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“I am an Argentine:” The Irish in Buenos Aires, 1844-1913

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Abstract

"I am an Argentine:" The Irish in Buenos Aires, 1844-1913
By Bradley Lange

Between 1822 and 1945, about 30,000 Irish people migrated to Argentina. While the majority settled in the rural provinces, a small community gradually developed in Buenos Aires. Predominately Catholic, this urban group rejected assimilation and established an autonomous, insular community until the late 1870s. This article argues that as the Irish Catholic community began to participate in Argentine social and political affairs, they increasingly identified with their host society instead of Ireland. It also considers the origins of their Argentine nationalism and explains the motives for their integration into *porteño* (Buenos Aires) society. Methodologically, contemporary foreign language newspapers are analyzed to gauge the degree to which the Irish-Argentine Catholics integrated between 1906 and 1913.

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"I am an Argentine:" The Irish in Buenos Aires, 1844-1913

Introduction

Between 1881 and 1914, 4,200,000 Europeans immigrated to Argentina. More than half of those migrants were Italian and another quarter Spanish.[1] Both groups settled predominately in the federal capital of Buenos Aires, where they exerted an overwhelming social, cultural, and political influence. As a result of their numerical preponderance and notoriety, both have generated a significant degree of scholarly inquiry.[2]

Still, dozens of other ethnic groups contributed to the metamorphosis that transformed Buenos Aires in the aforementioned period; in many cases, their stories have been overlooked.[3] While such communities were less significant than their better-known contemporaries from a numerical standpoint, each had a constitutive role in the production of the composite *porteño* culture that emerged. This thesis will isolate one such group, the Irish, with the intention of understanding how and why such a traditionally insular and self-contained

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[1] Fernando Devoto, *Historia de la Inmigración en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2003), 247.

[2] The most well-known studies are Jose Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), and Fernando Devoto and Gianfausto Rosoli, *La Inmigración Italiana en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 1985).

[3] This is not to say that all minority groups have been neglected by historians. Classic studies include Narciso Binayán, *La Colectividad Armenia en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Alzamor Editores, 1974); Liliana Cazorla, *La Inmigración Sirio y Libanesa en la Provincia de Buenos Aires: A Través de sus Instituciones Étnicas* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Los Cedros, 1995); Ronald C. Newton, *German Buenos Aires, 1900-1933: Social Change and Cultural Crisis* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977); and James Lawrence Tigner, "The Ryukyuans in Argentina," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 47, 2 (1967), 203-224.

community finally decided to integrate into the sprawling urban sphere around them in the late nineteenth-century.[4]

By examining English-language newspapers, personal letters, and census records, it will be possible to gauge the degree to which the Irish community embraced an "Argentine" identity between 1844 and 1913. While the Irish maintained a rigid program of isolation throughout the peak period of their immigration to Argentina from 1820-1879, several factors undermined this strategy in the decades that followed. Without the continued flow of new migrants, the community gradually lost its sense of Irishness as its majority was increasingly born in Argentina. As the influx of Irish immigrants to Argentina dwindled, the cultural bridge between community and homeland weakened. A quantitative analysis of the Irish-Argentine population will support this contention. In addition to this demographic shift, Father Anthony Fahy, the charismatic leader of the Irish community that had initially implemented the plan of isolation, died in 1871, and a likeminded successor did not emerge in his wake. In his place, new institutions surfaced that favored greater participation in Argentine affairs.

To help understand the extent to which the community had metamorphosed after the 1880s, significant attention will be given to an Irish family who began immigrating to Buenos Aires and its hinterland in 1844. The Murphy family emigrated for economic reasons during the potato famine and went on to own

[4] I use the term "community" with some caution, aware of the ambiguities of the term and the implication of cohesion and solidarity. As will be made clear, the Irish in Buenos Aires and beyond were in fact quite insular and interconnected during the initial peak phase of settlement, suggesting a level of "community," at least in its broadest interpretation. Father Fahy, a priest who arranged marriages and employment and worked to insure that the "community" be self-sufficient and isolated from their host society, defined the adaptive strategies of the period.

large tracts of land in and around Buenos Aires. Their letters survive to this day, and shed light on several important themes that predominate in the historiography, including the rationale for Irish immigration, the community's general attitude towards Argentina, and adaptive strategies in their adopted home. By juxtaposing their experiences with those of the community after 1886, it will be easier to distinguish the degree to which the Irish community had transformed at the end of the century and beyond.

As of yet, little is known about the Irish community in the city of Buenos Aires after the 1880s. The classic studies of the group conclude before 1900, when immigration had effectively ended.[5] This study will begin to address this lacuna. In terms of Irish diasporic studies, it may be located within the burgeoning historiography interested in collective identity and assimilation.[6]

The Meaning of Assimilation

In a pioneering article published nearly thirty years ago, Samuel Baily described the significant role played by foreign language newspapers in the assimilation of immigrant groups in Latin America.[7] While the importance of churches, hospitals, mutual aid societies, social clubs, and other ethnically oriented institutions had been acknowledged as facilitators to acculturation and

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[5] See, for example, Patrick McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," in Korol and Sabato, *Comó Fue la Inmigración Irlandesa en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Plus Ultra, 1981); Coghlan, *El Aporte de los Irlandeses a la Formación de la Nación Argentina* (Buenos Aires: El Vuelo de Fénix, 1982); Graham-Yool, *The Forgotten Colony*: *A History of English-Speaking Communities in Argentina (*London: Hutchinson, 1981); and Thomas Murray, *The Story of the Irish in Argentina* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1919).

[6] See, for example, Andy Bielenberg, ed., *The Irish Diaspora* (New York: Longman, 2000); Charles Fanning, ed., *New Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000); and Arthur Gribben, ed., *The Great Famine and the Irish Diaspora in America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

[7] Samuel L. Baily, "The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, 1893-1913," *International Migration Review* 12,3 (1978), 321-340.

adaptation, few scholars had recognized the crucial role of print media in this process. For immigrants lacking an understanding of their host society's language and culture, ethnic newspapers were invaluable conduits between two worlds. These periodicals kept their respective communities abreast of both local events and news in their homeland while serving a more utilitarian role as a guidebook for adaptation.

In his study, Baily differentiated between the processes of adaptation and assimilation. Adaptation referred to the acquirement of necessary behaviors such as language, fashion, and attitudes towards work that allowed successful participation in the host society. Assimilation was more complex and referred to a deeper interaction with the native population and "the development of identity based exclusively on the host society."[8] While noting that larger forces beyond a foreign language newspaper contributed to both processes, Baily contended that a newspaper had exceptional importance because of its distribution and language. He argued that the readership of such periodicals could be limitless given the possibility of group reading and word of mouth.[9] Thus, even if there is no record of circulation, as is the case with the three Irish newspapers being considered, we can speculate that wherever any assemblage of Irish-Argentines gathered between 1886 and 1913, there was at least the potential that the issues printed in the Irish newspapers could have been discussed by the crowd.

Though the influence of foreign language newspapers on their respective communities is undoubted, it remains unclear whether they ultimately restricted

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[8] Baily, "The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo," 322.
[9] Baily, "The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo," 327-328.

the assimilation of their readers by promoting ethnic and cultural homogeneity, or unwittingly abetted their incorporation into the host society. In Baily's analysis of Italian newspapers in São Paulo and Buenos Aires between 1893-1913, he found that the journals facilitated adaptation on many levels but ultimately hindered assimilation by promoting the maintenance of an Italian cultural identity and encouraging contact with the old world. Paradoxically, it seems that this refusal to change ultimately created a scenario in which *native* Argentines were obligated to become "Italian" in many ways as the immigrant group's cultural and social importance escalated.

While Baily's finer arguments reveal much about broader processes of immigrant adaptation, his conclusions are somewhat limited by his choice of subject. Italians were the largest immigrant group in both São Paulo and Buenos Aires, two cities known for their massive foreign populations during the period. The ability of Italians to avoid assimilation into native Argentine and Brazilian society into 1914 had as much to do with demographic characteristics as any other factor. The numerical strength of both groups allowed them to practice endogamy, retain Italian as their primary (but not only) language, and maintain other fundamental cultural characteristics in a society where they could afford to ambivalently reject assimilation. If we were to consider a group that was numerically marginal and linguistically incommensurable with the host society, we may discover that foreign language papers functioned much differently than they did for Italian immigrants, who had little reason to learn Spanish swiftly and jettison their social habits and cultural traditions when they could operate exclusively within their own community.

In the case of Argentina, the Irish provide a fascinating counterpoint to their Italian contemporaries. 2.9 million Italians migrated to Argentina between 1820 and 1930, and comprised 45 percent of the total immigrant population in the country.[10] Over that same period, only between 10,000 and 50,000 Irish settled there,[11] with half of that figure arriving in the wake of the potato famine of 1846.[12] While Italians formed 52 percent of the population of Buenos Aires in 1887,[13] the Irish were a minority in the city throughout the nineteenth-century. After 1870, Italians took an active political role at the forefront of radical demonstrations and protests that lasted into the 1930s, and made substantial cultural and linguistic contributions that transformed Argentine society.

