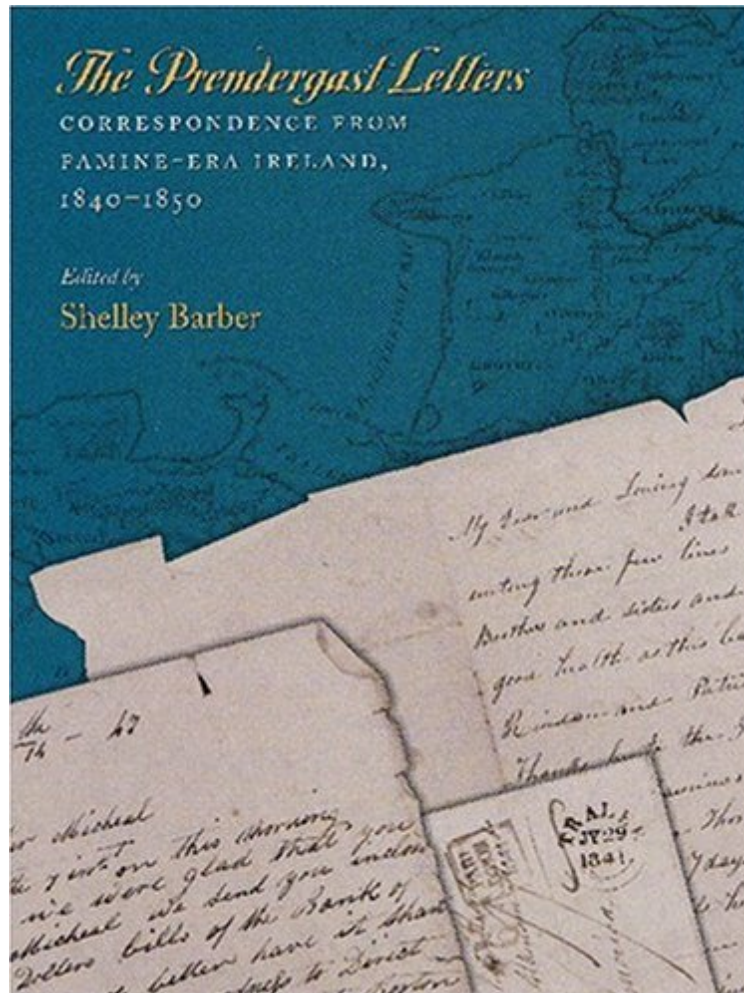


The Prendergast Letters: Correspondence from Famine-Era Ireland, 1840-1850

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From Brand: Univ of Massachusetts Pr : The Prendergast Letters: Correspondence from Famine-Era Ireland, 1840-1850 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Prendergast Letters: Correspondence from Famine-Era Ireland, 1840-1850:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I thoroughly enjoyed this book By Customer I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I started it the day after it arrived and could not put it down. I will read it again in the future. With 1840-1850 Irish immigrants myself, I felt that I was looking into the lives of my ancestors on both sides of the Atlantic, through the letters of the Prendergast family. I recommended the purchase of this book to the history and genealogy department of the St. Louis County Library.

The Prendergast Letters Collection, one of the noteworthy manuscript collections at Boston College's John J. Burns Library, provides an account of the experiences of an ordinary family in County Kerry, Ireland, from 1840 to 1850. The letters include myriad details of the lives of family members and neighbors, reports of weather, agriculture, and local events and economy, along with commentary on matters of national importance such as politician Daniel O'Connell's movement for the Repeal of the Act of Union. Most important, the letters offer a rare contemporary, firsthand account of Ireland's an Gorta Mor, the Great Famine that began with the failure of the potato crop in 1845. Letters written in the months and years following the announcement of the first crop failure provide insight into not only the sufferings of one family but also the response of the community and nation as this crisis transformed Ireland. James and Elizabeth Prendergast were the parents of six children. Their letters from Milltown, County Kerry, dictated to a scrivener, were posted to sons Thomas and Jeffrey and daughter Julia Riordan and her husband Cornelius, all of whom had emigrated in search of employment to Boston, Massachusetts a city that would itself be transformed by the famine-era influx of Irish immigrants. In addition to transcriptions of the forty-eight letters in the collection, this volume includes contextual essays by historian Ruth-Ann Harris and genealogist Marie Daly. The evidence of the letters themselves, along with the contributions of Harris and Daly, demonstrate the ways in which the family of James Prendergast was at once exceptional and typical.

"These letters are important for how they open a window on the lives and struggles of famine-era Irish and their immigrant offspring in America, in this case Boston, who stood somewhere between the 'relatively undifferentiated mass of those who barely survived' and 'those who became distinguished major figures.' . . . This book fills an important niche in the spectrum of studies in the field." Arthur Gribben, editor of *The Great Famine and the Irish Diaspora in America* "A fascinating study that provides fresh insights into both Irish and Irish American history." Christine Kinealy, author of *The Great Irish Famine: Impact, Ideology, and Rebellion* "Archivist Shelley Barber has done a magnificent job editing this collection to the highest scholarly standards. It is a handsome book with several photographs of the letters themselves. . . . The Prendergast Letters are a testament to the mundane in everyday life, even when that life is punctuated by matters of disorder and upheaval, such as those the Great Famine engendered." James Charles Roy "Here is an excellent example, worthy of emulation, of what can be done with a small collection of historical letters. . . . The book has been expanded with good historical and genealogical essays, an excellent glossary has been added to explain especially the people and events in Ireland, and the book is thoroughly indexed." Forum "The Prendergast Letters' principal value is in using the hopes, aspirations, and fears of one family to link both sides of the Atlantic. It will be a resource for students of immigration, ethnic studies, the Potato Famine, and social history. More studies of this kind are needed to give historians insight into the social, economic, and biological forces that shape human existence." Historical Journal of Massachusetts From the Back Cover "These letters are important for how they open a window on the lives and struggles of famine-era Irish and their immigrant offspring in America, in this case Boston, who stood somewhere between the relatively undifferentiated mass of those who barely survived and those who became distinguished major figures. . . . This book fills an important niche in the spectrum of studies in the field." --Arthur Gribben, editor of "The Great Famine" and the "Irish Diaspora in America" "A fascinating study that provides fresh insights into both Irish and Irish American history." --Christine Kinealy, author of "The Great Irish Famine: Impact, Ideology, and Rebellion" About the Author Shelley Barber is archivist, John J. Burns Library, Boston College. Ruth-Ann M. Harris is adjunct professor of Irish studies, Boston College. Marie E. Daly is director of research library, New England Historic Genealogical Society.