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Tom Dowling (1879-1964) otter-hunting in Zárate (*circa* 1910).

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**Voices from the Camps**

**Interviews by Bill Meek (1987) and Joe Murray (2004)**

By Edmundo Murray

The voice of Irish Diaspora is receiving increasing attention in Australia, North America, England, and of course in Ireland. Thanks to the production efforts of Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ), the Irish Public Service Broadcasting Organisation, the voices of the Irish in Argentina were recorded in two opportunities. Bill Meek produced 'Neath the Southern Cross' in 1987, and Joe Murray 'The Argentina Connection' in 2004. Together with 'Thirty-Nine Leagues of Land', a TV documentary directed by Jim Fahy and aired by RTÉ in 2002, these documents represent an important audio-visual source of historical and linguistic information about the Irish in Argentina.

Bill Meek recorded the interviews during his trip to Buenos Aires city and province in May 1987. The programme was aired in eight sessions, between 5 September and 14 November 1987. A summary was broadcasted in 2001 under the title 'The Forgotten Colony.'

On his turn, Joe Murray's interviews were recorded in 2003, and his show 'The Argentina Connection' was aired on the evening of 17 March 2004, hours before the visit of the Irish President Mary McAleese to South America. About that evening Joe Murray wrote: 'I have never had so much reaction to any programme I ever did over a period of thirty-nine years. People here in Ireland were not aware of this very significant emigration. Also many people were delighted to hear that not all of our emigrants were poor and hungry but some were what we might call entrepreneurial, or economic migrants.' He justified the effort of his trip with 'the great privilege of meeting so many fine people and enjoying their hospitality, and mostly for the opportunity of putting the material into a permanent archive.'

**Acknowledgements**

I am indebted to Bill Meek and Joe Murray for their efforts to record hundreds of hours of Irish-Argentine voices, and for their contributions to these pages. I am thankful to David Barnwell, Maire Ni Mhaidin Kiiamov, and Peter Ungphakorn, who provided valuable help with the transcriptions, and to Pedro Espinosa, who spent many hours working with the sound files. The original tapes and the authorisation to publish them were generously granted by Peter Feeney, Head of Public Affairs, and Adrian Moynes, Managing Director of Radio, Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ).

**Recording in Argentina**  
**A Broadcaster Looks Back**

By Bill Meek



*Bill Meek recording a group of Bolivian street musicians in Recoleta, Buenos Aires.*

Visiting South America in 1987 will always remain a highlight of my life, both professionally and otherwise. It all began when my brother-in-law John Redmond, then attached to the Irish embassy in Buenos Aires, suggested the idea that as a radio producer/presenter with RTÉ (the Irish national broadcasting station) I might consider making a documentary series on the Argentine community of Irish descent. My response was one of enthusiastic interest, but tempered by caution as it was a time when there were many cutbacks in radio budgets, and projects involving travel abroad were subject to close scrutiny at the highest administrative level. Nonetheless I went ahead with preparatory planning and duly submitted a proposal. To my delight, indeed almost amazement, the submission was approved. Thereafter on May 25 (a coincidental but nevertheless appropriate date) I found myself - microphone in hand - in the centre of Buenos Aires.

My assignment, in terms of time, was short but intensive. Often the working day began at 6am and continued well after midnight. I was privileged to meet a wide range of people and cover an extensive amount of territory. It was an odyssey of contrast. The day after conducting an interview in the Congress building, I might find myself talking to farming folk living in comfortably modest circumstances in the "camp". The next location could well be an estancia equal in dimension to half an Irish county!

I was more than fortunate in the erudition of my informants: scholars such as Fr. Federico Richards, the eminent genealogist Eduardo Coghlan, or the historian Hilda Sabato. Also icons of cultural life such as Maria Elena Walsh and Oscar Barney Finn and most significantly the many individuals who would not have been insulted to be described as "ordinary people" - the extraordinary testimony of Mrs. Clancy of San Antonio de Areco, then almost 100 years old, or the elderly gentleman who showed me his lovingly assembled scrapbook of Irish memorabilia, a beautifully presented souvenir of a country to which he had never been!

