

Selecting Peter Robinson's Irish Emigrants *

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Peter Robinson¹ sailed from Cork with 568 emigrants in 1823 and 2024 in 1825. He formed two settlements with them in Upper Canada. The first was based on a depot at Shipman's Mills (Almonte) in the Bathurst district, and the centre of the second settlement was the future site of Peterborough in the Newcastle district. Robinson's emigrations are usually considered as examples of the kind of colonization advocated by R.J. Wilmot Horton,² Robinson's immediate superior, or else, in the context of the history of settlement in Upper Canada.³ A full investigation from either point of view precludes paying much attention to Robinson's three visits to Ireland in the spring of 1823, the late summer of 1824 and the spring of 1825. During these visits Robinson created an organization for selecting emigrants which is of considerable interest in itself. In addition, a detailed analysis of his selection adds a new dimension to the practical application of Horton's plan and offers a firm base from which to assess the performance of Robinson's emigrants in terms of their origins.

Robinson's emigrations had a varied background. They were marked by the literary sources which had influenced Horton, the writings of Malthus and other political economists, and they owed something to the approximately 10,000 settlers who were located in the government supervised military and Lanark settlements by 1822.⁴ Although different settlers had been treated very differently, examples could be found in these settlements of all the kinds of assistance Robinson's settlers received: a free passage, a grant of land, superintendence and medical attention, and the

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¹ Peter Robinson, 1785-1838. In 1823 he was a member of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada and an honorary member of the Executive Council. He was in England on a private visit and was recommended to Horton by his brother, John Robinson.

² Robert John Wilmot, 1784-1841. He took his wife's surname of Horton in 1823 in fulfillment of her father's will. Under Secretary of State for the Colonies 1822-28.

³ See among others: H.J.M. JOHNSTON, *British Emigration Policy 1815-1830: 'Shovelling out Paupers'* (Oxford 1972); Helen I. COWAN, *British Emigration to British North America: the First Hundred Years*, revised and enlarged ed. (Toronto, 1961); Lillian F. GATES, *Land Policies of Upper Canada*, Canadian Studies in History and Government no. 9 (Toronto, 1968); Jean S. MCGILL, *A Pioneer History of the County of Lanark* (Toronto, 1968). For a new departure based on a field study of material culture see: John J. MANNION, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Adaptation*, University of Toronto Dept. of Geography, Research publication no. 12 (Toronto, 1974).

⁴ GATES, *Land Policies of Upper Canada*, p. 92.

distribution of rations, tools and other necessities for the period, Horton set it at one year, until the emigrant became self-sufficient.

The alarming state of Ireland in the early 1820s proved to be the catalyst which enabled Horton to combine previous Colonial Office experience in Upper Canada with his belief in the effectiveness of emigration as a form of pauper relief. In northern county Cork, for instance, armed bands of men retreated to the hills and, by 1820, that part of the country was in a state bordering on "a miniature civil war."⁵ Historians have since concluded that the wet autumn of 1821 and the resulting loss of much of the potato crop did more to interrupt the momentum of this movement than the authorities.⁶ However this may be, the effect on the population of the partial famine of 1822 and of the continuing unrest made it easy to argue a case for any form of relief in the south of Ireland.

From the beginning, there were two views of Robinson's emigrations current among Horton's contemporaries. Those concerned only with relieving the immediate situation, and they probably included most members of Parliament who voted to finance Horton's emigrations,⁷ did not expect to make a noticeable impact on unemployment by sending so few. Their object was accomplished if the hope of being included convinced people to remain quiet through a difficult time. "Quiet" in Ireland was a relative term, but some of the magistrates directly involved with Robinson did inform Horton that the government emigrations had had a pacifying effect on their immediate neighbourhoods.⁸

The second view of the emigrations was as pilot studies for a scheme of Horton's. He saw them as experiments which would establish an alternative to eviction in clearing estates. At his most optimistic, he considered removing as many as 900,000 rural paupers from the south of Ireland to government supervised settlements in the North American colonies. Despite initial interest from cabinet members such as Sir Robert Peel and Sir Frederick Robinson, Chancellor of the Exchequer, he failed to take his scheme beyond the stages of experiment and discussion in two Select Committees on Emigration in 1826 and 1827.⁹ Horton asked too much. As a Malthusian, he insisted that his emigrants be "redundant" paupers with no productive work and no means of paying their passage,

⁵ R.B. McDOWELL, *Public Opinion and Government Policy in Ireland, 1801-1846*, Studies in Irish History, Vol. V (London, 1952) p. 59.

⁶ Galen BROEKER, *Rural Disorders and Police Reform in Ireland 1812-36*, Studies in Irish History, Second series, no. VIII (London, 1970).

⁷ Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons, xiii (401), Estimates and Accounts, p. 301, item 72; Parl. Papers 1825 xviii (131) p. 357, item 3; Parl. Papers 1836-7 xv (160) p. 267, item 16. Parliament voted £15,000 for assisted emigration in 1823 of which about £10,000 went to Robinson. The vote for the 1825 emigration was £30,000 and it was supplemented in 1827 by an additional £10,480 to cover spending beyond the estimate.

⁸ C.O. 384/12, First Emigration to Canada 1823, f. 272, Ennismore to Horton, 29 June 1823; Ontario Archives, Peter Robinson Papers, MS 12, series 1, Kingston to Robinson, 19 Dec. 1824.

⁹ Parl. Papers, 1826 iv (404), First Report of the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom...; and 1827 v (550), Third Report... As chairman, Horton wrote the reports.

while, as a colonizer, he refused to budge from the estimate of £20 per head which he believed necessary to ensure that they did not become a burden on the colony. In the long run, none of his arguments from the political economy of his time were sufficient to convince either Irish landlords or his cabinet colleagues that his plan was in their interest. They drew back from incurring such a large, immediate expense in the hope of future benefits of which they were far less certain than he.

