

# Emigration to the 'North American Colonies' from the Port of Limerick in 1841

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In *Féilsgríbhinn Éamonn Mhic Giolla Iasachta: North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, volume XCII (1975), Caoimhín Ó Danachair published an interesting paper on emigration from County Clare. Undoubtedly many of those of whom he wrote sailed from the port of Limerick—this note covers the emigration from that port to Jamaica and North America during one year, 1841.

Amongst the William Smith O'Brien papers in the National Library of Ireland is MS 22370. This collection of miscellaneous papers contains "A return of all emigrants to the North American colonies and the United States who have embarked at this port", i.e. Limerick, for the first three quarters of the year 1841. Each of the three returns is signed "Richard Lynch, Govt. Emig. Agent". There would seem to have been no sailings in the last quarter of the year, as the list for the third quarter carries a sum of the embarkations for the first three quarters described as "total for the year". It is of interest that, apart from the *Robert Ker* sailing on the 11th of January to Jamaica and the *Shelmalier* sailing on the 21st of April to New York, all the sailings were to Canada.

In the National Archives in Washington there is an extensive collection of passenger lists of ships arriving in the United States during the nineteenth century. Amongst them is the list from the only sailing to the United States recorded in MS 22370, that of the *Shelmalier*, as the Limerick Port record has it, or the *Shelmalere*, as the captain's list of passengers names it. The ship sailed on the 21st of April and docked at New York on the 26th of May, a voyage of thirty-six days, which was very good time for the crossing. All of the one hundred and sixteen men, women and children who set out from Limerick survived the voyage.

Virtually all of the traffic from the Port of Limerick was to the St. Lawrence River area of Canada, an area which was frozen up for some months of the year. The *Limerick Chronicle* for the 23rd of June, 1841, reports that "three hundred vessels, which were waiting for the breaking up of the ice, sailed up the gulph of St. Lawrence last month." The reason for so much traffic on this route was the timber trade from Upper Canada to these islands and the westward trade in emigrants. In fact, the profits on the west bound emigrant trade were very close to those on the return voyage with timber.

The relationship between the timber trade and the emigrant trade was stated by the committee on the North American Colonial Association in a *Memoir on the Colonial timber trade presented to Sir Robert Peel* in 1842: "This marvellous movement which is there so fast replenishing the earth and subduing it, could not only never have so prospered as it has but for the timber trade, but could never have found its direction and seat within our dominions, nor even the means of opportunities of conveyance anywhere, but for that bridge across the Atlantic which has been formed by the timber ships".

Passage to Canada was the cheapest means of reaching the New World. While a steerage passage from Limerick to New York cost £3. 5s to £3. 10s, the trip to Quebec cost £2. 2s to £2. 5s, and the emigrant could then, if he wished, make his way to the United States. Martin Doyle's *Hints on Emigration to Upper Canada*, published in Dublin in 1831, lists the sort of store of food which an emigrant should take: "4 st. of oatmeal,

4 st. of cutlings for gruel, 4 st. of biscuits,  $\frac{1}{2}$  st. of sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of tea, 4 st. of butter, 20 st. of potatoes, and a few dozen eggs, which should be well greased, to exclude the air, and consequently preserve them fresh. I must add a quart or two of whiskey for emergencies, and no considerate agent would recommend or allow a much greater quantity". The same guide advised that the spring was the proper time for the agricultural emigrant to go out as work was more plentiful. This is the probable explanation for the great disparity in the numbers travelling in the same boat on different trips; the *Borneo*, for example, sailed on the 5th of April with 310 passengers and on the 3rd August with 54 passengers. Other boats show a similar drop in passengers in the later sailings.

The link between the emigrant trade and the timber trade is made clear in an advertisement in the *Limerick Chronicle* of the 17th of July, 1841:

James Harvey & Co. are now landing, ex Energy, Captain Irvine, from Quebec, a prime cargo of red and yellow pine timber; spruce and yellow pine deals: and pipe and barrel staves which, with their large stock of every article in the building line, they offer for sale on advantageous terms.

They are in daily expectation of the arrival of the Blessing, Amanda, and Kathleen, with a further supply. The Energy will be again despatched with passengers about the 16th inst.

