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"The Effects of Immigration on Irish Islander Place-Based Identity"
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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 Mhór 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 *Screig 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.

Monument on Árainn Mhór commemorating the Twinning Ceremony

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. 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. 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 and histories.

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 1950's.

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). 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.
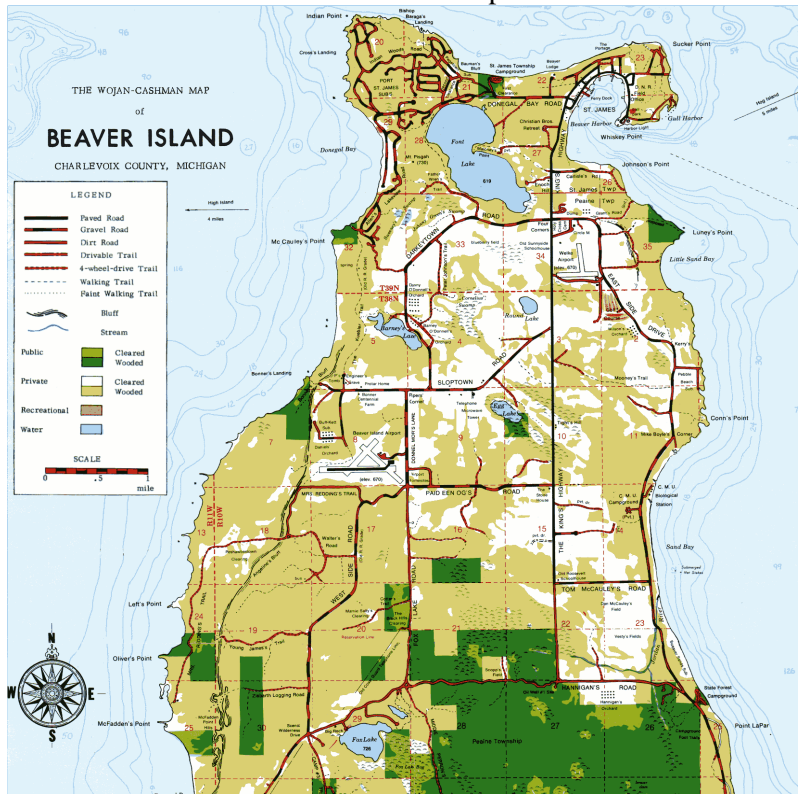
Partial map of Beaver Island

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 Appendix B for song] 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.

'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).

<u>Families and Community</u>

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 Appendix C].

> *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."*

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 Appendix D] (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.

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Appendix 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

Appendix 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."

Appendix 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 dro,

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.

Appendix 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.
Promices 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