Horton sent Robinson to Ireland in 1823 with introductions and instructions. Apart from a general letter from Horton, Robinson was introduced to the gentry of county Cork by Lord Ennismore and William Wrixon Becher, two Irish members of Parliament who had taken an early interest in Horton's plan.¹⁰ As Ennismore and Becher represented Cork County and Mallow respectively and as they came from the Blackwater valley, they offered Robinson support in a rural area which had access to the port at the Cove of Cork and which met all Horton's criteria in the way of poverty and unrest. Horton needed nothing more, and he ignored the Irish government so completely that Robinson was at work before Lord Wellesley, the lieutenant governor, or Lord Kingston, the "principal person of the county"¹¹ of Cork, had heard of the project. Both men were initially annoyed, but Horton's colleagues mollified Wellesley, and Robinson himself talked Kingston into becoming one of his principal supporters.

Horton's instructions to Robinson set out guidelines for choosing emigrants. Robinson had complete discretion in individual cases, but Horton insisted on several occasions that he must be able to justify each separate exception. No one Robinson took should be able to pay his own way and the heads of families were to be able-bodied, not over 45 and not encumbered by more than three children under 14. Although Horton disliked discriminating on religious grounds, it was "infinitely more desirable"¹² to take Roman Catholics, an instruction which Robinson heeded. A list of 177 settlers located in 1823 showed only 14 Protestants.¹³

These criteria did no more than establish a body of people from whom a selection might be made. They were intended as both a support and a reminder to Robinson as he negotiated with the local authorities on behalf of the government and Horton's plan. At the same time, Horton was careful to leave Robinson as free a hand as possible. For, while Horton recorded Robinson's selections as though they were pilot studies to be repeated as part of a grand scheme, the actual means at Robinson's disposal were those of a temporary measure of local relief. As a result, we have an unusually well documented example of the kind of programme which

¹⁰ C.O. 384/12, f. 11, Minute Readat Mr. Goulburn's to.../f. 16v./ Lord Ennismore, Mr. Becher, Sir N. Colthurst etc., n.d. Irish Emigration 1823. Ennismore was M.P. for Cork County 1812-27 and Becher represented Mallow 1818-26.

¹¹ C.O. 384/12, f. 25, Robinson to Horton, 9 June 1823.

¹² C.O. 324/95, Private Letters: Mr. Horton, p. 63, Horton to Robinson, 16 April 1825.

¹³ C.O. 384/12, f. 93, "Emigrants from the South of Ireland located in Canada by Mr. Robinson."

depended for its success on a class understanding between government officials and the local gentry. All concerned assumed that the reward for co-operation would be a share in the distribution of the patronage involved. But, it was only because Horton questioned his actions so frequently, that Robinson actually wrote of the need to meet the "reasonable expectations" of those "zealously anxious" for the success of the emigrations.¹⁴ This example can be expanded to trace the evolution of the venture until, by the summer of 1825, the selection of emigrants in Fermoy and three neighbouring baronies had acquired an administrative life of its own.

Robinson spent the month of June 1823 selecting emigrants. His official instructions did not reach him until June 2, and he could not take longer because he was anxious to have his emigrants housed before winter. His time in Ireland was divided roughly in half. For the first two weeks he concentrated on selling the idea of assisted emigration to key members of the nobility and magistracy and to potential emigrants. The turning point in the fortunes of the emigration came at about the middle of the month. By this time, both Robinson and Ennismore were certain of the popularity of the measure.¹⁵ Robinson then turned his attention to consolidating his selection and to arrangements for the emigrants' departure.

All of the region from which Robinson drew emigrants, including parts of the counties of Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford and Kerry, were under the Insurrection Act in the spring of 1823. Within his area of concentration, Ennismore and Becher identified the barony of Fermoy as the most disturbed and, on their advice, Robinson made his headquarters in the town of Fermoy.¹⁶ From Fermoy he branched out into the adjoining baronies of Condons and Glangibbon, Orrery and Kilmore, and Duhallow.

In his official report for 1823 Robinson stated that he had worked in a rough circle. He had first distributed a printed memorandum of the terms of emigration, and then he had visited the towns of Fermoy, Mitchelstown, Doneraile, Charleville, Newmarket, Kanturk and Mallow. The ships lists of the *Hebe* and *Stakesby* recorded the places of origin of the emigrants on board and provided further evidence.¹⁸ With a few exceptions, such as the families who came from Sixmilebridge in county Clare, most of Robinson's emigrants were from the towns named; from places within the "circle" such as Ballyhooly, Castletownroche, Liscarroll, or Churchtown; or from places within a perimeter of about 15 miles (the distance he estimated people would walk to see him) and on roads leading into the towns where Ro-

¹⁴ C.O. 384/13, 1824-25 Second Emigration to Canada, f. 245, Robinson to Horton, 31 May 1825, query 2.

¹⁵ C.O. 384/12, f. 25, Robinson to Horton, 14 June 1823; and f. 270, Ennismore to Horton, 15 June 1823.

¹⁶ C.O. 384/12, f. 21, Robinson to Horton, 9 June 1823.

¹⁷ P.R. Papers, 1, Report on the 1823 Emigration [2 April 1824], printed in Parl. Papers, 1825 vii (200) p. 249, and 1825 xviii (131) p. 359. For the state of these towns and of the district at the time of the 1841 census, see T.W. FREEMAN, *Pre-Famine Ireland: A Study in Historical Geography*, (Manchester, 1957), esp. pp. 230-33.

¹⁸ P.R. Papers, 3.

binson had lists open. For example, there were families who must have come from Croom and Newmarket, Limerick to Charleville in the north-west, from Rathcormick to Fermoy in the south, and from Clogheen, Tipperary to Mitchelstown in the east.

