Chapter 12: Senior Thesis Projects
by Deborah L. Rotman, Rhiannon Duke, Bianca Fernandez, and Jackie Thomas

Three students from the 2010 research team undertook analyses as part of their senior theses. They co-authored articles for publication in the *Journal of Beaver Island History*. Those projects are reprinted here so that they will be available to the Beaver Island Community until officially published in the journal.

*Essay 1: Interethnic Marriage in the Irish-American Experience: Social Transformation on Beaver Island, Michigan*  
by Rhiannon Duke and Deborah L. Rotman

**Abstract**

This article explores the various interactions and relationships between the minority non-Irish population and majority Irish immigrant and descendant population on Beaver Island, Michigan in the late the 19th and early 20th centuries. Focusing specifically on marriages between Irish and non-Irish, we seek to understand the changing dynamics of both interethnic relationships as well as the institution of marriage. We examine the period of Irish cultural dominance from the post-Mormon period of the 1850s until the 1920s, when the arrival of the Beaver Island Lumber Company marked the end of Irish hegemony on the Island. Using information about matchmaking customs, marriage practices, and interactions with non-Irish ‘outsiders’, we will illustrate the contextual mindset in which the immigrants arrived and constructed their lives on Beaver Island. We will also trace shifting attitudes toward what made an ideal marriage partner, how those choices were made, consequences of the decisions and their effects on Beaver Island identity through successive generations. Factors that will be considered include: marriage as an economic arrangement or as a love match, the importance of religion, ethnicity, and occupation in terms of who is considered marriageable, how gender affects the criteria for marriage choice, and differing attitudes toward these factors between older and younger generations. This relatively isolated island community of Irish immigrants and few others experienced marriage as both a cause and effect of social transformation.

**Introduction**

While cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago were certainly noteworthy historical hubs of Irish-American life, Beaver Island in northern Lake Michigan “was culturally perhaps the most Irish community in the Midwest, if not North America” (Connors 1999: 116). Beaver Island occupies a unique place in the story of Irish immigration to America in that it was home to an Irish immigrant and descendant majority population from about 1860-1900 (US Census Enumerations 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900). The bulk of these immigrants came from Árainn Mhór, County Donegal. (Metress and Metress 2006: 34). While some immigrants came directly from this island, others established themselves in Toronto, New York and Pennsylvania’s coal mining country before eventually making their way to Beaver Island (Collar 1976: 35). Due to their geographical and cultural isolation, the Beaver Island Irish were able to reconstruct many features of the economic and cultural conditions of Árainn Mhór (Collar 1976: 43).

This study focuses on the marriage patterns of the Irish on Beaver Island, both during the period of Irish cultural hegemony in the second half of the 19th century and continuing into the early 20th when Irish dominance began to wane. We explore the role of matchmaking on both Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island as well as the factors that contributed to the choice of a marriage partner, such as ethnicity, religion, age, generation, gender, occupation, and language. Ultimately, this study provides insight to the interethnic relationships among the residents of a small island community as well as how ethnic intermarriage both reflects and results from social change.
A Tale of Two Islands

There are similarities between the social and economic environment on pre-migration Árainn Mhór and that of Beaver Island in the early days of Irish ‘colonization.’ The islands’ degree of isolation from ‘outsiders’ and the mainland, their modes of subsistence, and how these factors influenced ideas about marriage as well as how partnerships were established were strikingly parallel. Importantly, however, the apparent re-creation of Árainn Mhór on Beaver Island was transformed through the decades as the second generation came of age.

Árainn Mhór is about seven square miles and located three miles off the coast of The Rosses region of west County Donegal. Despite its proximity to the mainland, accessing Árainn Mhór was once challenging due to the large cliffs that comprise the north, northeast and west sides of the island (Connors 1999: 16). Houses were arranged in the clachan system: small settlements of often “interrelated households,” but which lack any formal buildings that would be found in a town (Connors 1999: 117).

The Árainn Mhór islanders, who subsisted mostly on potatoes, paid rent to their landlord, the Marquis of Conyngham, in the form of produce and livestock (Connors 1999: 17). Fishing was a communal effort and supplemented the Islanders’ income. Families pooled their resources together to make their nets and curraghs; however, “frequent acts of vandalism by outside fishermen also impacted the profitability of the venture” (Connors 1999: 20). The little interaction Islanders had with outsiders was not always pleasant and as such they were often suspicious of strangers (Jerry Early, pers. comm. 2011). Additionally, the strong community bonds on Árainn Mhór contributed to clear distinctions between Islander and ‘outsider.’

Negative experiences with ‘others’ only reinforced these divisions and suspicions.

Seasonal migratory labor also supplemented local income (Hargreaves 1962: 104, 108). Throughout the 19th and into the 20th centuries, Árainn Mhór women, men, and children traveled to Scotland and the Lagan farming region in southern Donegal to harvest potatoes and perform other farm tasks (Hargreaves 1962: 108). During these times, the tattie hokers (potato pickers) interacted with people from elsewhere in the British Isles, which may have been the only time Árainn Mhór islanders had contact with “outsiders.” These interactions, however, resulted in relatively few external marriages (John Duffy, pers. comm. 2011).

Marriage on 19th century Árainn Mhór was largely an economic arrangement and personal preference was not often taken into account. A matchmaker was occasionally called upon to arrange a good match (John O’Hara, pers. comm. 2011), but more often parents would come to an agreement or a man would seek the permission of a woman’s father (McCauley 1957). The man who desired a wife would go to the woman’s house along with two other men. They would bring two bottles of whiskey and during the meeting, the man would usually speak only with the father, not with the woman he wished to marry (John O’Hara, pers. comm. 2011). In 19th century western Donegal, “marriage was something of a deal which brought security to men and women alike” (McBrearty 1956: 44). This practical attitude toward marriage was transferred to Beaver Island by those Árainn Mhór immigrants who made it their home.

Unlike the culturally homogenous Árainn Mhór, there existed a “relatively peaceful ‘multicultural society’” on Beaver Island made up of Odawa Indians, ‘Yankees,’ French Canadians, Métis, and Irish in the mid-19th century (Connors 1999: 60). Around 1847, however, this was disrupted when a leader of a faction of the burgeoning Mormon Church, James Strang, established a religious colony on the island (Quaife 1930: 84). The relations were tense and even hostile between the prior residents and the new occupants, resulting in gradual out-migration until virtually every ‘Gentile’ had left by 1852 (Weeks 1976: 20). In 1856, however, two dissenting followers shot and fatally wounded Strang (Weeks 1976: 22). In the aftermath, many of those who had been driven off the Island returned and forcibly removed most of the remaining Mormons (Connors 1999: 113), which marked the beginning of the Irish colonization of Beaver Island.

One of the Irish men who returned to the Island, “Black John” Bonner, traveled to New York City shortly thereafter to marry a young woman from Donegal, Sophia Harkins (Connors 1999: 124). He enticed other Irish in the city to join him on the remote island where there was plenty of land and fishing to be had.
(Collar 1976: 35). In this way, waves of migration to Beaver Island originated in New York, but also came from Pennsylvania’s coalfields and Toronto (Metress and Metress 2006: 34).

By the early 1860s, word about the new island community spread to family and friends in the United States, but also back in Ireland, including Árainn Mhór. One large group came to Beaver Island directly from Árainn Mhór in 1866 (Collar 1976: 44), and another landed in 1884 (Collar 1976: 47). These large influxes of Irish immigrants, combined with the gradual out-migration of non-Irish from the island, created an Irish hegemony for about 40 years between 1860-1900 (US Census Enumerations 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900). They made their living mostly by fishing but they also practiced subsistence farming in “clachan-like settlements” (Connors 1999: 118). Further similarities with Árainn Mhór included that the population was largely Catholic and Irish-speaking even into the twentieth century (Metress and Metress 2006: 36).

According to Island tradition, Irish immigrants who settled on Beaver Island also transmitted the “rural custom of ‘matchmaking’” to their new community (Connors 1999: 152). William “Old Billie” Gallagher, an immigrant from County Tyrone, acted as an Island matchmaker, arranging marriages at least as late as 1886 (Connors 1999: 153). Women also experienced pressure from their families to accept marriage offers from high-status men. In 1894, Daniel Martin, as the first man to possess his own tug, achieved a high economic and social standing. As such, when he asked John Gillespie for his 18-year-old daughter’s hand in marriage, the members of the Gillespie family encouraged her to accept. Despite a lack of romantic interest in Martin, who was nearly twice her age, Bridget accepted the offer and they were married shortly thereafter (Connors 1999: 154). The island’s Catholic clergy also exerted this patriarchal control over marriage. In particular, Fr. Peter Gallagher, C.S.C., kept unsupervised ‘company keeping’ and courting to a minimum through strict surveillance (Connors 1999: 153). It is clear that for many years on Beaver Island, unmarried individuals, particularly women, were not able to make their own decisions about whom they would marry.

Connors (1999: 141) argues that, due to the degree of homogeneity on Beaver Island, “it was difficult for the non-Irish to resist integration into the host society.” Accordingly, Island identity often trumped the varying ethnic identities (Connors 1999: 148). Most importantly, the Island identity was defined in opposition to mainlanders. Beaver Island native, Robert Cole, however, contends “if you weren’t Irish Catholic and you attempted to move [to Beaver Island], it was difficult…they had to fight to assimilate here” (Robert Cole, pers. comm. 2010). Despite any tension among the various ethnic and religious groups, “they apparently got along well enough to all survive” (Robert Cole, pers. comm. 2010) and even marry one another.

While ethnic endogamy was the predominant marriage pattern, exogamy became more common among the American-born second-generation Irish. This challenging of social norms coincided with the arrival of the Beaver Island Lumber Company in 1903 (Gladish 1976: 94). With an influx of non-Irish laborers and their families, the Irish majority was challenged for the first time since the 1860s. At this time ethnic boundaries between Irish and non-Irish were bolstered by some, but crossed by others, namely the second generation who challenged Island power dynamics and cultural practices.

Although Beaver Island is much farther from the mainland than Árainn Mhór (about 30 miles from Charlevoix, Michigan), it was seemingly less remote than its Irish counterpart. With its advantageous location in northern Lake Michigan and exceptional natural harbor, Beaver Island experienced “constant traffic with trade and commerce” (Robert Cole, pers. comm. 2010). Interactions with traders and merchants and harsh anti-immigrant stereotypes shaped the Islanders’ group identity as well. As the years went on, however, the American-born second generation gained more power and leadership privileges from their aging foreign-born parents. Consequently, this second generation of leaders “sought to redefine the traditional ethnic boundaries of gender roles, endogamy, language, and the ideological nature of Island religion and politics, as well as the degree of accommodation with ‘outsiders’” (Connors 1999: 149).
Gender, Ethnicity and Partner Choice

For the purposes of this study, we understand discrimination as it pertains to the choice of a marriage partner. We do not focus on discrimination as it is associated with prejudice and unfair treatment, but rather, as the recognition of distinctions between people that would cause one individual to be more desirable as a spouse than another. Such distinguishing factors to consider included: ethnicity, religion, economic status, age, generation, and language.

The interrelation of gender and ethnicity in immigrant groups is well illustrated in the study of Irish immigrants in Chicago during the period from the Civil War to the 1890s (Kelleher 1995). A study of marriage across ethnic lines cannot ignore gender roles and expectations and how they vary by ethnic group. In terms of marriage and its economic benefits, the Irish in Chicago exhibited “gendered styles of give and take [that] helped differentiate them from other groups in the United States” (Kelleher 1995: 260). These ethnically influenced gender roles may have contributed to the high rates of endogamy among first generation Irish immigrants. Endogamy did vary somewhat by gender, however, since 91.2% of men in the study chose a marriage partner from within the group, whereas only 86.1% of women did (Kelleher 1995: 380). We find a similar pattern among the Irish immigrants on Beaver Island. Kelleher’s study offers a useful comparative example, despite its urban focus, since Beaver Island is intimately linked to Chicago by way of economic and social interaction (Gladish 1976: 95; Cashman 1976: 84).

Gender can shape ethnicity in terms of the different identifications and understandings of ‘Irishness’ that women and men develop. Indeed, gender is fundamentally about the social and cultural interpretations of biological differences, both real and perceived (Fausto-Sterling 2000). Three constituents of gender are particularly useful in seeking to understand marriage choice on Beaver Island: (1) the social interactions that arrange a sexual division of labor, (2) the individual psychological identifications people feel as women or men, and (3) the cultural norms and ideals that justify and perpetuate interactions between males and females (Kelleher 1995: 23).

Ethnicity and gender are linked together in that they are both constructs that (1) systematize how people interact to meet their everyday needs, (2) influence personal identity on levels of which the individual is both cognizant and unaware, and (3) establish and sustain themselves by relying on social and cultural norms and ideals. Ethnicity is also central to understandings of gender as “a system that develops and instrumentalizes a ‘sense of peoplehood’” (Kelleher 1995: 28).