What were my impressions of the Irish Argentines? I would hesitate to indulge in generalisation, however I suspected that many fostered an ideal image of an Ireland which is no longer a reality and would have been perplexed by the actuality of the modern Ireland soon to be engulfed by the ethos of the so-called Celtic Tiger. As a broadcaster who had previously worked in the sphere of traditional music I was a little disappointed not to find some evidence of the survival of Irish grass-roots musical traditions as opposed to sentimental songs of the "drawing-room" provenance. But that was a quibble. My abiding memory is of a people endowed with a deep sense of community allied to an almost devotional dedication to generous hospitality. I feel sad that since my visit so many of those I recorded have died, and yet there is satisfaction that perhaps my series has perpetuated their memories if only in a small way.

After the eight programmes were transmitted on RTÉ under the title *Neath the Southern Cross*, I was pleased with audience reaction, both Irish and Argentine. One happy spin-off was the foundation of the Irish-Argentine Society of Dublin largely due to the energetic vision of its president, Mary B. Murphy. The association has given rise to many a convivial gathering and, importantly, was instrumental in initiating research by a founder member, the historian Dr. John De Courcy Ireland, culminating in the publication of his acclaimed biography of William Brown *The Admiral from Mayo*.



*Bill Meek 'on the job' with Fr. Fred Richards in Plaza Francia, Buenos Aires.*

**In the Name of Power**  
**Culture and Place Names in Venado Tuerto**

By Alejandra García and Gladis J. Mignacco [1]

Translated by Lilian González Moore



17 March 1918, St. Patrick's Day in Venado Tuerto  
(José Brendan Wallace collection)

*Adapted from the article in Spanish published by Revista Lote, Vol. VII, N° 72  
(Venado Tuerto, July 2003), with kind permission of the editors.*

The negotiation of identities through the generation of connoted place names seems to be a recurrent strategy of the South American governing elites to align geographic spaces with social and economic policies. Venado Tuerto, a city in the Argentine province of Santa Fe founded by Eduardo Casey in 1884, became an important settlement of Irish and other immigrants. In order to provide an understanding of the toponymic process, street names and their changes from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the 1930s are identified and studied in this article within the context of local and national social changes. *Venado Tuerto* (the name) is associated with the frontier land in the pampas, a place where the concept of Nation was to be developed, and where the sense of community was conceived step by step. Toponymy, a necessary complement for the *logoization* of cartography (cf. Benedict Anderson 1991), establishes the relationship between societies, time, and place names. The link between the geographic space and the perceived idea of frontier came from the fact that urban people integrated themselves better to the environment than the rural population. In a foundational stage, toponymy represented the values of the immigrants. The identification with an European *ethos* was key to represent their opposition between civilisation and barbarism. As a consequence, there was a cultural supremacy of the Irish settlers. At a later phase, the project of creating an Argentine identity gave preference to the sense of ownership over other values. This included the European immigration typical of the twentieth century. The toponymy of Venado Tuerto streets is a sample representation of these identification processes.

During the settlement of the area around Venado Tuerto, toponymy changed according to different historical, political, social and cultural forces of the country and the city. When we analyse those changes taking into account the contributions of cultural geography, an unexpected local history is revealed. Cultural geography help to research the city streets' toponymy through time, and provides an understanding of continuities, changes and anomalies. This research shows the place naming modalities from the foundation of Venado Tuerto until the present time.

### Streets Names in Old and New Venado Tuerto

Does the foundation of Venado Tuerto, its name, urban planning, and street naming reveal the history and the geography of the place? Were history and geography taken into account during those fundamental processes?

Venado Tuerto is a city in the south of Santa Fe province, Argentina, department of General López, population 60,201 (172,359 in the department) according to 1991 census, 366 kilometres from Buenos Aires, lat. 33° 46' S and long. 61° 48' W. *Venado Tuerto* means 'one-eyed deer.' Some Irish-related place names in the region include the following towns and railway stations: *Armstrong, Murphy, Duffy, Hughes, Ham,* and *Cavanagh*.