The letters Robinson wrote to Horton during June 1823 were particularly interesting because they recorded his first impressions. He was shocked at first, not by the poverty and outrages which he expected, but by the lack of trust and communication between classes. He had expected to rely on the magistracy to find him candidates, but he soon discovered that the "temper and disposition of the lower order of people" could not easily be judged by "what you hear" and that, on the other side: "It is not here as in other countries. The noblemen and gentlemen have not in the least the confidence of the lower order. They are governed entirely by appearances."¹⁹ In terms of Robinson's emigration, the lack of confidence took the form of deep distrust of an offer which landlords seemed to press hardest on unwanted tenants, and the "appearance" they picked up was the resemblance between assisted emigration or "genteel transportation" and the real thing.²⁰

As soon as he rode out into the country side to see the state of the people for himself, Robinson had no doubt that suitable candidates existed. He saw hundreds of men of a "good sort," "bred to farming" and "completely without work."²¹ In order to reach these people, he introduced a new element into Horton's scheme by approaching people in the middle range of society. Despite what he had been told to the contrary, he found that the Roman Catholic priests were often willing to give him active support and that their relations with their Church of England counterparts were generally amiable. On the first point, he cited the case of the priest at Newmarket who read his memorandum in church and gave a favourable explanation of the terms of assistance.²² The fuller records of the 1825 emigration provided evidence for this second point: a surprising number of emigrants had character references or recommendations signed by both a Protestant clergyman and a Roman Catholic priest and, in the case of four families from Cape Clear Island, the curate and parish priest were accepted as their only sponsors.²³ Robinson also spent some time discussing emigration with "respectable people" who came to inquire, a move which alarmed Horton considerably when he heard of it. Robinson, however, defended himself by pointing out that he must consider peoples' feelings if he was to find candidates. He believed that the presence of these people did more to re-assure real paupers than any number of promises.²⁴

¹⁹ C.O. 384/12, f. 23, Robinson to Horton, 12 June 1823; and f. 35 v. 29 June 1823.

²⁰ C.O. 384/12, f. 25 v. 14 June 1823.

²¹ *Ibid.* f. 26.

²² C.O. 384/12, f. 21, 9 June 1823; and f. 23, 12 June 1823; P.R. Papers, 1, Report on the 1923 Emigration.

²³ P.R. Papers, 2, Applications; for the families from Cape Clear see P.R. papers, 1 Certificate of character... and 8 and 9, Emigrants embarked at Cork.

²⁴ C.O. 384/12, f. 35, Robinson to Horton, 29 June 1823.

Robinson could only do so much working through more popular members of the nobility such as Ennismore or the acquaintance he built up as he rode around. In the end, his own personality seems to have been a deciding factor. When he found that candidates regarded their local magistrates only as judges and came more readily to him, he devoted long hours to interviews and to discussing North America: "Was I [Robinson] an American. Did I live there. Should I go back again. Was I quite sure there was no catch in it. Were there any pigs, potatoes, priests, wild men, beasts."²⁵ These measures provided enough evidence of good faith for Robinson to find that by the half way point he was drawing four times as many candidates as he could handle. As he intended to spread the benefits of the emigration through the district, he adopted a policy, which he followed again in 1825, of taking a proportion of the people who applied at each centre.

By the end of June 1823, Robinson had chosen 600 candidates of whom only 460 responded to his messengers and came to Cork in time for his July 1 deadline. This discrepancy in the numbers may have been some indication of the strength of lingering fears and suspicions, though Robinson attributed it to "how tardy they are in their movements" and "the dread the women have of the sea."²⁶ He had made some allowance for attrition due to sickness and other causes when he accepted 600, and he made up the remaining numbers in time to sail on July 8 with a full compliment of 568 emigrants. Those he took were probably rejected candidates who had followed him anyway; on July 6 he wrote that even as the ships prepared to sail, friends of his emigrants were still coming alongside in boats and offering themselves to go to Upper Canada.

The unrest in the district was outwardly of no concern in the selection. Robinson deliberately avoided, and had his Irish associates avoid, asking candidates any questions about their conduct during the recent disturbances. Nevertheless, the issue dominated the 1823 selection. At one level of society, it was the reason for the candidates' fears of government motives. At another, it supplied the basis of Robinson's understanding with the magistrates. Ennismore spelled out their thinking in a private letter to Horton. He and other landowners had feared the emigration would attract "the most industrious and best disposed" of their tenants. They could overcome this objection by "recommending only those who, if not actually connected with the disturbances, are likely to be so from their situation, connexions and want of employment."²⁷ The key to Robinson's side of the understanding was Horton's belief that the opportunity to own land, and to support his family honestly in Upper Canada, would be enough to transform a potential troublemaker into a useful citizen. On the strength of this opinion, which he stated as his own in his report, Robinson went over his lists of suitable families with the magistrates in each centre and allowed them to single out those they were "most desirous to get rid of."²⁸ He re-

²⁵ C.O. 384/12, f. 26, 14 June 1823.

²⁶ C.O. 384/12, f. 46, 1 July 1823.

²⁷ C.O. 284/12, f. 267, Ennismore to Horton, 30 May 1823, private.

²⁸ C.O. 384/12, f. 21, Robinson to Horton, 9 June 1823.

quired a character reference so as not to hold out "a bounty to bad characters."²⁹ With these in hand, he could say that he had not knowingly taken anyone convicted under either the Peace Preservation or Insurrection Acts, but he had no illusions. He knew that some of his emigrants had probably been involved in the disturbances and that he had others who, if the magistrates fears were justified, might take part in the future.³⁰

The reputation of the Irish was such that exaggerations were inevitable when trouble broke out in the Bathurst district settlement. Feuds which had built up through the winter erupted into a riot in April, followed a few days later by a fatal shooting and several arrests. An official investigation proved that Robinson's settlers were by no means solely responsible and gave grounds for modifying the reports which had alarmed Horton and, through the medium of the Irish papers, relatives of the emigrants.³¹ Robinson identified the sources of conflict for a committee of the House of Lords. They were religious differences, conflict between Scots and Irish, and resentment that his settlers had received more than disbanded soldiers. He believed that only time was needed, and he cited the example of Protestant Irish settlers in Cavan and Monaghan townships who had settled down quietly after a turbulent beginning in the community. Even so, there remained a parallel between the "turbulent characters" among the "young unmarried men" who were described as the instigators on the Irish side, and the "idle unmarried individuals" Becher would like to have sent in 1825 in place of the "steady men with families" he knew Robinson wanted.³² Difficulties might be explained away, but Horton, Robinson and the Upper Canadian authorities all made changes when the Colonial Office sent a second party of emigrants in 1825.

A proposed emigration for 1824 was delayed so long that Horton found general agreement that it would be better to wait and to take a double grant the following year. Robinson travelled to Ireland in August of 1824. He promised 1600 places for 1825. No individuals were chosen for these places; he simply committed them in blocks:

Lord Kingston	400 individuals
Newmarket	100 "
Doneraile	200 "
Mallow	200 "
Charleville	200 "
Ballygiblin	200 "
Lord Ennismore	200 "
Lord Mountcashell	100 "

Where final figures for 1825 exist, they show 400 emigrants sponsored by

²⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 22.

