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For a .csv containing tabular data for all stories, see the larger collection at

<https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.ht259b362>.

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Dublin Core

Title

Irish and Welsh Colonies in Argentina

Subject

Irish and Welsh emigration

Argentina

19th century

Creator

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Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/ZU4T-UM2M>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Coverage

-36.079729276470545, -64.0789580347166

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

Part Three of a three part series on Irish emigration to Argentina in the 1840s. Part One is entitled 'From Kilrane to Argentina' and Part Two is 'John James Murphy in Argentina'.

Story

When exploring the shared cultural history of Irish Sea Port towns, it is expected that there will be movement of people in both directions. However less expected is emigrants leaving from both Ireland and Wales, to head to the same Liverpool port and onward to Argentina the 19th century.

The Welsh who moved to Patagonia seemed to do so primarily as a means of preserving their own culture and traditions. They were non-conformist, Welsh speakers and felt that their rights had been reduced by the British Crown. In the words of preacher Abraham Matthews who was part of the original group,

“in an empty country, without being under a state government... where the Welsh could settle and rule themselves and ensure the continuation of their national habits... and establish the kernel of a Welsh Government... [with] a Welsh population, Welsh schools and complete enough possession of the country so that they would not be swallowed up by other nations round about.”

This group went to Argentina very much as a group with shared interests and a shared goal. That the country was not at all empty didn't seem to be a consideration at all.

The desire on the part of the Irish emigrants was more the exercise of economic opportunity denied them by the same crown than any sense of cultural preservation.

“You may say that I have enough to live where I like by selling it off and come home, but first just consider that your positions are at home and how your holdings are a mere source of slavery. Secondly, if you could only consider the real state of both countries, you would naturally say what could be the object of making a choice of that country wherein I should be only a looker on at your toiling ill-fed and ill-paid industry... people come to see the great preference this country is entitled to.”

John James Murphy in a letter to his brother Michael back in Kilrane, 1864.

While it is true that over many years requests were sent for good people to be sent from home as workers (their passage costing them 15 months labour). There is no sense of them working together towards shared goals in the way that the Welsh were establishing their community. Though the Irish community did tend to group together, socialising, going to mass, and maintaining links to one another it is far less explicit in comparison.

There is an argument that the Welsh and Irish were not engaged in settler colonisation, for example the Welsh Non-conformists were explicitly pacifist, and the Irish emigrants at the very least attempted to isolate themselves from any violent upheaval going on at the time, there was no explicit programme of extermination as in the case of some tribes in North America and other colonised places. There is evidence that in fact the Welsh would not have survived without the help of the Tehuelches people. Who showed them what to eat, how to hunt and where there was water in what was harsh and unfamiliar terrain. Even so there is no

question that the takeover of ‘empty’ lands directly impacted the traditions and culture of the indigenous peoples, and that there were points of conflict. It is interesting that as the Welsh sought to preserve their culture and Irish people sought land ownership and economic benefit denied them at home, they did not consider that they could be repeating the very injustices they sought to escape.

We have two other stories about the Kilrane Boys and emigration to Argentina, [one here](#) and [another here](#).

Factoid

Related Resources

The History of Patagonia Ben Johnson, Historic UK <https://perma.cc/XYF8-698F>

Miki Garcia, *Ireland's Invasion of the World: the Irish Diaspora in a Nutshell* (The History Press Ireland, 2015)

Edmundo Murray, *Becoming Irlandés, Private Narratives of the Irish Emigration to Argentina (1844-1912)*, Revised Edition in English 2005 L.O.L.A (Literature of Latin America), archived at <https://perma.cc/79Z8-VGJW>

Descendants of Original Welsh Settlers Mark 156 Years in Patagonia, archived at <https://perma.cc/9XR7-5QVM>

Gerry Breen Ed, *Rosslare Historical Society – Rosslare in History Vol. 2*, ISBN:13-978-0-9549955-5-3 2007

González de Oleaga, Marisa, and Ernesto Bohoslavsky, ‘Ethnic Mirrors. Self-Representations in the Welsh and Mennonite Museums in Argentina and Paraguay’, *Anais Do Museu Paulista: História e Cultura Material*, 19 (2011), 159–77, <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-47142011000200007>

Official Website