

## Another Drop in the Well: Exploring Irish Women's Immigration to New Brunswick Before the Famine

IN 1835 MARTHA CROSSET, 30, and her children Jane, 10, Elizabeth, 8, and James, the baby at 6, departed from the townland of Garvaghy in the parish of Ahoghill in County Antrim, Ulster. They were, according to contemporary records compiled for the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, destined for Saint John, New Brunswick. No mention was given of a husband or other adult male relative and no other Crossets were reported to have departed in that year.<sup>1</sup> Taken alone, these details suggest that Martha Crosset was a detached adult woman, possibly a widow, emigrating with her children. An examination of the 1851 Census of New Brunswick, however, tells, as Paul Harvey used to say, “the rest of the story.” Unmentioned in the Ordnance Survey Memoir for County Antrim, Martha's husband William had departed from Ireland in 1833 and gone to New Brunswick and established a beachhead for his family in the colony.<sup>2</sup>

The modicum of information that we can secure about Martha Crosset's story from the Ordnance Survey memoir can be understood as a glass of water – half full but also half empty, with the additional data provided by the 1851 Census adding a bit more clarity. For decades, scholars have struggled to fully integrate gender into the evolving portrait of Irish migration in order to tell the complex story of women such as Martha Crosset and their families in a way that is accurate, nuanced, and illuminating.<sup>3</sup> As recently as 2009, Willeen Keough wrote that in “the current

1 Angélique Day, Patrick McWilliams, and Noirin Dobson, eds., *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Volume XXIII, Parish of Country Antrim VIII, 1831-5, 1837-8, Ballymena and West Antrim* (Dublin: Institute of Irish Studies in association with the Royal Irish Academy, 1990), 37.

2 1851 Census of New Brunswick, St. Patrick's Parish, Charlotte County, 55.

3 In a 1988 review essay for *Acadiensis*, David A. Wilson noted the failure of scholars to consider the experiences of Irish women in Canada and insisted “this imbalance must be redressed.” Donald Akenson, in the 1990s, reminded us that the history of Irish women immigrants, especially Protestant Irish women immigrants, had yet to be described and analyzed in a comprehensive way and suggested that a new perspective on gender and immigration was overdue. Even in their more recent work on women in the Orange order in Britain, MacPherson and MacRaild note that while scholars have produced a substantial body of work on gender and immigration this work has been focused extensively on Irish Catholic women and efforts to describe the lives of non-Catholic Irish women immigrants are still in the “pioneering” stage. Janet Nolan, in a 2009 piece reviewing scholarship on the immigration of Irish women to the United States, continued the American tradition of focusing on Roman Catholic immigrants in the famine era and beyond. See David A. Wilson, “The Irish in North America: New Perspectives,” *Acadiensis* XVIII, no. 1 (Fall 1988): 215; Donald Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University, 1993): 157-87; D. MacPherson and Donald MacRaild, “Sisters of the Brotherhood: Female Orangeism on Tyneside in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Irish Historical Studies* 35, no. 137 (May 2006): 40; and Janet Nolan, “Women's Place in the History of the Irish Diaspora: A Snapshot,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28, no. 4 (Summer 2009): 76-7. Nolan, like all historians who look to the United States Census, is hampered by the lack of information about religious and ethnic identity recorded by the census.

Sandra Barney, “Another Drop in the Well: Exploring Irish Women's Immigration to New Brunswick Before the Famine,” *Acadiensis* XLIV, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2015): 95-105.

historiography on early Irish immigration and settlement in North America, Irish women are shadowy figures. They speak to us in sighs and whispers.” She modestly states that her book on Irish women in the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland is “merely one small drop in a slowly filling well.”<sup>4</sup>

This research note offers some possibilities for strategies that might produce another drop for that well. Through this preliminary consideration of several sources that illuminate the experiences of women and families as they immigrated from Ulster to New Brunswick in the 1830s, I suggest ways we might enrich the conversation about gender and migration before the Great Famine. The intention here is to ask how we might juxtapose various sources to illustrate the history of those women who travelled, alone or with family members or friends, to Londonderry to then sail for Saint John.<sup>5</sup>