Most importantly, gender and ethnicity are relational. In addition to affecting an individual’s personal sense of identity, gender and ethnicity allow individuals and groups to define themselves in opposition, or at least in relation, to other individuals and groups. Most pertinent to Beaver Island, gender and ethnicity help to regulate interactions between and among groups (Kelleher 1996: 32). This is especially relevant for the nature of ethnic intermarriage on Beaver Island, especially along gendered lines.

Another prominent factor considered in this study of ethnic intermarriage was religion. Irish and Catholic elements of Irish-American women’s identities affected every aspect of their lives in the United States (Grayson 2001). Irish and Catholic heritages and traditions determined women’s roles in society and in the family, shaped how women affected the lives of their husbands and children, and “influenced...women’s choices of partners” (Grayson 2001: 247). Ethnicity and religion were particularly important in choosing a spouse, and “since those who did not marry Irish Catholics often married other ethnic Catholics, one can assume that the role of religion was important to the Irish” (Grayson 2001: 259). This insistence on religious and ethnic endogamy reflects the strength of the Irish and Catholic identities and the influence they had on men and women’s lives. On Beaver Island, religion was an extremely important factor in marriage partner choice, even when ethnic lines were crossed.

Intermarriage is a complex social event. First and foremost, intermarriage “is not just a reflection of the boundaries that currently separate groups in society, it also bears the potential of cultural and socioeconomic change” (Kalmijn 1998: 397). On Beaver Island, the fact that ethnic boundaries were breached through intermarriage is both an indicator and a consequence of social change. Three social forces
interact to result in patterns of marriage. These include personal preferences for qualities in a partner, the prescriptions and proscriptions of an individual’s community or social group, and finally, the limitations of the “marriage market” or population in which an individual seeks a partner (Kalmijn 1998: 398). Given the historical nature of this study, as well as the Island’s unique context, it will also be imperative to consider the direct influence of parents and even matchmakers on spouse choice or arrangement.

Intermarriage is not without consequences. Indeed, “mixed marriages may threaten the internal cohesion and homogeneity of the group” (Kalmijn 1998: 400). Exogamy may also reduce the “salience of cultural distinctions in future generations” and, by extension, prejudices or negative attitudes towards ‘others’ (Kalmijn 1998: 396). With regard to assimilation, intermarriage results from introduction and interactions across cultural, ethnic or religious lines, as well as “the relative availability of similar, marriageable people in other groups, as measured by both their total numbers and their social desirability” (Bernard 1980: xxiii). We investigate both the availability and social desirability of both potential Irish and non-Irish spouses. Several individual characteristics may increase the tendency to marry exogamously: second-generation status, “mixed parentage,” older age at time of marriage, previous marriage, Protestant origin, elevated social standing, descendant of English- or German-speakers, and residence in a small community (Bernard 1980: 77).

There has been much interest in the patterns of Irish immigrant and Irish-American marriage; however, there does not appear to be a definitive pattern of mate choice. In spite of strained gender relations among Irish-Americans in late 19th century Chicago, marriage was particularly important in maintaining group ethnic identity and fostering male-female collaboration. Ultimately, the Chicago Irish “not only married, they married one another” (Kelleher 1995:362). Cross-cultural comparison indicates, however, that Irish-Americans in general were “unusually willing to marry members of other ethnic groups” (Foley and Guinnane 1999:26). In particular, Irish women in various locations on the east coast were more likely to be exogamous than their male counterparts (Diner 1983: 50). Possible explanations include necessary exogamy due to a scarcity of Irish men and voluntary exogamy to escape the hostility and segregation of Irish gender relations, as a showcase of “marital freedom,” or to climb the socioeconomic ladder and achieve higher status (Diner 1983:51).

Among Irish-Catholic minority populations in rural communities, such as South Dakota around the turn of the 20th century, the children of Irish immigrants were highly endogamous, both ethnically and, even more so, religiously, despite the limited availability of marriage partners (Funchion 2010: 123). In these communities, religion was an especially critical factor in marriage choice, gender impacted who could court and propose to whom, and the general patterns of marriage evolved through successive generations. Importantly, the Protestant majority in these rural communities limited opportunities for intermarriage between those in the majority and Irish Catholics (Funchion 2010).

Irish immigrant and Irish-American marriage practices are highly varied. In some cases, Irish populations married only other Irish, while in others the Irish were willing to marry outside their group. No two communities appear to be identical through time and across space. Research into ethnic intermarriage on Beaver Island, a unique community in the history of Irish-America, will contribute to the body of literature on these varied cultural practices.

Evidence for Mate Selection on Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island

We used primary sources to enhance our understanding of the social context from which the Árainn Mhór immigrants came when they arrived and established their lives on Beaver Island. We also utilized these sources to trace and analyze the population and marriage trends of the Beaver Island community.

The data sets we employed were United States Federal Census records from 1850-1930 (omitting the 1890 enumeration due to its loss in a fire), various oral history stories from both Beaver Island and Árainn Mhór residents, and questionnaires from the National Folklore Collection (NFC) at University College Dublin. The NFC matchmaking and marriage customs questionnaires we drew on were not completed by
Árainn Mhór residents but rather, those from Inver (McCauley 1957) and Teelin (McBrearty 1956), coastal villages in western County Donegal. While the information provided therein may not exactly reflect the social customs of Árainn Mhór, we can infer that many of the traditions were similar due to geographic proximity. The information in these questionnaires outlines the traditional social customs surrounding marriage arrangement. These types of orally-transmitted accounts provided many salient details not explicated in Donegal’s written history.

A traditional marriage in Donegal would typically be established through a courting procedure instigated by a man seeking a wife. The man, joined by a few others, would visit the home of his desired bride to obtain the consent of her parents (McCauley 1957: 375). On the somewhat rare occasion that a matchmaker was involved, this local man with a respectable profession (matchmaking was not a formal occupation in the community) would choose a good match from the available local girls. It was rare for the matchmaker to look for a match outside the district (McBrearty 1956: 12). During the meeting, the matchmaker would vouch for the courting man, describing his attributes to the girl’s father:

He would tell about the place that he had, the farm dwellin’ house and all the rest, that he had so many cattle and sheep and that he was a good honest hardworkin’ boy. When he’d have all the points well spun out, it was then that he’d mention the fortune (McCaulay 1957: 378).

Physical strength and a sound work ethic were also highly valued qualities in a husband (McBrearty 1956: 20).

Women, especially older ones who were anxious to marry, would also sometimes seek the aid of a matchmaker. He would then list the attributes of available men such as their amount of farmland, sheep, cows, fishing equipment, and so forth (McBrearty 1956: 14). Parents also had expectations of their potential daughters-in-law. The most desirable bride for a son was helpful on the farm, a “good housekeeper, a good miller and a good spinner and mender of clothes” (McBrearty 1956: 18).

Parents (particularly fathers) would arrange marriages between sons and daughters as well. These decisions would often be made without consulting the future bride and groom since the fathers would inform their children that they would soon be meeting to discuss marriage arrangements (McCaulay 1957: 388). Parents were eager to have their eldest daughter married off and they were not particularly pleased if a man came to ask for permission to marry a younger daughter. Parents would sometimes give their oldest daughter a large fortune, if possible, to make her a more desirable spouse (McCaulay 1956: 410). Whether initiated by parents, a matchmaker, or a courting man, there was immense pressure placed on women to accept marriage offers (McBrearty 1956: 13).

Stories from Árainn Mhór complement and reinforce the information provided by the NFC questionnaires. In fact, Bridget Gallagher, an Árainn Mhór resident, told a story from before her time that illustrated just this idea. A man of about 19 years asked a woman of nearly 30 to marry him. She initially rejected his offer on the grounds that he was much too young for her. Upon hearing this news, however, the woman’s mother said “she better go tell him she changed her mind because she might not get another chance” (Bridget Gallagher, pers. comm. 2011). She yielded to the pressure and agreed to the marriage.

Another Árainn Mhór resident, John O’Hara, noted that there was “no nonsense involved” in marriage arrangement. It was “more about practical things than anything else” (John O’Hara, pers. comm. 2011). John Duffy also provided some insights into Árainn Mhór marriage arrangement. He shared that marriages were often arranged by parents or a matchmaker on Árainn Mhór, and sometimes the future husband or wife was not present at all. As in the village of Inver, the oldest daughter had the right to be married first (John Duffy, pers. comm. 2011).

Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of island marriages were “all among themselves,” with the occasional marriage between an islander and an ‘outsider’ that they met while laboring in Scotland. Some of these ‘outsiders’ integrated well into the island community, as long as they were Catholic. Marriage to a
non-Catholic would have caused serious problems, according to Duffy (John Duffy, pers. comm. 2011). Residents of Árainn Mhór clearly valued religious distinctions between people, perhaps even more so than ethnic ones.

Those who emigrated from Árainn Mhór to Beaver Island brought their social customs with them and were able to essentially re-create their Irish home in America due to the cultural homogeneity of the place. Federal census enumerations illustrate the overall Island population as well as the number of Irish-born residents. Despite fluctuations in total Island population, the immigrant generation made up a significant portion of the total population from 1860-1880 (Table 12.1).

Since these population figures only account for Irish-born individuals, and not necessarily Irish families with American-born children, we also analyzed the censuses for Irish households. We defined an Irish household as: both the Head and Spouse Irish-born; or at least one (Head or Spouse) as Irish-born plus parents of Head and Spouse Irish-born; or in the case of second generation immigrants, neither Head nor Spouse Irish-born, but parents of both Head and Spouse Irish-born. It is clearer in these figures than in the raw population data that Irish households or families were in the majority from 1860-1900, and especially during the 1870s and 1880s (Table 12.2). Since a large immigrant group from Árainn Mhór arrived in 1884, we believe that the 1890 enumeration would have demonstrated a continuation of this cultural hegemony.

Table 12.1. Raw Beaver Island Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total # inhabitants</th>
<th>Irish-born individuals</th>
<th>Percentage of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12.2. Beaver Island Irish Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total # households</th>
<th>Irish households</th>
<th>Percentage of total households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>99</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to population statistics, we used the censuses to analyze marriage patterns. The factors we took into account when documenting marital status were nativity and parentage. For nativity, we distinguished between Irish-born, other foreign-born and American-born. These distinctions were important because second generation or American-born status increases the likelihood of interethnic marriage since it partially indicates the “degree of cultural diversity people encountered in childhood” (Bernard 1980: 80). Parentage was a significant factor in our analysis as well, particularly when considering the children of...
immigrants. We distinguished between individuals with two Irish-born parents, one Irish-born parent, and those with parents of non-Irish nativity. Parentage demonstrates more nuanced ethnic endogamy and exogamy among the American-born generation of Islanders, as well as how those lines blur when parentage is ‘mixed.’ Additionally, individuals are often more likely to intermarry if their “parents’ marriage crossed international lines” (Bernard 1980: 75). We considered only persons 18 or older when recording marital status.

The following table illustrates the changing nature of marriage on Beaver Island from 1850-1930 (Table 12.3). It outlines the frequency of several categories of marriage across the Irish- or other foreign-born and the American-born generations. These figures not only illustrate occurrences of both ethnic endogamy and exogamy, but also the shifting demography of the Island throughout the decades. In 1860, after the Mormons had been forcibly removed, the Island population consisted almost exclusively of Irish-born immigrants, particularly Irish-born single men and couples. The 1870 enumeration included a large group migration from Arainn Mhór in 1866, which likely accounts for the 177% increase in Irish-born couples on the Island from the previous decennial enumeration. The number of Irish-born couples persisted between 1870 and 1880. This was the first time marriages between Irish-born and second-generation residents with two Irish parents were documented. By 1900, the number of Irish-born couples was reduced by almost two-thirds while the number of second-generation, all-Irish couples more than tripled. In 1900, there was also a large number of marriages between second-generation residents with two Irish parents and those with none. By this point, the aging Irish-born population was dying out, the chain migration direct from Ireland had ended, and Irish hegemony was beginning to wane. Consequently, the cultural context for second-generation Irish choosing mates was very different from that of their parents.

Table 12.3. Married Beaver Island Irish and non-Irish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Irish-born</th>
<th>Second Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Irish</td>
<td>1 Irish 1 some Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nativity and parentage of unmarried Beaver Island residents was also tabulated (Table 12.4). These figures are important in determining who was available as a marriage partner. Again, only individuals 18 years or older were considered potentially marriageable. It is not until the 1880s that we see a significant number of eligible, unmarried individuals within the second-generation. There is also a dramatic increase in the number of unmarried individuals with non-Irish-born parents, especially men, in the 1910 enumeration. In fact, these unmarried non-Irish males (N=73) outnumber even the unmarried males with either one or two
Table 12.4. Unmarried Beaver Island Irish and non-Irish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Irish-born</th>
<th>Second-generation</th>
<th>No Irish-born parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both parents Irish</td>
<td>Only 1 Irish parent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Widower/Divorced</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irish-born parents (N= 68), which demonstrates a considerable change in the pool of available partners. Finally, across the generations and decades, there are far more unmarried men than women, suggesting that women on Beaver Island had their pick of partners.

