

## The Salamanca Archive- Journey into the twenty-first century.

The *Salamanca Archive Exhibition and Online Catalogue* was officially launched by the Spanish Ambassador, Mr Javier Garrigues Florez on 2nd December 2013 in St Patricks College, Maynooth. The online catalogue contains the papers of the Irish College, Salamanca and is available on

<http://library.nuim.ie/russell-library/manuscripts-and-archives/salamanca-archives>

The archive of the Irish College was brought to St Patricks College, Maynooth on the closure of the college in Salamanca in 1952. In total, the collection contains the archives of the Irish Colleges in Salamanca, Santiago de Compostela, Sevilla, Madrid, Alcalá de Henares and also contains some material from the English College in Valladolid spanning from the late sixteenth century right up to the mid-twentieth century.

The collection consists of over 50,000 individual items including loose material, bound and unbound volumes all contained in 101 archival boxes. It contains the formal records regarding the administrative, financial and general administration of the Irish College, along with the personal records of the Rectors who passed through the colleges lifetime. One can find items as varied as:

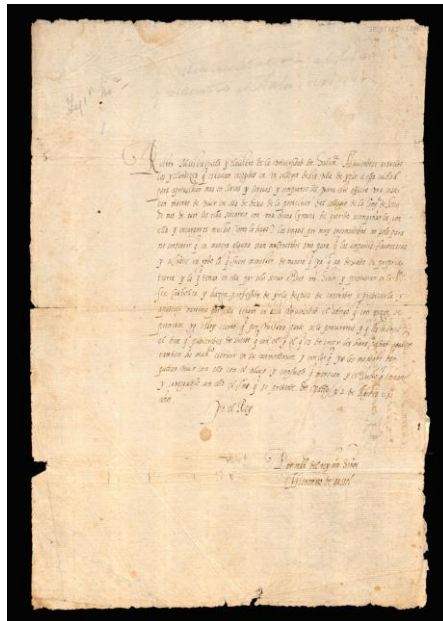
Student oaths, rectors private records, particular and private accounts, leases of property owned by the Irish College, receipts, book of income and daily expenses, correspondence, petitions, official ledgers, book of vows, patents and testimonials, bulls and briefs, royal documents, proclamations and decrees, title deeds, execution of wills, papers concerning estates, rents and royalties, mortgages and annuities.



Group photograph of seminarians of the Irish College, Salamanca with rector Rev Denis J O'Doherty and a visiting Archbishop. May 1930.

## Foundation:

The Irish College in Salamanca was founded by Rev. Thomas White who secured patronage from Philip II of Spain by means of a royal decree issued in Valladolid on 2 August 1592. This decree is often considered the inception of the Irish college in the city, known as the *Real Colegio de San Patricio de Nobles Irlandeses* and officially gave Rev White the support and permission to establish an Irish College in Salamanca specifically to educate and form Irish priests.



Copy of official letter from King Philip II giving his support towards the foundation of Regale Collegium Nobilium Hibernorum, regarded as the first and foremost of the Irish Colleges on the Iberian Peninsula.

From 1574 onwards Irish students, lay and clerical, had been coming to Salamanca in an effort to acquire, through Spanish generosity, the education they found so difficult to obtain at home. The main reason for this difficulty was the takeover of Ireland by the Protestant English state in the Tudor conquest of Ireland since 1534 resulting in a massive exile from the country. One of the main reasons for this exile was a series of penal laws against Catholics in operation in Ireland from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, which included acts forbidding Catholics to teach in Ireland or to send their children abroad for education, and the banishment of Catholic clergy, specifically foreign-educated priests. These Irish exiles were escaping both a political and religious oppression in their country along with the havoc of war and general economic dislocation. They exiled to the continent where they were able to find educational and economic opportunities and a better quality of life in

general. One of the main groups of exiles coming from Ireland were those seeking religious refuge.

Quickly, a 'network' of Irish Colleges began to emerge in countries such as France, Italy and Spain which educated both clergy and laity.

Salamanca was the first college to be founded in Spain and from there other colleges began to sprout up around various Spanish towns and cities. In the beginning these colleges were centres of education, politics and society. Supported by the Irish hierarchy and the Spanish monarchy the colleges had significant power in the political and social life of Spain. The Irish College in Salamanca was the largest of the colleges and it was considered the principal college. From its very inception the college received economic support from the crown. In 1593, by royal charter, Philip II granted a *juro* (a type of annuity) of 350,000 maravedis for the sustenance of the Seminary and from thereon his successors upheld this charity.

### **Student Life:**

If the colleges, at least at their origin, were not entirely ecclesiastical, the formation of priests was central to their mission. Irish students destined for the priesthood arrived in the Iberian Peninsula usually with some knowledge of Latin and the humanities received in the network of informal secondary schools in Ireland. Normally they entered the seminary at about eighteen years of age. Once in Spain, they enrolled for the prescribed study of arts and philosophy before moving on to theology and canon law. The whole course of study lasted seven years. On entering the college the students were required to write out a formal promise known as a *juramentos* or 'oaths', which were witnessed and sealed usually by fellow students. In it they pledged themselves to be obedient to the College authorities, complete their studies and return and continue 'The Irish Mission' in their homeland at the end of their studies. The texts of these oaths shed light on the personal and educational background of the students, naming their parents and dioceses and giving details of their studies, sometimes including the names of their teachers or hedge-schoolmasters in Ireland.