In marked contrast to the acute social and cultural imprint of the Italians, Irish traditions had little impact on Argentine society. The majority of their small community chose to settle in the more familiar landscape of the rural Pampa. Furthermore, their native English and Gaelic tongue and non-Mediterranean culture jarred with the increasing influence of southern European customs in Buenos Aires. Taken with their demographic insignificance, these factors indicate that the Irish should have rapidly assimilated in order to prosper.[14] Yet, Baily's portrayal of the lack of Italian-Argentine assimilation, and conventional representations of Irish-Argentine detachment in the historiography, present a paradox. On one hand, it is inferred that Italians had little interest in shedding

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[10] Jose Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 2.
[11] This figure has been highly contentious and will be explored later in the paper.
[12] David Rock, *Argentina: 1516-1987* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 133.
[13] James Scobie, *Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb, 1870-1910* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 17. As Baily notes, 20 percent of the population of Buenos Aires was Italian-born between 1895 and 1914. See Baily, "The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo," 323.
[14] Bishop, *The Irish Empire*, 149.

cultural ties to their homeland, yet still became the exemplar of "Argentine" culture by 1914 because of their numerical preponderance. Native Argentines were forced to adopt numerous Italian cultural norms because of the latter group's demographic prevalence. Regarding the Irish, we might expect their diminutive population to rapidly assimilate to avoid marginalization; yet, the historiography suggests that they were steadfastly endogamous and stubborn in their refusal to abandon their identification with Ireland throughout the nineteenth-century.

This contradiction will be resolved by reviewing newspapers, personal letters, and census data. This thesis will investigate whether or not the Irish continued to reject assimilation in this late period of their arrival to the nation, and will consider how they envisioned their place in Argentine society. It will also analyze whether the Irish continued to express an interest in the affairs of their homeland over their host society, as Baily observed in the Italian case. The objectives of Irish settlement will also be explored; that is, whether they were interested in short-term migration, as the Italians generally were, or if they intended to be permanent settlers, and if this trend changed over time.

While the Irish did not "assimilate" in the way that Baily described, I argue that they engaged in a similar, but less rigid, process that may be referred to as "integration." Their participation in societal affairs and interest in national politics and social life transcended a desire to simply adapt in a new environment and the group gradually began to consider themselves to be "true Argentines."[15] Still, their actions fell short of Baily's insistence that a group identify "exclusively" with adopted customs in order to fit his "assimilationist"

[15] *The Hiberno-Argentine Review* (Buenos Aires), 31 Jan. 1908, pp. 15-16.

model. The community never lost sight of its affiliation with Ireland and retained several autonomous social organizations and institutions. To be clear, they did not abandon an interest an Ireland; rather, they expressed an apparent desire to *identify* more with Argentine affairs, which is what would be expected of a generation that was overwhelmingly not born in Ireland. In short, they exhibited the behavior that almost any immigrant group would after several generations had been established and after continued migration from their homeland had become negligible.

Methodologically, the community newspapers will also be used to extract valuable data about the Irish in Buenos Aires during an understudied period of their settlement, when the Argentine economy was expanding into a world power at the same time Ireland was engaged in a tumultuous struggle for home-rule against imperial Great Britain. In this way the work strives to be both a social and cultural history; the result, by virtue of the sources, will be necessarily superficial. Still, a great deal can be gleaned from these periodicals. As the chief informants of community news and forums for intra-communal debate, these widely read newspapers provide flashes of the mentality of some constituencies of the Irish-Argentine community and the way they imagined themselves in Argentina by the early twentieth-century.

Three Irish Newspapers in Buenos Aires

The Southern Cross was one of the first newspapers published by the Irish community in Buenos Aires and was also the first Catholic, English-language periodical that appeared in the city. It was founded on January 16, 1875, by Patrick Joseph Dillon (1842-1889), a Roman Catholic priest, politician, and editor. Dillon would go on to be a prominent legislator in Buenos Aires, and was among

the group who pushed for the city to become the federal capital of the nation. Clearly, his goals for the community were quite different than his ecclesiastical forbearer, Father Fahy, who never would have become so involved in local politics. The fact that Dillon became a Spanish-speaking legislator suggests a fundamental difference between certain leaders of his generation, and the insularity of the despotic Fahy era.

Each issue of *The Southern Cross* published news about the Irish diaspora throughout the Americas, as well as news about the Irish cause against Britain. It also included a range of advertisements written in both Spanish and English, a point that suggests its readership was now fluent in the native tongue of Argentina. The newspaper frequently included stories about Irish heroes in Argentina that described how they had contributed positively to national development, or to the development of South America at large. In some cases, the parameters of "Irishness" were muddied to help augment the community's prestige. For example, on May 21, 1886, an obituary was published to celebrate the achievements of the head of the Chilean navy, Admiral Patricio Lynch. Even though he was of the second-generation and had been born in the Americas, the piece considered him to be "Irish" both because of his military accomplishments and the fact that "he spoke English with elegance and with thorough comprehension of the idioms of the language."[16]

The Hiberno-Argentine Review was a Catholic weekly published from 1906-1924 and then from 1924-1935 as *The Argentine Review*.[17] Though produced in Buenos Aires with an emphasis on local affairs, the periodical regularly noted the social

[16] *The Southern Cross* (Buenos Aires), 21 May 1886
[17] The word "hiberno" is a synonym for "Irish."

and economic condition of provincial irlandeses. Letters of correspondence from the provinces were published frequently, indicating that its readership extended beyond the federal capital of Buenos Aires.

The internal construction of each issue reflected the topical concerns of the community and the degree to which they were interested in Argentine affairs. The front page invariably included a series of editorials about pertinent issues. While these often addressed nationalist concerns involving the struggle for home-rule against Britain in the old country, the majority of these discussions involved events in Argentina. Surprisingly, most of these editorials were not directly related to Irish involvement in Argentine affairs, but were concerned with a general interest in Argentine political, social, and economic policies. This fact alone reveals much about the nature of Irish assimilation and adaptation in Argentina by the turn of the twentieth-century, and also contradicts historiographical arguments regarding Irish immigrant behavior in the diaspora. These points will be addressed in this paper.

Aside from the compulsory front-page news and editorials, the standard issue of the *Hiberno-Argentine Review* followed a similar format. There was a strong interest in both cultural and historical Irish customs. A typical issue included Irish jokes and folklore, traditional Irish recipes, memorable historical episodes, letters from correspondents in Dublin or Cork, the latest news regarding Ireland's struggle for self-rule against Great Britain, or a note about the state of Catholicism in Europe.

Fianna was another Catholic periodical produced for the Irish community in Buenos Aires and was published intermittently from 1910-1913. Irish folk tales and historical narratives dotted each copy, as did stories about the history of the

Irish in Argentina and their contribution to national development. Editor Mac Manus was a particularly vocal opponent of imperialism and regularly criticized British maneuvers throughout the world. Other themes that resonated throughout the pages of *Fianna* were analogous to those of *The Hiberno-Argentine Review* and *The Southern Cross*. Frequent reports of Argentine political and social issues were included that readers were encouraged to debate.

There also was a strong interest in Irish landmarks in each issue. Typically, a photo of the Irish Parliament building, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Donegal Castle, or another historical site was included, along with a brief narration of its importance. Since the majority of the readership had never been to Ireland, these inclusions were less nostalgic and more instructional in purpose. Also like the *Review*, *Fianna* published regular reports about Irish activity in the Pampa and provinces, as well as stories about the Irish throughout the diaspora.

Despite an undeviating preoccupation with Ireland, each periodical was concerned primarily with life in Buenos Aires by the early twentieth-century. Unlike the Italian case that Baily described, where Italian-Argentines were instructed on how to merely "survive and prosper in Buenos Aires,"[18] *The Southern Cross*, *The Hiberno-Argentine Review* and *Fianna* had a greater interest in promoting a fixed, enduring affiliation with the host society. The emphasis was not on survival, which in the Italian case often implied sojourn over settlement, but on permanent residence. The majority of Italians that arrived in Argentina did so with no intention of remaining permanently, and over half ultimately did

[18] Baily, "The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo," 327.

return to their homeland after a short-period.[19] In the Irish case, it seems that very few Irish-porteños intended to repatriate in the early 1900s. This position was not one of preference, but of pragmatism. Few Irishmen viewed the economic future of their homeland to be promising, and consequently displayed little intention to return to a country they considered politically and economically substandard. As a poignant editorial in *The Hiberno-Argentine Review* noted in 1906, the Irishman "is ever pining to be back in the old land, and thousands would return tomorrow if they were convinced that they would be assured of a living wage, and some assurance that his old age would not be darkened by the shadow of the poor-house."[20]

However lamentable, this plight was not one of sorrowful exile, and certainly was no Babylonian Captivity. A major argument in this essay is that the Irish of Buenos Aires embraced their displacement as a defining feature of their community. They never abandoned their heritage, but were prudent enough to realize that their destiny was in Argentina by the turn of the twentieth-century. Rather than adapting just enough to "survive and prosper," the Irish planted permanent roots in the Río de la Plata by 1906, both physically and psychologically. An examination of *The Hiberno-Argentine Review*, *Fianna*, and *The Southern Cross* over a thirty nine-year span will demonstrate that the Irish-Argentine community in Buenos Aires came to identify with Argentina over Ireland; moreover, their actions and enterprise demonstrate an aspiration to affect and participate in the long-term economic, social, political and cultural

[19] Magnus Mörner, "Immigration into Latin America, Especially Argentina and Chile," in *European Expansion and Migration*, eds. P.C. Emmer and Magnus Mörner (New York: Berg, 1992), 221-222.
[20] *Hiberno-Argentine Review* (Buenos Aires), 7 Dec. 1906, p. 5.

trajectory of their host society. The theme of displacement was ubiquitous in their writing, as was the idea that they had heroically overcome this misfortune.