The name *Venado Tuerto* was used from the beginning of the nineteenth century to refer to that specific geographic area. It is originated in a Mapuche toponym that means 'one-eyed deer.' [2] In fact, the name was applied to a lagoon near the future city, which was the point of reference and orientation, and provided water to Indians and Europeans as well. As it was customary, the name was associated with the memories and events of the place, which later became real legends. Venado Tuerto's founder Eduardo Casey identified the place with the name of the lagoon instead of using his own name. In this way, he preserved the memory of the space with its geographical characteristics. He used the name *Curumalán* (also with Mapuche roots) in another foundation. [3]

Nevertheless, ten years after the foundation of Venado Tuerto, there was a plan to change its name. Leoncio de la Barrera, journalist and historian, refers to this episode in his book *The True History about the Founder and the Date of Foundation of Venado Tuerto*. [3] The neighbours wanted to use the founder's name *Eduardo Casey* instead of *Venado Tuerto*. They wrote: 'We countrymen and foreigners in the name of the Provincial Constitution (Article Seven) address Your Excellency to express the following. The denomination *Venado Tuerto* has nothing to do with the historical and geographical realities of the Province or of the Republic. Additionally the denomination does not refer to the fantasy or popular feelings. It is in some way the Indian remains of some tradition of the Indian population that inhabited the place. Our demand is to name it *The Colony and Town Eduardo Casey*, since this Argentine man was the founder of these populations. He was driven by patriotism and not by money interests. We owe Mr. Casey the transformation of these areas taken away from barbarians and from the savageness that reigned in the south of the Santa Fe province. Presently, there exists in the town of San Urbano a fortress in which the inhabitants of the place observed the devastating Indian raids.'

This petition was signed by the first inhabitants (Alejandro Estrugamou, Ramón Urteaga, Pedro Iturbide, Ramón Mariño, Higuera, Ponciano Belén y Francisco Echeverría), as well as by members of the Irish community (Turner, Maxwell, Cavanagh, Downes, and Howlin). There were a great number of Italian and Spanish immigrants who arrived almost at the same time and who supported the petition. After some time these two latter groups became majority.



Country party (circa 1915). Some of the families present at these parties were Kenny, Downes, O'Farrell, Chapman, Orr, Guerlach, and Dallegri (José Brendan Wallace collection)



The Mapuche toponym expresses the memory of the land, and as such impressed Eduardo Casey. But a decade later it did not show any reference to the geographical history of the province. Concepts like 'Indian countries' were closely related to the ideas and policies of the Argentine government. Less than twenty years had passed after the military campaign against the Indians. However, even though a petition existed and that it was followed by its subsequent committee debate, the decision to change the name was not adopted. Some of the concepts in this debate, included those by MPs Lubarry and Lucero, expressed that 'the denomination *Venado Tuerto* is ridiculous, it does not say anything, it has no historical tradition' (Lubarry). Lucero said that he was 'going to back up the resolution of the committee, [but] I think that we must preserve those names attached to a tradition. If they are to be changed, they should be replaced by historical names that relate geography with the history of the country. The name *Venado Tuerto* has a tradition. This is why Eduardo Casey did not want to change the name. The original place names in the department of General Lopez (south of Santa Fe province) have an important historical tradition. It was in those places that civilisation succeeded over barbarism. These are very simple historic references and that is why I insist it is a duty to take them into account when there is a need to give these lands a name' (Lucero).

The coincidences and differences between these two MPs are significant. As a consequence of the campaign against the Indians the frontiers disappeared, the landscape changed, and technology left behind desert and barbarism. There was no possibility of a social encounter between Europeans and Indians. But there was disagreement between geographical and historical facts. According to Lucero, the original names should be preserved without barriers between past and present, even though this could influence the official history. But his petition was not accepted due to arguments of historical character. [4]

The name of the city reflects the origin of these lands. But the names of streets, parks, and places followed a different pattern, with the exception of one street that in the last decade was known as *Himojo* in reference to a lagoon recorded in 1806. This name was used by Bartolomé Mitre (President in 1862-1868) to designate a fortress in 1864. However Casey followed a different model to project his town.

### Foreign Street Names

In 1881 Eduardo Casey started selling the lands of Venado Tuerto, being most of the rural buyers families from the British Isles. Among the buyers of urban lots ethnical diversity was higher. The census of 1887 showed an increasing urbanization. In four years, the urban population was 205 while the rural reached 1,411. The majority of these people were Argentine-born and came from the Santa Fe province. Among the foreign residents, the larger part were Irish and English. [5]



Plaza General José de San Martín  
(Municipality of Venado Tuerto, Official Gazette, 1938)

In spite of the larger numbers of Argentines in the population, street names in the original urban planning were associated with the major foreign resident segments, who also concentrated the economic and political power. We found no documents recording the official street naming or their authors. The urban plans were submitted by Casey's representative, Celestino Rosas. [6] Only five out of twenty streets in the original plan were given names of Irish origin: *Casey*, *Brown*, *Turner*, *Gaban*, and *O'Farrell*. [7] All these names belonged to the Irish community and were closely connected to Casey through business relations. Additionally, Turner and Gahan were linked with Casey by family ties.