Timber and Deal yard  
Bedford Row  
Limerick  
July 10.

Francis Spaight was the chief Limerick agent involved in the emigrant trade as well as the timber trade. Others were David Bannatyne, James Bannatyne and David Harvey. Wheat was also imported from Montreal by James Bannatyne for milling at Limerick.

The boats returning from Canada did not confine their cargo to grain and timber as is clear from the *Limerick Chronicle* of the 4th of September. It carries a report from Kilrush, dated the 2nd of September, that the coast guards from Kilrush, led by Lieut. P. J. Freir, had boarded the brig *Maria Brenan* on its way from Quebec to Limerick at Scattery Roads, near the mouth of the Shannon. They had found four cwt. of tobacco concealed in the cabin, and had detected a boat coming from the brig with contraband which included tea. The captain, Robert Campbell, and his crew were brought before the magistrates at Kilrush and charged with smuggling, but the case was dismissed on technical grounds. A later attempt to re-open the case before the Limerick magistrates failed.

While the outward trade was almost entirely composed of emigrants, the *Limerick Chronicle* of the 7th of April 1841 has a notice of the departure of the *Shelmalier* "with 100 passengers, and 150 tons Ballysimon marble".

The *Limerick Chronicle* through 1841 carries advertisements regularly for the emigrant boats from that port. The advertisement in the issue of the 17th of July is not untypical:

America. for Quebec. To sail about the 25th of this month, (wind and weather permitting), the ship *Borneo*, Timothy Gorman—master, just arrived in port after a favourable passage of 26 days from Quebec, when she landed the passengers that went out in the Spring, in the best possible order. Captain Gorman received the thanks of the emigration agent there, for the very cleanly and healthy appearance of the emigrants. The same attention will be, as usual, paid to those now about to emigrate to Quebec by the same conveyance. A medical gentleman will embark in charge of the passengers. For information respecting passage, + c., apply to the owner, Francis Spaight, at his office, No. 50, Henry St. July 13.

The *Limerick Chronicle* of the 19th of June 1841 has a letter of thanks from the passengers on board one of the Limerick boats addressed to their captain:



Shelmalier. Sir, we the cabin and intermediate passengers on board the Shelmalier, bound from Limerick to New York, take this opportunity, on the happy termination of our voyage, of returning you our heartfelt thanks for your kindness and attention to us during our passage, and for your attention to those who were visited with sickness; to you, Sir, who so eminently possess the necessary qualities of a seaman blended with those qualities of a higher order, which distinguish the gentleman and christian, this humble meed of our approbation can but faintly express the gratitude which we feel towards you, and the confidence with which, on some trying occasions you have inspired us. We now, Sir, take leave of you, earnestly beseeching the almighty God that you may have a long and prosperous run in the honourable profession you have chosen, and when your sand is run on this earth, may you, Sir, meet with that reward in another port, which the selfishness of man too often denies to sterling merits in this world. We have the honour to be, Sir, your most sincere and grateful servants,  
Anthony O'Sullivan, Daniel Falvy, George Wilson, In behalf of one hundred passengers.

To Captain John Pierce, of the Shelmalier, from Limerick to New York June 19.

A similiar address presented to David Irvine, master of the *Energy*, who is named as Irwin in the Port of Limerick returns, appears in the same issue of the *Limerick Chronicle*. It bears the names of twenty-seven of the passengers who had reached Quebec on the 20th of May after a six-week voyage.

Only rarely does the press of the time refer to the place of origin of these emigrants, but it is reasonable to assume that they were from Limerick and adjoining counties. We are told in the *Limerick Chronicle* of the 31st of March, 1841: "The *Borneo*, of and from this port, cleared out yesterday for Quebec, with 307 passengers, mostly agricultural labourers from the districts of Ballyheige, Tarbert, and Ballylongford, in Kerry".

Not all the boats which sailed to America from Limerick survived to make a return journey. The *Breeze*, having safely passed Scattery Island on its way down the Shannon Estuary, went ashore at Scatarie on the coast of Nova Scotia on the 12th of May; the crew and passengers were saved.

