

were included in the third and fourth class categories.

A French visitor to Ireland in the 1830's described the typical Irish house in the following terms:

"Imagine four walls of dried mud (which the rain, as it falls, easily restores to its primitive conditions) having for its roof a little straw or some sods, for its chimney a hole cut in the roof, or very frequently the door through which alone the smoke finds an issue. One single apartment contains father, mother, children and sometimes a grandfather or a grandmother; there is no furniture in the wretched hovel; a single bed of straw serves the entire family. Five or six half-naked children may be seen crouched near a miserable fire, the ashes of which cover a few potatoes, the sole nourishment of the family. In the midst of all lies a dirty pig, the only thriving inhabitant of the place, for he lives in filth. The presence of the pig in an Irish hovel may at first seem an indication of misery; on the contrary, it is a sign of comparative comfort. Indigence is still more extreme in the hovel where no pig is to be found....."

"This dwelling is very miserable, still it is not that of the pauper properly so called. I have just described the dwelling of the Irish farmer or agricultural labourer."

AFTER THE FAMINE

After 1851 a new situation developed in Mount Collins. The reclamation of the northern half of the parish began and further fields were enclosed in Knockcoolceare and Seconglass.

In 1861 the number of houses had gone up by 21, distributed as follows:

Caherlevoy	four
Knockcoolceare	seven
Mount Collins	six
Seconglass	four

A further increase took place in the following decade. In that decade six more houses were built in Caherlevoy, twelve in Mount Collins, six in Seconglass, three in Acrea and there was a town of five in Knock-

coolceare. In 1871 there were 154 houses, an increase of twenty-two in the previous decade and an increase of eleven over 1841.

In 1881 the number of houses was still the same at 154, an increase of four in Caherlevoy and Mount Collins being offset by a decrease of four in the other three townlands. In the thirty years after 1851 all the houses in upper Caherlevoy were built and the village grew away from a hamlet.

THE FARM HOUSES

Up to the end of the last century the houses came within the fourth or third class categories with the majority of the houses up to the Famine at least being mud cabins.

The remaining houses were farm houses of from three to four rooms with a few of the houses on the larger farms up to second class standard. The oldest of these farm houses survived up to a year or two ago. The oldest of them were Batt Leahy's and John E. Jones' which were up to 200 years. Most of the others were erected within the past hundred years.

THE KITCHEN

The kitchen furniture included a set of solid chairs which served their purpose better than anything which may replace them. The parlour chairs were usually round backed Windsor chairs. No house could boast of a Sheraton or Hipplewhite though in more recent years upholstered chairs of ornamental design were used in parlours.

A noticeable feature of the older houses was the settle. This could seat a few people in daytime but its function was no so much that of a seat as it was a bed. All these settle beds have disappeared. Three-legged stools were often used and forms of bog-deal were used on occasion.

The kitchen table was of solid deal on substantial legs. It had to be substantial for not only was it used as a dining table, it was brought into use for heavy tasks like the killing of the pig. Very rarely was there a

land, and when as he says, "it is borne in mind that they were mostly intended for human habitation the population was of considerable extent". Estimates drawn from Joyce's calculations would put the number of people in Ancient Ireland somewhere around half a million.

POPULATION IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Figures for the end of the eleventh century give the population as a million. It was only slightly over that at the end of the fourteenth century and by the middle of the sixteenth century it was down to three fourths of a million. It is understandable that in the early and middle ages the possibilities of any rapid increase in population were extremely slight. The social and medical facilities which now give a high life-expectancy did not then exist. The conditions throughout Europe differ little from those in Ireland and up to the end of the sixteenth century the population of Europe did not reach 100 millions.

POPULATION LOW BEFORE THE FAMINE

The population in all this western area was very low up to the time of the Siege of Limerick. And it is probable that it was only after the beginning of the eighteenth century the population began to grow. The pressure of population on the land from the end of the eighteenth century forced more people into the remote areas. But even up to the middle of the nineteenth century there is no evidence of undue pressure in this parish.