A second group of streets received women names, such as *María*, *Inés*, or *Catalina*. Supposedly these names had religious or family grounds (Casey's wife and mother were Mary, and *Inés* was his wife's second name). The remainder of the streets had German or English origin: *Warner* in reference to the designer of the first urban plan, Rodolfo Warner; *Fair* and *Runciman* [8] for Casey's key business associates; *Klappenbach* was mentioned in a celebration at the Buenos Aires Hunting Club [9]; *Tetley* for a member of the Venado Tuerto Polo and Athletic Club [10]; *Tebbut*, probably the name of Casey's Irish partner, who was a member of the first group that visited Venado Tuerto in 1882. [11] About the other street names (*Harties*, *Huxtable*, *Krabble*, *Cooper*, *Kimball*, and *Harris*) we only know that they were of English origin. These later street names were not found among the first settlers. The colonisation process did not assign any relevance to the original toponymy or to vernacular place names.



Urban plan of 1900, including the original street names (fragment).  
(Venado Tuerto Municipal Archives)

### New Town, New Names

In 1889, six years after the foundation, the train arrived to Venado Tuerto. It was built by the South of Santa Fe and Córdoba Railway Company. At that time, the city centre was already settled.

The Land Company, subsidiary of the railway company, submitted for approval a new urban plan, which located the city centre to the south of the original place. Hence, *New Town Venado Tuerto* was created. In fact, the new plan followed a pattern used with other towns: Santa Teresa, San Urbano, Elortondo, Arias, Canals, etc., including the railway and the railway-owned lands on sale along the line. At that time, the 1890s, Casey was no longer operating in the area, and the Land Company became the new owner of the land along the railway. During this period, Italian-born residents predominated in the area and expanded to the rest of Santa Fe province.



Railway Station in 1938  
(Municipality of Venado Tuerto, Official Gazette, 1938)

The submitted map of New Town Venado Tuerto included some significant toponymic changes. The streets in the sixty-four blocks around the railway station received new names, which were very much influenced by the Italian immigration: *Italia*, *Milan*, *Genova*, and *Garibaldi* are some examples. Other street names honoured contemporary politicians both from the province and the nation. It was the case of *Galves*, *Aldao*, *Quirno*, *Sarmiento*, and *Estanislao Lopez* (though the latter did not belong to the same period as the others). Other street names had geographical connotations that appeared in the pattern map of the Land Company. There were names taken from towns and lagoons in Santa Fe and Córdoba: *Carreras*, *Funes*, *Arias*, *Olmos*, *Rueda*. [12] Nevertheless, we argue that those names were related less to the geographic space than to the cultural heritage and the political and economical space. The strength of political power was reflected in the street names, as it was the case of the Italian place names. All of those spaces

represented promising agricultural centres which would comply with the model of a new country, the *Patria Gringa*, or foreign nation.

In the first years, the Old Town (also known as *The Colony*) and the New Town remained separated, but then joined their urban plans and the old town had to modify its toponymy. From the time of the foundation and during more or less twenty-five years, the street names of Venado Tuerto embodied the cultural origin of the place, i.e., an Anglo-Irish settlement which was vigorously driven by Italian immigrants to become an important agricultural centre. However, since the original place names disappeared, toponymy revealed the origin of the city but not the memory of the land.

### **Street Names as Symbols of the National Identity**

In 1910 the street denomination changed again. The centenary of the Argentine Independence produced a nationalistic policy to unite the ethnically heterogeneous society of immigrants. The government strategy was to invigorate all factors connected with the Argentine patriotic feeling. [13] The Centenary celebrations were planned in advance and took place at national, provincial and municipal level. Accordingly, several new schools were established in different parts of the country, which were called *centennial schools*. The same happened with monuments that paid homage to the national heroes.

A new change of street names followed the same strategy. Venado Tuerto, together with other cities of the country, took part in the preparation for the commemoration. Eleven months in advance, there was a meeting at the London Hotel to create a special committee for the Centenary celebrations. [14] The Centenary Committee worked together with the Funding Committee, which was in charge of the financial administration of the town. The Funding Committee appointed members of the Centenary Committee. To illustrate the particular ideological atmosphere of the time, the resignation to the Committee Chair by one neighbour, Luis Cucchiani, was based on his foreign origins. Cucchiani recommended to appoint an Argentine citizen and, at the same time, reaffirmed his support for the celebration.