³⁰ Parl. Papers, House of Lords, 1825 vii (200), Minutes of Evidence of the Select Committee [on]... Disturbances... in those Districts of Ireland which are now subject to the Insurrection Act..., p. 249, Robinson, 23 June 1824.

³¹ J.K. JOHNSON, "Colonel James Fitzgibbon and the Suppression of Irish Riots in Upper Canada," *Ontario History*, vol. LVIII, (1966) p. 139.

³² C.O. 42/377, Upper Canada 1826, f. 171, Maitland to Bathurst, 31 March 1826; P.R. papers, 1, Becher to Robinson, 3 Oct. 1824, extract.

Kingston at Mitchelstown, 211 from Lord Doneraile at Doneraile, and 186 from Mountcashel at Kilworth.³³

One of the most important changes made in 1825 was the choice of a different kind of site for Robinson's settlement. His emigrants were sent to a new district with few established neighbours. This move not only reduced the possibility of conflict, but also made a welcome more certain among people who were looking for any form of settlement to open up the district. Robinson's settlers later received credit for starting the area north of Rice Lake on the way to prosperity.³⁴ Horton also addressed himself directly to the question of single men. He changed his basic unit of calculation from a family of four to one of five: a man, a woman and three children. This change in the proportion of children was accompanied by a shift in policy away from accepting individuals in addition to family groups. Thus, with a few exceptions, single men in the second emigration did not receive tickets, and Horton and Robinson expected them to travel as part of a family unit having a recognized "head."

Robinson's own assessment of the emigration was less concerned with the riots than with the performance of the emigrants as settlers. In 1823 he went to Ireland fresh from theoretical discussions with Horton in London. He also had his way to make in a district where a representative of the British government was regarded with suspicion. Two years later, his welcome was assured and his attention was focussed on the second settlement. His emphasis was now on choosing from among the pauper candidates so as to ensure its success.³⁵

Changes in the Irish situation helped Robinson to achieve his objective. The countryside had settled into a more normal state, the Insurrection Act was lifted in the summer of 1825, and his local contacts were thinking less as magistrates and more as landlords. They were ready to accommodate his new emphasis on agricultural qualifications. "Firey spirits" and "Whiteboys who will make excellent settlers"³⁶ dropped from sight in correspondence concerning the emigration, apparently by mutual consent. Two new issues arose to dominate the second emigration. One was the position of Robinson's sponsor's and whether or not it was true, as critics maintained, that they were restricting the benefits of the emigration to people on their own estates. The second was the practical problem of numbers. Applicants came in numbers which threatened to swamp Robinson and his organization; he wrote of 50,000 vying for 2,000 places. Robinson who might have expected to find his task easier in 1825, wrote instead to Horton that, "I never had a more unpleasant duty to perform than that of making the selection." He found it "painful to decide" among so many candidates

³³ P.R. Papers, 1, Robinson to Horton, 1 Jan. 1825; C.O. 384/13, f. 192, Robinson to Horton, 17 May 1825 and list f. 194; and f. 224, "Emigrants of 1825".

³⁴ Parl. Papers, House of Lords, 1847 vi (737), First Report... on Colonization from Ireland, p. 276, Charles Rubidge, 28 June 1847.

³⁵ C.O. 384/13, f. 184, Robinson to Horton, 14 May 1825.

³⁶ P.R. Papers, 1, Report on the 1823 Emigration; C.O. 384/12, f. 273-273v., Ennismore to Horton, 29 June 1823.

whose claims were so equal.³⁷ Once he had decided, he had to be constantly on the watch against frauds and substitutions and to submit to criticism on all sides from disappointed candidates.

Of necessity now that he had so many desperately anxious candidates, Robinson introduced new procedures in 1825 making the process of selection more formal and increasing the distance between himself and the applicants. One result was more paper work. The 1825 emigration had three distinct stages and, in addition to Robinson's letters to Horton, some of the working papers have survived for each. Robinson had nothing to do with the first stage. Candidates gave their names and references in to his sponsors during the autumn and winter of 1824-25. Their names and the names and ages of their families were entered into ledgers for Robinson's use when he returned in April to make his selection. A few of these lists, or returns prepared from them, are in the Colonial Office files. Examples of references can be found in Robinson's personal file headed "Applications", actually a collection of all kinds of correspondence from and on behalf of individual candidates.³⁸

Details of the second stage, Robinson's selection, can be deduced from the applications and from his collection of 272 embarkation certificates, duplicates of those he gave successful candidates at the time they were accepted.³⁹ The extant certificates or tickets date from April 12 to 26 when he was touring his "circle" of towns in County Cork. He seems to have spent most of the rest of April and May between Fermoy and Conway's hotel in Cork. He completed his numbers during this time by issuing tickets in the names of a number of sponsors, usually members of the nobility or prominent people, and usually on the basis of one or two families for each.

These tickets served as the candidates' identification for the final state of becoming emigrants. They used them to get on the steamboats which ferried them and their possessions to the transports in the Cove, and they presented them again when Robinson and the ship's surgeon mustered the passengers on each ship. The 1825 emigrants sailed in nine transports between May 10 and May 25. The ships lists⁴⁰ provided both information on the sponsors and families of emigrants not represented in the embarkation tickets and a check on which families actually sailed. Any further details relating to discoveries made by the surgeons after the muster were reported to Robinson in Upper Canada.

In 1825 the geographic limits of Robinson's selection were extended to Listowel just over the border of Kerry in the west, to Cape Clear Island

³⁷ C.O. 384/13, f. 81 v., Robinson to Horton, 4 May 1825; P.A.C., Upper Canada Sundries, vol. 72, p. 38,316, Peter to John Robinson, 8 May 1825.

³⁸ C.O. 384/13, f. 77 *passim*, "Papers showing the Anxiety of people to avail themselves of the offer of Emigration", A, B, and lit f. 173; P.R. papers, 2, Applications: Arranged alphabetically.