Oral histories about the degree of acceptance of ‘outsiders’ on Beaver Island and Árainn Mhór complemented the marital status data from the census. For example, Jerry Early (pers. comm. 2011) mentioned that Árainn Mhór islanders would have been suspicious of those not from the island. He stressed that a sense of ‘islandness’ was integral to community identity and that ‘outsiders’ could never fully integrate. Robert Cole echoed this pattern for the Beaver Island community (pers. comm. 2010). Connors (1999), however, suggested that, at least in the early years of Irish hegemony on the Island, non-Irish were quickly absorbed into the community. When the French Canadian DeBraie family came to Beaver Island in 1857, the difficult pronunciation of the ir last name was remedied when someone allegedly explained, “DeBraie is just French for O’Brien!” This name change became “official” as land deeds and census records used their “Irish” surname (Connors 1999: 142).

Members of another French Canadian family, the LaFrenieres, had a different experience on Beaver Island. Nels LaFreniere, his father, and his brother-in-law arrived on St. Patrick’s Day. They came to work for the Beaver Island Lumber Company, which was in operation from 1903-1915 (Gladish 1976). According to Nels’ daughter, the three men walked into a bar late at night where about 40 Irish men were “well into their cups” (Helen Pike, pers. comm. 2010). They asked for some whiskey in French, even though they could speak English. The bartender poured a drink for Nels’ father out of the spittoon. When he threw the drink in the bartender’s face, a brawl ensued in which the three French Canadian men were drastically outnumbered. This story illustrates Islanders’ suspicion of ‘outsiders’ as well as the tensions that resulted when in-group/out-group boundaries were crossed. Nels went on to marry Sophia, a second-generation Irish woman, however, and according to Helen, he became “one of the important businessmen of Beaver Island” (Helen Pike, pers. comm. 2010). Sophia also worked as her husband’s business partner (US Bureau of the Census 1920). Nels LaFreniere was eventually accepted into the community, which demonstrates that these
boundaries may not have been as rigid in the early 20th century as they had been during the period of Irish hegemony in the late 19th century. Additionally, Sophia may have accepted his marriage offer, despite his non-Irish status, partially due to the economic opportunities he could provide for her.

When Beaver Irish married non-Irish, these couples occasionally experienced discrimination. Katherine L. Allers was the daughter of German-born Charles C. Allers and Mary Victoria Curtis, a woman of Irish descent (Kathy Tidmore, pers. comm. 2010). Charles came to Beaver Island right around the turn of the century and brought a few German men with him as potential husbands for his daughters. Two of his daughters married these men, but James H. Gallagher, a man of Irish descent, courted and later married Katherine. Some of the older Irish residents refused to call her “Mrs. Gallagher” since she was not Irish (Kathy Tidmore, pers. comm. 2010). The older generations sought to maintain the community’s ethnic homogeneity. Although the marriage was already established, older Islanders expressed their dissatisfaction by denying her ‘true’ identification as a member of an Irish family.

Marriage and Social Transformation

Despite the tensions that some interethnic marriages caused among Beaver Islanders, there was an undeniable shift among the second generation in terms of who was considered marriageable and how those marriages came about. Changing marriage patterns may reflect a re-prioritization of the forces affecting the choice of a marriage partner. On Árainn Mhór, marriage was traditionally an endogamous economic agreement made either by a matchmaker, parental arrangement, or instigated by the husband-to-be as long as parental consent was obtained. Those who migrated to Beaver Island transferred these customs there. Among the second-generation, however, these traditions began to be challenged and transformed (Connors 1999: 149).

In the 1890s, with the coming of age of the second generation Beaver Island Irish-Americans, the Island entered into a period of transition. This American-born generation was “troubled with the community’s self-imposed exile from the outside world” (Connors 1999: 275). These second-generation Islanders, largely motivated by political and economic interests, sought to further integrate into mainland society. This was a time of cultural shift, which is illustrated in part by marriage patterns and trends. This period of transition also coincided with the arrival of the Beaver Island Lumber Company in 1903, which brought a host of non-Irish workers to the Island and created a new pool of potential marriage partners.

Interethnic marriage was uncommon in the decades of Irish hegemony during the late 19th century (Table 12.5). Non-Irish individuals had limited potential partners in their respective ethnic groups and, as such, occasionally married outside their cohorts, especially non-Irish men (Table 12.6).

Table 12.5. Beaver Island Married Couples involving Irish-born immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish-born and individual with non-Irish-born parents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Irish-born</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12.6. Marriages between an Irish-born individual and an individual with non-Irish parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of such marriages</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of non-Irish husbands</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Irish-born women may have had higher rates of exogamy than their male counterparts due to a desire to escape strained Irish gender relations or to climb the social ladder (Diner 1983:51). Men were typically the ones to initiate a courtship and eventually a marriage proposal, however, which may explain the “gender differences in…intermarriage patterns” in practical terms (Funcion 2010:137). This gendered practice of male-initiated courtship and/or proposal held true on Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island.

Gender differences also pertain to religious intermarriage. In comparable communities like those in South Dakota, Irish-American men were more likely than their female counterparts to marry other Catholics when marrying outside their ethnic group (Funcion 2010). More Irish-American women, however, married partners who had converted to Catholicism. This pattern reflects the traditional Catholic idea that mothers, especially those in religiously exogamous marriages, were instrumental in raising the children to be good Catholics (Funcion 2010: 137).

There is evidence of several non-Irish, non-Catholics on Beaver Island converting to Catholicism in order to marry an Irish Catholic. This occurred, at the very least, throughout the last three decades of the 19th century and into the 20th as well. Swedish-born Adolf Osterberg both joined the Catholic Church and married Irish-born Cicely Gallagher on November 9, 1876. Similarly, German-American Frederick Sendenberg was baptized into the Catholic faith just four days before his marriage to Irish-American Susan Boyle in 1890. Susan’s father, William “Whiskey” Boyle, Sr. was Frederick’s sponsor (Collar 2011). Katherine L. Allers, a German-American Lutheran “had to become Catholic” in order to marry Irish-American James H. Gallagher in 1908 (Kathy Tidmore, pers. comm. 2010; US Bureau of the Census 1910). Many Irish-Americans who did not marry endogamously chose Catholics of other ethnicities (Grayson 2001:259). For the Irish community on Beaver Island, religion was certainly an important variable when choosing a mate.

Irish hegemony began to be challenged at the turn of the 20th century. The Irish population declined from 96% in 1880 to 70% in 1900 and only 44% in 1910, and ethnic boundaries appear to have taken on greater importance (US Bureau of the Census). Because intermarriage “may threaten the internal cohesion and homogeneity of the group,” parents and older generations “have an incentive to keep new generations from marrying exogamously” (Kalmijn 1998: 400). Older generations, wishing to preserve the integrity of the ethnic enclave, may have been less welcoming of outsiders or less willing to accept marriages across ethnic lines, as in the case of the LaFreniere family’s St. Patrick’s Day arrival or the marriage between James H. Gallagher and Katherine L. Allers.

Despite possible tensions, interethnic marriages did occur. Second-generation Islanders did not necessarily prioritize ethnicity when considering marriage partners. Like the second-generation Irish in Worcester, Massachusetts, the American-born Beaver Island Irish were “far more willing to marry outside the ethnic group” (Meagher 2001: 72) when compared to their parents and other immigrants. By 1910, there were almost as many interethic marriages involving second generation Islanders as endogamous ones, whereas the number of endogamous marriages among the Irish-born generation drastically outweighed the interethnic nuptials (Table 12.7).

Table 12.7. Changing marriage patterns on Beaver Island

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Pattern</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Irish-born</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish-born; 1 non-Irish-born parents</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish-born; 2nd generation with both Irish-born parents</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both 2nd generation with all Irish-born parents</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both 2nd generation: 1 both Irish-born parents; 1 non-Irish-born parents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The significant increase in the number of second-generation individuals with two Irish-born parents married to those with two non-Irish-born parents is due in part to the influx of non-Irish individuals who came to work for the lumber company. The many eligible men working in the timber industry provided new opportunities for marriage partners at a time when there was also a cultural shift in terms of who was considered marriageable. Women in particular appeared to be seeking a different kind of mate than the previous generation. Of the 15 second-generation Irish women married to men with non-Irish-born parents, only two of the husbands were farmers. The rest were laborers in the lumber camps (N=3), fishermen (N=2), skilled tradesmen (N=2), skilled or managerial workers for the lumber company (N=3), marine engineers (N=2), entrepreneurs (N=2), musicians (N=1), or sailors of their own vessels (N=1) (US Bureau of the Census 1910).

It is possible that these exogamous second-generation Irish women were inspired by the same spirit of capitalism as their male counterparts (Connors 1999: 275). Since women were largely excluded from the economic sphere, perhaps one way to embrace this sense of modernity or to avoid the life of a farmer’s wife was to accept an interethnic marriage proposal. Additionally, Connors (1999: 156) asserts that many of these exogamous Irish women “viewed marriage outside the clan as an escape from the claustrophobic nature of Island family life.” The women who accepted offers across ethnic lines must have believed the match to be beneficial. An increase in ethnic intermarriage may have also resulted from a decrease in parental involvement or control over the choice of a spouse.

Second-generation Beaver Islanders were more likely than immigrants to marry across ethnic lines, especially in later decades. The children of ethnic intermarriage may have paid less attention to cultural distinctions because “children of mixed marriages are less likely to identify themselves with a single group” (Kalmijn 1998:400). On Beaver Island, those second-generation Islanders who were the products of ethnic intermarriage may have further decreased the significance of cultural boundaries by marrying exogamously themselves. Although not numerous, these types of marriages did occur (Table 12.8). For example, Frank Link, the son of a German father and Irish mother, married Hannah, a second-generation Irish woman.

Table 12.8. Interethnic Marriages of both Irish-born and Second-generation Irish individuals

| Year | 1 Irish-born; 1 both non-Irish-born parents | 1 both Irish-born parents; 1 both non-Irish-born parents | 1 both Irish-born parents; 1 one Irish-born parent | 1 one Irish-born parent; 1 both non-Irish born parents |
|------|--------------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 1870 | 9                                          | 0                           | 0                                      | 0                                      |
| 1880 | 10                                         | 1                           | 1                                      | 1                                      |
| 1900 | 2                                           | 8                           | 4                                      | 0                                      |
| 1910 | 1                                           | 22                          | 5                                      | 5                                      |
| 1920 | 1                                           | 14                          | 2                                      | 3                                      |
| 1930 | 1                                           | 8                           | 3                                      | 5                                      |

Conclusion

On Árainn Mhór and among the first generation of immigrants on Beaver Island, the influences of social custom and parental influence ultimately decided the course of marriage patterns. The relative unavailability of potential non-Irish partners, however, contributed to the high rates of ethnic endogamy. While the Beaver Island Irish remained predominantly endogamous throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, rates of ethnic exogamy increased as the decades wore on and the second and third generations came of age. The prioritization of three forces that determine partner choice shifted during the social, cultural, political, and economic transition that began in the 1890s. Personal preference became the most important factor for some, although economic considerations still remained significant.
There are very few communities in Irish-American history in which the Irish population has been in the majority. Furthermore, there were often interethnic tensions within the cities in which the Irish immigrant minorities established their lives. This is what makes Beaver Island such a unique community and such an interesting one to study. Although not as culturally homogenous as Árainn Mhór, the Irish were certainly the dominant ethnic group on Beaver Island for most of the second half of the 19th century. Ethnic intermarriage, as the social event of focus, not only illustrates what boundaries existed in Beaver Island society, but also under what circumstances those lines could be crossed. Our study sheds light not only on interethnic relationships and how marriage arrangements transformed though time, but also on how these two social phenomena are interrelated.

We found the following to be important social factors that determined whether or not an individual was marriageable: ethnicity, religion, gender, occupation or economic status, generation, nativity, and parentage. On Árainn Mhór, many of these factors (namely ethnicity, religion, nativity and parentage) were not significant due to the cultural homogeneity of the island. On Beaver Island, however, those factors became more salient since not everyone was of the same background. Furthermore, as the second generation of Beaver Islanders came of age, and as the pool of available partners changed, the prioritization of these discriminating factors was altered, as was the degree of parental involvement in partner choice. Ultimately, Beaver Island transformed into a different community than the original re-creation of Árainn Mhór it had been in the 1860s. Interethnic marriage was intimately linked to this transformation, both as a reflection and catalyst of social change.

Essay 2: The Effects of Immigration on Irish Islander Place-Based Identity
by Bianca Fernandez de la Torre and Deborah L. Rotman

Abstract

With a strong sense of place-based identity, islanders experience a linkage between the land and one’s sense of belonging. Part of this identity is based on the stories told and the names of certain places on the island. In addition, they have a sense of independence, a “can-do” attitude that makes islanders a group apart. Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island are connected, both through the mass emigration from the former to the latter and a twinning ceremony in 2000 that linked the two islands. There is a wealth of stories and memories that define the people who live in both places, many of which are embedded in the physical landscape. On Árainn Mhór, Irish place names describe the physical environment as well as a possible event, while commemorative and history-based placenames are more common on Beaver Island. Through legends and myths linked to the sea or Lake Michigan, residents and islanders of both islands feel a pull to island life, a connection to both the land and water, which draws its inhabitants back. We explore place-based identity through interviews with residents of both islands coupled with an examination of maps and physical spaces.