The *Limerick Chronicle* of the 14th of August, reports that the "*Lord Cochrane* of Tralee, the property of Messrs. Hickson, after landing emigrants in Quebec, all well, was, on her return, homeward bound with a cargo of timber, wrecked on the coast of America—crew saved". But the fate of the brig *Minstrel*, and of the bark, *Amanda*, was less happy.

The *Limerick Chronicle* of the 16th of June has an account from the *Quebec Mercury* of the 22nd of May of the shipwreck of the *Minstrel*, with the loss of almost one hundred and fifty lives. The *Minstrel* left Limerick on the 21st of April and had reached the coast of Canada by the 18th of May. At four in the morning of the 18th she struck Red Island Reef and, though the boats were launched, the *Minstrel* went down so quickly that only four of the passengers and four of the crew escaped death. The newspaper contains a list of the passengers with their place of origin and of the crew. There were several families on the voyage—seven Cronins from Doon, seven Mulvihills from Askeaton, twelve Carneys from Tullogh—and many other families from counties Clare and Limerick. One of those who survived the sinking of the *Minstrel*, a steward named O'Loughlen from Ennis, had escaped from three previous shipwrecks.

The *Limerick Chronicle* of the 3rd of November reports the loss of *Amanda*. She was wrecked at Little Metis Point on the coast of Canada on the 26th of September with the loss of forty-one lives; ten of the passengers and six of the crew were saved. Most of the passengers were listed as being from counties Clare and Limerick.

The first boat from Limerick to head westward in 1841 was the *Robert Kerr*, bound for Jamaica, and the *Limerick Chronicle* of the 2nd of January has an extensive report on the preparations for departure of the ship. It gives a full list of passengers, including



"Michael and Catherine Marshall, and their five children, Mary, James, John, Anne, and Michael (a remarkably fine healthy and interesting country family)". Amongst the passengers was a priest, Rev. Solomon Frost, a native of Limerick City, and Dr. Thomas Casey of Rathkeale went as ship's surgeon.

The provisions laid in for the voyage are described as being sufficient for twice as many passengers and included water, beef and pork, potatoes, bread, tea, coffee, sugar, flour and wine. Many of those who went were poor for "a large quantity of printed calico for women's wear was purchased at Todd's and distributed to the females on yesterday with thread, lining, etc., to make garments for them during the passage out, and, also, a cap, coat, and trousers to each of the men, and a quantity of blanketting for such poor families as appeared to stand most in want of it".

The *Limerick Chronicle* of the 5th of May contains a letter to his father from Thomas Daly, one of those who had sailed on the *Robert Kerr*. The voyage to Jamaica took forty-three days and in the course of the voyage Daly's wife gave birth to a girl. He was to enlist in the police at wages of £60 per year, and he would encourage his sister to join him; "This is the country for a poor man of sober and industrious habits", he wrote.

The issue of the 26th of June has a letter from Father Frost, the priest who had accompanied the emigrants. A large number of the emigrants had gone to work in the mountainous part of the island which was much healthier than Kingston or Spanishtown. Nine of those who had stayed in the coastal towns had died, and half these deaths arose from fever caused by drunkenness. Father Frost's letter lists the location and employment of the emigrants, and their wages, which varied from £25 to £50 a year. The best paid job was in the police, as Joseph Wilson's letter in the same issue of the newspaper indicated: "The police is a fine situation here, £60 sterling a year with a barrack, fire and candle light". John Ryan of Limerick City did very well for himself, too: the *Limerick Chronicle* of the 10th of November reports: "Mr. John Ryan, late of this city, grocer and spirit retailer, who emigrated to Jamaica by the *Robert Kerr*, is appointed Steward of the Naval Hospital at Port Royal, at a salary of £10 a month".

John Francis Maguire in *The Irish in America*, 4th ed. 1884, has much to say about the Irish in Canada, and since so many of the people of whom I write sailed from Limerick for Quebec it is proper to quote him: "Not only are the Irish in Quebec, and indeed along the St. Lawrence, among the most industrious and energetic portion of the population, but they are thrifty and saving, and have acquired considerable property... They seemed to me to bear themselves with an air of manly independence, as free citizens of a free country, in which the laws make no distinction between man and man".

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the Trustees of the National Library for permission to publish MS 22370 (see p. 71), and to the National Archives, Washington, U.S.A., for permission to publish the list of passengers on the *Shelmalere* (see pp. 73-76).