³⁹ P.R. Papers, 7, Embarkation certificates 1825. Alphabetical.

⁴⁰ P.R. Papers, 8, 9, 10, Emigrants embarked at Cove 1825. There are separate returns for each ship. Some returns are duplicates.

at the southernmost tip of County Cork, and eastwards into Waterford. Once again, the ships' lists showed that the majority of the emigrants were from the neighbourhood of his circle of towns and from County Cork: Cork supplied 226 heads of families out of a total of 306 in 1825. In 1823, the proportion had been about 146 out of 187. The only other counties represented in any number were Limerick and Tipperary with 24 each and Kerry with 14 families.

Robinson's collection of embarkation tickets enables us to trace his progress through several of his selection centres and to identify the principal sponsor at each place. Robinson was in Mitchelstown from April 12-14, Doneraile April 15, Kilworth April 16, Convamore, Lord Ennismore's seat, April 18, Mallow April 19 (only 2 tickets have this date), Cecilstown April 20, Charleville April 20-22, Mitchelstown again April 23, Mallow April 25, and Newmarket April 26.

His "principal sponsors", a designation Robinson used only in 1825, were closely identified with the people he had singled out in his report as having helped him most in 1823: Ennismore, Becher, Kingston, the Rev. Dr. Woodward and Mr. Jephson (Charles Denham Orlando Jephson of Mallow Castle, M.P. for Mallow 1826-1859). Only the Woodward names⁴¹ did not appear again in 1825. The sponsors named in Robinson's collection of tickets were: Lords Kingston at Mitchelstown, Doneraile at Doneraile, Mountcashel at Kilworth and Ennismore at Convamore, Becher at Cecilstown (emigrants who lived near Bechers's Ballygiblin House were received here in 1825), Captain Roberts, "one of the most respectable gentlemen in Charleville,"⁴² at Charleville, Jephson at Mallow and Richard Olivier Aldworth at Newmarket. Apart from a community of interest, several of these people had family ties. Kingston and Mountcashel had both married into each others families, Ennismore was related to Becher through his wife, and Aldworth married Ennismore's eldest daughter in 1826.⁴³

Robinson was working in a society tied into a patronage system at all levels. A parallel stands out between a letter from the Rev. Mr. Jones of Mallow to Robinson asking him to include one additional family and a letter from Kingston to Horton asking for an extra transport for 40 families who had set their hearts on going and who would be a nuisance if left behind.⁴⁴ The requests were tailored to their respective degrees of influence, but both felt justified in asking a favour in recognition of their early support for the scheme. The system was hierarchical as well as having correspondences at different levels. Letters in the applications file gave a glimpse of the chain. They revealed a whole range of people, clergy, small employers

⁴¹ C.O. 384/12, f. 25, Robinson to Horton, 14 June 1823. Robinson acknowledged help from Lord Woodward of Glanworth; Glanworth was about 4 miles from Fermoy.

⁴² C.O. 384/13, f. 69, Robinson to Horton, 29 April 1825.

⁴³ BURKE's *Landed Gentry of Ireland and Peerage*; C.G. COCKAYNE, *Complete Peerage*; Gerritt P. JUDD, *Members of Parliament 1734-1832*, Yale historical publications, miscellany series, no. 61 (New Haven, 1955).

⁴⁴ C.O. 384/13, f. 375, Jones to Robinson, 2 May 1825; and f. 381, Kingston to Horton, 19 June 1825, copy.

and interested neighbours, writing and using what influence they had to see that individual candidates were brought to the attention of someone who might recommend them directly to Robinson. In some applications, this principle was formalized with referees testifying to the character of others who actually knew the applicant.

The extent of limitation to the sponsor's estates and the restrictions on Robinson's freedom of choice seem to have been greatest when the task of keeping the ledgers and working with Robinson was delegated to an estate agent. John Church, an agent for Ennismore's family, probably selected the emigrants at Listowel, Kerry without a visit from Robinson. Certainly, he had Robinson's permission to replace families who dropped out with others totalling the same number.⁴⁵ In another instance, Robinson returned 16 tickets to Thomas Montgomery, Kingston's agent, either because the head of the family was overage or because its composition was unsuitable. Kingston appealed to Horton, and Horton, rather than offend so influential a supporter, ordered Robinson to reinstate the families even if it meant taking them as supernumeraries.⁴⁶ Robinson's notes on the embarkation tickets showed that he was quite ready to reverse himself for men over 45. By 1825, he had developed a strong preference for large families, particularly those with older boys, and he was willing to make a case for including a few older settlers for the sake of their experience and example.⁴⁷ He was less happy, however, about taking artificial families such as the one made up of William Williams and his brother and sister.

One of the reasons that the question of patronage was never clearly defined was that Horton was not much concerned by it. He saw the future of his scheme as a means of modernizing estates such as Kingston's by consolidating small holdings into viable farms. One of Robinson's applicants (James Condor, 51) stated that he had been dispossessed of his land in November 1824 because Kingston would no longer let lots as small as his. Horton was willing to regard participation in an experiment as the contribution from landlords in 1823 and 1825. In public discussions, both he and Robinson shied away from this issue. Robinson preferred a defence of the selection based on the popularity of the emigration and the correctness of his choice. This was the kind of material he sent when Horton feared he might have to defend the measure in Parliament: returns showing the proportion of applicants to emigrants, newspaper clippings, testimonials, and certificates from members of the clergy, magistrates and prominent citizens describing his emigrants in the terms of his instructions.⁴⁸

In private letters, Robinson admitted that disappointed candidates were "in general very clamorous" and quick to complain that he had

⁴⁵ P.R. Papers, 2, nos. 65 and 90.

⁴⁶ C.O. 324/95, p. 77, Horton to Robinson, 4 May 1825.

⁴⁷ Parl. Papers 1827 v (550), p. 389, Robinson, 17 May 1827; P.R. Papers, 1, Report on the 1825 Emigration, [4 May 1827], printed in Edwin C. GUILLET, *The Valley of the Trent*, Champlain Society, Ontario Series, vol. I (Toronto, 1957), p. 116.

