

The Journal of the American-Irish Historical Society (Vol. VI) by Thomas Hamilton Murray

COMMERCE BETWEEN IRELAND AND RHODE ISLAND.

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Including Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island has a long extent of coastline. There are in the state 90,000 acres of safe anchorage, varying in depth from six feet to twenty fathoms. The state has the Atlantic Ocean as its southern boundary. Of its cities and towns some twenty border deep, salt water. It is not surprising, therefore, that Rhode Island early attained maritime importance.

For many years ships were sent all over the world from Providence, Warren, Bristol, and Newport. Their sails whitened many seas. These Rhode Island mariners were a hardy race and worthy of the great merchants for whom they sailed.

Before the year 1700, their vessels had already become numerous. In due time they were known in Barbados, Jamaica, St. Kitt's, Nevis, Montserrat, and Bermuda. Their sailors cheerily sang in the ports of Madeira, Fayal, Surinam, and Curaçao, and were welcomed even in India and China.

The slave trade was the object of some of these voyages, commerce of others, while the fisheries engaged the attention of the rest. In 1738, Newport alone had over one hundred vessels engaged in business throughout the world. In 1763, the same place sent out 182 vessels on foreign voyages in addition to the 352 coastwise and fishing vessels. These were manned, all told, by 2,200 seamen. In June and July 1774, the vessels arriving at Newport from foreign voyages numbered 64, in addition to 132 coastwise and 17 whalers.

Providence was also a great port. An address to Congress, in 1790, stated that there "is a greater number of vessels belonging to this port (Providence) than to New York," and that "it is a place of more navigation than any of its citizens of the Union." Fortunes were rapidly made by merchants engaged in foreign trade, while domestic commerce also brought in its wealth. In reaching out to trade with the world Rhode Island merchants, unlike some "historians" of today, did not forget Ireland.

Several Rhode Island vessels made regular voyages to and from Irish ports. Others made occasional ones, or touched at Belfast, Newry, Dublin, Londonderry, Cork, or Waterford, on their way to or from British and other ports. A list of fifteen vessels engaged regularly or occasionally in the Irish trade is here given: Ships, Hope, Mary, Neptune, Tristram, Nancy, Robert Burns, Catherine, and Faithful Stewart; brigs, Little John, Betsy, Recovery, Sally, Lydia, and Happy Return; schooner, Mayflower. There were probably many others, but these fifteen are sufficient to illustrate the point.

Among the captains were Rathbun, Davis, Ambrose, Taggart, Dring, Warner, Crawford, Staples,

Coffin, Noyes, Allen, Smith, Cook, McCansland, Coggeshall and Howland.

Of the foregoing vessels, the Mary and Little John belonged to George Gibbs of Newport; the Hope to Samuel Fowler of Newport; the Betsy to Charles Handy, and the Recovery to Chris. Ellery, both also of Newport. These five vessels are specifically mentioned in the Newport Historical Magazine as making regular voyages to Ireland. From time to time the Newport Mercury chronicles the arrival from Ireland, or departure, therefore, of other ships and brigs. These were all in addition to those sailing between Ireland and Providence.

Among the articles imported from Ireland to Rhode Island at various times, were linen and woolen goods, Irish poplins, cambrics, lawns, silks, hosiery, sheetings, etc. Irish butter, beef, and other food products were also imported. The Newport Mercury, August 3, 1772, contains an advertisement in which, among other things, "Irish beef" is announced for sale. In the Providence Gazette, November 20, 1762, appears the following:

"By the Newport packet from New York, we are informed, for certain, that there are 2000 Firkins of the Best Irish Rose butter, arrived there.—A quantity of it is expected to be imported into this town, which we are confident will fall the price of that commodity." Under the date of December 25, 1762, the Gazette says: "Since our last, we hear that a vessel has arrived at Newport from Ireland, with 1300 Firkins of butter—Captain Champlain, the master of her, died soon after he came out." In December of 1764, a vessel from Ireland mistook her bearings and went ashore on Block Island. The following notice of the disaster was published in the Gazette on January 12, 1765:

"On the 25th of last month, in the daytime, a large double-decked brig, loaded with beef, pork, butter, and candles, bound from Ireland to Halifax run ashore on the north part of Block Island, where she soon beat to pieces; the people were all saved except the boatswain, who perished on the deck, which he would not be permitted to quit with the rest.—About 500 barrels of the cargo, with some other articles, were also saved. The master's name we cannot learn."

