

Migrant Culture Maintenance: The Welsh in Mahaska County, Iowa, 1870–1920

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THE VOLUME *Past and present of Mahaska County* (1906) contains the biographies of many of the county's prominent citizens, including William G. Jones. Jones' father, John G. Jones, had been born in Wales in 1829, had arrived in the United States in 1849, and was, according to the biographer, "a poor boy who eagerly embraced every opportunity to earn an honest living." Following time spent in Pennsylvania and California, he moved to Garfield Township in Mahaska County. With the money he had made in the gold mines of the West, he bought a tract of land on which he worked for the next forty years. Jones also established himself as a businessman and became president of the Farmers and Traders Bank in Oskaloosa. His efforts made him "a prominent factor in commercial and financial circles" and he also became a leader in the local Republican Party. Fraternally, he was connected with the Masons and the Oddfellows, and he remained active in the town's Welsh Congregational church, an institution that preached in Welsh. John G. Jones died in 1897 a wealthy and much respected man.¹

William G. Jones was born in his parents' log cabin in Mahaska County in 1862 and reared on the farm. He graduated from Oskaloosa College, decided on a career in law, attended Iowa

1. Manoah Hedge, *Past and present of Mahaska County, Iowa* [. . .] (Chicago, 1906), 466–68.

State College, and after graduating, he entered his profession in 1885. In addition to a successful legal career, Jones entered politics and was elected as a Republican state senator in 1903. He is recorded as a member of the Knights of Pythias and the Order of Foresters and participated “earnestly in any effort to propagate a spirit of patriotism and of loyalty to American institutions.”²

The essence of this sketch is found in many other biographies, obituaries, and newspaper reports of Welsh immigrants in the United States, which focus solely on positive attributes and invariably allude to the “suitability” of Welsh people as American citizens. For their part, Welsh leaders in the United States, while intentionally emphasizing the Welsh language and culture of their communities, were equally keen to stress that their fellow countrymen and women were perfect candidates for American citizenship.³ This article describes the distinct cultural nature of the Welsh ethnolinguistic community as it existed in Mahaska County, how it changed, and the forces that enabled Welsh immigrants and their children to so readily become Americans.

Until relatively recently, it has been impossible to establish the number of Welsh-born people living in the United States with any degree of certainty. Although the United States Census listed each individual’s place of birth beginning in 1850, and beginning in 1880, it also included the place of birth of each person’s parents, many individuals were recorded as being born in different countries on different census reports. There are other anomalies with, for example, confusion caused by the individuals recorded as “born at sea” and others not accorded a place of birth at all. Whatever the exact figures, Welsh emigrants were relatively few in number due not only to the small size of the Welsh population but also to the rate of emigration from Wales, which was significantly lower than that in either England, Scotland or Ireland, the

2. W.G. Jones is listed on the 1910 Census as an attorney. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1910 Census* (Washington, DC, 1913), Os-kaloosa, Ward 4, Mahaska, Iowa, roll T624_412, 10A.

3. W.D. Jones has addressed this phenomenon in *Wales in America: Scranton and the Welsh 1860–1920* (Cardiff, UK, 1993). See also Robert Llewellyn Tyler, *The Welsh in an Australian Gold Town: Ballarat, Victoria, 1850–1900* (Cardiff, UK, 2010).

other constituent nations of the United Kingdom.⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century, there were significant concentrations of migrants from Wales in the mining, quarrying and metallurgical districts of Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania; however, in most areas, the Welsh neither numbered in the thousands nor did they constitute a major percentage of the population as a whole.⁵ Nevertheless, in many districts, usually those associated with specific industries in which the Welsh were favored due to their expertise, they were found in sufficient numbers to yield valuable insights regarding the nature of their communities and how they evolved. In Iowa, while the Welsh established communities in Howard, Iowa, Lucas, Monroe, Polk and Wapello Counties, during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, only in Mahaska County did Welsh people congregate in sufficient numbers to form a small but distinct and highly visible ethnolinguistic community that endured for decades.⁶

Being born in a specific country, though, did not necessarily mean an individual was a part of that country's national community, and in some communities in the United States, a significant percentage of the Welsh-born population had either one or both parents born elsewhere, primarily Ireland and England. This was not the case in Mahaska County, where, in 1900, 349 (92.6%) of the 377 Welsh-born people had both parents born in Wales.