⁴⁸ C.O. 384/13, f. 77-80 list of items A-J; and f. 243, Robinson to Horton, 31 May 1825, queries 5, 6, 7. Some of the documents referred to in the list and in the answers to the queries can be found scattered throughout C.O. 384.

taken only those recommended by particular noblemen,⁴⁹ but these people left no trace on the written record. The other source of unfavourable criticism in 1825 was the city of Cork. Cork authorities were annoyed that the selection was in the hands of a few noblemen and gentlemen who "however respectable or high in rank had no claim to such exclusive patronage."⁵⁰ Robinson handled this challenge in the same way as he had Kingston in 1823 — by including them. The emigrants with ticket numbers over 270 had a variety of sponsors, but the single sponsor with the largest number was the mayor of Cork, John W. Wrixon. In addition, Robinson went out of his way to invite those who had been most critical to inspect his ships. His attention was to good effect. He was able to send Horton evidence of support for future emigrations in Cork and, from those directly involved, certificates as to the suitability of his emigrants.

The second set of problems in 1825, those associated with the numbers of applicants, concerned cases of hardship, of which there were many, and of fraud. Most of those who wrote to Robinson begging him to include them felt themselves to be in desperate straits. Applicants, or those writing for them, had many reasons for asking for special consideration. Candidates wrote that they had relatives asking them to come to Upper Canada (petitioners with close relatives in the 1823 settlement had the best chance of any), or that they had been accepted in 1823 and prevented from going for family reasons. More were the victims of administrative difficulties — a lost ledger in Ballygiblin caused considerable trouble, while others did not get to the selection centre in time and were passed over when they did not answer. Some candidates acted as soon as their names were entered in the first set of ledgers, apparently believing that this was all they need do to be accepted. They had given up any lease or claim they might have on a house or garden and had sold their furniture and potatoes in order to outfit themselves for the voyage. Others had taken the same course in despair because they had no other hope and saw no alternative but begging or starvation. All the people in the last two categories faced essentially the same problem. Their means were so limited that they had to decide between maintaining their lives in Ireland and preparing for emigration.

Robinson appears to have kept his temper and done his best to sort his way among the people who assailed him day and evening, on the street and in his hotel. In a few instances, he recommended that an applicant travel ahead and try for inclusion at the next centre, but relatively few of those who missed their first chance seem to have had a second.

The other recourse of disappointed candidates was to illegal means. Robinson regretted the widespread rumours that tickets were being sold, and he was frustrated by the difficulty of finding a concrete case to investigate. He was, however, powerless to prevent abuses such as attempts to alter tickets, the sale of tickets by one family to another of a similar composition, or a more sinister trade in tickets which were forgeries in the first

⁴⁹ C.O. 384/13, f. 81 v., Robinson to Horton, 4 May 1825; U.C. Sundries, vol. 72, p. 38316, Peter to John Robinson, 8 May 1825.

⁵⁰ C.O. 384/13, f. 432, Horace Townsend to Horton, 10 June 1825.

place.⁵¹ The measures he took were all related to seeing that these deceptions did not succeed. Most of those who were turned away must have been detected before they got into the steamboat taking them to the Cove of Cork. On board ship, Robinson and the surgeon in charge closed all but one of the hatches and mustered the emigrants on deck. Their main concerns were to find stowaways and to check that the childrens' appearance corresponded to the ages given for them. Older children received more rations and, in the case of teenage boys, might bring the family an extra lot of land.⁵² The reports of the surgeons in the Canadas revealed that they found a few stowaways and that several families were travelling under aliases.⁵³ Even if most of the assumed names represented fraudulent tickets, they were still a relatively small proportion of the total. On a purely practical level, Robinson had coped with numbers. The majority of his emigrants were chosen according to procedures in which he was the final authority and, with fewer exceptions this time, those he took were those who had been given tickets and officially chosen.

There is no doubt that Robinson's methods in 1825 were rough and ready. At best, he selected candidates on the basis of lists and recommendations and did not see them until he gave them tickets. He does not, however, seem to have been guilty of capitulating to social flattery, as Howard Pammett suggested in his work on the emigrations.⁵⁴ Robinson needed the help of the gentry to fulfil his mission. Horton, quite apart from his interest in winning support for his scheme from Irish landlords, had funds only for Robinson's personal expenses. Thus Robinson was bound to compromise. But, the most important administrative change he made in 1825 showed that he retained a clear idea of his own interests. In 1825, Robinson reversed the order of his choice and the magistrates'. Instead of showing them his lists, he retained the right of refusal and selected from candidates they proposed. By this means, Robinson gained more control over those he would take as settlers. He believed that the 1825 emigrants were "a better description of people than those taken out in 23 altho' they are wretchedly poor."⁵⁵ From his point of view and that of the settlement, the change was an improvement.

What Robinson gave up in 1825 was all control over the preliminary selection. As a result, his Irish contacts tightened their grip on the patronage which went with the selection and ensured their position as principal sponsors. Robinson had enough candidates in 1825 to accommodate both their wishes and his, but there were serious implications for a wider application of Horton's scheme. If Irish landlords required so much to co-operate in an emigration financed by the government, one must wonder how

⁵¹ P.R. Papers, 1, Report on the 1825 Emigration; and 2, Applications; C.O. 384/13, f. 376, Rev. Samuel Jones to Horton, 25 June 1825.

⁵² C.O. 384/13, f. 184, Robinson to Horton, 14 May 1825.

⁵³ P.R. Papers, 11, Reports of Ships' Surgeons.

⁵⁴ Howard Pammett, "The Assisted Irish Emigration to Upper Canada under Peter Robinson in 1825, including the founding of the City of Peterborough and the Settlement of the Surrounding Townships" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1934).

⁵⁵ U.C. Sundries, vol. 72, p. 38,316, Peter to John Robinson, 8 May 1825.