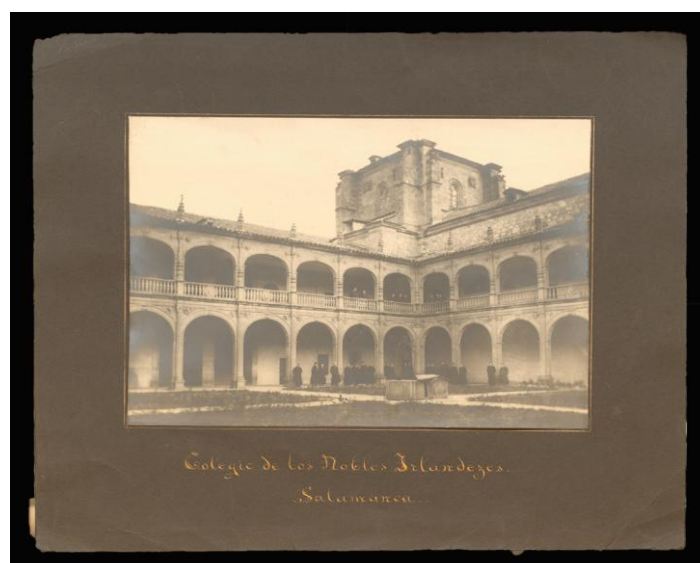
On the completion of their courses and following ordination the new priests applied to the king for a *viaticum*, a royal contribution granted under certain conditions to newly-ordained priests of the Irish Colleges. This was worth one hundred ducats and was given to priests returning to Ireland to cover the cost of their journeys. Between 1619 and 1659, at least 280 Irish priests applied for this *viaticum*. These viaticums

display just how committed and supportive the royal houses of Spain were to the establishment and development of Irish Colleges in their country.

### **Expulsion of Jesuits and the Peninsular Wars:**

By the mid 1700's, the Irish College in Salamanca was so firmly established that when Charles III expelled the Jesuits from Spain in 1767, the College continued its existence under royal protection. The only change was that from now on Irish secular priests would be present instead of Jesuit rectors. After the departure of the Jesuits the colleges in Seville and Santiago fell into such disarray that they had to be incorporated with Salamanca and in 1789 the rents and income of the Irish College at Alcala were also transferred.

In 1807, upheaval did come for the Irish College in Salamanca with the French invasion of the Peninsular Wars. The college had to be evacuated and closed. During the French occupations the College was looted and it lost nearly all its property including a large part of their archives, deeds of mortgage and treasury bonds. The Irish did return to Salamanca after the war and from 1838 they occupied *el palacio del Arzobispo* , the Fonseca Palace, given to the Irish by the Town Council through the influence of the English Ambassador to Spain at that time, George Villiers. This was where the college was to reside until it finally closed its doors in 1952.



El palacio del Arzobispo Fonseca, Salamanca. The Irish College resided in this building between 1838-1952 and to this day it is still known as El Colegio de los Irlandeses.1926.

## 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries:

By the early 1900's most of the Irish colleges on the Continent had been closed, partly because of an improvement in education opportunities and a more tolerant situation in Ireland. A national seminary for Catholics at St Patricks Maynooth had been established since 1795, and Catholic emancipation came in 1829. But the Irish college at Salamanca held fast to its position throughout the century.

But it was the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 that the Irish college in Salamanca was to be brought to a slow close. When the news of the revolt arrived, the students were on holidays in the summer villa of Pendueles and had to be evacuated through France. They were to be given 50 francs each for the journey back to Ireland by the Irish consul and this was to be the last '*viaticum*' and these the last students of the Irish Colleges in Spain. The rector of that time, Father Alexander McCabe, who had been on holidays in Ireland, returned to Salamanca in November 1936, to find that General Franco had established his headquarters there and that the college was being requisitioned by the military. Eventually Rev McCabe had to give way to pressure from the Spanish Government and allow the German Embassy to take over the college from June 1937 to May 1939.

At this stage, however, the College building , which was over four hundred years old, was in need of extensive repairs of which the college had no way to finance. The only solution seemed to be to sell the College. The Irish bishops sought an interview with General Franco and Ministers of State, and a compromise was arrived at whereby the College was given to the University of Salamanca on condition that the money realized from the sale of the Pendueles villa, lands and investments be given partly to the Irish College in Rome, and partly to establish scholarships. The *Colegio Mayor del Arzobispo Fonseca* was taken over by the University of Salamanca and has now been renovated as a university residence and cultural centre. It is still to this day known as *El Colegio de los Irlandeses*.



Launch of the Salamanca Archive exhibition and Online Catalogue. From left to right Cathal McCauley (University Librarian, NUI Maynooth), Rev Monsgr, Hugh Connolly (President, St Patrick's College), Susan Leyden (Archivist, St Patrick's College) and Ambassador of Spain Mr Javier Garrigues Florez.