Before exploring these themes in greater detail, an overview of the Irish presence in Argentina from the early colonial period is useful.

The Irish in Argentina, 1520-1843

The first Irishmen to set foot on the shores of the Río de la Plata were likely three men from Galway who accompanied Magellan during his famous voyage to the Southern Cone in 1520. Sixteen years later, a small group of Irish settlers were a part of Pedro Mendoza's expedition from Cadiz that founded Buenos Aires. After the settlement was abandoned in 1541 due to frequent Indian raids, most of these Irish settlers relocated to nearby Asunción. After this debacle, it appears that no other Irishmen traveled to the Río de la Plata until 1586, when Father Thomas Field arrived to convert the indigenous groups of the Pampa.[21]

The historical affiliation between the Irish and Spanish derives from an enduring fellowship steeped in folklore and merchant trade. Celtic and Iberian mythos suggested that the Irish Gaels were of Galician origin, and thus the elites of both regions were bound by mutual kinship responsibilities.[22] Beyond these national legends, the Irish and Spanish were in frequent contact with each after from the time of the Carolingian Renaissance beginning in the late eighth century. Charlemagne recruited many of his clerical reformers from Ireland, and this practice continued through the Spanish Inquisition. The states also engaged in a significant trade in wine and leather that ultimately inspired the migration of several Irish merchants to Spain. Following the Irish surrender to England in

[21] Patrick McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," in *Patterns of Migration*, ed. Patrick O'Sullivan (Leicester, England: Leicester University Press, 1992), 63-64.
[22] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," 64.

1601 during the Protestant invasion, close to 100,000 Irishmen fled to Spain where they occupied the abandoned lands of the vanquished Moors. Many Irish assimilated into the Spanish elite by marrying the daughters of local noblemen.[23]

In 1785, over one hundred Irish butchers and tanners were recruited to Buenos Aires to establish an export sector to trade hides and tallow to Europe and jerked beef to Brazil and Cuba. Most of these men were unmarried Catholics who were quickly incorporated into porteño society. Until the turn of the nineteenth-century, Irish migration to Argentina was spasmodic and numerically marginal. There were no Irish communities, and none of the migrants came to form the core of future Irish migratory settlements.[24]

After the failed British invasions of Buenos Aires in 1806 and 1807, many British merchants realized the export potential of the River Plate and became one of the most influential foreign groups in the region the following decade.[25] Several deserters and captives from the "British" forces were Irish conscripts who remained in Buenos Aires to construct stone quays for the fledgling port. Other bands moved to the hinterland to become small farmers and continued to maintain economic ties with the British merchants in Buenos Aires.[26]

During Argentina's subsequent war of independence against Spain (1810-1820), several Irishmen joined the ranks of the rebel garrison, lured by the promise of income, quick promotion, and adventure.[27] José de San Martín even traveled to Great Britain during the early phase of the struggle, where he appealed to trained officers to lead the abecedarian militias forming across the

[23] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," 64-66.
[24] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," 66-67.
[25] James Scobie, *Argentina: A City and a Nation* (New York: Oxford, 1971), 100.
[26] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," 69.
[27] Graham-Yool, *The Forgotten Colony,* 87.

Southern Cone. The majority of these professional recruits landed on the Pacific coast of the Andes; in the River Plate, the ranks were filled with British merchants and adventurers, attracted by the Argentine government's promise to award all captured goods to the captor. The most notable of these mercenaries was an Irishman named Admiral William "Guillermo" Brown, who fought in the Independence War, the Argentina-Brazil War, and the Guerra Grande in Uruguay.[28]

After the war ended, a prominent flow of migrants began arriving from Ireland and settling in the Pampa, where land and cattle were abundant. The first generation of settlers arrived in the mid 1820s, and was predominately composed of younger, non-inheriting sons of farmers. Later, daughters of tenant farmers and leaseholders joined these settlers in the hinterland. Typically, these migrants made the three-month voyage from Liverpool to Buenos Aires. Their passage was often paid for by family, friends, or potential employers in Argentina.[29]

An enthusiastic promoter of this initial wave of Irish migration was Prime Minister Bernardino Rivadavia, a Europhilic Liberal who sought to develop the national infrastructure with the labor of European migrants. Although he secured a £1 million sterling loan from London to subsidize Irish immigration, the funds were ultimately used to finance a war with Brazil over the Banda Oriental. Recognizing a need for continued manpower in the emerging docks, the British merchants intervened and recruited two hundred skilled Irishmen to Buenos Aires. A town named Belgrano was founded just outside of the city and became the keystone of the Irish-Argentine community that developed over the

[28] Graham-Yoool, *The Forgotten Colony*, 89-100.
[29] Patrick Bishop, *The Irish Empire*, 147.

next one hundred years. During that span, the lazy town would be engulfed by the expanding metropolis and transformed into an upscale suburb.[30]

Remaking Wrexford in the Pampa: The Murphy Clan, 1844-1864

In 1844, John James Murphy of County Wexford boarded the *William Peile* and set sail across the Atlantic to an unknown region called the River Plate. Unlike many of his countrymen who would flee Ireland the next year in desperation when the potato famine ravaged the island, John James left his home under milder circumstances, in search of adventure and fortune. Like the majority of Irish men who would disembark in the Buenos Aires harbor in the decades that followed, he took a job at a salting plant in the city to get his feet on the ground. And, like many other men in the early period of migration, he quickly left the *saladero* to seek a greater fortune in the Pampa. He joined a sheep estancia as a ditch-digger in the Chascomús region just south of Buenos Aires. Within just ten years, John James had earned enough money to purchase land of his own in Salto, a settlement in the province of Buenos Aires. He later added 4,000 hectares of land in Rojas, and another 20,000 from Venado Tuerto, forming one of the largest sheep farms in the Southern Cone.[31]

With this massive agricultural and economic reservoir, John James invited members of his family from Wexford to immigrate, thereby establishing a long chain of migrants who would follow to work on his ranch. His brothers, Patrick and William settled first, before a web that included cousins, aunts, uncles, friends, and neighbors followed suit. The Murphy Clan settled throughout John

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[30] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," 69.
[31] Edmundo Murray, *Becoming Irlandés: Private Narratives of the Irish Emigration to Argentina (1844-1912)* (Buenos Aires: L. O. L. A., 2006), p. 37-38.

James' manor, from Buenos Aires to the distant town of Santa Fe. During the next five decades, the Murphy family wrote to friends and family in Ireland, sharing their experiences and perceptions of their adopted land. Their letters help paint a picture of what life was like for the early Irish settlers, and help corroborate certain themes that predominate in the historiography. First, that male settlers made up the majority of these pioneering migrants, and moved from their initial settlement in the city of Buenos Aires to its hinterland; that an unusually high number of those settlers went on to buy land; that the pockets of Irish estancias in the Pampa helped attract other settlers in chain patterns, especially after the potato famine; that, while many settlers intended on returning to Ireland, circumstances forced many to remain in Argentina; and, most importantly, that these pioneering generations overwhelmingly tended to retain Irish customs, retain an unabashed spirit of Irish nationalism from afar in the face of British subjugation, and preserve a traditional way of life that was secluded from the Hispano-American world around them.

After their son had been in Argentina for nearly ten years, John James's parents received a letter from the Chaplain to the Irish, Edward Kavanagh, on February 1, 1853. Kavanagh stated that John James wanted a son and brother to join him in Buenos Aires on a ship leaving in two months time from Liverpool. Kavanagh had already arranged for the free passage of the two after writing the boat's captain and reaching an agreement. Another son, William, had already made the same voyage and was busy "establishing himself through the instrumentality of John with a flock of sheep." Kavanagh also noted that the sons wished to send a remittance back to their parents, but that a revolution was

preventing regular operations.[32] The letter also made reference to Irish friends that the Murphy parents knew, indicating that the social circles of Irish immigrants in Argentina were comprised of familiar faces known to relatives on both sides of the Atlantic.

The letter illuminates several aspects of the chain migration process. First, that William joined his established brother in Argentina and was immediately presented with the requisite tools to stamp out a suitable income, with the potential to do very well with some luck and hard work. Second, that the two men were busy pulling strings to secure the passage of even more relatives, which included ensuring that travel fares were taken care of and that a boat was arranged well in advance. Perhaps the most important line in the letter refers to the revolution - no doubt related to the infighting of the 1850s that slowed the process of Argentine state consolidation - that had suspended typical business affairs. Kavanagh assured John James's parents that their boys were not in danger because "foreigners of course take no part in it, and are therefore safe."[33] In 1853, it seems that an Irish immigrant would have established no loyalty to the Argentine Republic and therefore would have distanced himself from its imbroglios. Irishmen were there to make a fortune, assure the economic well being of friends and family and, with any luck, return to their homeland within a short time span. The political future of Argentina and its social upheavals were of no concern to them, because they had absolutely no bearing on their future as they saw it. However, as will be demonstrated, the possibility of an Irish immigrant in Argentina ignoring its national affairs after the 1880s seems far less

[32] Murray, *Becoming Irlandés*, 39.
[33] Murray, *Becoming Irlandés*, 39.

probable; after 1900, it is difficult to imagine that a person of Irish descent would not participate in a cause related to the stability and prosperity of their adopted land.

The Irish were able to ignore the events around them for several reasons, including the fact that the small community was bonded by several leaders who had achieved a great deal of financial wealth and economic independence that did not rely on Argentine patrons. In a way, men like John James worked for their own communities in the same way that caudillos worked for gauchos. They provided jobs, sponsored social events, donated money for schools and hospitals, and ensured that the Irish community did not have to enter into the unknown world of Spanish-speaking rebels to get by.

