

completely. That December an epidemic of Asiatic cholera commenced which raged for ten months.

In despair people looked to emigration as the only way of avoiding death. Poor Law Guardians and landlords who still had a cash reserve paid the emigrants passage. Landlords were on the brink of bankruptcy and clearing the land for use as grazing ground was their only hope of economic survival. The Poor Law Guardians, who were also short of cash - as neither tenant nor landlord could afford to pay their rates - quickly realised that a passage to America cost the same as feeding a pauper for six months.

A sizable portion of Famine emigrants to the U.S.A. left from the English port of Liverpool at an average fare of \$17.00. Steam had been employed between Irish and English ports since 1823 and steerage was available on the North Atlantic routes from Liverpool since 1822. The numbers who emigrated from the ports of Westport and Ballina cannot be estimated with accuracy but bands of up to seven hundred people were recorded as heading for these ports in the hope of a passage. The situation in the East Mayo town of Swinford was similar to that in Westport according to the resident Police Sub-Inspector Mr. Hunt who wrote "You will be horrified to see the multitude of starving men, women and children, who daily swarm the town soliciting with prayers just one meal of food".

Under the Passage Act of 1842, 7 lbs of provisions were to be given out weekly to passengers crossing the Atlantic but that rule was unenforceable on the high seas. In July of 1846 a barque, the "Elizabeth and Sarah", built in 1762, of 330 tons burthen, sailed from the tiny Mayo harbour of Killala. The certified passenger list contained 212 names whereas she carried 276 persons of which 42 died during the voyage. The boat contained only 36 berths of which five were occupied by the crew. She should have carried 12,532 gallons of water but instead set sail with 8,700 gallons in leaky containers. The boat contained no sanitary conveniences whatsoever and when she landed was described as "horrible and disgusting beyond the power of language to describe".

In the famine years death was a regular occurrence on the Atlantic crossing. In 1847 an estimated one death per 145 emigrants took place on U.S.A. bound vessels while 16.3% of those bound for Canada died on the voyage. The voyage, of several weeks, in overcrowded vessels reduced to a low state those who survived the voyage. The Chief Emigration Officer of Quebec commented:

"I have never seen people so indifferent to life; they continued in the same berth with a dead person until the seamen or captain dragged out the corpse with boat hooks. Good God! What evil will befall the cities wherever they alight?"

When boats arrived in Canada if any passenger showed symptoms of disease all the passengers were put into quarantine on Grosse Island about 50km from Quebec. An inscription on a monument on Grosse Island sums up what happened "In this secluded spot lie the mortal remains of 5,294 persons who, flying from pestilence and famine in Ireland in the year 1847, found in America but a grave". About the same number died in Grosse Island the following year from typhus. Another landing station was at Point St. Charles, near the Victoria Bridge, in Montreal where there is a memorial which reads "To preserve from desecration the remains of 6,000 immigrants who died from ship fever A.D. 1847