Interethnic Marriage in the Irish-American Experience: Social Transformation on Beaver Island, Michigan

by
Rhiannon Duke and Deborah L. Rotman
Department of Anthropology
University of Notre Dame

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 (McCauley 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 (McCauley 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 (McCauley 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 1).

Table 1. Raw Beaver Island Population

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

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 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 2. Beaver Island Irish Households

	Total # households	Irish households	Percentage of total households
1850	89	0	0%
1860	109	60	55%
1870	48	45	94%
1880	87	81	96%
1900	142	99	70%
1910	186	83	45%
1920	173	69	40%
1930	114	43	38%

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 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 Árainn 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 3. **Married Beaver Island Irish and non-Irish**

Decade	Irish-born				Second Generation				
	Both Irish	1 Irish 1 some Irish	1 Irish 1 non-Irish	1 Irish 1 2nd Gen. both Irish parents	All Irish parents	3 Irish parents	Each has 1 Irish parent	1 both Irish parents 1 non-Irish parents	Only 1 Irish parent
1850	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1860	44	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
1870	78	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
1880	78	2	10	15	7	1	0	1	1
1900	25	0	2	14	26	4	0	8	0
1910	17	0	1	15	27	5	1	22	5
1920	6	0	1	11	21	2	1	14	3
1930	3	0	1	4	12	3	1	8	5

The nativity and parentage of unmarried Beaver Island residents was also tabulated (Table 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 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.

Table 4. Unmarried Beaver Island Irish and non-Irish

Decade	Irish-born				Second-generation								No Irish-born parents			
					Both parents Irish				Only 1 Irish parent							
	Male	Widower/Divorced	Female	Widow/Divorced	Male	Widower/Divorced	Female	Widow/Divorced	Male	Widower/Divorced	Female	Widow/Divorced	Male	Widower/Divorced	Female	Widow/Divorced
1850	7	0	1	0	parentage not listed											
1860	43	0	11	5	parentage not listed											
1870	19	4	8	7	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1
1880	12	7	6	13	34	0	24	0	5	0	2	0	19	0	1	2
1900	8	12	2	15	53	3	12	3	5	1	1	1	37	3	7	0
1910	9	10	2	11	47	4	11	4	17	0	7	1	68	5	22	2
1920	4	6	0	5	37	3	8	4	4	1	3	0	54	14	31	12
1930	1	3	0	4	28	5	4	5	0	0	0	0	41	2	17	0

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 their 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 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 6).

Table 5. Beaver Island Married Couples involving Irish-born immigrants

	1870	**1880**
Irish-born and individual with non-Irish-born parents	9	10
Both Irish-born	78	78

Table 6. Marriages between an Irish-born individual and an individual with non-Irish parents

	1870	**1880**
Total number of such marriages	9	10
Number of non-Irish husbands	6	8

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 (Funchion 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 (Funchion 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 (Funchion 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 interethnic 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 7).

Table 7. Changing marriage patterns on Beaver Island

	1880	**1900**	**1910**
Both Irish-born	78	25	17
Irish-born; 1 non-Irish-born parents	10	2	1
Irish-born; 2nd generation with both Irish-born parents	15	14	15
Both 2nd generation with all Irish-born parents	7	26	27
Both 2nd generation: 1 both Irish-born parents; 1 non-Irish-born parents	1	8	22

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 8). For example, Frank Link, the son of a German father and Irish mother, married Hannah, a second-generation Irish woman.

Table 8. Interethnic Marriages of both Irish-born and Second-generation Irish individuals

	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.

Works Cited

Bernard, Richard M.
1980 The Melting Pot and the Altar: Marital Assimilation in Early Twentieth-Century Wisconsin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Cashman, William
1976 The Rise and Fall of the Fishing Industry. Journal of Beaver Island History 1:69-88.

Collar, Helen
1976 Irish Migration to Beaver Island. Journal of Beaver Island History 1: 27-49.

Collar, Helen
2011 Holy Cross Church Records. Helen Collar Papers, Clarke Historical Library Online Collection, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan. http://clarke.cmich.edu /resource_tab/information_and_exhibits/beaver_island_history/church_records/church_records_index.html. Accessed March 28, 2011.

Connors, Paul G.
1999 America's Emerald Isle: The Cultural Invention of the Irish Fishing Community on Beaver Island, Michigan. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Loyola University Chicago.

Diner, Hasia R.
1983 Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Fausto-Sterling, Anne
2000 Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality. New York: Basic Books.

Foley, Mark C. and Timothy W. Guinnane
1999 Did Irish Marriage Patterns Survive the Emigrant Voyage?: Irish-American Nuptiality, 1880-1920. Irish Economic and Social History 26: 15-34.

Funchion, Michael F.
2010 Ties that Bind: Ethnic and Religious Factors in the Marriage Choices of Irish-American Catholics on the Dakota Frontier. New Hibernia Review 14 (3): 121-142.

Gladish, David
1976 Notes on Island Logging. Journal of Beaver Island History 1:89-102.

Grayson, Elizabeth Pollard
2001 "Calling the Heart Back Home": Irish Catholic Women in America, 1845-1915. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.

Hargreaves, Clifford
1962 Economic and Social Conditions on Arranmore in the 19th and 20th Century. Donegal Annual 5(2): 99-114.

Kalmijn, Matthijs
1998 Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends. Annual Review of Sociology 24: 395-421.

Kelleher, Patricia
1995 Gender Shapes Ethnicity: Ireland's Gender Systems and Chicago's Irish-Americans. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, University Wisconsin-Madison.

Meagher, Timothy J.
2001 Inventing Irish America: Generation, Class, and Ethnic Identity in a New England City, 1880-1928. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Metress, Seamus P. and Eileen K. Metress
2006 Irish in Michigan. Discovering the Peoples of Michigan Series. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

National Folklore Collection 1461
1957 James McCauley (79), Farmer, Inver, County Donegal.

National Folklore Collection 1481
1956 John McBrearty (50), Farmer, Teelin, County Donegal. Collector: Pádraig Ó Beirn.

Quaife, Milo M
1930 The Kingdom of St. James: A Narrative of the Mormons. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

U.S. Bureau of the Census.
1850 Population Schedules. Seventh Census of the United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington DC.

U.S. Bureau of the Census.
1860 Population Schedules. Eighth Census of the United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington DC.

U.S. Bureau of the Census.
1870 Population Schedules. Ninth Census of the United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington DC.

U.S. Bureau of the Census.
1880 Population Schedules. Tenth Census of the United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington DC.

U.S. Bureau of the Census.
1900 Population Schedules. Twelfth Census of the United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington DC.

U.S. Bureau of the Census.
1910 Population Schedules. Thirteenth Census of the United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington DC.

U.S. Bureau of the Census.
1920 Population Schedules. Fourteenth Census of the United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington DC.

U.S. Bureau of the Census.
1930 Population Schedules. Fifteenth Census of the United States. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington DC.

Weeks, Robert
1976 The Kingdom of St. James and Nineteenth-Century American Utopianism. Journal of Beaver Island History 1:9-26.