To imagine the movement of women and families across the Atlantic, I presume that immigration must be viewed as a video and not a series of snapshots. As Nancy L. Green wrote in 2012, we have to visualize “individuals across space and in movement [to] better understand the history of migration itself.”<sup>6</sup> To see Irish women “in motion,” I propose that we consider three sets of historical documents. The first, the Ordnance Survey memoirs produced in Ireland in the 1830s, places these about-to-emigrate women and their families on Irish soil. The second, the passenger lists from ships that sailed from Londonderry to Saint John in this decade, provides information about women on the move from the old world to the new. The final resource I have considered is the census material collected in New Brunswick from 1851 forward. Each of these sources offers unique challenges and limitations; most significantly, I have not yet been able to follow a specific woman or a family through all three of these sources with complete certainty. Combined, and enriched by other qualitative sources, however, they can be foundational documents to help construct the history of the Irish women who settled Atlantic Canada before the famine.

Abdelmalek Sayad, as referenced by Nancy Green, has insisted that it is crucial to analyze the circumstances that prompt emigration in order more fully to understand immigration. We must “return to the sending societies to understand the

4 Willeen Keough, *The Silver Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/keough/kew01.html>, para. 50, 744.

5 Ultimately, my goal is to imagine how to combine these primary documents, and others, to help illuminate the intersection of gender and religion in the immigrant experience of Irish women and to contribute to the addition of gender to what Gordon Darroch labeled “the geographic and historical contingency of ethnicity.” In doing this I presume, as Kenny has argued and Fitzgerald has quoted and supported, that Protestant women and Catholic women from Ulster were “part of the same general story.” As mothers, wives, and daughters, women shared essential roles rooted in presumptions about their biology; how those essential experiences were lived, however, varied depending on religious, economic, and geographical circumstances. See Gordon Darroch, “Half Empty or Half Full? Images and Interpretations in the Historical Analysis of Catholic Irish in Nineteenth-Century Canada,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 25, no. 1 (1993), 1-8, and Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: A History* (New York: Longman, 2000), 2, quoted in Patrick Fitzgerald, “Mapping the Ulster Diaspora, 1607-1960,” *Familia* 22 (2006): 1.

6 Nancy L. Green, “Changing Paradigms in Migration Studies: From Men to Women to Gender,” *Gender and History* 24, no. 3 (November 2012): 785.

ways in which gender relations at home . . . may encourage or discourage emigration.”<sup>7</sup> While the Ordnance Survey memoirs may not provide information that expressly describes the events of women’s lives, they do enable us to construct some image of the specific Ulster communities they document. The memoirs are imperfect sources, but, as Keough writes, “the story of the Irish women who emigrated to North America before the 1840s can only be patched together from pieces and fragments of evidence.”<sup>8</sup>

The Ordnance Survey memoirs were compiled between 1830 and 1844 by the British government. During these years antiquarians, historians, and lexicographers were employed to create a narrative description of Ireland as a companion to the intricately detailed maps of the island being produced by the Ordnance Survey. The mapping project originated, according to historian Gillian Doherty, in the demands of Irish landholders for a new documentation and evaluation of land. She argues that this endeavor was rooted in a desire for modernization and reform, and was “motivated by a benevolent and improving spirit,” although old tensions eventually impeded the project’s progress. Challenged to interpret and preserve traditional place names, a division was created within the Ordnance Survey to study and record local history and culture. Captain Thomas Larcom, head of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, recognized the exceptional nature of the material being produced by the historical division and proposed the publication of local memoirs to augment the Ordnance maps. After the publication of the first memoir, on the parish of Templemore in County Londonderry in 1837, however, the Westminster government became concerned about the costs of producing such extensive work and about potential controversies rooted in religious and historical conflicts. In 1844 Prime Minister Robert Peel determined that the memoirs should no longer include data on history or antiquities and should, instead, focus exclusively on practical information such as geography.<sup>9</sup>

Wary of enflaming old disputes, the government did not publish other Ordnance Survey memoirs. However, those that were preserved and published in manuscript form provide an exceptional window into Irish life in the first decades of the 19th century. Of particular interest here are those memoirs for counties Antrim and Londonderry in Ulster, which include lists of emigrants who departed between 1833 and 1839. These are anecdotal records and are by no means comprehensive lists, but the inclusion of emigrants in the Ordnance Survey memoirs creates an exceptional record. The data they provide includes not only the names of those who departed and the parishes from which they left, but also their townland of origin, religion, trade, and intended destination. The memoirs, then, situate these emigrants in the sending societies from which they were departing.