The Centenary Committee aligned the celebrations with the government interests and strategy, and therefore changed the toponymy of the city. The old names were replaced by the names of heroes, who were considered the central characters of the Independence. The street names changed abruptly, representing a successful and subtle political operation, the target of which was to shape the idea of an Argentine Nation and its people. Four days before the Centenary the street name change was formalised and submitted by the Centenary Committee Chair, Manuel Sosa, to the President of the Funding Committee, Patricio Kirk. [15]

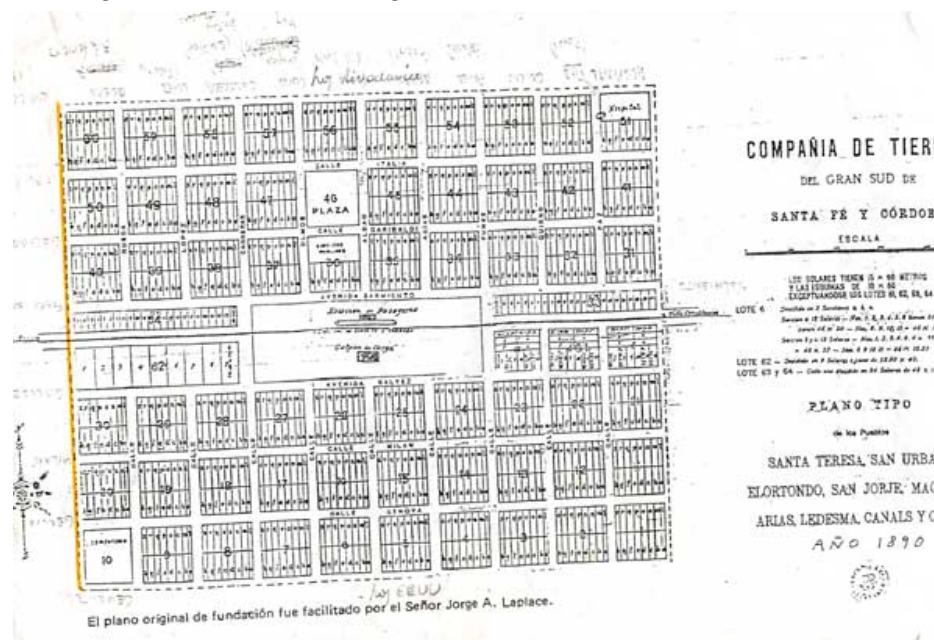
The change of street names supported the creation of a patriotic feeling towards Argentina. The transformation was performed with the participation of local political authorities. Additionally, this process of patriotic development received support from Santa Fe provincial authorities. From a total of forty streets, only six kept their name. Four plazas changed their name too. Thirty-four streets names related to national heroes, dates, and battles. The historic events taken into account by the new toponymy were the May 1810 Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and other dates connected to the development of the national state. The local leaders, with the exception of Brigadier López, were neglected and names connected to European immigration or *patria gringa* were forgotten too. Street names like Casey and Runciman, founders of Venado Tuerto, were displaced from the centre to the suburbs. Other streets received the names of neighbouring countries (Uruguay), of other countries strongly related to Argentina (Spain, England), of Argentine provinces (Buenos Aires, Tucumán), or the name of the great European conquistador, Colón.

The street naming strategy of 1910 in Venado Tuerto was an outcome of the Argentine elite's scheme to manipulate the May Revolution with the idea of imagining the concept of Argentineness.

### **And the Action Continued**

The project did not end with the Centenary, and for different reasons it continued to be significant for some years later. A new political context was added to the immigration problem. Hipólito Irigoyen's success in the 1916 presidential elections reinforced among the members of the bourgeoisie and the military a disdain for democracy. According to them, political parties were as dangerous for the nation as was immigration. Since 1930 the army began playing a key political role as guardians of patriotism and the constitution. During the administration of Agustín P. Justo the crusade for patriotism was re-enacted. At

that time a new Academy of History began to write the History of the Argentine Nation. General José de San Martín was recognised as a hero of the Argentines. [16]



Plan of New Town Venado Tuerto, offering land along the railway.  
(José Favoretto Collection)

In Venado Tuerto there is a continuity between 1910s toponyms and the city expansion in the 1930s towards North West and East directions, and close to the Motorway 8. These decisions were adopted by municipal decrees. [17] However, there is an ellipsis in that continuity, that is the period of the Radical Party administration. During President Alvear's government, the Funding Committee assigned street names in places that still lacked a name. The pattern selected was completely new, and the new names had to do both with geographical and, in particular, political aspects. [18] However, at the end of the 1930s, when Venado Tuerto's new City Hall adopted a decree to name twenty-eight streets, concepts associated with the May Revolution and the Independence Wars were used once again.