Various reasons have been put forward for the phenomenal increase in population in Ireland in the century prior to the Famine. The potato was introduced towards the end of the sixteenth century. It was an important part of the diet by the end of the seventeenth, and was the main staple food item by the end of the eighteenth. Its very high productive power, its suitability for spade culture and the fact that a small patch or indifferent soil could provide a family with food, encouraged early marriages. With the system of land tenure so bad that the possibility of any rise in the social scale was extremely remote, young couples settled down without waiting for the family holding, with the end result that the population went rapidly upwards — precipitating the Famine. The pre-Famine maps of Mount Collins parish show in the remoter areas, the tendency to extremely small field sizes. The earlier houses in the remote parts of the parish were probably indicative of the fact that early

settlement here was based on the potato. But the significant point about the population of the parish is that it did not reach its peak till well after the Famine because most of the more remote mountainous area still remained enclosed. The tables showing changes in the number of fields will help to make this clearer.

Census Year	Population of Mount Collins	% Change in the parish	% Change in Limerick County
1841	860	-25.8	-25.9
1851	638	+18.02	-17.2
1861	753	+12.88	-11.7
1871	830	+17.23	-6.9
1881	973	14.1	-14.3
1891	836	6.2	-11.3
1901	774	5.17	-4.1
1911	814	0.5	-2.6
1926	718	-12.2	-0.8
1936	691	3.8	----
1946	672	2.9	-3.3
1951	654	2.7	-3.9
1956	665	3	5
1961			
1966			
1971			

The first striking feature in the table is the marked similarity in the decline at the time of the Famine in the population of Mount Collins and in that of the rural population of Limerick as a whole. Between 1841 and 1851 the decline in each case was approximately 26 per cent. In Ireland excluding the Six Counties the decline in this decade was roughly 22 per cent.

THE FAMINE DECADE

Within the parish itself there were pronounced differences in the pattern of decline from one townland to another during the Famine decade. In Acres there was a decline of 73 per cent. In Knockcoolceore the decline was 39 per cent. In Caherlevoy it was 29 per cent, and in Seconglass it was 27 per cent and Mount Collins only 13 per cent. It is noticeable that the village townland shows by far the smallest percentage decline. Whether this has any particular significance it is difficult to say. The figure would seem to indicate that there was a move towards the village and away from the purely rural areas. This movement of people away from the rural areas into the towns was a noticeable feature after the Famine. The population of Newcastle West, for instance, went up by over 60 per cent between 1841 and 1851 and the population of Listowel almost doubled. This increase in the urban population (though not of quite the same magnitude) is typical of what happened in many of the Irish towns at the time. It may simply be described as a movement from the rural to the urban slum.

EVICTIONS AND CLEARANCES

After the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1845 there was, in the country as a whole, a transition from tillage to pasture, though its significance has been magnified, for at no time was Ireland highly tilled. In 1847 70 per cent of the country's land was under pasture. The Corn Laws provided a ready-made excuse for the consolidation of the smaller holdings into larger farms. Before the Famine, due to the extreme pressure of people on the land, subdivision had been carried to extremes. In 1841, over three fourths of the entire population was squeezed into less than one fourth of the land. The number of small holdings had increased enormously and in 1841 had the extraordinary high total of 310,000. When the number under one acre is included, the number of fragmented holdings reached up to half a million.

In the evictions and clearances following the Famine a quarter of a million holdings of between one and five acres were wiped out of existence and replaced by larger farms. There is no strong tradition in the parish of Mount Collins of widespread consolidation of holdings at the time of the Famine, and the available evidence bears out the tradition.

In his evidence before the Devon Commission in Newcastle West in August 1844 Mr. Patrick Hayes, landlord of Cregg and Caherhayes (the townlands adjoining Mount Collins) stated: "Farms are not often consolidated, and when they are it creates discontent. Sub-letting is carried on to a great extent. The cause of this is the increasing population. When a man gets his son married he gives him portion of the land, and the woman brings as a fortune either stock, or promissory notes for the amount. Its effects on population are evident."