The memoir for the Parish of Ahoghill in County Antrim, which recorded the departure of Martha Crosset and her children in 1835, describes in detail the community she was leaving. Garvaghy, the village in the parish where the Crossets resided, had a substantial population of Seceders, the faction of Presbyterians to

7 Green, “Changing Paradigms,” 791.

8 Keough, *Silver Thread*, para. 755.

9 Gillian Doherty, *The Irish Ordnance Survey: History, Culture and Memory* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 13-14, 32.

which the Crossets had pledged themselves. They worshiped on the fringes of the dominant denomination, but their church thrived; the meeting house could hold 500 and had been constructed more than a decade earlier, paid for through private subscriptions.<sup>10</sup> Given the rich tradition of Presbyterianism in Northern Ireland, it is likely that records to further illustrate the condition of the church in Garvaghy could be secured.

The Seceder meeting house was less than a quarter of a mile from the town of Portglenone, located on the River Bann, which was the judicial and economic hub of the townland (a traditional Gaelic delineation that describes the smallest geographic division within a county). An attorney and a magistrate were seated there, as were several apothecaries and surgeons, four haberdashers and milliners, nine publicans, and eight innkeepers. Including those in the linen trade and the agricultural workers who lived in the town, 147 trades and occupations were represented. Such a variety of endeavors might suggest diversity and prosperity, but the memoirist noted that the town was actually enduring economic and social disorder. One of the surveyors reported “The houses in Portglenone are principally low and wretchedly roofed . . . .The street is flat and very dirty.” The decline of Portglenone, according to the memoir, was rooted in its proximity to Ballymena, which held a dominant role as the regional market town. Portglenone had enjoyed prosperity when a linen market thrived in the community, but that market had lost importance because of regional consolidation in the industry. As Ballymena’s fortunes improved, Portglenone’s declined.<sup>11</sup>

Along with the weakening of the linen market, the memoirist recorded that the local linen fairs that formerly supported the town had been disrupted by a series of “dreadful party riots,” in which “many respectable persons [had been] beaten” and “others . . . deterred from attending.” These riots had become such a matter of community concern that a special magistrate had been appointed for Portglenone and a company of soldiers had been posted to the town. To discourage violent behavior, the Presbyterian clergy had been urged to stop the distribution of whiskey at funeral wakes and to forbid “cock-fighting, card-playing and dances.”<sup>12</sup>

The world Martha Crosset and her family chose to leave may have both comforted and challenged them. Her neighborhood church was stable and substantive, smaller only than the orthodox Presbyterian Church. She lived near a village of some size, where the linen industry had produced prosperity for decades. The number of schools in her parish was growing and, if she hoped to educate her daughters or her son, opportunities were available in her townland through schools funded by the London Hibernian Society. At the same time, the decline of the linen market in Portglenone, the outbursts of violence, and the public dialogue on gambling and alleged immorality may have contributed to the family’s decision to depart for North America.<sup>13</sup>

At some point, Martha Crosset and her husband William decided that the time had come to leave the familiar for a new landscape. After his safe arrival in New

10 Day, McWilliams, and Dobson, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland*, 11, 17.

11 Day, McWilliams, and Dobson, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland*, 11, 30, 9.

12 Day, McWilliams, and Dobson, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland*, 9, 15.

13 Day, McWilliams, and Dobson, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland*, 21-2.

Brunswick, she followed him – trusting in a complicated calculation. Ulster men and women, like all emigrants, had to weigh the risks they faced when pondering a departure for the Maritime colonies. In addition to considering the opportunities and challenges they would encounter once settled in the new land, they also had to think about the risk involved in travel from their old homes to their new. While transport across the North Atlantic was shorter and less dangerous than, say, relocation to Australia, it still constituted an intimidating proposition that was not without its potentially life-threatening challenges. It would be purely speculative to imagine how a woman traveling alone with her children viewed the prospect of a trans-Atlantic journey. Given her responsibility for her offspring, news of catastrophe, and the reassurances offered by shipping companies and government officials in response, may have been of some significant interest to her.