4. The reasons for this phenomenon are still very much open to debate. For analyses of the emigration decision, see Brinley Thomas, *Migration and Economic Growth: A Study of Great Britain and the Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, UK, 1973). More specifically, see William E. Van Vugt, "Welsh Emigration to the USA during the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Welsh History Review* 15 (1991), 545–61, and W. Ross Johnston, "The Welsh Diaspora: Emigrating Around the World in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Llafur* 6 (1993), 50–74.

5. For a general survey of Welsh immigration to the nineteenth-century United States, see Edward George Hartmann, *Americans from Wales* (Boston, 1967), 61–100. For a contemporary account of Welsh settlements in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century, see R.D. Thomas, *Hanes Cymry America* (Utica, NY, 1872). An excellent English translation of this fascinating work is *Hanes Cymry America* (1872). R.D. Thomas, Martha A. Davies and Phillips G. Davies, *A History of the Welsh in America* (Wymore, NE, 2008).

6. Cherilyn Ann Walley, "The Welsh in Iowa" (PhD diss, Iowa State University, 2003), 102–03. For an early history of the county, see *The History of Mahaska County, Iowa* [. . .] (Des Moines, 1878), and Hedge, *Past and present of Mahaska County*. See also Cherilyn Ann Walley, *The Welsh in Iowa* (Cardiff, UK, 2009).

	1870	1880	1885	1890	1900	1905	1910	1920
Welsh-born	217	316	406	487	377	236	193	106
Welsh stock*	NA	243	NA	NA	346	NA	220	138
Total	NA	535	NA	NA	723	NA	413	244

Table I. *The Welsh in Mahaska County, Iowa, 1870–1920. *Born in the United States with both parents born in Wales.*

Moreover, the numbers of Welsh immigrants are vastly under recorded, with some historians suggesting the Welsh presence to have been double the official figures.⁷ It is clear, therefore, that the Welsh maintained a long-term, numerically significant presence in the county (Table I). In 1872, the Reverend R.D. Thomas, in a detailed account of his travels throughout the United States visiting Welsh communities, wrote that the single Mahaska town of Beacon was home to forty-three Welsh families, a total of 215 Welsh people.⁸ In 1876, the *Oskaloosa Weekly Herald* reported that Beacon had a population of around 1,100 souls “composed mostly of miners and their families of Welsh and Swedish descent.”⁹ Although they maintained a long-term presence, a perusal of the census returns does not indicate that Welsh migrants sought to live together, with evidence of ethnic clustering at the micro level only. The Beacon hotel run by Welsh couple William and Mary Philips is a fitting example of this micro clustering. In 1870, it was home to four young Welsh coal miners and sixteen-year-old Annie Edwards who worked as the hotel cook.¹⁰

Despite this diaspora and although the Welsh never numbered many more than 1,000 individuals, the Welsh formed a culturally active community and became very much part of Mahaska

7. Jones, *Wales in America*, xviii.

8. Thomas, *Hanes Cymry America*, 75.

9. *Oskaloosa Weekly Herald*, 1/6/1876.

10. U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *1870 Census* (Washington, DC, 1872), Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, roll M593_408, 313AB.