That there was some consolidation in the parish is evident from the very severe decline in the townland of Acres, for instance. That there were clearances of sub-tenants seems indicated by the fact that the number of houses in this townland declined by fifty per cent in the Famine decade. As has been already pointed out there was no undue pressure on the land in the parish generally and in fact there is no strong surviving tradition of starvation at the time. One man was seen dying by the roadside in the village but otherwise the memories of the Famine seem to have been forgotten.

INCREASE AFTER THE FAMINE

As will be seen from the table, the really significant change in the parish took place after the Famine. Between 1851 and 1861 the population went up by 18 per cent. It went up by 11 per cent in the following decade and by a further 17 per cent between 1871 and 1881. In other words the population of the parish went progressively upwards in marked contrast to the country as a whole where the population went steadily down.

The following table shows the changes in population in Cork, Kerry and Limerick in the intercensal periods from 1841 to 1881. The changes in Mount Collins show a completely opposite trend.

PERCENTAGE CHANGES IN POPULATION

	1841 to <u>1851</u>	1851 to <u>1861</u>	1861 to <u>1871</u>	1871 to <u>1881</u>
Cork	-23.9	-16.1	-5.1	-4.1
Kerry	-18.9	-15.3	-2.6	2.3
Limerick	-20.6	-17.1	-5.9	-5.9
Mount Collins D.E.D.	-25.8	+18	+11	+17

The lower rate of decline in Cork, Kerry and Limerick from 1841 to 1851 is due largely to increases in the city and town populations. From 1851 to 1861 however there was a marked decline in the population of all three counties to be followed by a slower rate of decline in the two following decades. In Mount Collins, on the other hand, there was a pronounced increase in all three decades. This increase after the famine shows a tendency that may have shown itself in other individual parishes where there was land available for settlement. In his "Irish Agriculture in Transition", Professor Johnston states that he found a similar phenomenon in certain districts in North Cork and it is not unlikely that this trend will show itself in some parts of Kerry and in the hill land areas of Limerick. In general however, the population was going steadily down.

In the decade 1926-36 the decline in population in Ireland has practically ceased for the first time since the Famine. In Limerick city and county taken together, the population went up, and in Limerick county the decline was less than one per cent or one sixteenth of what it was in Mount Collins.

The depression in the United States in the early thirties brought emigration to America to a standstill, and this marked the end of an era. Up to the 1930's emigration to Britain was negligible. Very few people entered the British army and the movement to civilian employment in Britain was very slight. The tradition pattern for years and years was emigration to America. The "American Wake" was the melancholy expression of the break up of the family unit and for many in the earlier

years it has practically the same finality as death. Only those who have heard the old womans' caoining at an American wake, can realise how depressing it really was.

The one bright spot in this sad business was the expectation of the American letter. Not only did it recast the family link, it frequently provided monetary assistance for those at home. The small North Cork town of Newmarket was for this parish and for other parishes in West Limerick and North Kerry, the gateway to the wider world. It was the starting point of the railway journey to Queenstown. This was the town "with the tips of its toes in the ocean" that imprinted itself on the rural mind and every returned American would "venture another flight just for the joy of returning". During the long period of emigration right through the latter half of the nineteenth century, and up to recent years, Queenstown or Cobh, as it is now known, was the only port of embarkation. Movement through Dublin or Rosslare was almost unheard of up to comparatively recent years.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND AFTER

During the decade 1936 to 1946 the population of Ireland declined by less than half of one per cent. There was a certain amount of emigration to Britain but it never reached the proportions of the earlier or later years.

INCREASE IN POPULATION IN KERRY

It will be seen from the table that the population of Kerry increased between 1871 and 1881. This is rather a significant development. Apart from Dublin it was the only county to show an increase in the intercensal period between 1841 and 1926. The reason for that probably lies in the fact that Kerry had at the time considerable areas of land for reclamation. During the late Sixties and early Seventies, agriculture was relatively prosperous and considerable areas along the county's western sea-board were reclaimed with the result that the areas under crops and pasture in the country as a whole went up from 12 million acres to practically 13 million acres in 1876.