As the *New Brunswick Courier* documented when describing the wreck of the *Despatch*, which sailed from Londonderry for Quebec in the summer of 1828 but went down off the coast of Nova Scotia, ships did sink as they navigated the North Atlantic and disaster was a possibility faced by all passengers no matter their gender or status. “The whole of these unfortunate people . . . were in comfortable circumstances,” the reporter noted, but their wealth did not protect them.<sup>14</sup> The local press also reported on other, less catastrophic, shipwrecks, but more common was discussion about disease and sanitation aboard the ships. In an era when contagious illness could decimate a population forced into close contact, the dangers that were inseparable from a trans-Atlantic voyage were significant and substantial.

Government policy, and action, reassured immigrants that colonial officials were addressing the safety of transport, and colonial courts attempted to ensure that captains provided clean and safe vehicles for travel. In July 1831 the *New Brunswick Courier* reported that a number of captains who sailed the route from Ulster to Saint John had been indicted for violating the Passenger Law, which had been passed to ensure the safety and welfare of trans-Atlantic passengers. Several of them, though, were exonerated after their ships were visited by the health officer. Captain Duncan of the *Mary* was

particularly complimented by the Court, on the representation of the Health Officer who visited the vessel, for his praiseworthy conduct in attending to the comfort and convenience of his passengers, which not only lessened the privations of the voyage, but enabled them to land on our shores in perfect health and cleanliness.

Three other officers were not so fortunate; they were found guilty and were fined sums that varied between £20 and £30. The newspaper writer expressed his expectation that the situation would be improved:

It is sincerely to be hoped that these trials will have the effect not only of deterring others from transgressing in future, but also of inducing those who may have the [control] of passenger vessels, to

14 “Brig *Despatch* – Account of the wreck,” *New Brunswick Courier*, 2 August 1828, <http://archives.gnb.ca/Documents/IrishPortal/Newspapers/0226.pdf>.

endeavor, by a faithful discharge of their duty, to gain for themselves a good name among the emigrants, and the approbation of the authorities in the port where they arrive.<sup>15</sup>

Such concern for the well-being of passengers was a consistent theme in the *New Brunswick Courier* during the early years of the 1830s. In 1831, passengers from the *Leslie Gault* were described by the agent of that publication to be “in such cleanliness and good order, as to draw forth the highest commendations” for the ship’s captain.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the destitute immigrants who packed the coffin ships during the Great Famine, these early settlers had at least the hope that government efforts, and competition between passenger vessels, might ensure them a safe passage free from naval catastrophe or epidemic.

Once Irish residents had determined to depart and booked passage, they joined a community of emigrants that included people from varying economic and religious conditions. This was a community that placed men and women, young and aged, and wealthy and poor as well as Presbyterians, Seceders, followers of the Church of Ireland, other Protestants, and Roman Catholics in intimate contact. Historians can know some things about the diversity of the individuals who boarded these ships because a number of passenger lists survive to document the traffic between Ireland and New Brunswick. Although a major fire in 1877 destroyed a significant number of the Saint John Port Returns, enough passenger lists survive in the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick to illustrate the complexity of the people who boarded the various ships making the passage.

Passenger lists reveal varying degrees of detail and accuracy. Deirdre M. Mageean, in a consideration of the value of passenger lists as historical documents, observed that many passenger manifests provide minimal information and that which is presented must be viewed with skepticism. She raises particular concerns about the accuracy of information about occupation and age.<sup>17</sup> Even the most casual observer, when presented with a passenger list from the 1830s, will notice that the vast majority of men were listed as labourers and that the vast majority of women, even if listed between a man of a similar age with the same surname and a series of children also bearing that name, were reported to be spinsters. Given that the term “spinster” could refer to either marital or occupational status, this label creates as much confusion as clarity.