Founding Place-Based Identity

Memories and experiences, identity and culture are all inextricably linked in complex and varying ways, contributing to one’s sense of meaning and place in the world. Particularly in Ireland, history, stories, and identity are rooted in the physical landscape, in the rocks, the cliffs, the bogs, the shores, the ocean, and so on. Islands hold a distinctive mystique. Whereas there are ambiguous boundaries on the mainland, an island is surrounded by water, leading one to believe it can be easily mapped and captured. Yet an island is more like a “little piece…cut out of the world, marked off in fact by its richness in significances” (Robinson, 1996: 1). An island may appear to be a contained microcosm that can be entirely comprehended, but that is nothing more than an artificial construct. In this essay, we explore place-based identities on Árainn Mhóir and Beaver Island.
Throughout Ireland, many nooks and crannies bear placenames related to a story or a description of the physical landscape or topography. They are culturally significant, especially in the original Irish, representing a complicated cultural geography of language and location (Nash, 1999). The Anglicization of Irish placenames during the First Ordnance Survey of the mid-19th century and current projects geared towards the restoration of the original Irish names, for example, raise important questions about the re-imagining of identity, culture, and traditions. Language and location are powerfully linked to one another.

Although Irish is not fluently spoken as the primary language throughout Ireland, it is important to recognize the areas that are Irish-speaking Gaeltachtaí. They are seen as a stronghold for the Irish traditional culture and way of life, which is in part materialized in Irish placenames. They conjure up a rich history and past inseparably linked to the physical space.

In Brian Friel’s play Translations, colonial cartography culturally altered the landscape in the Irish-speaking town of Baile Beag/Ballybeg in Donegal in the 1830s, a time when the British government was establishing control over Ireland. A National School, where English was solely spoken instead of Irish, replaced the local hedge school, which adversely affected the culture of the area and the country. As an Irish-speaking community, it was difficult to have a foreign group, the English, come and systemize the educational program. The English were outsiders, imposing upon the Irish an unfamiliar system, expecting them to make the changes necessary without much thought to their culture or way of life. In addition, as the British government prepared maps of the Irish colony, the landscape was redefined through the Anglicization of placenames, which undermined the cultural fabric of those who live in Baile Beag/Ballybeg (Friel, 1996). Changing the name of the physical places to fit an imposed external structure created tension between the established residents and the British, especially when it came to documenting the place names.

The old Ordnance Survey as a mapping project was, among other things, a political and ideological act (Robinson, 1996: 3). Even though every cliff and crooked rock outcropping was recorded, the placenames were carelessly handled, even being misplaced and misspelled on maps. The translations into English were even more atrocious (Robinson, 1996). Druim Dubh means “black ridge” in Irish but became Dromduff, which in English is nothing more than a phonetic representation of the placename. Language, place, and identity were interconnected and rooted in one another but were lost in translation.

Human connections to the landscape are highly symbolic and take significance through interactions of everyday life. Crofting, a specialized form of agriculture based on sheep, continues to exist in Scotland because it plays an important role in national symbolism and self-identity (Parman, 2005). Crofting has created a particular way of life based on strong kinship systems, shared customs, and religious beliefs (Parman, 2005). In this way, crofting is more than just an agricultural activity, but embodies significant features of Scottish culture upon which national identity is based.

The language of crofting also links the past to the present through the landscape. Crofters say, “If you’re going to understand what it means to be a crofter, you must have the Gaelic” and there is a certain fear English is undermining this valued way of life (Parman, 2005: 12). Historical ethnography deals not only with the past, but also how the past is incorporated into the present. If one knows both Gaelic and English, the person may be able to link past and present to broaden one’s reality while creating a contemporary sense of identity and a unique story. Narratology and the ability to construct a world through storytelling are particularly important for a community (Parman, 2005). In some ways, culture is created through the fashioning of self through the use of narratives, some based on historical events and local lore.

Memory and narratives are important factors in place-based identity. The unique town and people of Lindsborg, Kansas, or “Little Sweden,” have created a place for themselves in American society (Schnell, 2003). Swedish immigrants to the area have retained some folk customs, but culture and tradition are changing. The Main Street has been designed to vaguely reflect European architecture, filled with shops and galleries that present a romanticized Swedish past.

The stories retold in the town of Lindsborg confer to all present a baseline for one’s place in the world (Schnell, 2003). As with any entertaining story, the facts mix with fiction to create a symbolic representation of the past, in effect memories, which are often idealized. As one resident recounted, “We are..."
able to weave ourselves into the fabric of our imagined – and real – communities… In the process, living itself becomes an act of creativity” (Schnell, 2003: 25). Linsborg can be seen in a more dynamic light: not as a fabricated concoction designed to draw in tourists but as a “place-rooted manifestation of an ongoing quest to answer the most fundamental of all questions: Who am I?” (Schnell, 2003: 6). Part of the answer to that complex question lies in the memories and narrative stories shared by the community.

Clearly then, place is both a physical reality and a symbolic representation. For example, Margaret Duffy visited Inishfree, an island near Árainn Mhór, and experienced the challenging world of island life. She called it a “little world – special and apart from the rest of the world – lobster pots, cozy unwashed cottages, heather, bog, precious little flowers peeping through the grass, open sky and lapping waves on a silver strand…” (Duffy, 1). As an outsider, Duffy viewed the island community through a particular lens. She noticed certain elements of island life that may go unnoticed by island residents. All these physical realities affect the way people live their life, which shape and contribute to their sense of identity. In essence, one could ask, can place be a process? Can identity evolve from the interaction of place and landscape?

These questions incorporate the importance of culture, a collective identity within the larger concept of place-based identity. A coherent form of place-based identity develops when there is a balance between the landscape as reality and as representation, in a sense between fact and fiction (Harner, 2001: 660). Narratives give more human element to factual history.

Human experiences also give meaning to a place. Those narrative stories take root, helping to form place-based identity. As a collective understanding, the social identity of the group is rooted in the physical landscape of the place. There are both the means and the meaning of the physical place. The means are the physical supports the land offers and the meanings are the intangible rewards it grants (Harner, 2001: 660). Place-based identity is rooted in both the meaning and the material reality.

On an island community, such as Beaver Island or Árainn Mhór, the sea is life-giving. It physically supports the islanders, but it also symbolically separates them from the mainland and is shrouded in lore and songs. The physical environment, including the separation from the mainland, affects the way islanders view themselves in their community For example, Beaver Island is part of Charlevoix County, but it is two hours away from Charlevoix by ferry. Beaver Islanders feel this separation and the community mirrors that large distance from the mainland, or the US as some refer to it. They bear a strong sense of independence from mainlanders, but they place value on community. Árainn Mhór, on the other hand, is only a fifteen-minute ferry ride, yet they still share that similar sense of island cohesion, especially in times of trouble. Despite some differences, these two island communities share unique connections with their respective island’s physical environment and with the other island’s sense of place and community.

Two Islands and their intertwined histories

Place, identity, and narratives are at the center of a symbolic and historic connection between Beaver Island, Michigan, and Árainn Mhór, Ireland. Immigration from Ireland to America affected Irish islander place-based identity. Many families from Árainn Mhór immigrated to Beaver Island, especially during the Great Hunger. It established a transnational relationship between these two islands, creating a specific and complex sense of identity.

Árainn Mhór is the largest of the islands in the west coast of an area called The Rosses, Co. Donegal (Hargreaves, 1962). It resembles a small mountain with areas of solid rock and craggy summits and cliffs as well as peat bogs and lakes. The island has been divided into ten townlands since 1836, possibly even before that. Each townland has its own beach, but the two dominant areas are Aphort and Leabgarrow because of their harbors and places important to the quotidian life, such as the post office and house of the landlord (Hargreaves, 1962: 99). The placenames of the island bear importance, describing the terrain and the physical space. Leabgarrow, for example, translates into “rough ground.”

The residents of Árainn Mhór are fishermen and small-scale farmers (Hargreaves, 1962: 109). Many people were evicted from the island around 1850, in part because of the Great Famine, but also because Mr.
J.S. Charley, who bought the island during that time, chartered a vessel to send people over to America. Some settled initially in New York, Toronto, and Pennsylvania, while others came directly to Beaver Island (Hargreaves, 1962: 110; Collar, 1987). By 1866, 52 Irish families had settled on Beaver Island, relying on their small farms and fishing, similar to their way of life on Árainn Mhór (O’Hara, 1968). The fact that Beaver Island was remote and allowed former Árainn Mhór residents to remain islanders contributed to a relatively seamless adjustment to their new homeland.

Beaver Island bears a distinct history. Originally inhabited by Native Americans and fur trappers, James Strang chose it as home for him and his sect of Mormon followers in 1847 (O’Hara, 1968). Declaring it the ‘promised land’ and himself king, he proceeded to establish control and authority over the area (O’Hara, 1968). By 1852, most previous inhabitants of the island had left, leaving the Mormons as the sole possessors (Collar, 1976). James Strang’s theocratic leadership was alienating, and he was eventually assassinated by two of his followers. News traveled quickly that Strang had been shot. As the legend goes, Black John Bonner, an Irish man originally from Rutland Island near Árainn Mhór, and other Irish immigrants evicted the Mormons and reclaimed the island. The point where Bonner landed is today called Bonner’s Landing, a commemorative title for one of the key figures in establishment of the Irish community in the immediate post-Mormon period (O’Hara, 1968; Collar, 1976).

“The Irish “were the second and last colonizers of the island” (O’Hara, 1968: 268). They recreated a place for themselves, establishing a close-knit, Catholic and Irish speaking community, similar to that of Árainn Mhór. After the Mormons were evicted, Catholicism was practiced again, especially due to the influx of Catholic Irish immigrants (O’Hara, 1968). Language also played a large role on Beaver Island as “Arranmore men and women brought … a Gaelic language as strong as the rocks that guard their island home” (O’Hara, 1968: 268). Many who migrated to the island in the late 1800s knew little or no English, and many people of the second generation of Beaver Island Irish immigrants conversed in the Irish of Donegal. Speaking the Irish language served as a daily reminder of their Irish roots, a preservation act of their shared identity.

The two islands are very distinct. Árainn Mhór, only a 15-minute ferry ride from Burtonport, is a hilly and rocky island with an area of peat bogs and sheer cliffs. Beaver Island, on the other hand, is a two-hour ferry ride out of Charlevoix, Michigan, and relatively flat with lots of forested area. On both islands, however, there is a clear sense of islander identity, but it is shaped in slightly different ways. Beaver Island is more remote and disconnected from the mainland, which is usually not visible from the island. Árainn Mhór, on the other hand, always has the mainland in sight, so even though a body of water separates the islanders, there is, at the very least, a visual connection with the mainland.

Places have a unitary identity, a marked sense of uniqueness and character (Cresswell, 2004). Such is the case with residents of Beaver Island and Árainn Mhór. They are unified in a common ancestry and their identity as islanders, but their sense of Irish identity is uniquely positioned relative to their island homes.

Investigating the links in Ireland

Various methods of data collection were employed to explore islander place-based identity. Oral histories, cartographic data, and archival resources were particularly important for elucidating lived experience.

Oral histories and identity narratives were crucial to understanding how people on both islands view themselves, their physical space, and sense of place. For example, Jerry Early, a resident of Árainn Mhór, clearly expressed his pride in being an islander, especially belonging to this exclusive community of people who truly show their worth during times of crisis and unrest (pers. comm., 2011). Bill McDonough of Beaver Island has been and always will be an islander. He visited Árainn Mhór various times, feeling always at ease in an island community, saying, “I’m an islander. I want to be on that island” (pers. comm., 2010). The physical island place bears importance in the inhabitant’s sense of self.
Cartographic materials were also essential to analyzing the differences and similarities between the two islands and how they contribute to different senses of islander identity. The names written on the maps concerning certain areas are significant. For example, on Beaver Island, Donegal Bay harkens back to the county of Donegal to which Árainn Mhór belongs. In 1945, Henry Allen gave it its name as a tourist draw (Cashman, pers. comm.). Similarly, Árainn Mhór has many Irish placenames that describe the physical landscape, such as *Sceig an tSeabhaic*, which translates into “the peak of the hawk.” Placenames contribute to one’s sense of identity, even if in an indirect manner. It is not a deliberate attempt to form the way a community sees itself, but it can provide useful insight into certain characteristics of the people or the physical environment as well as what they consider important and how the landscape is understood.

Archival work was significant for the project because it brought to bear some of the stories of people who have lived on the islands. The University College Dublin Folklore Collection had many different notebooks, mostly in Irish, containing collected folklore narratives. Folklore stories were important for many reasons, including that they link the physical landscape with a rich history of the island. On Árainn Mhór, *Uaimh an Áir*, the cave of the slaughter, located at Illion, was the townland where Cromwell’s soldiers murdered a group of hiding islanders. On Beaver Island, Font Lake was so christened because it was used by the Mormons for baptism.