The name of the wrecked brig is believed to have been the Golden Grove. Her Irish cargo was in the nature of supplies for the British garrison at Halifax. The fact that the cargo consisted of beef, pork, butter, and candles, indicates that those articles were exported from Ireland in considerable quantities during that period.

Speaking of this wreck recalls the fact that in 1763, the year before, a Rhode Island vessel was stranded on the Irish coast. She was the Samuel and Joseph, Captain Brown, bound for Amsterdam. In November and December 1766, the Providence Gazette contained this advertisement:

FOR BELFAST, THE SHIP, "Catherine" - Thomas Allen, commander; Takes in her cargo at Newport, and will be ready to sail by the 12th Day of January.—For freight or passage, apply to

said Captain on board or to Mr. Benjamin Greene, in Newport.

Providence, Nov. 7, 1766.

June 15, 1772, the Newport Mercury notes the arrival at Newport of "the brig Joseph, Captain Pie, bound to New York in 49 days from Waterford in Ireland." July 19, 1773, the same paper states that "Last Thursday arrived the brig Sally, Capt. John Murphy, in 30 days from Jamaica." She brought several passengers. This was probably the Sally that at another time is mentioned as having reached Dublin under Captain Davis. The Providence Gazette, February 24, 1776, has this interesting note: "Arrived from Ireland, but last from Barbadoes, the sloop N. York packet, Capt. John Freers, who informs that the people in Ireland and Barbadoes are very warm in the cause of America." The Gazette also published the following:

FOR LONDONDERRY, THE SHIP "FAITHFUL STEWART", Captain McCausland:

Will sail from Newport in ten days.—For Passage apply to Messieurs Clark and Nightingale, in Providence, or the Captain on board. Providence, Jan. 29, 1785.

Special attention is called to the fact that "passage" is advertised in connection with these voyages. This is good evidence that passengers sailed direct for Rhode Island from Ireland. Some of these were probably merchants or agents engaged in the Irish trade. The fact that such accommodations were provided, likewise justifies the conclusion that immigrants also came direct from Ireland to Rhode Island, and in considerable numbers, too. These immigrants, in all probability, landed, some in Newport and others in Providence. It may be, too, that Warren, Bristol, Westerly, and other places, likewise received direct Irish accessions from this source. Further on will be found additional evidence of direct immigration from Ireland.

Another advertisement in the Providence Gazette reads as follows:

FOR DUBLIN THE GOOD SHIP "TRISTRAM," Gideon Crawford, Commander.

Now lying at Mrs. Hayley's Wharf will sail in 10 or 12 days. For Freight or Passage apply to the Master on board or to Joseph and William Russell. She has good accommodations for Passengers.

Providence, Jan. 14, 1786.

Here again "passage" is advertised, it will be noted. Soon after a news item appeared in the Gazette, stating that "the ship Tristram, Captain Crawford, sails this day for Dublin." It appears that the "Tristram" made many voyages to and from Ireland. On April 26, 1788, over two years after the trip just mentioned, the Gazette had the following budget of marine news:

On the ship "Tristram," Capt. Warner, of this port, is arrived at Dublin.—The ship Mary, Capt. Rathbun, and Brig Little John, Capt. Ambrose, of Newport, is also arrived at Dublin.—The Brig

Recovery, Capt. Taggart, of Newport, arrived at Newry.