In spite of their limitations, passenger lists are neglected sources for those of us looking to enrich the history of immigration by adding a sharper focus on women and families. If the historian stops to consider the exchange between the passenger and the steward creating the list, or between the partners or family and friends and the steward, there is an opportunity to ponder the circumstances that contributed to

15 “Passenger Law Indictments – Acquittals and Prosecutions,” *New Brunswick Courier*, 2 July 1831, <http://archives.gnb.ca/Documents/IrishPortal/Newspapers/0275.pdf>.

16 “Brig Leslie Gault – Emigrants settled in Fredericton area – Good report,” *New Brunswick Courier*, 4 June 1831, <http://archives.gnb.ca/Documents/IrishPortal/Newspapers/0269.pdf>.

17 Deirdre M. Mageean, “Nineteenth Century Irish Emigration: A Case Study Using Passenger Lists,” in *The Irish in America: Emigration, Assimilation, and Impact*, ed. P.J. Drudy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 45-7.



creating the list as it appears as a finished product. Did women offer comments about their work skills and their marital status to the clerks that were ignored? Was there a discourse between passenger and clerk or did the person in authority, the ship's representative, simply impose his presumptions in describing his customers for the manifest?

It is true that passenger lists may provoke more questions than answers and that, because of their inherent limits, some historians do not make extensive use of them. But, in explaining her determination to consider every possible source, quantitative or qualitative, exhaustive or circumstantial, Keough asserts that "anecdotal evidence is needed to help us understand the dynamics that shaped specific movements and the meanings that migrants derived from particular migration and settlement experiences."<sup>18</sup> Given that these records are among the rare resources that offer some information about the "going" of emigration/immigration, they cannot be ignored. Correlating them with data from the Ordnance Survey memoirs produces a new and rich vein of evidence, even though gaps inevitably remain.

According to the Ordnance Survey Memoir for Tamlaght Finlagan Parish in County Londonderry, for example, Fanny and William Gilderson departed in 1834 to sail to Saint John on the *Robert Burns* with their four children: Mary, Hanna, William, and John.<sup>19</sup> An examination of the passenger manifest from the *Robert Burns*, however, does not include the youngest child, John, who was only two years old.<sup>20</sup> Was John's absence from the passenger list evidence of family tragedy or family calculation? Perhaps he was presented to the crew of the *Robert Burns* as a babe in arms, too young to be required to pay passage. Is this an example of a family defining their interaction with a commercial enterprise and, by doing so, shaping the historical record? As about-to-be emigrants, perhaps they were comfortable with the recording of their youngest as a child of two; as immigrants, it might have improved their economic condition to present him as too young to be assessed a fare. The Gilderson family does not appear to have remained in New Brunswick and is not easily found in other documents, so we may never know John's fate. Yet such a tiny glimpse into the Gildersons' life can encourage us, as historians, to imagine innovative questions, and possibly new sources, to answer those questions.

Passenger lists do not provide consistent and absolute data, but these documents do offer an image of a moment in the history of the Irish diaspora as recorded by one individual working within one set of structures. The Ordnance Survey memoir documents that the Campbells – John, Mary, and their daughter Mary Ann – also emigrated from Magheramore. The Gildersons, according to the Ordnance Survey memoir, were Roman Catholics; the Campbells were Presbyterians. Both of these families took ship on the *Robert Burns* and they are, in fact, listed together on the passenger manifest. Each family had children who were younger than ten, and the

18 Keough, *Silver Thread*, para. 42.

19 Brian Mitchell, *Irish Emigrant Lists, 1833-1839: Lists of Emigrants Extracted from the Ordnance Survey Memoirs for Counties Londonderry and Antrim* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1989), 97.

20 Passenger List, *Robert Burns*, 1834, RS23E1/1834e47, reel F9798, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB).

historian has to ponder what the experience of immigration must have been for those children who shared so many traits and experiences but whose religion was different.<sup>21</sup>

Joining these families as they boarded ship were significant numbers of young women and men, who seemingly travelled alone. Margaret McEntire, 18, and Anne Littlewood, 20, left Drummond townland, also in Tamlaght Finlagan Parish. Like the Gildersons and the Campbells, these young women were from the same community but possessed different religious affiliations.<sup>22</sup> Geographical proximity, rather than religion or gender, apparently linked passengers as they purchased tickets and boarded ship. From Ballyking came the Healys, a young Catholic family of five, and John White, a Presbyterian of 19. Together, they travelled with McEntire and Littlewood on the *Ambassador*, making up one of a number of clusters of individuals who were apparently from connected home communities. Whether they simply purchased tickets from the same agent or were clinging to the familiar for the length of the voyage cannot be known, but the passenger list documents a moment when male and female, Catholic and Protestant Irish shared a transformative experience as they set out from the old world for the new.

