



Public Record Office  
of Northern Ireland

# **INTRODUCTION**

# **PINKERTON PAPERS**

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# Pinkerton Papers (D1078)

## Table of Contents

Summary .....	2
John Pinkerton.....	3
Correspondence .....	4

## Summary

c.150 documents, 1795-1921, relating to the Pinkerton family who were tenant farmers in Seacon More, Co. Antrim. One section of the collection, 1795-1921, deals largely with family and estate matters and includes: a 1795 lease 'to John Pinkerton, the elder, Secinmore'; various Pinkerton wills including that of Samuel Pinkerton, Senior, Secon, 1811; an account book, 1870-1908, relating to the Pinkerton property; photographs of members of the Pinkerton family and other individuals, c.1860-c.1914.



## **John Pinkerton**

The main interest in the archive lies in the papers and correspondence of John Pinkerton, 1830-1908 who was MP for Galway, 1886-1900. Pinkerton rose to local prominence as a member of the Ballymoney Debating and Agricultural Societies, and as a radically minded member of the Coleraine Board of Guardians. In 1885 he stood as an independent candidate for North West Antrim; despite defeat he so impressed the Parnellites that he, a Protestant tenant farmer, was adopted as the party candidate for Galway in 1886. During his career as an MP he appears to have been an exceptionally active 'political missionary', and was frequently called upon to speak in favour of Land Reform and Home Rule at Liberal demonstrations throughout Scotland and England. His active and significant role is displayed in the papers, eg, there is a letter from D. McAlister, Kilkeel, October 1887, congratulating him on 'the great success achieved by you in the English constituencies... Didn't the Grand Old Man [Pinkerton] give it them in right style'. Many political issues are covered including: Pinkerton's work towards a Bill for the temporary relief of agricultural tenants in Ireland and the admission of certain leaseholders to the Land Act of 1881 various election campaigns; the appointment of a Catholic President for Queen's College, 1900.

The papers reflect his prominence in all these areas and include correspondence relating to the Ballymoney Agricultural Society, 1876-1878 and his role as a member of Coleraine Board of Guardians regarding issues such the appointment of 'a good sound Liberal' for the position of Medical Officer to the Workhouse, 1884.



## Correspondence

Of much added and important interest is the inclusion in the Pinkerton collection of 13 letters of the famous Irish Nationalist, John Mitchel, 1815-1875. In the first letter, 1834, he writes to his father of his dissatisfaction with his post as a bank clerk in Londonderry. The remaining letters, 1848-1874, are all written to his sister, Matilda Dixon, in Dromore, Co. Down, from his exile in Bermuda, Tennessee, Washington DC and Paris. The American letters are of particular interest in that they reflect Mitchel's sympathy with the South and with Southern institutions during the pre-Civil War period. Indeed, at this time, 1854, he established a newspaper in New York called 'The Citizen' in which he strenuously opposed the abolition movement. In one letter, written to his sister on 10 April 1859, he declared 'I am saving the South with all my might - indeed so violently that a great part of the south (besides the whole north) think me mad'.

