

DUNBRODY

IRELAND'S HISTORIC EMIGRANT SHIP

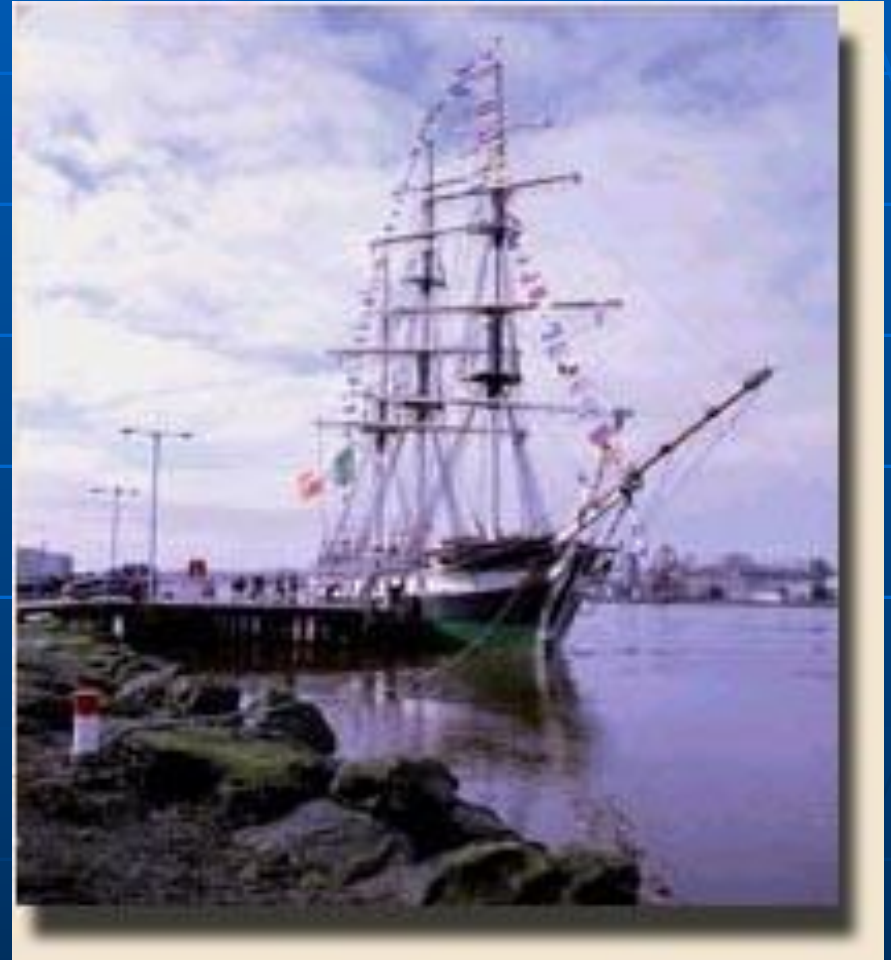


Historical Information

Dunbrody is a 458 tonne three-masted barque, 176 feet (53.7 metres) long. Her hull length is 120 ft. (36.6 m), she has a beam of 28 ft (8.5 m), a draft of 11.5 ft (3.5 m) and has a sail area of 10,100 square ft. (c. 940 sq. m.). The present ship is a reconstruction of the original Dunbrody, built in Quebec in 1845 by Thomas Hamilton Oliver, an Irish emigrant from Co. Derry.



- The original Dunbrody was a three-masted barque built in Quebec, Canada, for the Graves family of New Ross, Co. Wexford in 1845. She carried many emigrants to the new world from 1845-1870. The Dunbrody Project involves the construction of a full scale sea-going replica. The Dunbrody was finished in early 2001 and has been opened to visitors since 1st May 2001 at the quayside in New Ross.



- From 1845 to 1851, between April and September, she carried passengers on her outward journeys to Canada and the USA. She usually carried 176 people but on one crossing, at the height of the Famine in 1847, she carried 313.