Travel from Ireland to New Brunswick might have brought together Irish of all categories for a moment, but it would be naïve to assume that religion, gender, marital status, and economic circumstance ceased to be defining characteristics. Every passenger list includes a remarkable number of “labourers” but also a few men whose trades were considered worthy of identification. Carpenters, gentlemen, weavers, and many farmers were sprinkled among the labourers in the surviving Saint John passenger lists. At the same time, relatively few trades were listed for women. The vast majority of women were listed as “spinsters.” As already noted, because this term could refer to either an occupational or a marital status, it is essentially impossible to know if clerks were attempting to record women’s occupations or if they were simply reciting an often-incorrect generic descriptor.

The manifest from the *Highlander* is an exceptional document. The *Highlander* sailed out of Londonderry with a surprising number of skilled craftswomen on board. Mary Diver, whose occupation was listed as mantuamaker (dressmaker), joined her husband Edward, a wheelwright, in leaving Dungiven. Susanna and Andrew Davis departed from Strabane in County Tyrone. He was a weaver, and she was a mantuamaker as was their apparent traveling companion Jane McFarland. The McDermott sisters, Mary and Bidy, left Ramelton on the same ship, and Catherine McCaffery, another dressmaker from Strabane, sailed with her husband Phillip, a shoemaker. Hannah, another skilled needleworker, and John Boyle hailed from Londonderry, but they took their respective skills – he was a carpenter – and sailed for New Brunswick. When examined, it appears that the passenger list for the *Highlander* documents ten women who were skilled needleworkers. Since there were only 66 adult women listed as passengers on the ship, the notion that one out of every six would be a mantuamaker raises intriguing possibilities.<sup>23</sup> Was there a

21 Passenger List, *Robert Burns*, 1834, RS23E1/1834e47, reel F9798, PANB.

22 Passenger List, *Ambassador*, 1834, RS23E1/1834e23, reel F9798, PANB.

23 Passenger List, *Highlander*, 1834, RS23E1/1834e31, reel F9798, PANB.



mass exodus of skilled women workers as the linen industry restructured? If so, did these women insist on their skills being documented and were they advantaged by their professional experience and abilities when they arrived in North America? A dedicated search to trace these women in Canadian and American records would be necessary in order to begin to answer these questions.

Pursuing these apparently skilled craftswomen in the historical record of Canada or the United States presents a daunting challenge. One of the most promising resources for the historian seeking to trace Ulster immigrants in New Brunswick is the inaugural census collected in 1851. The returns for the colony's 1851 Census, and for the other decennial enumerations, which were collected by the federal government from 1871 onward, offer the researcher the opportunity to observe how those immigrants who came over in the 1830s fared in their first decades in the Maritimes. There are, of course, limitations on the information that can be uncovered in these documents. One of the most glaring challenges is the difficulty in tracing those Irish women immigrants who settled in the colony and changed their surnames through marriage between their arrival in the 1830s and the collection of the census information in the 1850s. Given this constraint, the census is most useful for tracing male immigrants, women who did not marry, and already married couples. By tracing the family unit, the lives of the female components of that partnership can be illuminated. We know from the 1851 census, for example, that Martha and William Crosset still resided in New Brunswick and were settled in St. Patrick's Parish in Charlotte County, in the southeastern corner of the colony. Martha and William oversaw an empty nest by this time, according to the census recorder; William was a farmer and it was noted that they lived in a farmhouse, rather than a rougher log cabin as did some of their neighbors.<sup>24</sup>