Two other important factors that helped ward off assimilation (as Baily described it) during the early post-famine period were the presence of an English-language newspaper, called the *Standard*, and a priest, Father Anthony Fahy. Both were referenced in letters exchanged between two of John James's brothers, William and Martin, between July of 1862 and November of 1863. The first letter notes that the *Standard* "gives a full and true account of everything most interesting to foreigners in this country and their friends in the old land."[34] The newspaper was founded in 1861 by Edward Thomas Mulhall, an Irish immigrant who settled in Buenos Aires in 1854, where he first worked in the sheep trade before becoming a journalist.[35] Though its reputation did not match the seminal newspapers that followed (*The Southern Cross*, *The Hiberno-Argentine Review* and *Fianna*), it nonetheless was a pioneering periodical that served to

[34] Murray, *Becoming Irlandés*, 39.
[35] Murray, *Becoming Irlandés*, 178.

keep new immigrants abreast of local news and of the events back home in their native English.

Father Anthony Fahy was the unquestioned leader of the Irish community between his arrival in 1844 and his death in 1871. Born in Galway, he was ordained in Rome as a Roman Catholic priest and was named the chaplain of the Irish in Argentina in 1843. As will be demonstrated later, his efforts to preserve the isolation of the Irish community were instrumental in its refusal to assimilate into the greater Argentine social-cultural milieu.[36] Known for greeting each immigrant when they arrived in Buenos Aires and also for arranging marriages to maintain ethnic homogeneity, Fahy was dogmatic in his desire to reconstruct his homeland in Argentina, free from local influences. A letter from William to Martin, dated November 24, 1863, illuminates Fahy's stronghold over the laity. William alerted his brother of his recent marriage, noting that he "first got acquainted with [his spuose] about nine months since her landing in Buenos Aires," and that Father Fahy did them the "kindest" favor by presiding over the wedding festivities and placing an announcement in the *Standard* for everyone to read.[37] It may be inferred, given Fahy's reputation (he officiated 165 weddings in Argentina and was known for arranging marriages) that he played a part in pairing the couple. His proactive leadership style was instrumental in maintaining homogeneity in the community until his death.

By and large, the Irish found the economic and material conditions in Argentina to be highly favorable. In a letter written to his brother Martin, who was still residing in Ireland, John James extolled the virtues of his adopted

[36] Murray, *Becoming Irlandés*, 178.
[37] Murray, *Becoming Irlandés*, 41.

homeland, noting the great potential for financial success. He commented that "the people are flocking here from all parts, many without money, others with capital, of which there is a great field open here for investment."[38] His correspondence with Martin also reveals another component of the central feature of the Irish settlement process to Argentina, that of chain migration. For those Irishmen, like John James, who were able to acquire larger tracts of land during the first half of the century, there was a tendency to recruit workers from familial and friendship networks in Ireland. On March 25, 1864, John James asked Martin to "send him…three men," and even requested one by name. He also detailed how their passage would be secured, how long they would work at his estancia, Uncalito, and how the terms of their indenture would be set.

> With the plough, you will be pleased to send me out three men, as James, Joseph, & Nick, leaving my place left me scarce of hands. I will mention one to you: Tom Lawler, that was with me in Crosstown. The other two may be of your own choice. Arrange with Captain Lenders of the *Raymond* Dublin. If you cannot get them cheaper by a Liverpool ship, La Zingara, [which] will be in Liverpool about the same time. If there were any three of four men of respectable family coming out, and choose to come to Uncalito, it would save you the trouble of arranging the others. If not the conditions be understood with others are that they serve me fourteen months hire, and [I] pay all expenses committed with their coming but the passage money. We must raise the time of their servitude, on account of the exchange so high. You can send Jack Carr's son as one of the three, if he is as when I left. Send the plough in charge of one of them as if it was his own, so as it may pass without charge on the passage as his own luggage, or implements that he require.[39]

The letter is interesting on several levels. John James is able to request individuals by name whom he wants to work for him. The implication is that the opportunity is so promising that anyone would accept the invitation. He also names a captain he has worked with before, indicating that a precedent has been

[38] Murray, *Becoming Irlandés*, 42.
[39] Murray, *Becoming Irlandés*, 47.

set already regarding the transportation of friends and family. Despite the length of servitude being raised to fourteen months, the conditions seem relatively reasonable, at least compared to terms of service for migrants throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and indicate that labor was plentiful enough to not warrant harsh and coercive contracts.

In addition, the role of Martin Murphy becomes clear. He works as a middleman and facilitator for John James, carrying out his requests and organizing for the passage of new immigrants and supplies. In this sense, chain migration appears to function as much as an economic enterprise as it does a means of providing opportunities to impoverished family and friends. John James served as the patron within a multifaceted web spanning from the province of Buenos Aires to Ireland, with numbers of individuals connecting the dots in between, serving simultaneously as employees, confidants, economic agents, friends, and family.

Father Fahy and the Isolationist Plan: 1844-1871

While small Irish pockets emerged in Buenos Aires during the 1820s, their population likely did not reach the several hundreds until the 1840s, and quickly into the thousands during the potato famine. Despite objections from Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas to both European immigration and British incursions during his Anglo-French blockade, Irish immigration persisted in the 1840s due to the efforts of their community leader, Father Anthony Fahy. His protests to Rosas' position led to official enquiries and, later, to an allowance of Irish immigration. Though most Irish-Argentines settled in the Pampa as farmers and peasants, enclaves did remain in Buenos Aires. In 1848, the Irish Hospital was founded and served the entire Irish community in the city.

Fahy acted as a father figure and leader to the Irish, to whom he gave financial advice and for whom he arranged marriages to preserve ethnic and cultural homogeneity. He strove to maintain a self-reliant, insular Irish community free from urban vices and that rejected assimilation into an unfamiliar foreign culture. New settlers were met at the docks when they disembarked and were assigned rooms in approved Irish boarding houses. Men were typically placed in either meat-salting plants or estancias like the ones owned by John James, while women were typically paired with an Irish partner for marriage. The policy of isolation and non-assimilation proved to be highly successful as the Irish developed into a self-reliant community in Buenos Aires by the mid-nineteenth-century.[40] By and large, this strategy was not predicated on ethnic bigotry and intolerance, but rather was rooted in a devout sectarianism that preferred English Catholic traditions to the perceived liberal secularism of Buenos Aires.

Other community leaders were also tied to the clergy. In 1855, the Irish Hospital was rebuilt to house a convent occupied by the Sisters of Mercy. These nuns managed both the hospital and a welfare program for the Irish-Argentine community. Groups of priests and nuns were recruited and imported from Ireland in an effort to provide Irish-Argentines with Irish leadership and spiritual guidance.[41]

Beginning in the 1820s, many Irish males worked in Irish-owned meat-salting plants at first, choosing to save money and learn Spanish before relocating to the recognizable countryside to work as shepherds. Most settled in

[40] Patrick Bishop, *The Irish Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 149.
[41] Graham-Yool, *The Forgotten Colony*, 157-158, and Bishop, *The Irish Empire*, 149.

the Chascomús region near Buenos Aires, where they were given a herd of 1,200 to 2,000 sheep by an *estanciero*, or wealthy cattle baron.[42] After a predetermined number of years had passed, the Irish shepherd would be allowed to keep a certain number of the sheep that had been born in the interim, a figure that was usually much greater than the number he had been given initially. With this surplus, the shepherd would recruit friends and relatives from Ireland to replicate the same process. This chain migration based on kinship stimulated the growth of the Irish-Argentine community throughout much of the nineteenth-century.[43]

By the 1850s, when free land reached its apogee after Rosas' numerous campaigns against native tribes, many of these Irish shepherds – like John James Murphy - became wealthy *estancieros* themselves. They exported large quantities of beef, hides, and other animal by-products while employing a predominately Irish workforce of new immigrants. That decade, women began arriving in greater numbers and worked primarily as maids and cooks, and comprised half of the Irish immigrant population. Marriage within the Irish-Argentine community remained endogamous throughout the nineteenth-century.[44]

While Irish communities throughout the diaspora from the United States to New Zealand have frequently been portrayed as middling, impoverished, and poorly educated Catholics, the case of Irish-Argentines in the nineteenth-century provides a fascinating counterpoint. Due to a rare availability of land, a flourishing export economy, and a strong sense of community, the Irish in the

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[42] Juan Carlos Korol and Hilda Sabato, *Comó Fue la Inmigración Irlandesa en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1981), 83.
[43] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," 73.
[44] Bishop, *The Irish Empire*, 148.

