

**Spatial Dimensions of Social Relations:
Gendered Domestic Spaces on Árainn Mhór, Co. Donegal
and Beaver Island, Michigan**

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This research was made possible in part by support from the following sources:
The Nanovic Institute for European Studies at the University of Notre Dame, the Center for Undergraduate Scholarly Engagement (CUSE), the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts (ISLA), and the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP).

Abstract

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

Introduction, Historical Background

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

Home on the Island (2006)

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

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

In the 1850s America had its first and last King in the form of Jesse James Strang, a charismatic leader and later prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It was Strang who established the Mormon kingdom on Beaver Island for his followers. Records indicate that when Strang arrived in 1847 there were already two Irish settlements on Beaver Island (Collar 1976). By 1852, the island was occupied almost exclusively by Mormons as most

non-Mormons out-migrated as a result of tensions with Strang. Following his assassination in 1856, however, Mormon families faced a forced eviction by the Irish. As non-Mormons returned to the island “the exiles were joined by others and a fishing community quickly developed, predominantly Irish in origin” (Collar 1976:29). In Beaver Island history it is held that John Bonner and the Martin Brothers of Gull Island were the first to arrive back on Beaver following the assassination of Strang. Fellow Árainn Mhór Irish who had initially settled in Canada, New York, and the anthracite fields of Northeastern Pennsylvania also arrived to join kin between the years 1866 and 1884 (Connors 1999:2). Chain migration from County Mayo and County Donegal, with a majority of the people from the islands of Rutland and Árainn Mhór, was also established by the mid-1860s (Collar 1976:33).

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

The Significance of Gendered Spaces

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

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

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

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

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

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

Residential architecture, among other landscape features, "reflects ideals and realities about relationships between men and women within the family and society" (Spain 1992:7; see

also Moore 1996). The spatial organization of the home also expresses attitudes about how the activities of daily life should be ordered (e.g., Barber 1994; Bourdieu 1973; Glassie 1975; Johnson 1993). Dwellings are designed to accommodate occupants and reflect the size and economic status of the social groups that reside there. Domestic space was an especially important arena in which the changing ideals of gender and family manifested themselves during the mid- to late nineteenth century.

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

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

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

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

Exploring Gendered Spaces

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

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

Six houses on Árainn Mhór were mapped and surveyed to examine the organization of domestic space. For each house, the length and the width were measured as well as the pitch of the roof and general orientation of the house (Table 1). Many houses proved to be too unstable for the measurements of interior dimensions. Any extra features or buildings next to the houses were also noted and measured according to the same standards as the house itself.

House	Length (Meters and Centimeters)	Width (Meters and Centimeters)	Pitch (Rise on 12, in degrees)	Direction (Degrees)
House One	10 M 52 cm	5 M 36 cm	Rise on 12 is 9 or 36°	W, NW or 297°
House Two	13 M 70 cm	4 M 86 cm	Rise on 12 is 7 or 30°	N or 17°
House Three	8 M 86.1 cm	4 M 67.2 cm	Rise on 12 is 7 or 30°	SW or 220°
House Four	8M 25 cm	3M 80 cm	Rise on 12 is 7.5 or 31°	NW or 318°
House Five	7M 95 cm	5M 20 cm	Rise on 12 is 7.5 or 31°	SE or 112°
House Six	7M 70 cm	4M 60 cm	Rise on 12 is 2.5 or 10°	NW or 300°

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

While there is no apparent correlation or pattern within the direction of the homes, the general sizes of the structures as well as the pitches are comparable.

Each house layout, their primary building material, spacing of windows and other notable aesthetic elements were also described. This data intersected with the archival records at the National Folklore Collection (NFC) at University College Dublin. Surveys about residential architecture contained valuable information not only on how houses were constructed but what materials were used, how the houses were set up, and how each member of the family utilized the domestic spaces.

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

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

Gendered Domestic Spaces

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

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

Irish Homes on Árainn Mhór

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

Most typical Irish houses were described as one or two rooms, a bedroom and kitchen each with a window (Figure 1). In some houses, a loft was present. A bed was located close to the fireplace in the kitchen where the parents would sleep, also known as an outshoot. It was common for large families to reside in such small structures. In the adjoining bedroom, there would typically be four to six people in a single bed (Dr. John Duffy and Bridget Gallagher, pers. comm., 2011).

Placement of homes had a social and practical purpose. Houses were placed close to a well for easy access to water. Homes near the sea were able to gather seaweed that washed ashore for fertilizer as well as wood from shipwrecks for use in the house (Seamus Bonner, pers. comm., 2011). Farms consisted of tiny lots that could be as small as 0.2 hectares (Aalen et. al 1997:142).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mormon Homes on Beaver Island

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

Under Strang’s leadership, all property on Beaver Island was considered “the lands of the Church” and was “apportioned among its members” (Backus 1955:30). Each “inheritance”

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

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

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

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

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

Irish Homes on Beaver Island

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

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

In the transition to life on Beaver Island, the opportunity to own land was a major factor for the Irish. On Árainn Mhór, about two-thirds of the land belonged to the landlord to whom tenants paid a rent or fee. Each family owned a small plot on which they resided and farmed. The landlord system severely restricted land ownership (Gallagher 1986). For Irish immigrants,

“owning a house was a symbol of freedom and dignity to people who had been landless in Ireland” (McCaffrey 1997:83). The opportunity for control and self-sustenance was a compelling factor in the Irish resettlement in Northern Michigan.

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

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

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

Physical Arrangement of Residential Space

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

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

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

The Greene Homestead just off the King’s Highway is a terrific case study of Irish residential space on Beaver Island. This home was originally a rectangular two-story log home built in the 1870s by an Irish immigrant who came over from *Árainn Mhór* in the 1860s (Figure

2). It embodies the ways in which the Irish negotiated the constructed landscape left behind by the Mormons following their eviction.

This Irish homestead was strikingly similar to the “old original Mormon log homes” (Figure 3) (Mary Beth (Greene) Nelson, pers. comm., 2011), but was very different from those in Ireland. On Árainn Mhór and elsewhere, houses were constructed using dry laid stone as that was the raw material most readily available as illustrated in the Greene Homestead on Árainn Mhór (Figure 4). On Beaver Island, however, there was a paucity of stone suitable for construction, but timber was abundant. Although shipbuilders and carpenters in Ireland, timber frame house construction would have been unfamiliar technology for the Árainn Mhór immigrants. The Greene homestead – and other log cabins built by the Irish on Beaver Island – may have resembled Mormon architecture so strongly because builders used extant Mormon homes as templates in new construction.

Consequently, these new houses were an amalgamation of both Mormon and Irish ideals of gender, family, and community. The first floor of the Greene Homestead, for example, contained four rooms, including a living room, parlor, kitchen, and a bedroom (Figure 5). When compared with traditional residences on Árainn Mhór, this type of house had twice as many rooms and highly specialized and gendered spaces.

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

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

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

Irish and Mormon Aspects of Greene Homestead

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

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

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

The true variation of the transformation rests within gender and the transition that women encountered on Beaver Island because of alternative modes of architecture and technology. Farmhouse plans are one of the clearest examples of the family unit being stretched and pulled apart. It is the divisions and distinctions of space that were made during this time that created the mold for more modern gender relations within the domestic sphere. As the Irish “built their new community, how much did they keep of the values and the customs of the life they left, and what adaptations did they make to a new and different world?” (Collar 1976:49). This is ultimately a story of gender and how with some slight variations to a home layout the social dynamics of a family can change.

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