Documentary sources were also examined at the Archives and the National Library, including Griffiths Land Valuations, articles concerning the economic and social history of Árainn Mhór and the linkage between the two islands. It was useful to see the distribution of land and how that compared with Beaver Island. The *Journal of Beaver Island History* provided important background on the socioeconomic conditions and history of Beaver Island, especially once the Irish began to permanently inhabit the island.

Each of these varied resources has contributed to the rich conception and discussion of place-based identity on each of the islands. By addressing the main theme of place-based identity through different perspectives and resources, the connection established between the two islands has only been strengthened.

**Linking Past and Present**

Apart from the twinning ceremony in 2000, Beaver Island and Árainn Mhór have not shared a strong explicit connection apart from its linked immigration history in the mid to late 1800s. Beaver Island has embodied an Irish American identity, drawing from its ancestral roots in Árainn Mhór. The residents of Árainn Mhór knew of the existence of these Irish American immigrants with a common ancestry, but the specifics were not well known. Until recently, direct links between these two places through letters or mutual visits were not maintained. A monument to those renewed ties was erected on Árainn Mhór (Figure 12.1). Despite this disconnect for so many generations, the two islands and their respective communities have shared an unwavering strength, an ‘islandness’ of sorts, especially in times of need. Islanders are a people who know what it is to struggle and toil especially because they don’t have the prospect of immediate help arriving. Ó Péicín (1997:16), a priest who spent time on the Aran Islands in Co. Galway, captured the essence of islandness when he wrote “My time on Inishmore (one of the islands in the archipelago) had taught me that life was hard, that it was a struggle, and yet the people had a hardy individuality about them which meant they coped”. The story of Paid een Og, who links these now twinned islands, illustrates this especially well.

**Paid een Og: Linking Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island**

Placenames at times link the two islands to one another. One incredible example is that of the story of Paid een Og. Both Jerry Early and his father, Andrew Early, shared the story of Paid een Og (Early, pers. comm. 2011). During the 1850s and 1860s, which included the Famine years, hawk eggs were a part of the diet on Árainn Mhór. They could be found in the cliffs by the north side of the island where islanders also fished.
One day, while Paid een Og and his son were fishing, they saw a hawk fly from its nest. With the eggs unattended, his son climbed up the cliff side. This was a common occurrence, but on this day he fell to his death. Some islanders carried his corpse on a door back to his home. It was shocking for the siblings, especially for the autistic brother who saw all the commotion and took off, possibly panicking. Nighttime came and he hadn’t come back. His family went looking for him and found him first thing the next morning, drowned in a bog. Upon losing two children in separate accidents in the same day, their mother shortly after committed suicide. In the wake of these tragedies, Paid een Og emigrated with the remaining family to Toronto and eventually to Beaver Island. Unfortunately, the tragic story did not end there. While on Beaver Island, one night the aging Paid een Og went drinking and slipped off the dock into the freezing lake. His body was not recovered until spring.

He is now memorialized on the island in a road that bears his name – Paid een Og’s Road. On Árainn Mhór it is still possible to see the remnants of his house, consisting of nothing more than a couple of stones overgrown with thistle and thorns. The road on Beaver Island and the stones of his home on Árainn Mhór draw upon a different time, one where immigration was a reality for many Irish people. The decision to leave and the need to start one’s life anew in another country is encoded in these physical landmarks, keeping the narrative alive in the present-day physical landscape and historical record.

Despite great challenges, islanders carry on more than most in part because of their sense of independence. Paid een Og suffered great personal loss and hardship, yet he continued moving forward, starting a new life for himself and his remaining family on Beaver Island. He eventually remarried, and many Beaver Island residents today are descendents of his (McDonough, pers. comm.). He is remembered on both islands by being kept alive in the local lore.
**Memory, Practice, and the Physical Landscape**

As illustrated by the story of Paid een Og, memory is a powerful component of history. It is assigned to the landscape to facilitate its preservation. The physical environment triggers a story or a piece of history that otherwise would reside only in the recesses of one’s mind. The word *dinnseanchas* represents “placename tales that witness history and action uniting with geography [in which] a place...becomes its own story” (Mullin-Norgaard, 2002). True of both islands, names of certain areas or roads bear the story of people, events, or descriptions of the physical environment that shape an islander’s understanding of himself or herself and his or her relationship to the natural world. There are poems, prose, reflections, and songs written about the physical attributes of both islands and their effects on residents. These writings and thoughts, inspired by the physical landscape, enrich a person’s sense of identity.

Árainn Mhór has a diverse range of environments, from the beach shore to cliffs and mountains, from peat bogs to grazing lands. In the poem simply titled, “Arranmore,” some of the Árainn Mhór 2008 transition year students describe these different regions and environments of the island in each verse, giving the Irish placename, the English translation, and some of the major events that have occurred in that area (see Poem A at the end of this essay). Their poem demonstrates how stories are rooted to places that grant a lasting permanence.

For example, there is *Uaimh an Áir*, or the cave of the slaughter, located at the south end of the island, near the Chapel (Figure 12.2). This is the site where 67 women and children were murdered by orders of Captain Conyngham (Fadó Fadó, 2008). This placename refers to the historical event linked to the physical location, giving even greater importance to the event that occurred. It is important to note how the wide range of landscapes creates a dynamic environment coded with significant and lasting stories.

Legends are also a part of the physical landscape of the island. For example, the legend of *Na trí Micka Gorra*, the name of the rocks off the coast of Árainn Mhór, states that these rocks were once witches who were on their way to Árainn Mhór with the intent to burn the island (Fadó Fadó, 2008). A spell was cast on them as they passed Owey Island, turning them into stone. Now legend goes that every seven years, they move a bit closer to the island, but only when no one is looking. This example demonstrates the power of memory, legends, and stories and how they can be preserved in a physical place.

Beaver Island history is also linked to the physical landscape, but it is done through different kinds of place names. Where Árainn Mhór concentrates on naming relative to the geographic and physical landscape, Beaver Island has many historically commemorative place names, honoring or remembering a certain point or outcropping after a person who lived there. Luney’s Point is so named after the lighthouse keeper Pat Luney, who settled there in 1846 (“Names and Places”, 1976) (Figure 12.3). Another example is Appleby’s Point, named after Captain Glibert Appleby who was the third keeper of Beaver Head Light (“Names and Places”, 1976). Apple trees still grow there, a symbolic reminder of the past in the present. In this way, these placenames contribute to the historical and personal narrative of Beaver Islanders.

Other placenames are used in songs and lyrics, drawing on the importance of Beaver Island’s Irish roots. The song “Donegal Bay” refers to a large boulder near the middle of the bay and mentions the “grandson of the Blarney Stone stock”, (Hendrix, 1980). It states, “You’ll wade out to kiss it/ In the true Irish way” [See Song B at the end of this essay] explaining how people swim out to the boulder to mirror the Irish tradition kissing of the Blarney Stone. This is just one example of Irish traditions in Beaver Island history, lore, and memory.

Memory or a name that bears some symbolic or significant meaning attached to a certain place can shape one’s physical environment. Whether the placenames refer solely to the physical landscape or the need to memorialize certain individuals or reference certain historical events, they are lasting and remain part of the community narrative of the island. They contribute to the growing and changing memory of the island, which feeds into the islander’s sense of identity.
Figure 12.2. Ordnance Survey Map of Árainn Mhór, courtesy of the children of Scoil Naisiunta Athphort (Aphort National School) and Packie The Master Bonner (principal) who compiled the old names and wrote them map in the 1950s.
Figure 12.3. Partial map of Beaver Island.

‘Islandness’ – The importance of community, especially in times of hardship

Island life also requires a certain degree of independence and resourcefulness. As Packie Ward and Charlie Boyle expressed, "There's something special about islanders" (Ward and Boyle, pers. comm., 2011).

Families and Community

Living by a body of water’s whim is challenging, creating a close-knit and interdependent community of islanders. The physical reality of living on an island, with fixed and unchangeable boundaries, forces one to look inward and foster community and family relationships within those limits, in part because there is no one else and in part because they have a shared experience of being raised on an island.

There is great value placed on community, especially during difficult times. Jerry Early explains how this “islandness” or islander way of being is not something easily learned (pers. comm., 2011). It is a way of life learned from youth. Outsiders can become a part of this community, but they can never be completely an islander. There seems to be an understanding and way of thinking islanders have that cannot be readily acquired if not since birth.

Bill Cashman, long-time Beaver Island resident and member of the Beaver Island Historical Society, expresses why it is difficult for an islander to accept someone new into the community. Essentially, “a bond is given and a responsibility is accepted. It is not just an abstract but a palpable burden” (Cashman, pers. comm.). By accepting someone new into the community, the islanders know the resources will be stretched. They want to make sure the new member of the community knows, in essence, that they are promising to be
there for other islanders, for better or worse. “It is like taking in an orphan, knowing the limited resources will be stretched a little thinner” (Cashman, pers. comm.).

Bill McDonough also expresses the unique community life that exists on Beaver Island as “a very isolated community and everyone looks after one another... [and] when push comes to shove, everybody can pull together as a unit and make sure whoever needs help gets it” (pers. comm., 2010). Repeatedly, the need to stick together and be a cohesive unit is an underlying understanding of island life. They rely on one another as support and as family, creating a seemingly exclusive community that may be difficult to enter if not a native. Islanders recognize the importance of interdependence, creating a network among themselves.

**Hardship**

Living on an island comes with a sense of hardiness and struggle against the odds. Both Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island know of the hardships that come with being remotely isolated from the mainland. Árainn Mhór is “a survivor” because its people have done and seen it all; they are no strangers to struggle and fighting (Jerry Early, pers comm. 2011). Hardship is a factor of islander place-based identity because an island is a difficult environment to inhabit. One lives off the water, at times a helpless victim of its storms and tumult.

Remoteness is a reoccurring hardship for both islands. Even though Árainn Mhór is physically not very distant from the mainland, it still faces challenges in getting emergency help to the island when sea conditions are tough. In addition, economic difficulties also contribute to the hardships islanders face. “Everything brought in is marked up, and every product sent off is marked down” (Cashman, pers. comm.). By being far from the mainland, transportation costs increase because supplies need to be flown in or sent on the ferry, similar to emergency help. As many stories express, islanders have become resourceful folk who find alternatives and solutions to problems that are far from the ordinary.

One of the most painful losses on Árainn Mhór is that of the 1935 Disaster (O’Donnell, 1993). On November 9, twenty passengers were returning to the island after spending a season “tattie hoking” in Scotland when the boat capsized (Fadó Fadó, 2008). The only survivor, Patrick Gallagher, lost several members of his family that night. The bodies were buried in the island cemetery, located close to the shore and facing the direction of the disaster (O’Donnell, 1993).

In the *Irish Independent* a few days later, it was written, “Today, with the sun shining, the island looked brighter and more cheerful but the lonely hills seemed to be haunted by the ghosts of the men and women who had died. The wind and the sea mourning in the caves seemed to be in unison with the mourning wailing of the women” (O’Donnell, 1993). The parallel between the mourning women and the wind and sea creates a link to place-based identity. The physicality of the island is personified as mourning with the people of the island, creating a harmony, however grief-stricken, between the physical environment and its residents.

Although on a lake, Beaver Island is also no stranger to loss. The community has experienced various shipwrecks and lives lost at sea, such as that of Johnny Gallagher. The song “Lost on Lake Michigan” is a tribute to his story [see Song C at the end of this essay].

* Said Owen, “Brother Johnny it grieves my heart sore,  
  To think that we’l ne’er return to the shore.  
  God help our poor parents, how their tears down will flow,  
  For we’ll sleep in Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.”

There is a certain understanding that those who venture out into the ocean or lake risk their life daily. Large bodies of water are unknowable, so the possibility of tragedy is a daily reality parents, children, and loved ones need to live with. This subject matter is reminiscent of sean-nós, or Irish traditional song, which usually addresses sadness and loss.
The need to return

Something very unique about islanders is how they are drawn back to their home and the sea. Many Árainn Mhór islanders “come home”, usually after having gone to the mainland or to other countries, such as the UK, America or Australia to find work. They will describe feeling a certain calling, a ‘dúchais’ – a pull – that will lead them back home, if for nothing else but to withdraw (Ó Péicín, 1997). Many of the retirees on Árainn Mhór have traveled the world and lived elsewhere as adults, but now they have chosen to return to their island home (Ward, pers. comm., 2011). Many are attracted to the quiet and natural beauty. They feel a connection to the land and the people who grow and live there. Charlie Boyle, who worked on the lifeboats, was a skipper and has lived on the island his entire life (pers. comm., 2011). Packie Ward and Dinny McGowan, however, left and made their lives away from Árainn Mhór, but they have decided to return (pers. comm., 2011). They missed the energy and environment of the island, agreeing it is a nice place to settle down.

A similar comparison can be made concerning Beaver Island. Many young adults leave Beaver Island to go to college on the mainland, but some decide to return to the island, often right after college. Others wait and travel, live elsewhere, but then return to retire once more on the island (McDonough, pers. comm., 2010). It seems as if the island community draws residents back home.