Pampa became "the most financially successful group of Irish emigrants in the world at that time, and certainly the most successful ethnic group, by a wide margin, in Argentina." [45] A traveler in 1840s commented that Irishmen digging ditches in rural estancias could amass a few hundred shillings in just three weeks – a figure high enough to purchase a flock of fifteen hundred sheep of their own.[46]

The insular nature of the Irish community, both in urban Buenos Aires and in its hinterland, was a defining feature of the group throughout the nineteenth-century. Unlike the sparse bands of Irishmen that quickly assimilated into native society throughout the colonial period, the Irish-Argentine community that followed adopted a strict program that rejected native culture and emphasized Catholic moral values. Much of this had to do with the system of chain migration in the Pampa that was predicated on the recruitment of fellow countrymen. Even for the Irish children born in Argentina, Fahy fanatically inhibited assimilation and the adoption of Argentine customs. He founded a hurling league and established clubs throughout the province of Buenos Aires that allowed only Irish players to participate. The purpose was to unite the disparate Irish micro-communities and generate scenarios where the Irish did not have to interact with native Argentines.[47] By emphasizing the cultural and ethnic disjuncture between the groups, Fahy impressed a quasi-racist ideology dogma on the laity until his death in 1871.[48]

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[45] Andy Bielenberg, "Introduction," in *The Irish Diaspora*, ed. Andy Bielenberg (London: Longman Publishing, 2000), 7.
[46] James Scobie, *Argentina: A City and a Nation* (New York: Oxford, 1971), 99.
[47] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," 79.
[48] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," 78-79.

Searching for a New Identity: 1872-1886

In the decades following Fahy's death, religious leaders and community institutions struggled to sustain his program. The Irish Hospital, St. Patrick's Society, and the Irish Ladies Beneficent Society were plagued by mismanagement and infighting. Smaller organizations attempted to maintain community stability as well, but struggled to stay afloat financially. One ubiquitous name in Irish newspapers was the Irish Orphanage, whose progress was monitored weekly throughout the late nineteenth-century. The names of those who had donated funds to the orphanage were published in the newspapers, along with how much they had given. [49]

Ethnic clubs were hallmarks of nineteenth-century immigrant communities throughout Latin America. These organizations helped recent migrants find employment, meet friends and spouses, and often provided medical care to their constituents when it was denied to them elsewhere. Curiously, no such organization emerged in the Irish community after Fahy's death. One reader of *The Southern Cross* complained about the lack of Irish associations in Buenos Aires, which seemed to have been a major problem for new arrivals. The tenor of the letter reflects just how much the community leadership had eroded since Fahy's death, and how immigrants were left to find their own way in the city.

> It is surprising that in the Argentine Republic, where there are so many respectable, intelligent, and wealthy Irish people, there is no society for the protection of Irish immigrants. Being but a short time in the country, and not knowing much about the moral and social condition of the inhabitants, I cannot speak on the necessity for such a society with the same amount of authority as many of my countrymen who have been here for several years. The Italians, French, Swiss, Belgians, and I believe, also the Germans and Austrians, have their respective societies for the protection of the immigrants. Now, seeing that other nationalities

[49] For example, "Subscriptions to the Irish Orphanage," in *TSC*, 17 January 1890: p. 4.

> recognise the necessity of such societies, the chief object of which is to give information and procure employment for the poor and helpless immigrants, the question naturally arises, why should not the Irish, who have almost been foremost in the van of religion, civilisation and humanity, have a similar society? The climate of South America must have converted Irish blood into water…Before arriving here the immigrant has the most buoyant hopes of accumulating wealth and happiness. But on arriving in Buenos Aires he is quickly convinced of the contrary, and he finds himself traveling, as it were, in some mystic land, without friends (and perhaps without money), in which he can only communicate his wants to others by vague gestures...[In the Immigrant Hotel] they are huddled together in a large shed provided for the purpose by the ruling powers, where attention is paid neither to morality or cleanliness. How could any decent Irish boy or girl venture into the precincts of such a hovel?...[An Irish Society] would be a means of saving many form the bread paths which lead to destruction in Buenos Aires.[50]

Unlike the era in which Fahy greeted arrivals on the docks, placed them in hotels, found their jobs, and arranged their marriages, the period after his death seems to have been marked by ambivalent neglect in the absence of a strong headship. It is no surprise then that the Irish community abandoned their cloistered existence during the final quarter of the nineteenth-century, and instead became more interested in learning Spanish, cultivating relationships with Argentine politicians, and taking an interest in the moral, economic, and political condition of the nation.

Despite the generally unorganized state of affairs, the community continued to grow amidst an Argentine economy on the cusp of its Golden Age. With vast tracts of lands opened from Rosas' campaigns as well as a burgeoning political generation ensconced in a liberal economic ideology, beef and cereal exports flourished in overseas markets. Within the national climate of optimism and fiscal growth, there were clear signs by the late 1870s that the Irish-Argentine community was eschewing Fahy's separatism in favor of greater participation in

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[50] *TSC*, 7 February 1888.

Argentine affairs, perhaps out of necessity. For example, in 1879, the Club General Brown was founded to campaign for a greater Irish voice in Congress. In subsequent decades, several Irish politicians rose to electoral prominence with a platform that encouraged continued immigration and the moral and spiritual elevation of the "*paisano*."[51]

Other factors also undermined the traditional bonds that had held the Irish community together. The liberal intellectual climate of Argentina in the 1870s aroused a popular feeling of anticlericalism that led to the termination of the Jesuit College in 1875. The Irish Sisters of Mercy likewise came under public fire and left the country for over a decade.[52] Also, the 1870s marked the last phase of considerable Irish emigration to Argentina until the 1920s, thereby lessening the relative presence of Irish-born individuals and eroding the intimate affiliation between Irish-Argentines and Ireland.

In the short-term, however, it may have been the unprecedented growth of the Argentine-born Irish sector that weakened the community's ties to its homeland. The census of 1895 registers 16,284 individuals of Irish decent in the province of Buenos Aires, yet only 4,693 were born in Ireland. By comparison, there had been 8,623 individuals of Irish decent in the province in 1869, and the majority – some 5,246 – was born in Ireland. One notes that over that twenty-six year span, the number of Irish-born individuals was relatively constant, though the total number of the Irish community in the province doubled. Furthermore, in 1895, only 2,852 individuals of Irish decent lived in the city of Buenos Aires -

[51] Korol and Sabato, *Comó Fue la Inmigración Irlandesa en Argentina,* 147-151.
[52] Graham-Yool, *The Forgotten Colony,* 159-160.

comprising less than 1 percent of the population – and a mere 915 of those were born in Ireland.[53]

The total number of Irish immigrants who traveled to Argentina between 1822 and 1929 has been a point of contention in the historiography. The first estimate, in Sabato and Korol's *Cómo fue la inmigración irlandesa a la Argentina*, was somewhere between 10,500 and 11,500. [54] Eduardo Coghlan used incomplete passenger records to project the figure at just over 7,000, a much smaller figure than that of Sabato and Korol.[55] Both sets of figures went unchallenged until 1992 when Patrick McKenna argued that neither study accounted for remigration and return migration, and also that both neglected the cholera outbreak of 1868 that took the lives of thousands of immigrants. He estimated that in the nineteenth-century, between 45,000 and 50,000 Irish immigrants traveled to Argentina.[56] Most recently, Patrick Bishop offered a comprising sum of 30,000 migrants.[57] A major problem with each estimate is that they only account for Irish-Catholics. The absence of the Scot-Irish, Anglo-Irish, and Irish Protestants necessarily leaves each approximation short.

Regardless of the actual figure, the Irish community was much smaller than the Italian group that Baily studied. There were, however, some similarities between the two. Both came from Catholic nations and emigrated primarily for economic purposes. Each had particular success in the interior: the Italians excelled in the riverboat trading industry, the Irish in the agrarian sector. Both

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[53] Coghlan, *El Aporte de los Irlandeses a la Formación de la Nación Argentina,* 18-22.
[54] Korol and Sabato, *Cómo fue la inmigración irlandesa a la Argentina*, 48.
[55] Coghlan, *El Aporte de los Irlandeses a la Formación de la Nación Argentina.*
[56] Patrick McKenna, *Nineteenth Century Irish Emigration to, and Settlement in, Argentina* (St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare: MA Geography Thesis, 1994), 83.
[57] Patrick Bishop, *The Irish Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 149.

began arriving in the first half of the nineteenth-century and gradually developed familial and kinship networks that facilitated chain migration. Also, the Irish adopted a policy of stoic isolationism throughout the nineteenth-century by retaining English as a primary language, practicing ethnic endogamy, and participating in segregated social activities. Likewise, Baily argued that the Italians rejected assimilation during the same period and were culturally and socially autonomous. In this way, it appears that the relative size of an immigrant community had little relationship to its adaptive strategies.

The reasons for this are multifarious and will become clear after considering several key differences between the two communities. The peak of Irish migration occurred during the 1840s when the potato famine was at its apogee. By the turn of the twentieth-century, the core of their community had been long established, and continued immigration was sparse. The Italians did not begin to peak until the 1880s, and heavy immigration remained constant until 1914. Also, given the cruel impetus for emigrating, the Irish generally had little hope of returning to their homeland after leaving, and the vast majority remained in Argentina for the remainder of their lives. In contrast, between 1880 and 1913, half of the two million Italians that entered Argentina ultimately repatriated.[58] Thus, it may be argued that idiosyncratic factors play much greater roles in the adaptive trajectories of immigrant groups; the most promising correlation may have something to do with generational patterns. That is, as a community becomes "older," it tends to become more engaged in the affairs of its adopted country.

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[58] Baily, "The Role of Two Newspapers in the Assimilation of Italians in Buenos Aires and São Paulo," 324.

