March y° 19th 1758

Dear Cousin:

I had upertunity of reading your letter that was sent to your fatherinlaw, which gave me great satisfaction to here you were all in good health and fortuned so well as to be possessed in so good a bargain of lands. We are all in good health at present I bless God for all his mercies and yr uncle David is helthy and harty and do all join in our love and Compliments to you and your families and enquiring friends. I expected an account oftener from you, only times being troublesome in that country with wars that we were assured that you were all ded or killed. The good Bargains of your lands in that Country Doe greatly encourage me to pluck up my spirits and make Redie for the Journey, for we are now oppresed with our lands set at 8s per acre and other improvements, Cutting our land in two acre parts and Quicking and only two years time for doing it all — ye<a> we Cannot stand more. I expected a letter from you more oftener, or that Cusen W™ Fleming would come over before this time, but these things does not Discourage me to goe only we Depend on yr° for Derections in the goods fitting to take to that place. I had disappointment of 20s worth of Lining Cloth yt I sold, and had James Hoskins bond for the money. The merchant ran away, and I had great truble in getting my money, so that <it> was deleavered. Brother John Fleming is dead and brother James Lindsey is married again to one Hoskins and his son Robert has service to his uncle James Martin and desires to know if he will redeem him if he goes over there. He is a good favour and is willing to work for his passage till its paid.

Your Cusen<s> in Desert mart in is all in health. Cusen Mary <desires> to let you know all my father’s family is in helth and joins in yr° love to y°. My father is very far spent and I expect to see him buried before I leave the place. Your father and my uncle Andrew is but tender in helth. Sarah Rickets desires to be remembered in her love to her sister Nelly and other friends. Our living is dear in this place. I conclude with my love to you and all friends there. I am yours till death.

—David Lindsey

“I once took a notion that I would leave my people and depart for the New Island”

An tOileán Úr — The New Island

by an unknown poet, mid to late 1700s

Now a traditional folk song in Northern Ireland, this poem displays the reluctance of native Irish Catholics to emigrate at a time when many Scots-Irish Protestants in northern Ireland, descended from lowland Scots, were leaving by the thousands for America.

I once took a notion that I would leave my people and depart for the New Island, and so I did. As I left I prayed the High King of Heaven to preserve me through all dangers to the end of my journey.

Once there I walked twenty miles and never met a Christian — No, nor even a horse or a cow or a sheep grazing on the meadow. There was nothing but dense woods and deep glens resounding with the roar of wild beasts, and the people wore no more clothes than would amount to a thread twisted between the fingers.

Then I chanced upon a house, and the people there asked me where I came from and in what country I had been reared. We spoke in English, and I answered that I had been brought up in Ireland — in the wood of Lisreagh, beside Lough Erne.

No sooner had I spoken than an old woman rose from her cozy nook beside the fire and came over to shake my hand. “God bless you of all the people I’ve ever met — for I myself was reared in Lisbellaw. Many were the pleasant days I spent in Ireland and beside Lough Erne in the wood of Lisreagh; there’s no other place like it from Wales to the Head of Howth or from Cork to Lisbellaw.”

When I saw these people I made up my mind that I would be happier to live the rest of my life and die in Ireland, for that is where I would find kind and delightful young folk to pass the time with me by day and by night.

1 Audio presentation of folk song available from Clannad at www.youtube.com/watch?v=87x8R0BjgJk.
2 The New Island: the New World, America. As early as the 1490s the term “the New Isle” was current in England as a synonym for the New World. [Miller et al., note, p. 54]
3 Christian: a “civilized” human being (i.e., a European). [Miller et al., note, p. 54]