After the twinning ceremony, both Beaver Islanders and Árainn Mhór residents adopted a “theme song” of sorts titled, “May We All Some Day Meet Again” [see Song D at the end of this essay] (McDonough, pers. comm.). For the twinning ceremony on Árainn Mhór, a large group of Beaver Islanders flew to Ireland to participate in the celebration, and at the end of one of the nights spent in Jerry Early’s pub, the song was played and requested repeatedly until all present knew the lyrics. It is, to this day, sung on Beaver Island, calling back the memory of that night and the connection between the two islands’ sense of home and belonging. In essence, it represents that pull back to one’s dwelling, to a place that is familiar and known.

...And every road, that we have traveled.
Is the road that always brings us back.
(Chorus)
And take us to familiar places,
And takes us back to share again,
Golden days and friendly faces,
May we all some day meet again.

The lyrics bring to the foreground the importance of the physical place, the roads traveled that will eventually lead one back to home, to the island community. Even though romanticized, the “familiar places” are safe and warm, full of “friendly faces” that promise a safe and inviting community.

The physical space undoubtedly plays a large role in one’s desire to return. Bill McDonough could not imagine living anywhere else than on Beaver Island. He has also grown to love Árainn Mhór, not only in part because of his ancestral connections to Ireland but also because it is an island community, something he knows well. The tangible places on both islands are encoded with memory and an understanding that pulls its residents and community back, sooner or later. People are drawn back home, to the memories and stories they grew up with, especially when retiring and slowing down their pace of life. Those who grew up as islanders generally carry with them a love and pull to the ocean, a pull to memory, family, and home.

Conclusion

Family, stories, the place, and their sense of ‘islandness’ link Beaver Island and Árainn Mhór. They are coupled through their connections to the land and the sea, both of which are life giving and home. Mass
emigration from Árainn Mhór to Beaver Island began a connection that would be lost for various generations only to be restored with the twinning ceremony. The physical landscape and the large body of water with an unpredictable volatility contribute to an islander identity. Within these environs, places are encoded with stories, legends, and memories that contribute to a greater sense of self and community identity. The tangible space can trigger recollections that solidify and reinforce certain island identities and histories. Placenames contribute to keeping the stories alive, for the landscape speaks volumes if people know how to read it.

**Poem A :** “Arranmore” (Fadó Fadó, 2008)

In Fallogowan the animal pound  
Where the courthouse ruins can still be found.  
The ghost of John Stoupe Charley  
Lingers over the strand at Carricklea

In Poolawaddy, the otters cave,  
where the lifeboats, countless lives have saved  
from here, the poor and the homeless fled  
while hundreds in their wake lay dead.

In Screig an tSeabhaic, the peak of the hawk,  
Dark memories stir at the old mass rock.  
The priest at prayer in the penal days  
While lookouts scan Ballacreesh bay.

At Gortgarra, at the crossroads,  
Young girls dance in their bright pink clothes.  
In Fallahinkie, the sounds of jigs and reels  
Are carried across the hills and fields.

In Plohogue, the place of the hallow  
The whim bush is a glorious yellow.  
The tattyhokers remembered in 1935  
When Beal-an-Ayleen took 19 lives.

At Uaimh an Áir, the cave of the slaughter,  
Cromwell’s soldiers crossed the water  
Sixty seven children and women  
Murdered by orders of Captain Conyngham

In Aphort, the outer port,  
Waves lap along the Cladagh shore.  
The sun reflecting many hues  
Of green and yellow, brilliant blue.

In Leabgarrow, the rougher ground  
An old house carries and eerie sound  
The spirit of a long dead groom  
Still haunts and chills an ancient room.
In Ballintra, the Alt stream glows
And Slat-na-Mara ebbs and flows
Above the ringfort, along the beach
A rainbow lies out of reach.

From field to sea, from lake to shore
History lives in Arranmore.
Isle of joy, isle of pain,
A paradise where memories reign

**Song B:** “Donegal Bay” By The Allens *(Journal of Beaver Island History Vol. 2, 1980)*

If you want to have fun, friends,
Away from it all,
Just pack up your things,
Head for old Donegal.

There’s lots of white sand dunes,
Lake Michigan blue,
And mountain to climb high,
With a magnificent view.

On top of Mount Pisgah,
Above the tall pines,
The scene far below you,
Is worth the great climb.

You’ll find a warm sand spot,
And spread your mat gay,
Relax in the sunshine,
The rest of the day.

On the shore waves are breaking,
Against a large rock,
It’s known as the grandson,
Of the Blarney Stone stock.

You’ll wade out to kiss it,
In the true Irish way,
You’ll always remember,
Old Donegal Bay.

You’ll reluctantly leave there,
And you will all say:
“We’ll return every year, friends,
To Donegal Bay.”
**Song C:** “Lost on Lake Michigan” by Dan Malloy (*Journal of Beaver Island History* Vol. 2, 1980)

Oh come brother sailors, I hope you’ll draw nigh,
For to hear the sad news, it will cause you to cry.
Of the noble Johnny Gallagher, who sailed to and fro,
He was lost on Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

Oh Johnny my dear son, in the dead of the night,
I woke from my dream, it have me great fright.
And to Traverse City I beseech you not to go,
For you’ll ne’er cross Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

Oh mother dear mother, your dreams are not true,
And I will shortly return and prove it to you.
For the Lord will protect me where e’er I go,
And I’ll cross o’er Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

Oh Nancy lovely Nancy don’t stop me my dear,
I will shortly return so come dry up your tears.
And home in our cottage full of bumpers will flow,
And I’ll cross o’er Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

It was in October of seventy-three,
We left Beaver Harbor and had a calm sea.
Bound for Traverse City, our destination to go,
We were crossing Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

We left Traverse City at nine the next day,
And down to Elk Rapids we then bore away.
We put in our stores, and to sea we did go,
For to cross o’er Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

As the day then wore on we were well under way.
And had taken our last sight of Grand Traverse Bay.
We carries all sail, and the “Lookout” did go,
We were crossing Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

At nine that same night a light we did spy,
That is Beaver Island, we are drawing nigh.
With the wind from the north-west, oh how it does blow,
And we’re crossing Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

Oh Johnny got up and he spoke to the crew,
He said “Now my brave boys, be steady and true,
Stand by your fore halyards, let your main halyards go,
There’s a squall on Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.”

Said Owen, “Brother Johnny it grieves my heart sore,
To think that we’ll ne’er return to the shore.”
God help our poor parents, how their tears down will flow,
For we’ll sleep in Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.”

So come brother sailors, let us all shake our hands,
As we know in our hearts now, we’ll ne’er reach the land.
May the great God of glory unto us mercy show,
For we’ll sleep in Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

The “Lookout” is running before a hard gale,
Her rudder unshipped and overboard went her sail.
And the billows came foaming like mountains of snow,
They were lost on Lake Michigan where the stormy winds blow.

**Song D: “May We Some Day Meet Again” By The Furey Brothers And Davey Arthur**

There are roads to where we’re going,
Endless highways and dusty tracks,
And every road, that we have travelled,
Is the road that always brings us back.

(Chorus)

And take us to familiar places,
And takes us back to share again,
Golden days and friendly faces,
May we all some day meet again.

There are words we should have spoken
There are plans we should have made.
Promises that we have broken,
It has always, always been the same

(Chorus)

So have no fear of distant thunder,
Lightning strikes then moves ahead,
May the storm fill you with wonder,
May it light the road that lies ahead.

(Chorus)
Essay 3: Spatial Dimensions of Social Relations: Gendered Domestic Spaces on Árainn Mhór, Co. Donegal and Beaver Island, Michigan

by Jacqueline Thomas and Deborah L. Rotman

Abstract

The creation and utilization of space both shapes and is shaped by gendered social relations. In this project, we examine the architecture of domestic spaces on Árainn Mhór, Co. Donegal and Beaver Island, Michigan to understand how houses were constructed, transformed, and used. We are specifically interested in how architectural traditions from Árainn Mhór may have been replicated in the houses of Irish immigrants on Beaver Island. The dimensions and floor plans of houses on Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island were coupled with archival data and oral histories to reveal domestic life on the two islands in the mid- to late nineteenth century. A deeply family-centered culture was reflected in the organization of household spaces in both places. Houses were strongly associated with women in Irish culture and, as such, were the loci of female labor and the daily tasks of food preparation, childrearing, and maintenance of the physical and cultural household. Domestic spaces codified and reproduced the role of women in the family, household, and society. As such, women were important culture bearers on both Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island, yet data suggests that the role Irish and Irish-American women played in the domestic space may have been challenged by the new architectural traditions found on Beaver Island.

Introduction, Historical Background

“This story is unique in the history of emigration from Ireland, it tells of an eviction from an island in the year 1851. It tells how those evictees made their way to the new world and founded a parallel island community. It tells how the Irish and American islands found each other again in modern times.”


This quote describes the relationship between Árainn Mhór in County Donegal, Ireland and Beaver Island, Michigan. The two communities although separated by the Atlantic are inextricably tied to one another and remain one of the most fascinating stories of emigration in North America. Beaver Island reminded the Irish of the Old World. The letters written from Beaver Island to family still in Donegal would continuously mention how “it was like Ireland” (Collar 1976:43).

This project seeks to gain an understanding of space and gender relations through the domestic architecture of Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island, ultimately drawing connections between the two landscapes. Specifically, we are interested in residential space and how gender roles inside the domestic sphere of Irish immigrant families were altered when they emigrated. Through immigration old traditions are let go, new traditions are gained, and communities sustain the practices that are important to them. The negotiation between the old and new life is evident within the adaptations a community develops over time. These adaptations are best observed and most evident upon the physical landscape of a settlement.

In the 1850s America had its first and last King in the form of Jesse James Strang, a charismatic leader and later prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It was Strang who established the Mormon kingdom on Beaver Island for his followers. Records indicate that when Strang arrived in 1847 there were already two Irish settlements on Beaver Island (Collar 1976). By 1852, the island was occupied almost exclusively by Mormons as most non-Mormons out-migrated as a result of tensions with Strang. Following his assassination in 1856, however, Mormon families faced a forced eviction by the Irish. As non-Mormons returned to the island “the exiles were joined by others and a fishing community quickly developed, predominantly Irish in origin” (Collar 1976:29). In Beaver Island history it is held that John Bonner and the Martin Brothers of Gull Island were the first to arrive back on Beaver following the
assassination of Strang. Fellow Árainn Mhór Irish who had initially settled in Canada, New York, and the anthracite fields of Northeastern Pennsylvania also arrived to join kin between the years 1866 and 1884 (Connors 1999:2). Chain migration from County Mayo and County Donegal, with a majority of the people from the islands of Rutland and Árainn Mhór, was also established by the mid-1860s (Collar 1976:33).

Following the Mormon eviction from the island, standing Mormon homes and farms were re-occupied by Irish families. The immigrants were able to “colonize a land much like their homeland” (Connors 1999:2) and letters sent back to Ireland described Beaver as “an island remarkably like Árainn Mhór, and full of empty houses which had been abandoned by the Mormons and could be had by any who simply walked into them” (Collar 1976:40). One local story notes that the Boyle family moved into a house where the hearth was still warm and a cow was standing in the barn (Collar 1976:41). Ultimately, Beaver Island would become “a place for the gathering of the clans” from Árainn Mhór where “ties of blood and friendship were strong, ties that had been forged in the close knit island communities of their Irish homeland” (Collar 1976:43). The Irish were able to construct and develop their own identity on Beaver Island consisting of “adjusted and reoriented Old World cultural patterns [combined] with pervasive forces of modernity” (Connors 1999:3). The amalgamation of Old World and modern cultural practices contributed to the formation of a distinct Irish-American personality, which is clearly observed through an examination of the Beaver Island physical landscape.

The Significance of Gendered Spaces

Gender separation was an important dimension of nineteenth-century social relations as evident in the differential use of space (Rotman 2007, 2011). Within domestic residences, for example, private spaces like kitchens were often defined as feminine since they were arenas for women’s work, including female members of the family and/or domestic servants (e.g., Coontz 1988; Ryan 1994; Spain 2001). Similarly, areas like the formal dining room, which functioned as a space for entertaining and social reproduction were by virtue of their public purpose, defined as masculine. This essay examines domestic space in order to understand gendered social relations in households on Árainn Mhór and Beaver Island.

One of the most influential ideologies structuring gendered social relations in the second half of the nineteenth century was the cult of domesticity, particularly in middle-class American families (e.g., Beetham 1996; Hayden 1995:54-63; Ryan 1985; Sklar 1973). Although domestic ideals were in circulation as early as the 1820s, the publication of The Treatise on Domestic Economy by Catharine Beecher in 1841 defined and embellished the art of domestic virtue (Beecher 1841; Giele 1995:36; Sklar 1973:136; see also Cott 1977; Ryan 1994). The ideals of true womanhood (as domesticity was alternatively known) elaborated women’s position within the private sphere and celebrated qualities such as piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (Giele 1995:36). This ideology segregated male and female responsibilities. Men were relegated to public, economic endeavors, while women were assigned “traditional roles in the home, education, and community service” (Russell 1981:3).