Attention may now be given to the Irish community of Buenos Aires in the period 1886-1913, both to demonstrate that the community was not as insular as it had been before Father Fahy's death in 1871, and to understand the reasons and chronology of this shift. McKenna has argued that the provincial Irish-Argentine communities were able to reject integration into Argentine society until Juan Perón came to power in the 1940s. By then, their schools could no longer reject others based on ethnicity, and several young people began migrating to the city.[59] However, it seems that the conventional strategy of Irish isolation in the city of Buenos Aires began to decay *immediately* following the loss of Father Fahy.[60] With fewer immigrants arriving after the final peak phase of the 1870s, there was a gradual loss of Irish identity and an increasing desire to integrate into local affairs, especially given the numerical marginality of the community in the perpetually expanding milieu of urban Buenos Aires. As of yet, little is known about the Irish community in the city of Buenos Aires after the 1890s and their involvement in societal affairs. The classic studies of the community conclude before 1900, as immigration began to stall.[61]

Memory and Morality: The Irish in Buenos Aires, 1886-1913

By the middle of the 1880s, many Irish in Argentina began to move away from the reclusive ethos of the previous generations, and the imagined bond joining them with their ancestors began to erode. In a fascinating editorial

[59] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," 80.
[60] Korol and Sabato, *Comó Fue la Inmigración Irlandesa en Argentina*, 147-151.
[61] McKenna, "Irish Migration to Argentina," Korol and Sabato, *Comó Fue la Inmigración Irlandesa en Argentina,* Coghlan, *El Aporte de los Irlandeses a la Formación de la Nación Argentina,* Graham-Yool, *The Forgotten Colony*, and Thomas Murray, *The Story of the Irish in Argentina* (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1919).

entitled "The Irish in Buenos Aires" that was published on February 5, 1886,[62] a writer celebrated the Irish contribution to Argentine development while noting the marked differences between his community and his countrymen in Ireland. His words demonstrated a remarkable moment of self-awareness as he observed the cultural differences between the Irish in Argentina and those in Ireland, distinguishing the two as unrelated for once. He wrote that "Those who are too fond of believing that the Irish are hopelessly lazy, thriftless, and unfit for self-government, if they came to the Plate would soon have themselves disabused of these most erroneous ideas. There they would see what the Irish can be when they obtain a fair chance, and are not subject to the depressing influences which retard their progress in Ireland." While clearly not disparaging Ireland or its political entanglements, the writer nonetheless underlined the fact that time, space, and circumstance had created a populace that was fundamentally different than its forbearers.

Prior to the 1880s, the Irish in Argentina were an inclusive group that preferred speaking English instead of Spanish. In fact, the latter was neglected in the curriculum of most schools throughout most of the nineteenth-century. This was encouraged by Fahy and others to restrict the community from becoming too immersed in local affairs, and also derived from the prevailing belief that the Hispanic language and its cultural descendants were of inferior value than their own Gaelic traditions. However, public opinion regarding this trend seems to have begun shifting during the 1880s. One reader of *The Southern Cross* argued that there was "no reason in the world why little Irish boys and girls brought up in this country should not learn both languages, and speak them correctly" and

[62] *TSC*, 6 February, 1886

that it was time to reverse the "pernicious custom prevalent in many of the schools in Buenos Aires in which English is taught."[63]

The debate over whether Spanish should be taught in Irish schools was a popular issue during the 1880s. A typical letter published in *The Southern Cross* argued that it should be a fundamental piece of the core curriculum. The reader, who identified themselves as "X," wrote:

> Let me ask you what do the children learn in the schools in Buenos Aires? How many of the children know French, which is the most fashionable language? How many of them know Spanish, which is the language of their own country? They return home after their studies without any guarantee that they have advanced in knowledge, except perhaps a pert grimace and an air of superciliousness….The parents, clinging to old and absurd prejudices, plainly state that they do not wish their children to be taught Spanish...It is like wearing a light summer suit at the poles and a heavy surtout at the equator. The consequence is that the children are brought up like pariahs in the land of their birth.[64]

The writer articulates a clear dissatisfaction with the belief amongst certain members of the community that the English language was superior to other romance languages. They also ridicule those in the Irish community who are seen as obstructing the group's progress by adhering too rigidly to old customs. Most importantly, they recognize that this obduracy is most effecting the younger generations, who are poorly equipped to be successful without the basic communicative tool of their native country.

Another writer for *The Southern Cross* "was reminded that Salvini, the greatest actor in the world, and who cannot speak a word of English, was an Irishman. His right name was Tom Sullivan and he was born in Ireland, but his parents emigrated to southern Italy when he was an infant, and died there before

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[63] *TSC*, 15 January, 1886: 4.
[64] *TSC*, 19 February, 1886: 5.

he was able to talk."[65] The anecdote pointed out that Irishness was not lost when English was not spoken, and that a great deal could still be achieved if one adopted the customs of another society. Members of the community were beginning to articulate a position that stressed the possibility of multiple identities. In other words, they concluded that learning Spanish would not expunge their Irish heritage.

One way to measure the extent of national identity is to consider popular attitudes towards education. The classroom had the potential to be an integrative tool; by teaching Argentine history lessons, Irish schoolchildren were familiarized with a national narrative that likely alluded their parents in their own formative years. A patriotic Irish-Argentine praised the opening of 40 new public schools in October of 1886:

> Sunday last was signalised by another important event, the opening of forty public schools in this city…The Argentine Republic has made great strides in respect of education, and its moral and material progress can be measured by the extent and degree of its education. In popular education we hold the second place on the American continent, The United States being first, and we are not inferior to many European nations...The patriotism in the future should take the shape of raising, by means of the school, the intellectual level of this mass of people (referring to those in the provinces mainly), who are in danger and drag on all improvement.[66]

The writer identifies with the successes of Argentina, and uses the term "we" to emphasize that the Irish community is a part of the nation. There is also a comparison made to the United States, which occurred frequently in each newspaper. Typically, writers and readers measured the economy, government, and immigration rates between the countries, which reveals a great deal about the collective mentality of the Irish by the late nineteenth-century. Ireland, and

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[65] *TSC*, 25 June 1886: 7.
[66] *TSC*, 8 October 1886: 5.

Europe was no longer the measuring stick; the Irish were now part of the Americas, and they felt more common ground with the United States, and to a lesser extent, Brazil, their greatest rival.

Curiously, the Irish in Buenos Aires paid a great deal of attention to the development and progress of Brazil, despite the fact that the Irish population there was negligible. Typically, their interest in nations that were not Argentina or Ireland was reserved for locales within the diaspora; that is, nations with considerable populations of Irishmen, such as Australia and New Zealand. Yet, stories were published frequently in all three newspapers detailing the political and economic failures of Brazil, and more commonly, of the impending abolition of slavery there. A typical opinion published in *The Southern Cross* viewed Brazil not as a competitive state, but rather, as a place that had much in common with Argentina, and as a place that could follow its example:

> Brazil is now engaged in the solution to the emancipation problem, and in which servile institutions are doomed, and we are gratified to perceive that year by year the growth of European emigration to the Empire is being gradually augmented. But the current is nevertheless much too sluggish and shallow, and we hope that Brazilian statesmen will adopt vigorous measures to make it deeper and more rapid….the Argentine Republic [has benefited] a great deal by this inflow of foreign population. Nothing has more potentially contributed to stimulate progress in the State.[67]

By the 1880s, the Irish saw European immigration as a positive solution to any enduring social problems in Argentina, and viewed their own success as compelling proof of that point. There is also tangible evidence that the Irish were beginning to seek an Argentine endorsement of their contribution to national development. For the first time, the community looked to the political leadership of the nation for recognition. In January of 1886, a "New British Hospital" was

[67] *TSC* (Buenos Aires), 22 January 1886: 2.

constructed to carry on the legacy and mission of its predecessor, which had been one of the most important means of ensuring that the Irish had no need to consult Argentine institutions for assistance. The inauguration of the new hospital was attended by President Alejo Julio Argentino Roca. During the ceremony, an Irishman "extolled the great benefits that the British people had bestowed on [the] country," before Roca commented that he was in "favor of our countrymen giving every possible support to the British Hospital, insomuch as it is the only establishment of the sort in this country in which our poor countrymen are received without any distinction of race or religion."[68] This recognition of the Irish plight was an unusual turn for an Argentine president during the nineteenth-century and foreshadowed the increasing role in local political affairs that the community would achieve during the subsequent decade.

By the turn of the twentieth-century, the *Hiberno-Argentine Review* and *Fianna* were two of the most widely read periodicals within the Irish community, along with *The Southern Cross*. Each emphasized moral restraint, hard work, and an intense sense of community fellowship and collective purpose. However, while these qualities were traditional pillars of Father Fahy's inward-looking program, they were no longer accompanied by a rejection of Argentine culture and stoicism towards local affairs. Increasingly, the periodicals conveyed a strategy of integration that simultaneously stressed both the retention of Irish values and the participation in the political, social, and cultural affairs of Buenos Aires.

In this way, the goals of the Irish community after the 1880s do not fit into Baily's dichotomous model of assimilation or adaptation. The community's

[68] *TSC*, 29 January, 1886

desire to become full participants in local politics and cultural affairs fell short of assimilation, because the community retained a prolonged and active interest in their heritage and retained a large number of traditions. Yet, their strategy was much more complex than merely adaptation, which implied that attempting to blend in was useful only for practical purposes, including the acquisition of jobs and the accumulation of wealth. The Irish, by way of men like Dillon, Manus, and others, were committed to becoming part of the local political bureaucracy and displayed a vested interest in the social and economic well-being of Buenos Aires, not because it benefited them financially in the short-term, but because they had come to see themselves as permanent members of the nation who wanted to be a part of its advancement.