In June of 1791, Joseph and William Russell of Providence had an assortment of Irish linens "Just imported in the ship Tristram from Dublin." The Gazette, under the date of Providence, April 13, 1776, says: "Capt. Cook, from Belfast, informs that recruiting parties had been beating up there from September till January to reinforce the ministerial army in America, but they had only enlisted ten men." This helps the reader to form a good idea as to the direction of Irish sympathies at that time.

The quotations in the remainder of this chapter are from the Providence Gazette. A news graph, dated Newport, states that on "Monday last arrived here the ship Mary, Captain Ambrose, in fifty-nine days from Cork." On February 14, 1789, under the head of Providence, we are told that "On Wednesday also arrived the brig Happy Return, Capt. Dring, from Dublin, Isle of May, and St. Eustatia." The Happy Return has frequent mention, sometimes as arriving from Dublin and again from other ports. But there came a time when she returned no more. The incident occurred in 1790 and is thus narrated: "The brig Happy Return, Capt. Dring, of this port (Providence), bound for Dublin, is lost near that port. The crew and a part of the cargo were saved." In April of 1790, is chronicled the arrival at Dublin of the brig Sally, Captain Davis, of Providence, "after a short passage of 22 days." In November of the same year, the ship Tristram, Captain Warner, is again mentioned as having cleared for Dublin from Providence. Among the arrivals in the port of Providence in May of 1791, was the "ship Tristram, Warner, Dublin." In November of 1791, the Tristram, commanded by Captain Hollowell, departed from Providence for Newry. December 14, 1792, the brig Betsy left Providence for Newry and in May of the next year, her arrival at Providence is noted: "from Newry, which she left the 5th of March, having touched at the Cape de Verds."

In April of 1796, the brig Lydia, Capt. John Cook arrived at Providence from Cork in forty-nine days. We find it recorded December 21, 1799, that "A ship from Cork put into Newport on Sunday evening last, and sailed next morning. She brought Cork papers to the 24th of October." Elsewhere it is stated that earlier in that year the ship Palmyra, Captain Trotter, of Providence, for Hamburg, put into "the Cove of Cork."

The schooner Mayflower left Providence for Dublin in February, 1801. In 1809, among the departures from the port of Providence was the "Ship Neptune, Staples, Ireland." The same year it is stated that the "ship Nancy, of Rhode Island, 14 days from Richmond for Cork, spoke July 6, lat. 43:52." In October 1809, the brig Orient arrived at New York "53 days from Dublin. Left there among others, ship Nancy, Capt. Noyes, just arrived from Providence." These Rhode Island captains became great favorites in Irish ports. They were frequently entertained and were treated in a hospitable manner generally. In 1811, Capt. Peregrine Howland of Newport, died in Belfast. He was in his thirty-ninth year at the time, and his passing away caused much sorrow. The ship Robert Burns, Captain Coffin, arrived at Newport on January 3, 1820, "in 39

days from Ireland.” The ship George Washington, of Providence, is noted as having arrived at Cork on March 26, 1820, “from Madeira in 15 days.” She was commanded by Captain Allen. Under a Newport date of January 6, 1820, we find the following: “Arrived on Tuesday last, in distress, ship William and Jane, Brown, from N. York, with flaxseed, bound to Londonderry,— Sailed from N. York, Dec. 24, and next day the ship sprung a leak, which continued to increase, and was compelled to throw over part of the cargo, and put into this port.”

It will thus be seen that flaxseed was exported to Ireland from this country. That is perhaps what Black & Stewart, Irish merchants of Providence, intended to do with the “2000 bushels of good and well cleaned flax seed” they advertised for in 1763.

From the facts here adduced it will be seen that for a great many years until Irish manufacturing industries were crushed by English law, commercial relations existed between Ireland and Rhode Island. Irish goods and Irish passengers were landed on the wharves in Newport and Providence, while outgoing ships took goods and passengers for the old land. Too long have these facts been forgotten or ignored. But a new era has dawned and the sun of the investigation will yet bring forth even greater and more interesting developments.