Under domesticity, the home was defined as a private, female sphere in opposition to the public economic sphere of men (e.g., Alcott 1838; Child 1833; Cott 1977; Wall 1991, 1999). Americans believed that the survival of the republic lay in the character of the rising generation. Child rearing became a significant concern and the home emerged as a haven from the evils of the outside world (Halttunen 1982:10). Therefore, some have argued that this ideal was meant to resist too complete a separation of the public and private spheres by making mothers’ roles relevant to the larger cultural context (Coontz 1988:193).

It is important to note, however, that an absolute separation of spheres did not exist. Yentsch (1991:205) notes that “public space was not wholly public for it also contained a private component; [while] private space was not wholly private for it also contained a public component. Within the context of the community, household space was private. [Yet] within the context of the house, some spatial areas were more private than others.” Nylander (1994:241) observed that, within cities, parlors were used for
entertaining (male, public). However, women’s social gatherings, such as teas and clubs, marriages, and baptisms might also be held in the parlor (female, private as well as public). For rural settings, McMurry (1988) observes that parlors were used for both family rituals and social activities. She states, “private family rituals held in the parlor reinforced ideas of family solidarity, continuity, and patriarchy. The social aspect of the parlor encompassed female hegemony, entertainment of friends, and the display of feminine accomplishments” (McMurry 1988:141). Interestingly, McMurry’s interpretation equates private with male and public (or semi-public) with female, completely contrary to understandings of gendered space under domesticity in urban settings. These social functions illustrate that the use of space for public and private purposes by men and women was fluid and contingent upon the type of social interaction and the human agents present.

Spain (2001) also demonstrated that categories of “public” and “private” did not capture the complexities of gendered social relations, particularly with regard to women’s involvement in activities, such as domestic reform. She identified a parochial space; that is, “the world of the neighborhood as opposed to the totally private world of the household and the completely public realm of strangers. . . . The boundaries between domestic, community, and paid work [were] porous, just as they [were] between private, parochial, and public spaces” (Spain 2001:6-7). Significantly, parochial space extends the porosity of public and private – and their associated gender roles – beyond the boundaries of a discrete household to the communities in which they were situated.

Gender relations are often defined as public versus private, production versus consumption, active versus passive, culture versus nature, and men versus women, but that view distorts social reality (Lamphere 2001; Nixon and Price 2001; Rotman 2009). Such binary oppositions belie the fact that an artifact can be an aspect of production and consumption, public and private or male and female (Wurst 2003:227). Rejecting a rigid binary structure “allows us to conceptualize more than two genders and to see age, marital status, class, and race as key aspects of gendered social relations” (Wurst 2003:230). Acknowledging this complexity also allows scholars to imagine that the ideologies that shape gender relations are themselves equally fluid and often an amalgam of several related ideals. In addition, the adoption and implementation of gender ideologies varied according to time and space, financial and social circumstances, the abilities and desires of human agents, and developmental cycles of the family (Rotman 2005, 2009).

Residential architecture, among other landscape features, “reflects ideals and realities about relationships between men and women within the family and society” (Spain 1992:7; see also Moore 1996). The spatial organization of the home also expresses attitudes about how the activities of daily life should be ordered (e.g., Barber 1994; Bourdieu 1973; Glassie 1975; Johnson 1993). Dwellings are designed to accommodate occupants and reflect the size and economic status of the social groups that reside there. Domestic space was an especially important arena in which the changing ideals of gender and family manifested themselves during the mid- to late nineteenth century.

The socioeconomic status of a family was expressed in both the scale of a domestic residence as well as the proportion of gender-specific spaces within it (Rotman 2007, 2009). Houses built for families of substantial economic means possessed a variety of specialized rooms, such as parlors, libraries, sewing rooms, dens, and nurseries. Homes for families of modest means, however, had simplified floor plans that reduced gender segregation by combining single-purpose, gender-specific spaces into multi-purpose, sexually integrated rooms within the house, such as the living room (Spain 1992:127). Whereas numerous gender-specific spaces were indicative of separation, the sexual integration of many household spaces was consistent with the complementary, but hierarchical, nature of gender relations at the property (see Ember 1983; Brydon and Chant 1989; Rotman 1995, 2001; Rotman and Black 2005).

Gender-specific as well as sexually integrated spaces exist beyond the walls of a domestic residence into the outdoor areas of the home lot. In characterizing the division of labor on a urban farmstead during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Stewart-Abernathy (1992) noted that men and teenage boys were largely responsible for the care of the hogs, mules, and horses as well as tending to the grain, hay, and
firewood. Meanwhile, women and teenage girls were charged with the chickens, vegetable gardens, and fruit. Outdoor activities areas, like interior rooms of houses, were perceived as gendered spaces.

The economic and productive needs of rural, farming families differed, however, from those of wage laborers in towns and cities (Rotman 2009). Consequently, some aspects of domesticity were given primacy over others depending on the setting. Farmhouse plans – some of which had been designed by women – often put a premium on efficiency for the sake of greater productivity, with children’s nurseries placed close to the kitchen, and special rooms designated rooms for farm laborers. This contrasted with the urban ideal in which the home as an asylum was emphasized. Children’s spaces were prominent, kitchens were isolated or hidden, and home and work were sharply differentiated (Adams 1990:96; McMurry 1988:5).

Upon immigration to America the Irish were encouraged to quickly assimilate and adopt the ideologies popular in American culture, including the cult of domesticity. In the Five Points Neighborhood of New York City, however, the Irish “adopted elements of Victorianism and fused them with their own concepts of morality” (Brighton 2001:28). In this way, traditions and values from Ireland were re-interpreted and melded together with American ideals according to the needs of individual families and ethnic groups.

Exploring Gendered Spaces

Before examining the social relations embedded with the physical landscape on Beaver Island, it is crucial to look back to Árainn Mhór to “understand what happened to [the Irish] before they came, what memories they brought with them and what relationships colored their actions” (Collar 1976:36). It is critical to have a solid comprehension of the “Old World” style and customs to accurately interpret the domestic data on Beaver Island.

Ireland has a strong oral tradition and consequently, oral histories are important for understanding how domestic spaces were utilized; households were run, and other aspects of rural domestic life in Ireland. Conversations with residents on Árainn Mhór, especially at the Ionad Lae/Day Centre illuminated Irish domestic life specific to Donegal.

Six houses on Árainn Mhór were mapped and surveyed to examine the organization of domestic space. For each house, the length and the width were measured as well as the pitch of the roof and general orientation of the house (Table 12.9). Many houses proved to be too unstable for the measurements of interior dimensions. Any extra features or buildings next to the houses were also noted and measured according to the same standards as the house itself. While there is no apparent correlation or pattern within the direction of the homes, the general sizes of the structures as well as the pitches are comparable.

Table 12.9. Summary measurements of houses on Árainn Mhór (mapped January 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>Length (Meters and Centimeters)</th>
<th>Width (Meters and Centimeters)</th>
<th>Pitch (Rise on 12, in degrees)</th>
<th>Direction (Degrees)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House One</td>
<td>10 M 52 cm</td>
<td>5 M 36 cm</td>
<td>Rise on 12 is 9 or 36’</td>
<td>W, NW or 297’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Two</td>
<td>13 M 70 cm</td>
<td>4 M 86 cm</td>
<td>Rise on 12 is 7 or 30’</td>
<td>N or 17’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Three</td>
<td>8 M 86.1 cm</td>
<td>4 M 67.2 cm</td>
<td>Rise on 12 is 7 or 30’</td>
<td>SW or 220’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Four</td>
<td>8M 25 cm</td>
<td>3M 80 cm</td>
<td>Rise on 12 is 7.5 or 31’</td>
<td>NW or 318’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Five</td>
<td>7M 95 cm</td>
<td>5M 20 cm</td>
<td>Rise on 12 is 7.5 or 31’</td>
<td>SE or 112’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Six</td>
<td>7M 70 cm</td>
<td>4M 60 cm</td>
<td>Rise on 12 is 2.5 or 10’</td>
<td>NW or 300’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each house layout, their primary building material, spacing of windows and other notable aesthetic elements were also described. This data intersected with the archival records at the National Folklore Collection (NFC) at University College Dublin. Surveys about residential architecture contained valuable information not only on how houses were constructed but what materials were used, how the houses were set up, and how each member of the family utilized the domestic spaces.

Documents at the National Library in Dublin provided additional supplementary data about rural domestic life and traditions of the home. These records offered excellent illustrations of the social ideologies that structured the creation, use, and maintenance of domestic space.

The understanding and conceptualization of domestic life on Beaver Island was greatly aided through the support of Beaver Island residents and the Beaver Island Historical Society. During field school in the summer of 2010 many Mormon houses on Beaver Island were examined and defining characteristics were noted. The Beaver Island Historical society supplied the necessary contextual and background information for all of these homesteads as well as information about Mormon and Irish occupation of the island. A central case study for this essay centers on the Greene Homestead on Beaver Island to which Mary Beth (Greene) Nelson contributed valuable sketches and family history.

**Gendered Domestic Spaces**

Landscapes are malleable entities that are molded to suit the needs of their inhabitants. Analyzing a landscape is a telling feature about the creators and reveals prevalent social and gender constructions (Rotman 2009). Changes that occur on a landscape are not just adaptations to a new environment; rather they contain meaningful symbolic elements of social relationships and ideologies. Spaces like “houses, barns, and gardens that comprise cultural landscapes embody information about their makers because the built environment actively serves to create, reproduce, and transform social relations” (Rotman and Nassaney 1997). These changes illustrate the social and gender relations that took precedence in the lives of inhabitants of a particular locale. Despite ever changing social trends and ideologies these physical manifestations can assist in making links of continuity across various landscapes.

Gender roles and relationships between family and the community were the most important themes revealed in the domestic spaces on Beaver Island. While Irish and Mormon homesteads both strongly emphasized family life, these cultural groups had different understandings of how rigidly men’s and women’s spheres as well as family and community spaces should be separated or integrated. An analysis of residential architecture on Árainn Mhór revealed the ways in which families were organized in Ireland, providing an important baseline for understanding homes on Beaver Island.

**Irish Homes on Árainn Mhór**

Irish family life on Árainn Mhór was rooted within the domestic sphere. A house on Árainn Mhór embodied rigidly separated gender roles as well as the communal nature of village life.

Most typical Irish houses were described as one or two rooms, a bedroom and kitchen each with a window (Figure 12.4). In some houses, a loft was present. A bed was located close to the fireplace in the kitchen were the parents would sleep, also known as an outshoot. It was common for large families to reside in such small structures. In the adjoining bedroom, there would typically be four to six people in a single bed (Dr. John Duffy and Bridget Gallagher, pers. comm., 2011).
Placement of homes had a social and practical purpose. Houses were placed close to a well for easy access to water. Homes near the sea were able to gather seaweed that washed ashore for fertilizer as well as wood from shipwrecks for use in the house (Séamus Bonner, pers. comm., 2011). Farms consisted of tiny lots that could be as small as 0.2 hectares (Aalen et. al 1997:142).

The houses were simple in their construction in part because of the Penal Laws that were in place by landlords. If a family improved their home by constructing a chimney or installing windows that measured more than 2’x 2’, their rent was increased. The floor was often made of clay with straw to cover it (Gallagher 1986).

Irish houses typically did not have heat or running water inside. Instead the peat fire was constantly tended and kindled (Bridget Gallagher, pers. comm., 2011). The true heart and core of an Irish house rested within the kitchen and the hearth was “the symbol both of family continuity and of hospitality towards the stranger” (Evans 1957:59). It was often placed in a central part of the house, away from the door so as not to be blown out. If the house had two rooms, the second room would be built on the other side of the fire to effectively use all of the warmth that was generated (Bridget Gallagher, pers. comm., 2011).

These small spaces with larger families were typical in Ireland. The house was viewed as a communal space and distinctions between family and community were not rigid. It was not uncommon for the women in a community to look after all of the children (Tom Hennigan, pers.comm., 2010). Conversations at the Ionad Lae/Day Centre revealed that within the Árainn Mhór community there was always one house that all the children would congregate at to play and hear ghost stories. Visitors to a home were also expected to participate in some of the household chores. Each house made their own butter and it was mandated by superstition that everyone needed to take their turn at churning the butter to ensure good luck (Bridget Gallagher and Tom Hennigan, pers. comm., 2010, 2011).

The gendered use of space and the social aspect of work are especially important features of domestic residences. Irish uses of household space were gendered in ways that differed from the cult of domesticity. In Ireland, houses were entirely female spaces (NFC 1958), whereas under domesticity they contained both male and female spheres (Rotman 2006).

The long and frequent absences required by fishing and seasonal agricultural labor migration to Scotland meant that men were rarely present within the home. As such, the house became strongly associated with women and children (Tom Hennigan, pers. comm., 2010) and, consequently, women had near complete
control over household affairs (Bridget Gallagher, pers. comm., 2011). With money from the sale of their eggs, for example, women would purchase groceries for the home (NFC 1958 (1523): 316).

