



The average age of marriage increased by some ten years and family size was consequently reduced. Houses were built on the holdings rather than in village communities as had been the case in pre-famine days. Emigration to the U.S.A. continued to be the destiny of 70% of young people.

The departure of an emigrant was treated in his native village similarly to his or her death. The night before the emigrant set out for the port an 'American Wake' was held. In marked contrast to those attendant upon the death of an aged person, American Wakes were sad affairs as parents said farewell to their child knowing they would never meet again. Their only communication would be an occasional letter. It was customary for the American Wake to continue until morning. Then those present would accompany the emigrant on the first leg of the journey.

Emigrants sent home what money and clothes they could afford to their families. The money was used in a variety of ways. The priority was to make the first installment on the renting of extra land. Subsequent installments could be provided for from the extra production of the increased holding. Some of the money was saved to pay doweries to marry off daughters as they were matched off and to buy passages for emigrating children. Household furniture including mattresses, delph and chairs began to grace even the poorer tenant farmer's home for the first time. Clothes from America meant that for the first time the peasantry could have a regular change of clothing.

The post-famine emigrants were usually in their late teens or early twenties. As a result of post famine emigration the population balance changed to the point where the typical farming family in the 1860s and 1870s consisted of grandparents in their seventies, a married son and his wife, both in their fifties, and their children aged from seven to seventeen.

To the tenant farmer in the years prior to the Great Famine, money was simply a commodity received in the market place for corn and handed over on the appointed day to the landlords agent to secure continued tenure of the land. In post famine Mayo the tenant farmer had the opportunity to invest a little cash in land and breeding stock which in turn yielded a return greater than what was required for subsistence. In this way a little wealth be gradually created. Lord Dufferin in "Irish Emigration and Tenure of Land in Ireland" estimated the amount of money sent home from America by Irish emigrants between 1848 and 1864 in excess of thirteen million Pounds. Thus materialism and a primitive form of capitalism began to replace the post-feudal subsistence system of the pre-famine era.

It is worth observing at this juncture that even if there had not been a failure of the potato crop the rapidly increasing population could not be