Although none of the Crossets' children were residing with them in 1851, a continued search through public records reveals that their son James eventually settled near them in Charlotte County. In the 1871 Census of Charlotte County James Crosset is recorded as living in the Parish of St. Stephen with his wife Mary and six children.<sup>25</sup> James Crosset was employed as a carriage maker, a craft he had been practicing for at least six years since his business was listed in the Hutchinson Directory for 1865-1866.<sup>26</sup> The elder Crossets cannot be discovered in the 1871 Census, but William Crosset, at least, was still living. His obituary was published in December of 1875 when it was noted that he had died at the end of November in his own residence in Upper Mills, a community in St. Stephen's parish, suggesting that, at the time of his death, he was living closer to his son and family.<sup>27</sup>

24 1851 Census of New Brunswick, St. Patrick's Parish, Charlotte County, p. 55, Heritage Charlotte County, <http://www.heritagecharlotte.com/census.html>.

25 1871 Census of New Brunswick, St. Stephen's Parish, Charlotte County, p. 70, Library and Archives Canada (LAC), [http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/1871/pdf/4396592\\_00511.pdf](http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/1871/pdf/4396592_00511.pdf).

26 *Hutchinson's New Brunswick Directory for 1865-66, Containing Alphabetical Directories of Each Place in the Province, with a Post Office Directory and an Appendix Containing Much Useful Information* (St. John: Thomas Hutchinson Publisher, 1866).

27 "The Saint Croix Courier Journey Through Time: A Collection of Amusing and Informative News and Opinions from Past Issues, written with permission of *St. Croix Courier*, courtesy of Joan Christie," [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nbcharlo/misc31.htm](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nbcharlo/misc31.htm).

An examination of the lives of the younger Crossets, James and Mary, suggests possible strategies for continuing to follow the stories of those initially located in emigration and passenger lists. Census data, newspapers, and business directories reveal a family well established in New Brunswick and engaging in practices and pursuits adapted to their new environment. As the Crossets moved to the west towards St. Stephen, they had settled among other immigrants and second-generation residents with experiences and identities much like their own. The decision to settle in St. Stephen, in fact, placed the Crossets in the middle of an enclave of Protestant Irish. Houston and Smyth's geography of the Orange Order in Canada indicates the presence of Orange lodges in the area, and Toner notes that the "Protestant Irish predominated in the southwestern portion of the province."<sup>28</sup>

Mary Crosset, James's wife who, at 35, was five years his junior, was also of Irish origin. Unlike her husband, however, her parents had emigrated before her birth and she was a native of New Brunswick. Since James had arrived from Ireland as a child of only six years, the two of them had essentially the same position as children of immigrant parents. Their decision to marry reflects the trends that Peter Toner noted in his examination of the 1871 Census. He discovered that Irish Protestant men were less inclined than Irish Catholic men to marry Irish-born women. More important to these Protestant Irishmen was the religion of their prospective wives.<sup>29</sup> Mary Crosset, Irish by ethnicity but not birth, met the critical standard of sharing her husband's religious identity.

That religious identity had evolved over the years. The younger Crosset couple had abandoned James's parents' allegiance to Presbyterianism and become members of a Wesleyan Methodist Church. An examination of the census records for the district in which they lived revealed that this decision was shared with others who identified themselves as ethnically Irish. More significantly, association with the Wesleyan Church was not limited to the Irish but was shared by many who called themselves English and Scottish as well.<sup>30</sup> An additional review of local church records would enrich this story substantially.

By the 1870s, the Crosset family had been in New Brunswick for 40 years; many of them lived through Confederation. They were solidly rooted in the province, residents in a region dominated by Protestants and heavily populated by people of Irish ethnicity and ancestry. After mid-century, their lives were reflected in, and have to be measured by, sources created and preserved in colonial, and later provincial, records. Church documents, newspapers, court records, photographs, and endless pieces of ephemera are possibly existent to provide information about their lives, providing a richer, more complete picture of their experience as Canadian citizens of Irish descent.

But these documents only tell the story of Martha Crosset and her descendants as they functioned in this North American landscape. They illustrate the outcome of

28 Cecil Houston and William Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 70-2; Peter Toner, "Another New Ireland Lost: The Irish of New Brunswick," <http://gail25.tripod.com/nb1.htm>.

