

SOME NOTES ON SPANISH ARCHIVES

BY

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PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA

Selma Barkham has to date concentrated her work in the archives of the Consulado (merchant guild) of Burgos for her investigations of Spanish archives on behalf of the Public Archives of Canada. These archives house notarial registers recording maritime insurance policies, and in the notarial archives of Guipuzcoa province, at Oñate (14,065). The attached notes from her report of February 1974 indicate some of the documents to be found in each. The insurance policies are to be found at Burgos (surprisingly far inland) because during the 16th century financial arrangements were negotiated at the fairs of Medina del Campo and loans were dated for payment from the May and October fairs. Underwriters for maritime insurance were to be found here and not in the small coastal ports from which the ships went out to Newfoundland waters.

The Archivo Histórico de los Protocolos de Guipuzcoa was formally established in 1942 and is housed in the former Universidad de Sancti Spiritus at Oñate. The protocolos (notarial registers) number approximately 14,000 and date from the early 16th to the mid-19th century. Many show evidence of neglect in housing them for several centuries; many others have been lost.

(For descriptions, see Los Protocolos Guipuzcoanos by Fausto Arocena [San Sebastian, 1948] and Historia del Archivo General de Guipuzcoa by José Berruezo [San Sebastian, 1953].

The records relating to fishing ventures are very rarely to be found in the Archivo general de Indias at Seville (40,000) as they were not controlled by the Council of the Indies, the regulating body for Spanish colonial possessions. Examination (if budget allows) will be extended to other notarial archives: Archivo histórico de Alava at Vitoria (12,800); the Archivo y Biblioteca de la Diputación provincial at San Sebastian;

the Archivo histórico provincial at Santander; the Archivo del Consulado de Bilbao and Diputacion de Vizcaya at Bilbao; the Archivo general de Guipuzcoa and the Archivo del Corregimiento de Guipuzcoa (judicial archives) at Tolosa; the Archivo des Real Chancilleria at Valladolid (judicial - appeal cases); Archivo de los Protocolos de Burgos (4,000); and similar institutions. [The figures appended indicate the number of registers held by the archives, as a rough indication of size.]

Types of notarial documents found to be relevant to TERRANOVA - in order of significance.

- 1 Autos and resulting Informaçion. (legal matters).
- 2 Cartas de afletamiento (charter contracts).
- 3 Contratos - setting up companies, hiring crews, buying provisions, building ships, etc.
- 4 Obligaciones - loan agreements, both money and goods.
- 5 Cartas de poder - power of attorney.
- 6 Insurance policies and other forms of contracts related to insurance.
- 7 Cartas de Pago and Receipts.
- 8 Cartas de venta (sales contracts).
- 9 Wills and testaments.
- 10 Proceedings of Cofradias (fraternities of fishermen) and municipal or parochial meetings- very rarely relevant.

(Types 1-3 are much rarer than 4-6).

The most frequently encountered other types of documents which never appear to have any direct relevance to Canada are:

- a contracts to do with land
- b contracts to do with the Church
- c marriage contracts
- d appointment of guardians for minors - but these may be indirectly relevant when they mention a father who died on a Terranova voyage.