# PORT OF LIMERICK

A return of all emigrants to the North American colonies who have embarked at this port for quarter ending 31st March 1841.

Nos.	Ships & Masters Names		Tonnage and Destination		No. of Crew	When Cleared	When Sailed	Adults		Children		Infants u. 12 mths	Totals
								Males	Females	Males	Females		
1.	"Robert Ker"	P. Agnew	357 Tons	Jamaica	17	Jany 1st	Jany 12th	57	50	16	8	3	134
2.	"Kathleen"	R. Mills	176 Tons	St. John's N.B.	11	March 11th	March 12th	4	4	1	0	1	10
Totals								61	54	17	8	4	144

A return of all emigrants to the North American colonies and United States of America who have embarked at this port for quarter ending 30th June 1841.

Nos.	Ships & Masters Names		Tonnage and Destination		No. of Crew	When Cleared	When Sailed	Adults		Children		Infants u. 12 mths	Totals
								Males	Females	Males	Females		
1.	"Energy"	Irwin	305 Tons	Quebec	13	April 2nd	April 5th	61	53	10	8	7	139
2.	"Borneo"	T. Gorman	458 Tons	Quebec	21	March 31st	April 5th	133	89	34	26	28	310
3.	"Breeze"	O'Donnell	321 Tons	Quebec	16	April 2nd	April 5th	76	60	6	11	6	159
4.	"Ninian"	Bowler	361 Tons	Quebec	14	April 1st	April 5th	80	60	18	18	6	182
5.	"John & Mary"	Wright	344 Tons	Quebec	14	April 5th	April 7th	14	11	3	4	4	36
6.	"Governor"	D. Gorman	309 Tons	Quebec	16	April 6th	April 7th	88	70	15	16	14	203
7.	"Thetis"	Ross	297 Tons	Quebec	13	April 8th	April 12th	55	39	11	17	10	132
8.	"Shelmaliel"	Pierce	253 Tons	New York	12	April 10th	April 21st	52	40	12	12	0	116
9.	"Anne Moore"	Paton	238 Tons	Quebec	14	April 12th	April 21st	68	36	15	18	11	148
10.	"Nerio"	Ellis	184 Tons	Miramichi (New Brunswick)	12	April 12th	April 21st	45	32	7	13	9	106
11.	"Bryan Abbs"	Hugill	256 Tons	Quebec	13	April 13th	April 21st	43	27	14	8	4	96
12.	"Minstrel"	Outerbridge	296 Tons	Quebec	15	April 16th	April 21st	49	43	19	20	10	141
13.	"Amanda"	Davis	427 Tons	Quebec	18	April 23rd	April 29th	120	79	28	42	28	297
14.	"James Cooke"	Follin	204 Tons	Quebec	11	April 24th	April 28th	55	38	19	33	16	161
15.	"Dolphin"	Nichols	201 Tons	Quebec	11	May 14th	May 21st	55	38	23	13	12	141
16.	"Jane"	Rose	191 Tons	St. John's N.B.	10	May 15th	May 21st	34	23	9	5	2	73
17.	"Maria Brennan"	Campbell	206 Tons	Quebec	11	May 22nd	May 24th	53	45	17	19	3	137
18.	"Emerald"	Sharp	142 Tons	St. John's N.B.	10	May 21st	May 22nd	4	3	—	—	—	7
19.	"China"	Ball	432 Tons	Quebec	18	June 15th	June 23rd	65	51	28	16	16	176
20.	*"Lord Cocharane"	Williams	499 Tons	Quebec	17	April 19th	April 20th	166	109	33	34	22	344
21.	*"Nicholson"	Elbeck	159 Tons	Quebec	9	May 22nd	May 24th	44	28	15	12	4	103
Totals								1340	974	336	345	212	3207

\*The entries for *Lord Cocharane* and *Nicholson* are annotated 'Tralee'. In fact, both of these ships sailed from Tralee for Canada, according to the *Limerick Chronicle* of 24 April and 26 May, respectively.

A return of all emigrants to the North American colonies who have embarked at this port for quarter ending Sept. 30th. 1841.