29 Toner, "Another New Ireland Lost."

30 1871 Census of New Brunswick, St. Stephen's Parish, Charlotte County, p. 70, LAC, [http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/1871/pdf/4396592\\_00511.pdf](http://data2.collectionscanada.ca/1871/pdf/4396592_00511.pdf).

immigration, but they cannot reflect the space between – the months, eventually years, between William Crosset's departure and the arrival of his wife and children in the colony. Those North American sources do not reflect the motives that drove the family to depart Ulster, or the experience of traveling from one home to another.

Donna R. Gabaccia and Vicki L. Ruiz argue that the task faced by immigrant women "was as much to make a home as to find one." In this initial survey I have tried to illuminate some sources that might help document both the finding, as well as the making, of that new home. My goal has been to suggest some possible ways we can discover how, as Gabaccia and Ruiz assert, these female Irish migrants "create[d] meaning in their own lives and shape[d] the lives of others."<sup>31</sup> Whether as residents of an Ulster community, passengers on a ship travelling the Atlantic, or settlers in a new land where identity was an evolving concept, Irish migrants such as the Crossets, both female and male, have to be seen as parts of a mosaic within which they helped develop and reshape communities and institutions. When Martha Crosset said farewell to her husband she faced two years without him and a voyage across the Atlantic before they were reunited. She cared for her family and managed her household, both in the public and private spheres, without her husband present. By joining with him in this plan, she pursued a course of action that remade her family's identity and experience and helped shape the identities of the various communities of which she was a member along her journey. Her story reminds us that, as Green has written, "separations and reunions constitute gendered rhythms of mobility," and her life has to be examined from a position that acknowledges all those complexities.<sup>32</sup>

I would not suggest that combining sources like the Ordnance Survey memoirs, passenger lists, and census data alone can ever produce a complete and fully nuanced illustration of the immigration experience of the Ulster women who came to New Brunswick before the Great Famine. The intention here is to propose that sources like these may be combined to construct a general outline of events that must be filled in by more qualitative data. Willeen Keough states: "As we shift our perspective from overseas Irish emigration in general to focus on Irish female emigration experiences in particular, and finally hone in on earlier [pre-Famine] movements, our viewing screen becomes increasingly constricted."<sup>33</sup> I suggest that we revise our view to take in the information that can be obtained from such broad, allegedly gender neutral, and comprehensive sources as the ones described here. Additional work to tease out the ways in which gender and religion, economic status, and age influenced the individual and collective experiences of these immigrants has to be undertaken to enrich the story. By looking for records that document both the experiences of emigration and immigration, I believe that we can squeeze out some new drops to help fill the well of Canadian women's history.

SANDRA BARNEY

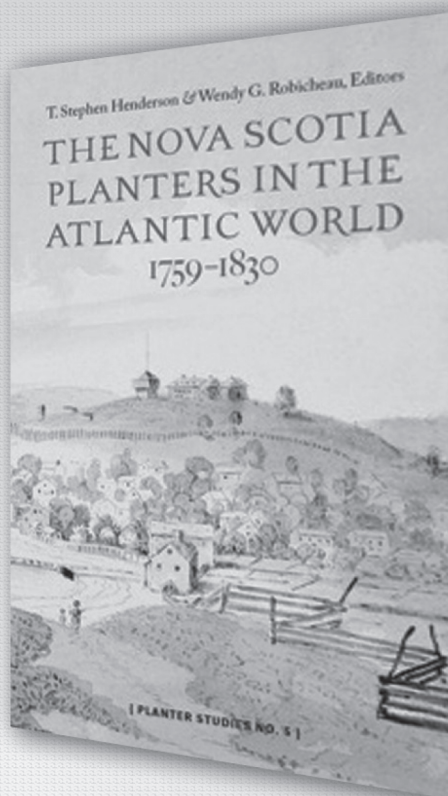
31 Donna R. Gabaccia and Vicki L. Ruiz, "Migrations and Destinations: Reflections on the Histories of U.S. Immigrant Women," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 26, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 5.

32 Nancy Green, "Changing Paradigms," 792.

33 Keough, *Silver Thread*, para. 755.

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