community in Argentina and a deeper analysis of this failure to urbanize is required before nineteenth century emigration to there is fully understood.

Comparative studies between the large Irish land owners in Argentina and Ireland would also be worthwhile. In this writer's opinion a major factor why the Irish elites failed to capitalise on their opportunities post-1870 was because intellectually they were still back in Ireland. In Ireland it was not uncommon for the large land owners of Meath at least, to live in Dublin, have their children educated privately, often in England or send them to Blackrock College, Clongowse Wood Etc. They also failed to invest their capital in industrializing their country. Yet they had substantial capital reserves. It was the norm in small towns in the wealthy farming areas of Leinster and Munster with a population of less than 1,000 to have three, four, or even five English banks, with Irish names, competing for farming deposits. Both the Church in Ireland and Argentina was to a large extent controlled by the wealthy land owners. Cannon Dillon's classmates who were ministering in Ireland were also engaged in building monumental Catholic edifices which they equated with progress. It is very possible therefore that the Irish estancieros in Argentina were reacting to events as if they were in Ireland rather than in Argentina. Further evidence for this is the fact that they assumed that they had provided well for their children by passing on 400-500 acres to each of them. In Ireland a farm of that size would ensure a prosperous future for a child and grandchildren for many generations to come, whereas in Argentina a farm of that size offered little better than subsistence. It is possible therefore that the Irish community's

structure as constructed by Fr. Fahy and Thomas Armstrong, so insulated them from the realities of life in Argentina that they were taking their decisions as if they were large-scale farmers in Ireland. Without a comparative study however such conclusions cannot be sustained, but until such work is carried out one cannot judge too harshly the actions of the Irish landed elite in Argentina for ultimately failing themselves, their fellow countrymen and their country -Argentina-.

Despite all of those limitations however, it has to be acknowledged that for those who knew about it in the nineteenth century, Argentina offered the best opportunity for an Irish person with little or no resources of their own to become prosperous land owners. Those who were able to overcome the difficulties they encountered, which were very similar to those encountered in all pioneering communities in the New World, the rewards more than justified their efforts. Their community spirit rather than the Protestant model of individual effort was largely responsible for their success. That fact alone makes this community unique among the Irish in the New world which everywhere else was ruled by Britain and following the Protestant model of development. The fact that they were so successful shows that an alternative model of settlement to the British one was available and its neglect by scholars who study Irish emigration is therefore all the more regrettable. As a community they became and have remained more prosperous than any other group in Argentina. It is hoped that the broad outline of why and how an Irish community was established in Argentina, which was reported on here, will stimulate this much needed research, not only

on the Irish in Argentina, but, on the wider issues raised here in order that Irish emigration in general, together with the Ireland we live in today, can be better understood by succeeding generations.

A P P E N D I X            1

ORIGIN	STATED ORIGIN FOR EMIGRANTS					
	TOTAL	%	MALES	%	FEMALES	%
IRELAND ONLY	1679		920		759	
Co. of Origin	1984		1214		770	
TOTAL	3663		2134		1529	

BREAKDOWN BY COUNTY FOR EMIGRANTS

CO. OF ORIGIN	TOTAL	% *	MALES	% *	FEMALES	% *
Carlow	7	0.35	3	0.15	4	0.2
Cavan	10	0.5	9	0.45	1	0.5
Clare.....	71	3.58	41	2.07	30	1.51
Cork	90	4.54	58	2.93	32	1.61
Donegal	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Dublin.....	49	2.47	29	1.46	20	1.01
Galway	20	1.01	19	0.96	1	0.05
Kerry	36	1.82	24	1.21	12	0.61
Kildare.....	10	0.5	9	0.45	1	0.05
Kilkenny	19	0.96	11	0.55	8	0.04
Laois	14	0.71	8	0.4	6	0.3
Leitrim.....	1	0.05	1	0.05	0	0.0
Limerick	17	0.86	12	0.61	5	0.25
<b>Longford</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>14.63</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>9.54</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>5.1</b>
Louth.....	6	0.3	5	0.25	1	0.05
Mayo	10	0.5	8	0.4	2	0.1
Meath	10	0.5	8	0.4	2	0.1
Monaghan.....	1	0.05	0	0.0	1	0.05
<b>Offaly</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>1.31</b>
Roscommon	18	0.91	12	0.6	6	0.3
Sligo.....	7	0.35	7	0.35	0	0.0
Tipperary	14	0.71	10	0.5	4	0.2
Waterford	12	0.61	11	0.55	1	0.05
<b>Westmeath.....</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>43.54</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>24.57</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>18.97</b>
<b>Wexford</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>15.59</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>9.59</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>6.0</b>
Wicklow	12	0.61	10	0.5	2	0.1
Antrim.....	18	0.91	11	0.55	7	0.35
Armagh	2	0.1	1	0.05	1	0.05
Derry	3	0.15	3	0.15	0	0.0
Down.....	4	0.2	4	0.2	0	0.0
Fermanagh	3	0.15	2	0.1	1	0.05
Tyrone	1	0.05	1	0.0	0	0.0

\* Percentage figures are rounded to 2nd decimal place, therefore the columns do not sum to exactly 100%

**Source.** Derived from Coghlan 1987.

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