

WELSH-AMERICANS ARE COMING 'HOME'

THOUSANDS of Welsh-Americans are excited. They are going "home" to Wales. Thinking of trans-Atlantic flights that will take them to London for rail and road transportation to Swansea, the magnetic appeal of the homeland is being felt over widespread areas of North America.

Carmarthen looms prominently in their travel itinerary.

Many will be returning to familiar scenes. They were born in Wales. Others of near and distant affiliations will be visiting the land of their ancestors for the first time. Almost all are members of the National Gymanfa Ganu Association of the United States and Canada. All are proud of their Welsh heritage.

The main reason for the mass exodus in late July will be the 43rd National Gymanfa Ganu Festival of North America over a three-day period at Swansea beginning of August. This will be the second time for the American festival to be held in Wales—the first time being during the investiture at Cardiff.

OVERFLOW ACCOMMODATION

Co-ordinating arrangements in Wales are the officers of the Wales Tourist Board.

Reports received here indicate that Swansea hotels are reserved to capacity, with overflow accommodation reserved in neighbouring guest houses and farm homes. The appeal of the Swansea festival is understandably exciting for the large numbers from the Swansea Valley who live both in the United States and Canada.

Mr. Jack Meadows, executive secretary of the gymanfa association, contacted at his Youngstown, Ohio, headquarters, stated that the response for travel to Wales exceeded all expectations.

"This has to be the largest group travel to Wales from the United States at any time," he said.

Large passenger jets are scheduled to take off from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Milwaukee, Chicago, Cleveland, Boston and New York. Mr. Meadows added that travel plans are proceeding smoothly, and that the Welsh-Americans will be joined in London by Welsh-Canadian flights from Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal.

Mr. Owen C. Roberts, of Montreal, national president, responding to some criticism for taking the festival out of North America, said: "Quite a number of our members are elderly. It will be a wonderful opportunity for them to be in Wales — possibly for the last time — at reasonable travel rates. Besides, we will have another four-day festival in Cleveland in October."

Mr. Lewis Edwards, Niagara Falls (formerly of Clynderwen), secretary of the Ontario Welsh Festival Association, predicts that the second visit of the North American Festival to Wales will initiate fresh and vital communications between Wales and North America.

MOVE TO CARMARTHEN

Following the three-day celebrations at Swansea, the visitors will move on to Carmarthen for the

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National Eisteddfod. They will be welcomed by T. Elwyn Griffiths, general secretary of Undeb y Cymry ar Wasgar (Association of Welsh People Living Outside Wales).

Mr. Griffiths, who is the county librarian for Caernarvonshire, arranges a reception for the "exiles" at the eisteddfod each year.

It is possible that a civic welcome will be arranged by the Mayor of Carmarthen. For the Detroit contingent, the occasion will offer opportunity to meet again with the Rev. Emrys and Mrs. Ray Jones and their son Hywel. They were popular members of the Detroit Welsh community and associated societies when Mr. Jones ministered to needs of the members of the Welsh Church here in the mid-sixties. He is still remembered for his reasoned approach to the difficult functioning of the church during the city's racial turbulence in 1967.

The anticipated joy of being in Wales will be matched only by the joy of singing. They will be singing in the planes, they will sing well at Swansea and will sing anywhere at any given opportunity. The singing traditions of Wales have been well perpetuated all over North America.

Mr. Lyn Harry, musical director of the Swansea Orpheus Choir, conducting the Niagara Falls Gymanfa Ganu in May, complimented both the U.S. and Canadian Cymry for keeping so vibrantly alive the musical traditions of the homeland.

MASS PILGRIMAGE

From Carmarthen the travellers will join a mass pilgrimage to St. Davids. Paying homage to the patron saint will be a sincere gesture of reverence, as all belong to American Welsh societies bearing the name of the Cymric saint.

This will complete the official schedule, after which large groups and smaller parties will tour the scenic offerings of the country. Others will enjoy the company of relatives and friends, and all will experience the Welsh welcome which, to the general way of thinking, is warmer, friendlier and more outgoing than anywhere else on earth.

For the time being, thinking of going "home" is a predominant expectation. The Land of Our Fathers is just short weeks away, the arrival will herald the fulfilment of a wonderful dream come true for the singing visitors.