

Emigration Series: 1



Emigration to the U.S.A.

***Hi! Uncle Sam!
Wherever there was fighting
Or wrong that needed righting
An Ulsterman was sighting
His Kentucky gun with care:
All the road from Yorktown
From Lexington to Yorktown
From Valley Forge to Yorktown
That Ulsterman was there!***

American Revolutionary Ballad

The history of emigration from Ireland is dominated by the mass exodus during the period of the Great Famine and its aftermath, when more than a million people left the country for North America. In Ulster, where the effects of the Great Famine were less dramatic than in the South and West of Ireland, emigration reached its greatest peak during the eighteenth century. These emigrants were for the most part Protestant, and in particular Presbyterian.

The main cause of emigration during the eighteenth century was the attraction of the American colonies for those who were eager to improve their prospects - younger sons in particular. On 12 May 1785, John Dunlap, who was responsible for the printing of the Declaration of Independence, wrote to his brother-in-law in Strabane, Co. Tyrone, extolling the advantages of the New World: *'People with a family advanced in life find great difficulties in emigration, but the young men of Ireland who wish to be free and happy should leave it and come here as quick as possible. There is no place in the world where a man meets so rich a reward for good conduct and industry as in America.'*

The most obvious source for researchers who are descendants of emigrants to the United States of America from Ireland are the emigration records deposited in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately emigration is not, as a general rule, particularly well documented. Most passenger lists, for example, are to be found at the port of arrival rather than departure due to the fact that the authorities were more concerned with recording those entering a country rather than those leaving. Letters written from emigrants to their relatives in Ulster form the most substantial part of our emigration records. This sort of material can be found in many of the private collections deposited at PRONI. The easiest way to locate these records is to use the **Subject Index** in the Search Room. Under the subject heading 'Emigration', researchers will find a brief description of the records, the relevant dates and the appropriate reference number.

Researchers should also consult the **Place Names Card Index** in the Search Room which contains numerous references to emigrant letters from settlers in America.

Passenger Lists are another valuable source of Emigration Records. Of particular interest are:

- T711/1** List of passengers from Warrenpoint and Newry to Philadelphia and New York, 1791-2
- MIC333/1** Passenger Lists - Philadelphia, 1800-82
- MIC333/2** Passenger Lists - Baltimore, 1890-91
- MIC333/3** Passenger Lists - Boston, 1871-91
- MIC333/4** Passenger Lists - New York, 1826-27, 1840-2 and 1850-2
- T1011** Passengers from various origins arriving mainly in New York, 1802-14
- T3262** Passenger Lists from Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Londonderry, Newry, Sligo, Warrenpoint to USA, 1803-06
- T521/1** Passenger Lists from Ireland to America, 1804-06 (index available in *Deputy Keeper's Report 1929*)
- D2892/1/1-14** Passenger Books of J & J Cooke, Shipping Agents. Sailings from Londonderry to Philadelphia, Quebec, St John's, New Brunswick, 1847-71 (see also **MIC13**)

A number of emigrants lists are available on the shelves of the Search Room, including:

The Famine Immigrants: Lists of Irish Immigrants Arriving at the Port of New York, 1846-1851 (seven volumes, published in 1983) which contains data from the original ship manifest schedules for the Port of New York, deposited in the National Immigration Archives in the Balch Institute in Philadelphia. Besides names, other details recorded include age, occupation, native country, port of embarkation and arrival date. This is now freely available on-line at ancestry.co.uk

Irish Passenger Lists 1847-1871, contains lists of passengers sailing from Londonderry to America on ships of the J & J Cooke Line and the McCorkell Line.

Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Boston, 1820-1891.

Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, 1820-1821.

Immigrants to New England, 1700-1775, contains an alphabetical list compiled by Ethel Stanwood Bolton.

Lists of Emigrants of America, 1635-1776, contains lists of passengers, including Irish emigrants, who departed from English ports.

Many of the emigration archives that are deposited in PRONI have been indexed and either transcribed or digitised and form part of the Emigration Database of the Centre for Migration Studies which can be accessed in PRONI and at certain public libraries.

In the National Archives in London, passenger lists from 1890-1960 can be found in the Board of Trade archive (**BT27**) but exact place of residence is rarely given before 1922. The earliest Board of Trade passenger lists are now being published on-line at ancestorsonboard.com