Horton hoped to control the selection if he had succeeded in persuading them to contribute substantial sums. Robert Peel, who was in many ways the most thoughtful and practical of Horton's critics, underlined this difficulty. Peel believed that the conflict of interest between the sender and the recipient of assisted emigrants was such that landowners would be certain to take advantage of the scheme. He advised Horton to forget about wooing private money. He should rather use whatever government funds were available to select emigrants solely on the basis of their suitability as settlers.⁵⁶

The special circumstances influencing the administration of Robinson's emigrations carried over into policy decisions as to which level of Irish rural poverty would be canvassed for emigrants. Once again, Horton set the guidelines and Robinson and his Irish associates worked out the details. Most of Horton's instructions need little discussion. Robinson complied with his preference for Roman Catholics. Although Robinson's families were generally larger than the family of four or five Horton used for planning, any children over 18 counted as adults and so helped to maintain a satisfactory ratio of adults to children. The crucial provision was Horton's instruction to take paupers. Horton naturally thought of a pauper in terms of a person eligible for relief in an English parish. For the purposes of the emigration he wrote of him as someone unable to pay his own and his families' passage, and this definition was picked up in many of the certificates and references written for Robinson. In order to find an Irish context for the people described in this way, it was necessary to look beyond Robinson's emigrations to other Irish material in Horton's collection.

Horton wrote more than one letter expressing the fear that Robinson had departed from his instructions. Although he did not identify his informants, he must have received complaints from sources outside the emigrations. Some observers believed Robinson's emigrants were too well dressed to be paupers. Robinson explained that a number of them had received gifts of clothing from interested members of the gentry or from friends.⁵⁷ According to Reade, the chief surgeon in 1825, few of the families who got soaked boarding the ships in the rain could produce a change of clothes.⁵⁸ A more basic cause of misunderstanding seemed to be a difference in standards of poverty. Irish pauperism was later defined for Horton as, "the imminence of actual starvation".⁵⁹ No one seriously suggested the people at the bottom of the social scale for emigrants: displaced families living in bogs, beggars wandering the roads, and country people crowded into the worst city slums. A.C. Buchanan, one of the witnesses at Horton's Emigration Committees, supplied a reason for not tapping levels

⁵⁶ British Museum, Peel Papers, Add. MSS 40357, f. 281, Peel to Horton, 6 Aug. 1823, copy, private; and 40388, f. 41, Peel to Horton, 12 July 1826, copy.

⁵⁷ C.O. 384/13, f. 243, Robinson to Horton, 31 May 1825, query 5; and f. 164, *Cork Constitution*, 10 May 1825, "Emigration to Canada."

⁵⁸ C.O. 384/17, Emigration, North America 1826 and 1827, f. 321, Reade, Report, 13 March 1826.

⁵⁹ R.J. Wilmot HORTON, *The Causes and Remedies of Pauperism*, Introductory Series, Appendix A, p. 108.

of poverty lower than the cottier or small farmer. The question was one of selecting a category of people who were not too debilitated or demoralized to succeed as settlers.⁶⁰

Landlords and magistrates also favoured the people still within the boundaries of their estates or of the communities for which they felt responsible. The poorest of Robinson's emigrants had either a settled place of residence or enough connections in a former residence to obtain references and sponsorship. Starting from this point, we can generalize several other aspects of their background such as the degree of their poverty, their living conditions, literacy and health, and their present and past occupations.

Candidates for Robinson's emigrations had a great fear of becoming beggars in the future, but, with the exception of Eliza Regan who had been left with a large family when her husband emigrated, they would not admit to it in the present. They were in addition people in a position to outfit themselves, at least to the extent of one suit of clothes for each member of the family. Applicants who could not feel too poor to take advantage of the emigration, and Robinson gave formal assurances that he had not himself supplied anyone with clothing in Ireland.⁶¹ Those who could took extra clothing, some food of their own for the voyage, oatmeal and potatoes were mentioned⁶² and possibly a few household utensils or favorite tools. As a group, however, they were not able to complete their personal outfits. Robinson had to step in with help beyond that promised in the memorandum. In 1823, he obtained an emergency issue of bedding and cooking utensils before he took the emigrants to their lots. In the course of the winter, he also distributed leather and shoes widely and flannel and cotton in selected cases of hardship.⁶³

The emigrants were not asked directly about ready money until Horton had a questionnaire circulated among them in 1828.⁶⁴ Robinson had written in 1823 that one, and only one of his emigrants had capital to the amount of £20.⁶⁵ The questionnaire also turned up a couple of exceptions, men who still had land to farm or "property" in Ireland. These people were real exceptions. Emigrants frequently answered the question by writing that they had none, no money at all. Those who answered affirmatively, whether they interpreted the question as meaning before they left Ireland or after they arrived in Upper Canada, replied with small sums, £10 or less.

⁶⁰ A.C. BUCHANAN, *Emigration practically considered... in a letter to the Right Honourable R. Wilmot Horton*, (London, 1828), p. 44.

⁶¹ P.R. Papers, 2, application of Peter Fane; C.O. 384/13, f. 164, Robinson's note on Cork Constitution for 10 May.

⁶² C.O. 384/12, f. 183, John Mara to his brother James, 10 Nov. 1824, copy.

⁶³ U.C. Sundries, vol. 62, p. 32,880, William Marshall to Hillier, 6 Oct. 1823; P.R. papers, 6, Schedule of locations of 1823 emigrants.

⁶⁴ Derby Central Library, Catton Papers, (Horton's), Questionnaires. 180 completed forms.

⁶⁵ C.O. 384/12, f. 45, Robinson to Horton, 1 July 1823.

Robinson and Horton both left general descriptions of the emigrants' living conditions. Horton stressed the bleakest details: three families to a cabin, only very occasional employment, and a subsistence depending on "casual charity" or "more suspicious sources." Robinson gave a better idea of how they managed. He was looking for farmers with no land to farm. He found them living on one or two acres and working when they could, usually during the potato planting and the harvest seasons. Tradesmen also cultivated small plots. When they emigrated they sold their share of a crop or their right to a garden, usually to families in the same cabin.⁶⁶

John Robinson admitted that he found his brother's emigrants "a little uncouth."⁶⁷ While several of the respondents to the 1828 questionnaire were illiterate and others wrote and expressed themselves with difficulty, the majority could write, some with facility. Robinson's overall impression was that most of his emigrants were literate and knew the rudiments of arithmetic, enough to calculate their rations to "the eighth part of an ounce."⁶⁸ The emigrants fared less well in another test, that of health. Reade wrote that "...with few exceptions, misery, want and every species of wretchedness appeared to have been their guide..."⁶⁹ Once they were in North America their ailments were, for reasons of public relations, officially described as fever and ague, the common complaints of Upper Canada. Reade's reports, however, singled out typhus, chronic dysentery and, for the children, whooping cough. Robinson privately blamed diseases brought from Ireland as the most serious cause of illness among emigrants and emigration officials alike in the summer and fall of 1825.⁷⁰ In general, all references to the health of successful candidates reinforced the impression that those worse off than they must have been in a sorry state indeed.