The new street names, with the exception of two (Cullen and Perú) followed within the old pattern: Liniers, Balcarce, Dorrego, French, Berutti, José María Paz, Suipacha, Montegudo, Laprida, Las Heras, Arenales, Rodríguez Peña, Caseros, Alberdi. In addition to this, a monument to General San Martín was erected in the main plaza. [19] Thus street names and monuments were part of the visual strategy used by the governing elites to stimulate the patriotic feeling.

### Rescuing Casey

The value of Eduardo Casey as founder, was rescued after its removal to Venado Tuerto's periphery. In 1937 the main street name, Avenue of the Centenary, was changed to Avenida Casey. Furthermore, a monument to celebrate his heritage was erected in a plaza at the end of Avenida Casey. [20] This resolution was taken on line with the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Venado Tuerto, and it was the work of the municipal administration in 1933, which was responsible for establishing the history of the place since its foundation.

With this exception, the choice of place names was dominated by the Argentine elites' strategy to stimulate the Argentineness of new settlers.

### Conclusion

Previous to the colonisation of Venado Tuerto, the lack of a settlement culture in this space had the effect of emphasising the border between common and proper names. Hence, the initial toponymy was not associated to the space's history or geography, but to the colonisers and their political and economic power. However, this trend was modified by the new nationalistic model of power, which was supported by the local forces when planning the street names used in the city since 1910 to the 1960s.



25 April 1917, wedding of Diego Kenny and Catalina Gaynor  
(José Brendan Wallace collection)

### Notes

[1] Alejandra García (cavanaghgarciaa@enredes.com.ar), Gladis J. Mignacco (ezquierro@powervt.com.ar), Instituto Superior del Profesorado N° 7, Departamento de Geografía.

[2] Landaburu, Roberto, *Irlandeses: Eduardo Casey, Vida y Obra* (Venado Tuerto, Santa Fe: Fondo Editorial Mutual Venado Tuerto, 1995).

[3] Barrera, Leoncio de la, *La verdad histórica sobre el fundador y la fecha de fundación de Venado Tuerto* (second edition, 1933).

[4] Leoncio de la Barrera, *op. cit.*

[5] Some of the 1,338 Argentines were from Santa Fe (734 ), Córdoba (118 ), Santiago del Estero (50), San Juan (39), and Buenos Aires (36). Among the foreign residents, there were English and Irish (45), Spanish (45), Italians (27), French (19), Turks (12), Germans (8), Chileans (5), and others. In R. Landaburu, *Gringos* (Venado Tuerto: Fondo Editor Mutual, 1991).

[6] Leoncio de la Barrera, *op cit.*

[7] The outstanding work of Eduardo Coghlan, *Los irlandeses en la Argentina: su actuación y descendencia* (Buenos Aires, 1987), which records the Irish from their arrival in Argentina to the present time, allowed us to find the Irish origin of some street names.

[8] R. Landaburu, *Los irlandeses, op cit.*

[9] R. Landaburu, *Los irlandeses, op cit.* (discourse given by Klappenbach at the Club de Caza de Buenos Aires)

[10] Eduardo E. Huhn, *Reseña de Venado Tuerto, 1883-1933* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Amorrortu, 1934). Horse race of 18 April 1892.

[11] Leoncio de la Barrera, *op cit.*

[12] *Diccionario biográfico y geográfico argentino* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo); Olmos is a lagoon in the Córdoba province that flows into Río Cuarto.

[13] *La Argentina de 1910, sensibilidad, alegorías, argumento en torno a un centenario* in: 'Revista Universitaria Semestral' N° 4 Año III First Semester 1993

[14] 22 June 1909. Communications of the Venado Tuerto Funding Committee, November 1908 through December 1910 (Venado Tuerto Municipal Archive).