Women also generally helped their husbands in many different forms of work outside of the household. Hugh Deery from Ballintra, Co. Donegal observed that, “women reared on a farm always took part in the same work on a farm as the men-particularly when help was scarce and the farmer’s children were all daughters” (NFC 1958 (1523): 316). Clearly, women played a vital role in both the farm work and shaping the domestic sphere.

Conversely, however, men took very little part in any of the household work with the exception of whitewashing and thatching the house. Men did not cook or wash clothes, though they learned to complete these tasks if they worked abroad in Scotland or Britain (NFC 1958(1523): 310). The function of the home for an Irish man would have been a haven from work and a place to enjoy time with friends and family.

In Ireland, men and women had very distinct roles within the home and family. The structure of economic tasks, however, meant that Irish households were entirely female spaces. There were no clear demarcations within the home by gender. Indeed, given the communal nature of village life, there were also few separations between the family and community.

Mormon Homes on Beaver Island

When the Árainn Mhór Irish immigrated to Beaver Island, they encountered cultural landscapes that had been constructed from cities in Illinois and Wisconsin. The homes they built reflected urban ideals. There were several important characteristics of Mormon family life, which shaped domestic space on Beaver Island. These significant social features included: “Chastity (less sex outside of marriage); Children (above average family size); Conjugalit (stronger preference for marriage); and Chauvinism (the belief that men should have authority in family decision making and that traditional gender roles are best)” (Heaton 1988). Mormon ideals strongly paralleled those of domesticity, which significantly influenced the configuration of what a proper home should be.

Under Strang’s leadership, all property on Beaver Island was considered “the lands of the Church” and was “apportioned among its members” (Backus 1955:30). Each “inheritance” consisted of a village lot and from 40 to 160 acres of farm land (Quaife 1930:139; Van Noord 1988:109). Inheritances were not free; rather “those who joined the kingdom could not receive an inheritance until they gave the king a tenth of all they possessed” (Van Noord 1988:110). The inheritance of Wingfield Watson, as one example, was described as “about midway of the island [sic], in the midst of the untamed wilderness, several miles from St. James. Here a cabin was built, a well dug, and fruit trees set out; in short, with no accumulated capital, by the hardest of manual labor during the ensuing four years, the foundations of a modest homestead were reared” (Quaife 1930:175).

Mormon houses were typically “two stories high and built of squared logs, whitewashed outside and in” (Van Noord 1988:73). Presumably, the king’s cottage represented an ideal Mormon residence. It was described as:

a sturdy two-story frame home with a porch across the length of the front. Massive doors at the front and rear were connected by a hallway through the center of the home. There was a large room on either side of the first floor, with two bedrooms and closets upstairs. The house was built in a grove of hardwoods and scattered evergreens on a level area just below the bluff where the log house stood. There was a view of the harbor and Lake Michigan beyond. A white picket fence surrounded the yard (Van Noord 1988:167).

Interestingly, with the establishment of the Mormon kingdom on Beaver Island, the communalism that had characterized their lives in Illinois and Wisconsin was abandoned. Although “groups of Mormons were encouraged to associate themselves under the patronage of a chosen leader, sharing his table and house”
(Quaife 1933:139), fewer than 10% of dwellings in 1850 were comprised of more than one nuclear family (United States Bureau of the Census 1850). Even the delimiting of the houselot with a fence signaled a significant shift away from communalism toward a new emphasis on individual households.

Mormon houses on Beaver Island conform to a separation of public and private spheres as advocated by domesticity much more than Irish homes on Árainn Mhóir. Domestic ideals created homes that were perceived as a predominantly female space and a haven from the outside world. The configuration of domestic spaces reinforced rigid gender roles and differences between community and family, emphasizing individuality over communalism.

**Irish Homes on Beaver Island**

With the assassination of Strang in 1856 and the eviction of Mormons from Beaver Island, many of the Irish were able to immediately move into extant Mormon homesteads. The Irish occupation of Mormon homes was quite seamless because of the similar understandings of domestic space between the two groups. Mormons and Irish both valued large families and homes were a strongly female sphere. Consequently, when the Mormons built their homes on Beaver Island, their residences both embodied these ideals and facilitated gendered social relations and separations between family and community.

The Irish were able to adapt and easily occupy Mormon homes. The configuration of domestic space and the mental template underlying it were similar enough to what they knew from their homes on Árainn Mhóir.

**Land Ownership**

In the transition to life on Beaver Island, the opportunity to own land was a major factor for the Irish. On Árainn Mhóir, about two-thirds of the land belonged to the landlord to whom tenants paid a rent or fee. Each family owned a small plot on which they resided and farmed. The landlord system severely restricted land ownership (Gallagher 1986). For Irish immigrants, “owning a house was a symbol of freedom and dignity to people who had been landless in Ireland” (McCaffrey 1997:83). The opportunity for control and self-sustenance was a compelling factor in the Irish resettlement in Northern Michigan.

Importantly, however, the land plots for each home were much larger on Beaver Island than in Ireland (0.2 hectares vs. 40-160 acres). Homesteads were positioned along roads with sometimes considerable distance between neighbors, a configuration that was very different from the more nucleated clachan settlements in Ireland. While the prospect of owning more land likely appealed to the Irish, the sense of isolation may have been unsettling.

There is some evidence that the Irish may have attempted to recreate the clachan along Sloptown Road, one of the main arteries on Beaver Island outside of the village of St. James. Sections 4 and 9 of Township 38 North, Range 10 West lie to the north and south of Sloptown Road, respectively, and immediately west of the King’s Highway, the main north-south transportation route on the island. During the Mormon occupation in 1852, along this stretch of road, there were six property owners (Grieg 1852). Although homes were not explicitly marked, presumably these parcels also coincided with six households. Following the Mormon occupation, the Irish constructed additional homes between extant residences, infilling between structures (Anonymous 1976:193). By 1901, the number parcels along this one mile stretch had been subdivided and contained 11 homes (Anonymous 1901). In this way, the Irish were able to reduce the isolation of the original linear arrangement of Mormon homes by creating a more nucleated concentration of families along the road.

By infilling, the Irish were able to initiate the development of an “intricate web of services and tasks” or shared work between neighbors that has characterized rural [and Irish] living (McMurry 1988:xvi). Therefore, this configuration of homes facilitated communal interaction similar to that of Árainn Mhóir; one
way in which Irish immigrants altered the Mormon cultural landscapes to better fit their social ideals and traditional lifeways.

Physical Arrangement of Residential Space

The construction of domestic space embodies cultural ideals, including those governing gendered social relations. Whereas Mormon and Irish homes share some similar features, they diverge in important ways, particularly with regard to family dynamics.

Irish cottages are much longer than they are wide and this construction is governed by superstition and, therefore, the shape of the home is considered to be of high importance. For a house to be considered ‘lucky,’ the living space could be no more than one room wide. A small house also reflected the importance of family. Indeed an old Irish saying is, “Widen the house and the family will get smaller” (Evans 1957:41). Such a floor plan lacks highly segregated spaces, allowing both for fluid interaction amongst different genders in the household as well as between the family and members of the community.

Mormon homes on Beaver Island were much wider than a traditional Irish home, often at least two rooms deep. Their homes lacked the fluidity characteristic of thatched houses in Ireland and contained many more demarcated spaces, reflecting a more rigid separation of both gendered spheres and distinctions between family and community. Thus, Irish occupation of Mormon homes required some alteration of social interaction.

The Greene Homestead just off the King’s Highway is a terrific case study of Irish residential space on Beaver Island. This home was originally a rectangular two-story log home built in the 1870s by an Irish immigrant who came over from Árainn Mhór in the 1860s (Figure 12.5). It embodies the ways in which the Irish negotiated the constructed landscape left behind by the Mormons following their eviction.

Figure 12.5. Irish built Greene Homestead on Beaver Island. (Mary Beth (Greene) Nelson pers.comm., 2011). Photograph courtesy of Mary Beth (Greene) Nelson.
This Irish homestead was strikingly similar to the “old original Mormon log homes” (Figure 12.6) (Mary Beth (Greene) Nelson, pers. comm., 2011), but was very different from those in Ireland. On Árainn Mhór and elsewhere, houses were constructed using dry laid stone as that was the raw material most readily available as illustrated in the Greene Homestead on Árainn Mhór (Figure 12.7). On Beaver Island, however, there was a paucity of stone suitable for construction, but timber was abundant. Although shipbuilders and carpenters in Ireland, timber frame house construction would have been unfamiliar technology for the Árainn Mhór immigrants. The Greene homestead – and other log cabins built by the Irish on Beaver Island – may have resembled Mormon architecture so strongly because builders used extant Mormon homes as templates in new construction.

Consequently, these new houses were an amalgamation of both Mormon and Irish ideals of gender, family, and community. The first floor of the Greene Homestead, for example, contained four rooms, including a living room, parlor, kitchen, and a bedroom (Figure 12.8). When compared with traditional residences on Árainn Mhór, this type of house had twice as many rooms and highly specialized and gendered spaces.

Figure 12.6. While this house does not exist on Beaver Island it is an accurate example of what a typical Mormon domestic space would have looked like (Van Noord 1988:266). Photograph courtesy of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Figure 12.7. Photograph of Greene Family Homestead on Árainn Mhór (Mary Beth (Greene) Nelson, pers. comm., 2011). Courtesy of Mary Beth (Greene) Nelson.

Figure 12.8. Sketch of the Greene Homestead Floor plan on Beaver Island. (Mary Beth (Greene) Nelson, pers. comm., 2011). Courtesy of Mary Beth (Greene) Nelson.
Since the Greene Homestead was likely built using a Mormon house as its template, the configuration conformed to urban ideals of domesticity. There were rigid distinctions between men and women’s roles within the home and family. Importantly, the Greene Homestead is no longer an entirely female domain. In Ireland, the kitchen was a highly fluid space containing the functions of living room, parlor, and bedroom and women’s power was concentrated in this space. On Beaver Island, however, the kitchen still existed, but was now marginalized at the back of the house. With the addition of other spaces within the home, women’s power was now diluted relative to the authority they possessed within the home on Árainn Mhór.

The Mormon-Irish homes on Beaver Island also placed greater emphasis on individualized rather than communal social interaction. The living room and parlor consisted of both a private sphere where a family could spend time together as well as a public one wherein they entertained guests (Spain 1992:127). In Ireland, homes were communal, fluid, and highly integrated with other households in the village. In the absence of the clachan on Beaver Island, however, household spaces and distances between houses created new distinction between family and community.

The adaptation of Irish immigrants to Mormon cultural landscapes was not without consequences. New household architecture, for example, was not simply a reconfiguration of domestic space, but fundamentally altered gender roles and relations by marginalizing the women’s sphere as well as emphasizing individuality over community. Importantly, these changes dramatically transformed the ways in which subsequent generations of Irish immigrants were acculturated into new forms of social interaction.

Mormon Aspects of Irish Homes

Many of the characteristics of the Mormon and Irish households were strikingly similar, allowing for the ready Irish occupation of Mormon landscapes. They were also able to adapt aspects of their environment to better suit their needs and align with their worldview, such as using Mormon houses as templates for new construction and increasing the density of Irish homes to recreate clachan-like settlements.

The Irish mental template also intersected with the Mormon mindset on many levels, for example the extra space included for a large Mormon family would suit a large Irish clan as well. In the heart of the Greene floor plan the kitchen and bedroom on the first floor are reminiscent of Irish cottage. With a long kitchen and large bedroom, it is clear there is an Irish base at the center of this Mormon-inspired floor plan, but did not coincide entirely. Whereas Irish homes were solidly female domains, Mormon-Irish homes devalued women by marginalizing the space most associated with them to the back of the house, the kitchen.

With the addition of the new and specific living spaces, the public and private spheres were kept at a distance. A traditional Irish cottage offered the blending and melding of these two spheres within the home while the Mormon model established a stricter partition between the two with the addition of more space and walls in the home. The separation of the kitchen and the living room in conjunction with the concept of separate bedrooms now offered occupants a choice of where to spend time, stretching the family apart. The kitchen, which was already a female space in the Irish cottage, became even more female as family members might have chosen to spend their time after a meal in the living room or in their bedroom. The stretching of the family unit also erased the proximity to male or public knowledge that women once enjoyed when the house only consisted of one or two rooms in Ireland.

The true variation of the transformation rests within gender and the transition that women encountered on Beaver Island because of alternative modes of architecture and technology. Farmhouse plans are one of the clearest examples of the family unit being stretched and pulled apart. It is the divisions and distinctions of space that were made during this time that created the mold for more modern gender relations within the domestic sphere. As the Irish “built their new community, how much did they keep of the values and the customs of the life they left, and what adaptations did they make to a new and different world?” (Collar 1976:49). This is ultimately a story of gender and how with some slight variations to a home layout the social dynamics of a family can change.
Since this is a student-centered project, it is anticipated that many more students will write senior theses, present posters at conferences, contribute to the project website, and otherwise be integral to the exploration and dissemination of the history of this unique and wonderful island. These various products will be made available to the public as appropriate and ultimately curated with the Beaver Island Historical Society.