So far as the emigrants' "former trade or occupation" was concerned, all observers agreed on the main categories. The largest group was reduced farmers, many of whom who had been evicted for non-payment of rent, followed by unemployed labourers and tradesmen. The lists in which these labels were attached to individuals provided some precise information. A considerable variety of trades were represented. Robinson took masons, carpenters and coopers, sawyers, blacksmiths, a number of shoemakers, tailors, bakers and a few schoolmasters. But, as discrepancies between different lists suggested, such terms as "farmer," "reduced farmer" and "labourer" were used loosely.⁷¹

In one sense, the terms did not signify much. A reduced farmer was after all a farmer who was forced, if he could find work at all, to work as a

⁶⁶ Parl. Papers, 1827 v (550), Third Report; and 1826 iv (404), App. 11, p. 330, Robinson, 23 Feb. 1825.

⁶⁷ Catton Papers, Chief Justice Robinson, John Robinson to Horton, 15 Dec. 1823.

⁶⁸ Parl. Papers 1826 iv (404), App. 11, p. 332.

⁶⁹ C.O. 384/17, f. 321, Reade, Report, 13 March 1826.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*; U.C. Sundries, vol. 74, p. 38,356, Reade, Return of deaths... 27th June 1825 to the 27th Sept. inclu.; C.O. 42/380, f. 241, Peter to John Robinson, 12 Jan. 1826.

⁷¹ P.R. Papers, 8 and 9, Ships lists; Parl. Papers, 1826 v (550), p. 46, Robinson, 24 May 1827, Return... of Improvements made by the Irish Emigrant Settlers... up to 24th November 1826; Catton, Questionnaires.

labourer or at any trade he knew. Yet, for many of the emigrants it was important that they had been farmers whether, like 125 of 306 heads of families in 1825, they had been "recently dispossessed of land,"⁷² or whether they had been working as casual labourers for some time. As a result of their experiences, there was enough of a common mood among the candidates for contemporaries to generalize and for the same themes to recur repeatedly in their applications.

Kingston described their unwillingness to accept their fate. He called it "a kind of pride among this class of people we cannot get rid of" and complained that, because of it, they held back from working for others in their former station of life. Ennismore characterized them as restless spirits, potentially ready either for emigration or, if they despaired of improving their position, for outrage at home.⁷³ Their own applications showed that they concentrated their anxieties on their children and on their fears that they might before long be reduced to the final state of wandering beggars. The second theme which emerged equally strongly was a conviction that only some entirely new element, such as Robinson's offer, would stop the downward course of their lives.

With candidates who were poor, miserable, sometimes hungry, and in a state of mind such as this, Horton and Robinson had reason to be confident in 1823. Some sign of good faith from Robinson or from a local figure they trusted was all that was needed to persuade people to brave the rumours and uncertainties which surrounded the 1823 emigration. Once they sent back favourable reports, the district was swept by a desire to emigrate with Robinson. Candidates were not deterred by the long odds, or by the risk to any security they retained in Ireland. They persisted to the limits of their connections and influence and even, in many cases, to the shores of Cork where any number of disappointed candidates were ready to fill a vacant place.

The evidence for the manner of the selection of Robinson's emigrants was clearer than that for the type of person selected because those involved in choosing had the active role. The one card held by the candidates was the negative possibility of refusing to come forward. Once they applied in numbers, they appeared only as suppliants. Horton's guidelines and the interests of Robinson and of the Irish gentry figured largely in the evidence. The conclusion which emerged was that Horton and Robinson were trying to identify and to take families who were unwanted because they had no place in the stagnant Irish economy rather than those who might prove equally undesirable in either Upper Canada or Ireland. Local authorities in Ireland went some distance in co-operating with this aim because of their own circumstances, their fear of serious disturbances in 1823 and their desire to clear their estates in 1825, and because the British government was paying for the venture. But, when the focus turned to individual cases, the numbers were too great, and the evidence of lists, applications and oc-

⁷² C.O. 384/13, f. 243, Robinson to Horton, 31 May 1825, query 5.

⁷³ C.O. 384/13, f. 381, Kingston to Horton, 19 June 1825; C.O. 384/12, f. 272, Ennismore to Horton, 29 June 1823.

casional references too scattered, for precision. The priorities of those in authority can be summarized: Horton's interest in paupers, landlords' in their tenants, Robinson's in large, active families with boys old enough to help clear a farm. Once these had been met, the particular combination of situation, local influence, suitability and luck which led to one family being chosen over their neighbours remained as an area for speculation.

Robinson was in many ways an ideal person to describe the selection procedure he helped to create in 1823 and 1825. He was an outsider, but one with sufficient knowledge of the ways of patronage and of the workings of his own "Family Compact" in Upper Canada to be sensitive to the currents of local opinion. He must have drawn on this experience in establishing a working relationship with Irish magistrates, just as he drew on his knowledge of backwoods conditions in selecting candidates. Horton had reason to be pleased with his choice of deputy. And yet, the most striking aspect of the selection of emigrants was the strength of the hold Robinson's "principal sponsors" had on the patronage of the district and the power which this gave them to limit the options of government. By the time Robinson completed the 1825 selection, they had consolidated their position. Landlords and magistrates recommended from within their personal sphere of influence, if not exclusively within their own estates. Sponsors can be found for 298 of the 306 tickets recorded on the 1825 ships' lists. Robinson's eight principal sponsors accounted for 242 of the 298. All other sponsors, including Wrixon and Cork officials, sent only 56 families, one less than the 57 travelling under Kingston's name alone. Ennismore's efforts in 1823 apart, these eight sponsors had made only a token contribution of time and money to assume five sixths of the patronage and a central role in the selection. So far as it can be measured, this was the price of their co-operation with the central government if they were to assist Robinson in choosing emigrants who met his qualifications as settlers.