Many of the passengers were the evicted tenants of Lord Fitzwilliam's Wicklow estates and Viscount de Vesci's Portlaoise estates. She carried two classes of passenger – the cabin passenger who paid between £5 and £8 and the steerage passenger who paid between £3 15s 0p and £4. This fare was at least the equivalent of two months income for a tenant farmer in the 1840's

















OVERSEAS EMIGRATION FROM IRELAND BY DESTINATION

1841-1900 (%)

Period	United States of America	Canada	Australia and New Zealand	Other overseas emigration
1841-50	60.8	27.9	1.9	0.4
1851-60	84.1	9.7	8.3	0.6
1861-70	84.4	4.9	10.1	0.6
1871-80	82.8	4.8	11.4	1.0
1881-90	85.3	6.1	7.5	1.1
1891-1900	92.7	2.3	2.5	2.5



Source: Commission on Emigration
and Other Population Problems,
1955, tab. 93, p. 124. ©

ALLOCATION OF SPACE

The only space steerage passengers could call their own was a bunk which was to measure no less than 6 feet by 18 inches, that was to be "home" for the duration of the voyage which could last anything from five to ten weeks. To save on costs, the bunks were constructed 6 feet by 6 feet and were to be shared by four people, often total strangers. The bunks were two-tiered. In stormy weather, sickness and dysentery meant passengers often lay in their neighbours', as well as their own vomit and excrement. Those in the lower tier also had to suffer the drippings from above.

British Passenger Act 1847

SALE OF ALCOHOL TO PASSENGERS

The sale of spirits or 'Strong Waters' to passengers was expressly forbidden in 1847. A captain who proved negligent in this regard was liable to a fine of up to £100. In practice, the sale of liquor to passengers was generally regarded as one of the master's perks.

British Passenger Act 1847



THE BRITISH PASSENGER ACTS

In 1803 the first Act of Parliament to regulate the passenger trade of British ships was passed. The ever-increasing flow across the Atlantic was the result of abuse and trickery on the part of shipowners and agents, growing correspondingly. The Act was designed to protect the rights of passengers but the provisions were totally inadequate. Amendments were made in 1823, 1842 and in July 1847. They proved to be more aspirational than enforceable.



NUMBER OF PASSENGERS ALLOWED

The number of passengers allowed was calculated on the registered tonnage of the vessel. The 1847 Act determined that a reasonable ration was one passenger to every five registered tons or 'One Passenger for every Ten Clear Superficial Feet'. This number was to include the master and crew. The Dunbrody had a registered tonnage of 485, although her owners frequently advertised her as a much bigger vessel of 850 tons. Taking the official figure of 485 tons, a total of 291 adult passengers and crew could be carried. However, children under 14 were classified as half statute-adults and infants under 1 were not counted at all. So the actual numbers carried greatly surpassed 291 without breaching the regulations.

British Passenger Act 1847









Dunbrody remained in the Graves family ownership for 24 years. She was sold in 1869 and became a British registered ship. In 1874, en route to Quebec from Cardiff, Dunbrody's captain chose not to wait for a pilot to assist him in navigating the St. Lawrence. He paid for this when he ran aground. She was fortunate, however, to be bought by a salvage company, repaired and sold on. Unfortunately, in 1875, she took her second and fatal grounding. Sailing home to Liverpool with a full timber cargo worth £12,500, a fierce gale blew up and drove her dangerously off her usual route towards the shores of Labrador. Though the exact details are not known, it is assumed that if she grounded fully laden with a timber cargo, her aging hull would have been broken up beyond economic repair.

- The cabin passengers (usually Protestant gentry) had food and services provided but the steerage passengers had to cook and fend for themselves. 1847 was the worst year of the Famine. In the first open months of the Spring 40 ships were waiting to disembark and the quarantine station at Grosse Île in Canada had more than 1,100 patients suffering in terrible conditions. In May 1847, Captain Baldwin finally landed his passengers at Grosse Île after a very long passage. In a letter addressed to William Graves, he reported "the Dunbrody was detained in quarantine for five days because there were too many ships queuing in the St. Lawrence River. Doctor Douglas is nearly singled-handed....everyday, dozens of corpses are thrown overboard from many ships....I have heard that some of them have no fresh water left and the passengers and crew have to drink the water from the river. God usually help them!"