Nos.	Ships & Masters Names		Tonnage and Destination		No. of Crew	When Cleared	When Sailed	Adults		Children		Infants u. 12 mths	Totals
								Males	Females	Males	Females		
1.	"Watchful"	Duncan	268 Tons	Quebec	9	July 3rd	July 14th	46	38	11	15	10	120
2.	"Nerio"	Ellis	184 Tons	Miramichi	12	July 14th	July 15th	2	1	—	—	—	3
3.	"Helen Steward"	Stewart	258 Tons	Quebec	10	July 22nd	July 23rd	5	5	—	5	1	16
4.	"Ninian"	Bowler	361 Tons	Quebec	14	July 23rd	Augt. 3rd	2	7	—	—	—	9
5.	"Energy"	Irwin	305 Tons	Quebec	14	July 22nd	July 23rd	25	23	10	14	3	75
6.	"Borneo"	T. Gorman	458 Tons	Quebec	21	July 27th	Augt. 3rd	21	15	10	7	1	54
7.	"Governor"	D. Gorman	309 Tons	Quebec	13	Augt. 6th	Augt. 9th	21	16	11	8	2	58
8.	"Amanda"	Davis	427 Tons	Quebec	18	Augt. 17th	Augt. 22nd	18	15	3	2	1	39
Totals								140	120	45	51	18	374

144  
3207  
374

3725 Total for the Year

Richard Lynch  
Govt. Emig. Agent

The following is the record of the *Shelmelere* from the Passenger Lists in the National Archives at Washington. The National Library of Ireland holds microfilm copies of many of these lists.

There are seven columns of information on each passenger; I have included the first four. In the fifth column, 'the country to which they severally belong' Ireland was the answer in all cases. 'The country to which they intend to become inhabitants', column six, was the United States for all. Column seven, 'died on voyage', was mercifully blank. It seems reasonable, therefore, to omit those columns.

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Record No. 309 of 1841

Bark Shelmelere 26 May 1841. List of Passengers 1841 Limerick  
District of New York — Port of New York

I, John Pierce, do solemnly, sincerely and truly swear that the following list or manifest of passengers, subscribed with my name, and now delivered by me to the Collector of the Customs for the district of New York, contains to the best of my knowledge and belief, a just and true account of all the passengers received on board the Br. Barque Shelmelere whereof I am master, from Limerick... sworn to, this 26th May, 1841.

Names	Age years months	Sex	Occupation
1. John Crosby	40	Male	Baker
2. Mary Crosby	35	Female	Wife to „
3. Catherine Crosby	13	Female	Child
4. Morice Crosby	10	Male	Child
5. Julia Crosby	11	Female	Child
6. Bridget Griffin	17	Female	Child
7. Margaret Griffin	5	Female	Child
8. John Moran	40	Male	Shoemaker
9. Jane Moran	38	Female	Wife to „
10. Michael Corbett	18	Male	Laborer
11. Eugene Couting	26	Male	Laborer
12. Ellen Couting	22	Female	Servant
13. Edward Ryan	20	Male	Laborer
14. John Moloney	27	Male	Laborer
15. Patrick Moloney	25	Male	Laborer
16. Thomas Lillis	27	Male	Laborer
17. Chas. Gurmon	24	Male	Laborer
18. Danl. Mc Cartney	22	Male	Laborer
19. Catherine Mc Cartney	18	Female	Wife