[15] Communications of the Venado Tuerto Funding Committee, *op. cit.*

[16] The Sanmartinian Institute of Buenos Aires was founded, and 17 August was selected as an yearly national celebration.

[17] Digest of the Municipality of Venado Tuerto, 1 January 1940. Decree N° 46 *Denomination and Street Numbering of the City*.

[18] *Pueblo Nuevo* was the name given to the modification of the urban plan performed in 1890, i.e., the lands that ran parallel to the railway. R. Landaburu, *Los Irlandeses*, *op cit.*

[19] Decree N° 10 in Book N° 1, Municipality of Venado Tuerto.

[20] Digest of the Municipality of Venado Tuerto, *op. cit.*

**John Thomond O'Brien (1786-1861), army officer and entrepreneur**

By Edmundo Murray



**John Thomond O'Brien (1786-1861)**  
*(The Southern Cross, Número del Centenario)*

**O'Brien, John Thomond** (1786-1861), army officer and entrepreneur, was born in 1786 in Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow, son of Martin O'Brien and Honoria O'Connor.

John T. O'Brien arrived in Buenos Aires in 1812 to open a merchant house. He enrolled in the army and fought in Uruguay with General Soler, being promoted to lieutenant. In 1816 O'Brien joined José de San Martín's mounted grenadiers regiment in the Andes army. After the battle of Chacabuco John T. O'Brien was promoted to captain and appointed aide-de-camp to general San Martín. O'Brien fought in the battles of Cancha Rayada and Maipú, and in the campaign of Peru. In 1821 he was promoted to colonel and awarded the "Orden del Sol" and Pizarro's golden canopy, which have been borne by the viceroys of Peru in processions.

In Peru John T. O'Brien turned his attention to the mining business. He received from the Peruvian government a grant for the silver mine of Salcedo, near Puno. O'Brien and his associate, Mr. Page, who represented Rundell & Bridge London jewellers, embarked in an effort to provide food and supplies to their miners at Lake Chiquito at 5,500 meters above sea level, from the port of Arica, located 380 kilometres away in the Pacific coast. They purchased a boat in Arica, stripped it of anchor and rigging and after two years of hard labour managed to launch her on the lake. This was the first attempt to establish regular communications between the valleys in Bolivia and the Pacific coast. Unfortunately for O'Brien and Page, a storm destroyed the vessel and with it the hopes of carrying on the mining works. Other remarkable efforts of O'Brien included the transportation of a steam engine across the Andes, digging through Laycayota mountain a canal 600 meters long traversed by nine locks, and laying a railroad for the conveyance of ore.

After the failure of his mining undertaking in Peru, John Thomond O'Brien returned to Buenos Aires. In the mid-1820s a group within the Irish elite of Buenos Aires, including doctors Michael O'Gorman and John Oughagan, and the Irish chaplain Fr. Moran, attracted the interest of the local government to implement an immigration scheme from Ireland to Buenos Aires. They communicated with the archbishop of Dublin and in 1826 commissioned O'Brien to travel to Europe and recruit "moral and industrious" immigrants. He spent two years in Ireland trying to engage emigrants without success. However, he met John Mooney of Streamstown, Co. Westmeath, who went to Argentina in 1828 when O'Brien was returning. This was to be the start of the Irish emigration to Argentina from the Westmeath-

Longford-Offaly area. In addition to John Mooney, his sister, Mary Bookey (née Mooney) and her husband, Patrick Bookey, went with O'Brien.

Back in South America in 1835, O'Brien was promoted to general in Peru. In Buenos Aires, he fell in disgrace of the regime led by Juan Manuel de Rosas and was imprisoned before being released through a combination of pleading by Rosas's daughter and British diplomatic pressure.

In 1845 John T. O'Brien published in London the pamphlet *Correspondence with the British Government relative to the war between Buenos Ayres and Montevideo and the free navigation of the River Plate, with an Appendix detailing some of the acts committed by Rosas, Governor of Buenos Ayres* (London: Reynell & Weight, 1845). In 1847 he was in Montevideo and the following year was appointed special envoy of the Uruguayan Republic to the United Kingdom.

John Thomond O'Brien returned to Ireland and died on 1 June 1861 in Lisbon, on his way back to South America. His remains were repatriated to Argentina in 1938 and received an official funeral. A town in Bragado was named after him.

Edmundo Murray

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