

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

SIR THOMAS LARCOM

Papers, 1858-64

Reel M852

**National Library of Ireland
Kildare Street
Dublin 2 Ireland**

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Filmed: 1979

HISTORICAL NOTE

Sir Thomas Larcom

Sir Thomas Larcom (1801-1879) was born in Gosport, Hampshire. He studied at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich and was commissioned in the Royal Engineers. In 1824 he joined the Ordnance Survey. He moved to Ireland in 1826 and was appointed as an assistant in the Ordnance Survey of Ireland in 1828. He held this position for twenty years.

In 1848-51 Larcom worked briefly with the Board of Works and Famine Relief before being appointed Under-Secretary for Ireland. It was the first time that the office was non-political and permanent. He instituted reforms in the poor law and local government, improved the public health system, and encouraged the development of agriculture and higher education. He was promoted to the rank of Major-General in 1858 and was knighted in 1860. He had an extraordinary knowledge of Ireland and was convinced of the importance of collecting and analysing statistical and other information. Larcom played a major part in the suppression of the Fenian Uprising in 1867. He retired in 1868 and was made a baronet.

Larcom bequeathed 179 volumes of correspondence, memoranda, newspaper cuttings and pamphlets to the Statistical Society of Ireland. The collection was transferred to the National Library of Ireland in 1918-19.

The Ribbonmen

The Ribbon Society was a Catholic secret society that was active in rural Ireland for several decades in the nineteenth century. Its members, who were organised in lodges, wore green ribbons in their button-holes. Their chief objective was to protect the interests of tenant farmers and rural labourers. Ribbonmen were involved in violent attacks on landlords and they also resisted paying tithes to the Church of Ireland. They took part in numerous clashes with Orangemen in northern Ireland.

Like the 'Whiteboys' in earlier times, 'Ribbonmen' was a loose term applied generally to individuals in rural areas who were charged with carrying firearms or administering illegal oaths. From 1825 onwards many men alleged to be Ribbonmen were transported to Australia. According to George Rudé in *Protest and punishment* (1978), '340 or so Whiteboys, Ribbonmen and other land-warriors arrived [in Van Diemen's Land] on a score of ships between 1840 and 1853'. In the 1850s Irish newspapers continued to describe in graphic terms the activities of Ribbonmen, but by the 1860s they had been superseded in Irish demonology by the Fenians.

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National Library of Ireland MS 7633

Letters, memoranda and newspaper cuttings on the state of the county of Donegal, 1858-64

1. Attempt to murder Rev. A Nixon, 1858-59

Newspaper cuttings on the attempted murder of Rev. Alexander Nixon of Heathfield by Ribbonmen and on agrarian outrages and the state of Donegal generally.

2. Ribbonism and agrarian outrage, Donegal, 1861-62

Correspondence and newspaper cuttings concerning outrages in Donegal, the trials of Ribbonmen, the examination of informers and witnesses, an attack on Clonmany Church, threats to murder the agents of landlords, reports on individuals believed to be sympathetic to Ribbonism, and the departure of Ribbonmen for America and elsewhere. The correspondents include J.C. Considine, George Fitzmaurice and J. Doherty.

3. Mr Adair, Derryvaugh, evictions, 1861-62

Correspondence, memoranda, notes and newspaper cuttings mainly concerning the eviction of 45 tenant families by John G. Adair of Derryvaugh, Donegal. They include reports of court proceedings, lists of families evicted in Donegal, papers concerning the murder of Adair's steward in November 1860, and correspondence on the possible removal of Adair from the Commission of Peace. There are also papers concerning debates in the House of Commons on a motion by Vincent Scully and a copy of *Derryveagh evictions: return to an order of the House of Commons*, 14 May 1861 (printed, 18pp). The correspondence includes letters and minutes to Larcom from Edward Cardwell, the Chief Secretary for Ireland.

4. Murder of Adam Grierson, former steward of Adair, at Derryvaugh, 1863-64

Correspondence and newspaper cuttings relating to the murder of Adam Grierson, the former steward of John Adair, the trial of Francis Bradley on a charge of murder, and on the state of Donegal generally. The correspondents include J.S. Macleod.

5. Lord Leitrim's doings in Donegal, 1858-64

Correspondence and newspaper cuttings about complaints by Lord Leitrim about the security of his life and property, the management of his estates in Donegal, debates in the House of Lords, Leitrim's behaviour as a magistrate, litigation involving charges of Ribbonism, and an assault made on one of Leitrim's stewards in 1864. The correspondents include J.C. Considine, J.M. Studdart, J.S. Macleod and R.M. Bland. There is also a map of the county of Donegal.