In a recent study, McKenna contended that "the Irish community in Argentina by virtue of reading Irish newspapers and family letters was almost certainly better informed about conditions in the English-speaking world of Ireland England, the US, Canada, and Australia than they were about conditions in much of their adopted land."[69] Though this might have been true throughout Fahy's lifetime, it was certainly no longer the case by the early twentieth-century. From 1906-1913, the pages of *The Hiberno-Argentine Review* and *Fianna* were permeated with commentaries and articles about Argentine affairs. Both sustained an interest in national politics, the activities of radical strikers and unions, the education system, the military, export prices, the monthly inflow of immigrants to Buenos Aires, Argentine diplomacy, urban crime, and political corruption. In an illustrative editorial written in 1910, an anonymous author in *Fianna* denounced an epidemic of fraud that had been plaguing national

[69] Patrick McKenna, "Irish Emigration to Argentina: A Different Model," 206.

elections. The writer implored the community to avoid bribes and place honest votes, stating that "the vote of an Irish-Argentine (should) be always considered a guarantee of political good faith."[70] A similar opinion published in *The Southern Cross* praised the Irish contribution to the local voting process, noting that "many of the Irish porteños took an active part in the elections on Sunday," and that "one result of their interference was to increase the overwhelming majority of Paz (ostensibly a candidate for a local office), and another to contribute to the preservation of order. There was not the slightest disturbance took place in any district where our countrymen took a prominent part. We congratulate them on this fact, and also on the fact that they chose the right side."[71] The issue of public order and civil obedience was a common theme in every periodical. An editorial published in *The Hiberno-Argentine Review* criticized the lawless nature of the interior provinces and argued for an increased police presence to prevent theft and murder. The writer contended that if development and migration to the interior were to continue, the stability and security of the region would have to be demonstrated.

The newspapers also published fascinating moral critiques of Argentine society. If the Irish were to participate more actively in the affairs of the nation, they seemed to prefer doing so in an environment liberated from the vice that Father Fahy had feared decades earlier. A pillar of his segregationist strategy was the perceived moral superiority of the Irish community and the apprehension that assimilation would damage their honorable character. One such critique was published in the weekly "News and Views" section of *The Hiberno-Argentine*

[70] *Fianna* (Buenos Aires), 9 July 1910: 26-27
[71] *TSC*, 10 December 1886: 4.

Review on 27 November 1908. It noted that in the preceding twelve months the residents of the city of Buenos Aires had spent one hundred million dollars gambling at the racetrack and lottery, a fact that could not "be regarded as favorable to the character and status of the capital."[72] A comparable editorial was published in *The Hiberno-Argentine Review* that criticized the legal sale of erotic novels.[73]

Beyond this vigilant attentiveness to national affairs and local customs, both papers exhibited a passionate sense of Argentine nationalism that was perversely underpinned by Argentina's historical struggle against Great Britain, a fact that engendered a common bond between the Irish and their host society. Between 1906 and 1913, the Irish were nearing the apogee of their struggle for home rule against Great Britain that ultimately lasted from 1801 to 1913. In Argentina, the Irish community found inspiration in the historical tales of the failed British invasions of 1806 and 1807.[74] One reader condemning British imperialism throughout the world mockingly alluded to 1806 when "the combined Spanish and Argentine forces drove back to the sea the bastards that came to rob Argentina and establish their yoke in this free land."[75] A tourist from Dublin provided an account of his visit to the San Domingo Church in Buenos Aires, where captured British flags from the failed invasion were kept. Choosing his words carefully to avoid smugness, the writer referred to the "remarkable series of reverses those four British flags…commemorate."[76]

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[72] *HAR* (Buenos Aires), 27 November 1908: 6
[73] *HAR* 20 November 1908: 5
[74] *HAR* 1 October 1909: 34
[75] *Fianna* 7 April 1911: 57-58
[76] *HAR* 21 December 1906: 7

A story published in *Fianna* in 1910 reported that the British were set to return the Falkland Islands "to the rightful owner the Argentine nation" to commemorate the centennial celebration of Argentine independence.[77] Another from 1913 ridiculed British entrepreneurs for exploiting the Putumayo Indians in the provinces, pointing out that Irish estancieros in Gran Chaco treated the Putumayo with dignity and kindness.[78] In these instances, the Irish merged their enmity towards Great Britain with specific episodes from Argentina's national history, thereby claiming a degree of shared intransigence towards the nation. In Argentina, the Irish not only saw a progressive democracy open to immigration and brimming with economic potential, but also one that had historically rejected the imperialistic advances of their perpetual adversary.

This sense of pride in the Argentine nation was ubiquitous in both newspapers throughout the period and was consistently manifested through stories extolling the contributions of the Irish to national development and frequent passages recounting important historical episodes and Irish-Argentine heroes. The most common method of using the achievements of the dead to articulate the successes of the broader community was through the obituary. Almost unilaterally, Irish obituaries in the three newspapers described the exceptional qualities of the deceased, and then related those to the community, projecting them to the group writ large. As a source, the obituary not only illuminates key facts about the dead, but also reveals much about community identity, particularly the way it chooses to remember the deceased, the qualities they see fit to stress, and how they are related back to the community. An

[77] *Fianna* 17 March 1910. It appears that this event never transpired.
[78] *Fianna* July 1913

emblematic obituary published in 1907 for Thomas McGuire recounted his experiences as one of the original settlers during the great migration of the 1840s. The piece celebrated his pioneering spirit in the Pampa, where "he plodded along with an unbroken confidence in the future of his adopted land." The contribution of these Irish settlers also surfaced in the column when its writer commented that "the trackless prairies of the Pampa were changed into well ordered estancias provided with all the appanages of modern progress." Although McGuire was celebrated for his economic success and commitment to encouraging development and immigration in the countryside, "he never forgot the dear old land beyond the seas."[79] Another typical obituary noted that "Patrick Terrell was for many years a resident of this country, being among the first of that band of Irish settlers who made for themselves, by their skill and honest labor, happy homes in the Argentine Republic. During those many years Mr. Terrell won the respect of all his neighbors both native and foreign…He was in every sense of the word a true Irishman."[80]

A similar obituary from 1905 praised the pioneer Eugene Cronin for struggling "under a semi-tropical sun to form the base of a modest fortune." Another from 1907 commented that "Frank Rauth was a typical Irishman in every sense of the word. A staunch and practical Catholic, he never belied the creed of his ancestors…and was an ardent lover of the cherished land that gave him birth." The piece concluded with a proud eulogy to other fallen forbearers, hopeful that "generations of Hiberno-Argentines yet unborn, will recall with pride and veneration the memory of those grand old pioneers of our race in the

[79] *HAR* 8 February 1907: 13-14
[80] *TSC* 18 May 1888: 5.

River Plate…They are leaving us; but the bright example of their many remains."[81]

These tributes appeared almost weekly in both papers and consistently reinforced several themes by following a similar script. First was a pioneering spirit among the early immigrants who arduously struggled against all odds to survive in a foreign land. There also was a recurring feeling that the success of the Pampa as an agricultural basin after 1850 was due in large part to the efforts of the Irish, who embraced their adopted home and contributed to its growth as a republic. Furthermore, most obituaries noted the moral character of the deceased and their commitment to Catholic values, and how they embodied what it meant to be Irish. Finally, nearly every tribute noted that the departed never left the memory of Ireland behind.

The Irish also exhibited an exceptional fascination with former Argentine President Bartolomé Mitre (1821-1906). Occasional mini-biographies were published in both papers that described his promotion of immigration and recognition of the Irish contribution to the Argentine economy. The same year of his death, the Irish community in San Andrés de Giles Partido, a subdivision of Buenos Aires, erected a monument in his honor in a public square. A spectator commented in *The Hiberno-Argentine Review* that both the Irish and Argentine flags were flown during the procession, which included a visit from members of the Mitre family. The correspondent wrote that the monument "reflects credit on the worthy citizens of Giles who wish to perpetuate the memory of the deceased patriot."[82]

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[81] *HAR* 8 March 1907: 15-16
[82] *HAR* 4 January 1907: 7

Six years later, *Fianna* republished a piece Mitre had written in 1873 celebrating the Irish contribution to national development.[83] One passage is remarkably similar to the tenor of dozens of columns printed in both papers between 1906 and 1913 and is emblematic of the collective purpose the Irish community had gradually embraced after the mid-1870s:

> The descendants of those clans, confirmed in the Christian faith by the teachings of the Celtic Paul, have come to our shores, and hung up their native harps to accompany the Melodies of their countryman, Thomas Moore, not as slaves who weep for their expatriation to the shores of the Babylonian river, but as free men and voluntary exiles who have found a new country where labor is productive, and where their children are born and grow up under the aegis of hospitable institutions.

Mitre echoed the same themes of the obituaries and tributes to deceased Irish-Argentines, noting the selfless sacrifice and contribution of Irishmen to Argentine development. He also defended the Irish-Argentine goal of having their sons elected in the provincial chambers in the same letter:

> By the popular vote, the native-born son of an Irishman, there to represent, as an Argentine, the interests of the Irish community and the two noble races destined to 'increase and multiply' under the auspices of Liberty, Labor, and Prosperity.

Two points are made in Mitre's proclamation. The first is the idea that the Irish would retain a level of autonomy while still participating in Argentine institutions, a point that foreshadows an ubiquitous theme in both newspapers. The second is that the protagonist of Mitre's vision is the native-born son of an Irishman. Fahy's generation had identified primarily with Ireland because it was overwhelmingly their place of birth, and the site of their formative years. They could not forget Ireland because it had given them their identity. The majority of Mitre's "Irish" had likely never been to Ireland, and never would. In the mid-

[83] *Fianna* July 1913: 157

1870s, the percentage of Irish-born Argentines was decreasing; by 1895, only 32 percent of the Irish community in the city of Buenos Aires was born in Ireland.[84] Thus, while the community retained a sense of pride in their customs and native history, they were less committed to ethnic segregation because they identified more with their own nation of birth.

