

Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann
National Library of Ireland

Collection List No. 158

Longfield Map Collection

MSS 21 F 32 – 21 F 49

Land Survey Maps by John Longfield, John Brownrigg, Thomas Murray et al. The maps, which are arranged by county and barony, represent all counties in Ireland with the exception of Kerry.

Ca 1770-1840

Compiled by Karen de Lacey 2009

The Longfield Maps - Introduction

The Firm

John Longfield (b.c.1775, d.1833) was a Dublin based land surveyor and valuer. He was educated at the Dublin Society School and won a number of awards during his time there. In 1799 he began a business partnership with John Brownrigg (b.1748/9, d.1838) and Thomas Murray (fl.1799 – 1853). The firm of Brownrigg, Longfield and Murray was active from 1799 until c.1805. The partnership was also often simply referred to as Brownrigg and Co. In 1805 when Murray left the firm and Brownrigg retired, John Longfield continued to preside over the company on Grafton Street, Dublin. John trained his son William (fl.1825-, d.c.1870) as a surveyor and it was he who continued the work of the firm after the untimely death of his father from cholera in 1833.

The Collection

The Longfield map collection consists of 1,671 individual maps bound into twenty-eight large volumes. They have been arranged by county and barony and annotated with locations. The catalogue gives the full title of the map, in addition to dates and the name of the surveyor, where available. These maps, alongside a number of manuscripts, were donated to the National Library of Ireland in 1908 by Robert Ormsby Longfield, a nephew of William Longfield. While many estate maps from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are extant, the Longfield maps are unusual in that they were the property of the surveying firm, rather than the landowners. Therefore, a large proportion of the maps are in fact office copies, drafts for the much more colourful and elaborate maps given to the clients.

Although John Longfield was employed as an engineer by the Irish Bogs Commission from 1809 to 1811 the predominant output of the firm continued to be estate maps. They were commonly used to mark a change in ownership and the company also found work with a number of clients surveying their various holdings across the country. Over 50% of the maps with listed surveyors are recorded as being by John Longfield's hand alone. From the autographed maps we can see that there were a sizeable number of freelance surveyors working for the firm and it seems likely they and other junior partners would have collaborated on the creation of these surveys but have simply remained un-credited. The fact that these maps were for office use means that many lack dates and surveyor names, in addition to other details. A compensation for this deficit of information exists in the numerous doodles, signatures, calculations and notes which appear on the maps. Often intriguing details are mentioned in passing such as the inscriptions, "The corner at X (in Clonygarra) is the spot

where the unfortunate man Devereac? was murdered in the year 1831." and "Near this lies buried one of the Kings of Leinster who was killed by the son of Bryan Boru King of Munster.", which appear on maps of Kilkenny [21 F. 38 (21)] and Tipperary [21 F. 47 (1)] respectively.

Another point of interest is how many maps in the collection originate from outside the company. J. H. Andrews surmises that these would have been supplied by clients to aid with identifying property boundaries. It is also interesting to note how many maps within the collection are in fact copies of older maps. Indeed, in two cases [21 F 51 / (103) and 21 F 51 / (92)], a survey from the year 1640 has been copied. Some of the maps are listed as having been copied as many as three or more times over a period of decades. A feature of these maps as being office copies is that they were often drawn on waste paper, which is evidenced particularly by a number of maps on the back of a plan of the Merseyside docks. This is also apparent in the number of verso and inset maps which occur in the collection, which are often of completely different counties. It is important to note that a consequence of the use of old paper is that it makes using the paper's watermark to estimate the date of the map unreliable.

The maps represent all counties in Ireland with the exception of Kerry. The fact that the firm was based in Dublin probably explains the city and county being so well represented within the collection, accounting for more than 44% of all maps. While the East of the country is comprehensively covered there are comparatively few maps of the West and North of Ireland. The firm had a consistent output of maps from the early 1770s but the number begins to wane from the early part of the 1840s. This is in all probability due to the rise of the Ordnance Survey, which had completed a 6 inch map of Ireland in 1846. Indeed, William was not listed as a surveyor in the Dublin directories after 1855 as the ability to merely enlarge these Ordnance maps had reduced the need for independent surveyors.

The manuscripts (Mss. 859-864) which were given to the library in addition to these maps, contain reports, valuations, correspondence and tables of reference. There are almost no documents that record the firm's accounts or equipment and no ephemera relating to the company by way of trade cards or advertisements. There is, however, a cartobibliography which lists client names and locations. It not thought to be chronological or particularly comprehensive but could offer an idea of which maps may have been lost.

Historical and Stylistic Background

John Brownrigg had been trained by the well-known surveyor Peter Bernard Scalé (b.1739, d.1826), who had in turn been trained by the renowned John Rocque (b.c.1704/5, d.1762). Rocque had established the French School in Ireland and instigated a complete change in cartographic style. The style of the French School was characterised by decorative, colourful, and elaborately embellished maps. Ornamental cartouches and *trompe l'oeil* effects on the

reference panels, often drawn to resemble torn pieces of paper, were common. As a third generation practitioner of the French School, Brownrigg also created decorative maps but none which were on a par with the artistic work of Scalé. Longfield, in turn, was even less decorative. He seems to have favoured a simpler and more restrained style, using less colour and detail. Brownrigg is not the only follower of Rocque with maps in the collection; there also exist a number by Samuel Byron (fl.1745-, d.1795) and Francis Mathews (fl.1767 – 1800). Despite the presence of a number of important figures from the French School there is surprisingly little stylistic evidence of the impact of the school on the Longfield maps although this is partly a result of the majority being draft copies.

Bibliographic Sources

J. H. Andrews, "The Longfield Maps in the National Library of Ireland: An Agenda for Research", *Irish Geography*, Vol 24, (1), 1991, pages 24–34.

J. H. Andrews, "The French School of Dublin Land Surveyors", *Irish Geography*, Vol 5, (4), 1967, pages 275–292.

Sarah Bendall, "Dictionary of Land Surveyors and Local Map-makers of Great Britain and Ireland 1530-1850", (London, 1997).

John Longfield, "Six volumes of miscellaneous notes, drafts of maps, and correspondence of John Longfield relating to various surveys and valuations carried out by him in various parts of the country, and arranged in alphabetical order of counties, 1820-35." NLI Mss. 859-64.

-Karen de Lacey

Maps

Individual descriptions of maps in the Longfield Map Collection are available through our Online Catalogue (<http://catalogue.nli.ie/Collection/vtIs000282687>).