20.	Nicholas Fin	30	Male	Laborer
21.	Catherine Fin	25	Female	Wife
22.	Michael Mc Namara	35	Male	Laborer
23.	Bridget Mc Namara	28	Female	Wife
24.	John Mc Namara	6	Male	Child
25.	Mary Mc Namara	5	Female	Child
26.	Patrick Mc Namara	3	Male	Child
27.	Martin Mc Namara	1	Male	Child
28.	George Boucher	38	Male	Laborer
29.	Mary Boucher	32	Female	Wife
30.	Thomas Boucher	9	Male	Child
31.	Henry Boucher	7	Male	Child
32.	John Boucher	5	Male	Child
33.	Anne Boucher	1	Female	Child
34.	Hannah McDonough	23	Female	Servant
35.	John Laughman	36	Male	Laborer
36.	Margaret Laughman	22	Female	Wife
37.	Johanna Laughlin	1	Female	Child
38.	Patrick Laughlin	26	Male	Laborer
39.	Catherine Langham	24	Female	Servant
40.	Margaret Langham	1	Female	Child
41.	William Langham	21	Male	Laborer
42.	Michael Mc Rea	27	Male	Laborer
43.	Mary Mc Rea	25	Female	Wife
44.	Maurice Mc Rea	1	Male	Child
45.	Patrick Barry	30	Male	Laborer
46.	Mary Barry	25	Female	Laborer
47.	Catherine Barry	1	Female	Child
48.	Patrick Hagan	18	Male	Laborer
49.	Bridget Mannon	20	Female	Spinster
50.	Danl. McCartey	27	Male	Laborer
51.	John White	25	Male	Laborer
52.	Patrick White	27	Male	Laborer
53.	Mary McCall	24	Female	Spinster
54.	Debora Moran	21	Female	Spinster
55.	Chas. Counens	24	Male	Baker
56.	Ellen Counens	22	Female	—
57.	Mary Whealan	40	Female	Widow
58.	Patrick Moloney	25	Male	Laborer
59.	James Moloney	21	Male	Laborer
60.	Henry Walsh	28	Male	Laborer
61.	Hannah Ready	20	Female	Spinster
62.	Bridget Ready	14	Female	Spinster
63.	Peggy Crean	24	Female	Spinster
64.	Ellen Wilson	25	Female	Spinster
65.	Patrick Corbett	10	Male	Child

66.	Mary Hobby	48	Female	Widow
67.	Michael Madigan	27	Male	Laborer
68.	Johanna Madigan	25	Female	Laborer
69.	Thomas Walsh	20	Male	Laborer
70.	Dennis Cullen	23	Male	Laborer
71.	Bridget Hickty	24	Female	Spinster
72.	Mary Connell	24	Female	Spinster
73.	Michael Hays	18	Male	Laborer
74.	Barnett Brien	22	Male	Laborer
75.	Hannon Baker	24	Female	Spinster
76.	Margaret Baker	22	Female	Spinster
77.	Jas. Dalton	28	Male	Laborer
78.	Mary Renday	22	Female	Spinster
79.	Catherine Floyd	40	Female	Spinster
80.	Jas. Meehan	21	Male	Laborer
81.	Morris Doran	25	Male	Laborer
82.	Thos. Lyns	18	Male	Laborer
83.	Timothy Murphy	24	Male	Laborer
84.	Geo. Sullivan	45	Male	Laborer
85.	Ellen Sullivan	40	Female	Laborer
86.	Jas. Sullivan	37	Male	Laborer
87.	Arthur Sullivan	14	Male	Laborer
88.	Maryanna Sullivan	11	Female	Labourer
89.	Eliza. Sullivan	9	Female	Laborer [?]
90.	Anthony Sullivan	24	Male	Bootmaker
91.	Danl. Falvey	25	Male	Carpenter
92.	Michael Haffernan	40	Male	Laborer
93.	Thos. White	25	Male	Laborer
94.	Jas. Hurly	27	Male	Laborer
95.	Geo. Wilson	24	Male	Baker
96.	Bridget Wilson	22	Female	Laborer
97.	Mary Ann Wilson	3	Female	Laborer [?]
98.	Ann Wilson	1	Female	Laborer [?]
99.	Mary Madden	16	Female	Laborer
100.	Mary Sullivan	30	Female	Laborer
101.	John Cussin	24	Male	Gentleman
102.	Patrick Moran	27	Male	Carpenter
103.	Jas. McCarty	37	Male	Tailor
104.	Ellen Ready	29	Female	Laborer
105.	John Atterday	6	Male	Entry
106.	Mary O Cannan	21	Female	Blotted
107.	Michael O Brien	22	Male	Cordwainer
108.	John O Brien	20	Male	Laborer
109.	Mary Fitzgerald	20	Female	Dressmaker
110.	John Madigan	30	Male	Laborer
111.	Felix Ready	26	Male	Smith



112.	Sally Ready	26	Female	—
113.	Bridget Comary	30	Female	Widow
114.	Alex Heffernan	40	Male	Laborer
115.	Michael Boucher	2	Male	Child
116.	Nichs. White	1½	Male	Child

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