Over time, both newspapers reflected this newfound interest in Argentine traditions and culture. In 1906, the *Hiberno-Argentine Review* published the program from a Christmas recital held at the St. Lucy's English School in Buenos Aires. The very first performance of the night was the singing of the Argentine national anthem by the school's pupils. In fact, 11 of the 17 performances were sung in Spanish, and included traditional Argentine songs from "Himno al Pueblo Argentino" to "Mi Bandera."[85] During the annual St. Patrick's Day celebration in 1910, a correspondent noted with pride that both the Argentine and Irish flags were present at the ceremonies, and that the national anthems of both countries were performed.[86] An issue of Fianna in 1910 published the words to the "Himno Nacional Argentina" over an entire page.[87]

Another piece of intriguing evidence that the Irish community was integrating into the Argentine socio-cultural plexus is a feature story published in *Fianna* that provided a history of the Argentine national tea called yerba-maté. The article described its origins, place in popular culture, and even explained to the readership how it was consumed in public.[88]

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[84] Coghlan, *El Aporte de los Irlandeses a la Formación de la Nación Argentina,* 18-22.
[85] *HAR*, 28 Dec. 1906, 9.
[86] *Fianna* (Buenos Aires), 17 Mar. 1910.
[87] *Fianna* (Buenos Aires), 9 Jul. 1910: 70.
[88] *Fianna* (Buenos Aires), 9 Jul. 1910: 10-13.

The Sinn Fein Debate and Irish Integration

The most illuminating example of Irish integration in the early twentieth-century was a public debate that engrossed the community throughout 1908, creating a flashpoint that helped codify the objectives and collective identity of the group. At issue was the establishment of a branch of the Sinn Fein political movement in Buenos Aires in late 1907. Founded first in 1905 by Dubliner Arthur Griffith (1871-1913), the movement was a hyper-nationalist, anti-imperialist crusade that campaigned for Irish self-rule.[89]

Several Irishmen in Buenos Aires attempted to found a local branch of the movement and held initial meetings beginning in late 1907. The episode quickly became an ebullition for the Catholic community, who used the event to work out conflicted feelings of nationalism. The debate materialized in the *Hiberno-Argentine Review*, which typically provided a forum to resolve similar intra-communal disputes. The issue at hand was clear: should the community support the movement in a show of solidarity with its homeland, or were local affairs of paramount importance?

Many Irish-Argentines were willing to support Irish industries, political ideals, and political activists, but contended that their primary loyalty should align with their adopted home. Others were pleased that an organization interested in their homeland had been founded, regardless of distance. Though the *Hiberno-Argentine Review* observed that Sinn Fein meetings were "fiascos" lacking organization and vision, they stated that "as a matter of notorious fact we are warm supporters of Sinn Fein…It is on the contrary, a real practical economic

[89] Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 21-22.

force, making for sound, sensible end…In this we are, and always have been, hand in glove with Sinn Fein."[90]

The most outspoken critic of the movement was a reader who used the pseudonym "Irish-Porteño," and his comments typified the dispassion for Irish politics that many Irish-Argentine Catholics felt. In one of his most biting letters, he defined "Irish-Argentines" to be only those of Irish descent born in Argentina, not Ireland, and contended that this group had "no desire to dabble in Irish politics, and that they do not, consequently, wish to become Sinn Feiners." His diatribe continued:

> Is he a patriot, who, in his own native soil, publicly proclaims himself an adherent of a foreign political organization? I'm an Argentine, and foreign politics do not interest me – hence I am not in a position to laud or condemn it…But even if I were certain that it were the best policy for Ireland and that it would ultimately bring about her freedom, I would not, even then consider myself under any obligation to join it. And why? Solely and simply because I am an Argentine and consider that as such I am bound to Argentina, and should lend my services – small and insignificant as they may be – to her political and social amelioration…Now, why should we be expected to give out pecuniary assistance to a foreign political organization when here in Argentina there are hundreds upon hundreds of children of Irish origin growing up without any education, and in many instances, crying to heaven for the very necessaries of life?[91]

Although it is difficult to determine whether or not others shared this position in the community, certain clues emerge from these letters that indicate that rejection of the Sinn Fein movement was widespread. For example, another letter from January 10, 1908 reiterated the same viewpoint:

> I may safely say, without exaggeration, I know the Irish-Argentines, my countrymen, well, and that I am in tune with their thoughts and feelings, their likes and dislikes, and therefore I assert…that they, as a body…have

[90] *HAR* 24 January 1908: 5-6
[91] *HAR* 10 January 1908: 14-15

> no sympathy with the Sinn Fein, or any other new fangled fandangle imported here.[92]

Another "Criollo" argued that "if our Irish friends consider it their duty to support the Sinn Fein scheme with us the case is very different. We too have a nation and a race to uplift and to save."[93] Another correspondent stated that his support would always remain with Ireland, although he would not support radical parties in his adopted land. Speaking for his immediate community, he asserted that "in our sphere, too, we quietly but sincerely rejoice in the triumph won, not by us, by this party, or that leader, but by Ireland over Ireland."[94] Argentine-born individuals of Irish descent seemed to be willing to support Ireland in spirit and purpose but preferred to concern themselves primarily with problems in Argentina. Poverty and political representation were more pressing concerns for a group far less connected to Ireland than previous generations had been.

The same "Irish-Porteño" who had articulated the most derisive assault on the movement submitted another letter on January 31, 1908. Like the anonymous writer that claimed to speak for the entire Irish-Argentine community, "Irish-Porteño" alleged that he was in tune with the sentiments of his fellows:

> Having come in contact with my fellow countrymen during many years in mostly every Irish-Argentine centre I was in a position to know their sentiments and feelings, and I accordingly asserted that they were not interested in Irish party politics, much less anxious to become adherents to a movement…I furthermore maintained – as I do still – that we could not, as true Argentines, join an organization that was both foreign and political. That my views have been sanctioned by the Irish-Argentine community is amply proved by the fact that not a single Irish-Argentine…has objected to them. On the contrary my views have been ably defended and upheld by several Irish-Argentines…I objected to Sinn

[92] *HAR* 10 January 1908: 16
[93] *HAR*, 24 Jan. 1908: 14.
[94] *HAR*, 21 Feb. 1908: 14.

> Fein on the ground that as an Argentine it would be wrong for me to adhere to it as it would clearly demonstrate that I was devoid of love and patriotism towards the land that gave me birth.[95]

Another reader identified as "Porteño" made a similar argument. Again, speaking on behalf of the broader community, he stated that "we, Porteños, don't understand Sinn Fein, and don't want to either…We, or most of us, would like to see Old Ireland get her rights, (though) if we do our duty I guess we have enough to do to look after our own country's affairs."[96]

Conclusion

Each of these sources adds to our understanding of Irish-Argentine feelings towards integration between 1871 and 1913. The Irish in Buenos Aires were much different than the Italians of the city during the same period that Samuel Baily observed. They were also much different than the Murphy family that settled in and around Buenos Aires during the middle part of the nineteenth-century. As evidence has demonstrated, the community of Irish-Argentine Catholics was interested in social and political affairs of Argentina after the 1880s and increasingly identified with the nation over the country of their ancestors. While *The Southern Cross*, *The Hiberno-Argentine Review*, and *Fianna* demonstrated a strong affinity for Irish history and culture, the editors, writers, and readers expressed a stronger loyalty to the social concerns of their adopted home of Argentina, which by the twentieth-century was in fact the place of birth of roughly 70 percent of the Irish community in Buenos Aires. The group was much likelier to be interested in addressing issues of poverty, child welfare, and the

[95] *HAR* 31 January 1908: 15-16
[96] *HAR* 20 November 1908: 11

promotion of increased immigration as a political policy than supporting the movement for self-rule in Ireland.

Unlike the Italian community, which was still being reinforced through the constant admixture of new migrants in the early twentieth-century, very few Irish-Argentines were born in Ireland after the 1870s. This resulted in a marked shift in their national identity and reveals a great deal about the process of assimilation for immigrant groups. As the presence of foreign-born individuals declines, the tendency to identify primarily with the host society increases.

Finally, the Irish case in Argentina cannot be situated within either the "adaptation" or "assimilation" model that Baily proposed. The group was certainly interested in a prolonged, fixed relationship with Argentina that transcended a desire to simply survive and adapt. Yet, they were not willing to jettison all of their ethnic traditions and interest in Ireland as part of a process of total assimilation. The group continued to speak English, maintain community institutions, practice endogamy to a great extent, and preserve the history and folklore of Ireland. Still, they identified primarily with Argentina and displayed an exceptional awareness of local affairs. Accordingly, this essay has suggested that the group was engaged in the process of "integration" after the 1880s that allowed for heightened and active involvement in the socio-cultural milieu of Buenos Aires without discarding their traditional identity as a unique and autonomous community.

This process began after the death of Father Fahy, the influential and passionate leader of the community who had promoted its segregation for so long, and likely continued into the 1930s and 1940s. Tellingly, the name of *The*

Hiberno-Argentine Review was permanently changed to *The Argentine Review* in 1924, a move that signaled the process of integration to be well-underway.

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