County's public face.¹¹ Although most Welsh people in the county were involved in the mining industry, Welsh and Welsh-speaking tradesmen, shopkeepers, and those in service industries were also present at the time. In 1880, the skills of a blacksmith could have been found at the shop of Joseph Jones whereas David Evans, John Jones, and Moses Thomas worked as carpenters.¹² John W. Bowen worked as a post office clerk, and groceries and other supplies were available from the stores of John Thomas and Morgan Jones.¹³ Welshman David Thomas worked as a painter, Samuel Salisbury was a shoemaker, and stonemasons Watkin Price and Shedrick Morgan could have attended to construction requirements.¹⁴

In 1900, the diversifying nature of the county's economy was clearly reflected in the trades practiced by Welsh immigrants. The services of a painter, plumber, carpenter and stone mason could be found in the personages of Henry Jones, Pierce Roberts, Ently Jones, and Philip R. Davis, respectively.¹⁵ The ministrations of a physician could have involved Dr. John E. Morgan, a requirement brought on, perhaps, by an overindulgence in the wares of confectionary merchant Richard J. Lewis.¹⁶ Those in need of spiritual sustenance could have found solace of a religious nature in the church of R.W. Hughes and those in need of relaxation following a day's work could well have found solace of a more

11. The Welsh share very few family names. Family names in Wales were derived from the patronymic Ap (son of), the equivalent of the Gaelic Mac. Thus, most Welsh surnames end with the genitive S or begin with the residual P or B, both indicating son of, examples being Pritchard/Richards, Probert/Roberts, Pugh/Hughes, Price/Rees, Bevan/Evans, Williams, Thomas, Davies and the ubiquitous Jones. For a comprehensive clarification of the Welsh surname, see T. J. Morgan and P. Morgan, *Welsh Surnames* (Cardiff, UK, 1985).

12. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *1880 Census* (Washington, DC, 1882), Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 353, 344A, 345D; *1880 Census*, Madison, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 353, 270B; *1880 Census*, Beacon, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 369B.

13. *1880 Census*, Beacon, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 369B, 368D.

14. *1880 Census*, Beacon, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 370C, 372C, 369A; *1880 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 353, 355B.

15. Department of the Interior, Census Office, *1900 Census* (Washington, DC, 1901), Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 15, 5; *1900 Census*, Harrison, Mahaska, Iowa, 8; *1900 Census*, Prairie, Mahaska, Iowa, 3.

16. *1900 Census*, Cedar, Mahaska, Iowa, 2; *1900 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, 6.

corporeal nature at the premises of saloon proprietor John Price.¹⁷ Welsh-born women overwhelmingly worked in the home, with only a handful of unmarried or widowed women working outside the home, such as dressmaker Dianna Jones and saleslady Margaret E. Silverhorn.¹⁸

The Welsh in Mahaska County were in no way isolated from each other. They frequently joined in cultural activities that attracted Welsh people from across the county, the state, and beyond. The pages of *Y Drych*, the Welsh-American newspaper that served the community in North America from 1851, contained plentiful evidence of friendships and associations that had been formed not only in the United States but also in Wales itself.¹⁹ A fine example is provided by the account of Perenin (Pilgrim) a Welsh resident living in Cleveland, who described visiting the towns of Excelsior, Muchakinock, Given, Beacon, and Oskaloosa in Mahaska County, during which he had the pleasure of meeting many friends of long-standing acquaintance (*y plaser o gydnabyddu a llawer o gyfeillion*).²⁰

IF THE WELSH had an enduring presence in the county, what made them in any way different from other immigrant groups, especially those from the United Kingdom? In what way did they constitute a distinct community? Besides religiosity and unique cultural practices, the vast majority of Welsh immigrants spoke a different language from the host community and their fellow migrants from the United Kingdom. General surveys of immigration to the United States frequently overlook this and even historians

17. *1900 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 15; *1900 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, 22.

18. *1900 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, 9, roll T624_412, 1B.

19. For a history of *Y Drych*, see Aled Jones and William D. Jones, *Welsh Reflections: Y Drych and America 1851–2001* (Ceredigion, UK, 2001) and Hartmann, *Americans from Wales*, 128–29.

20. *Y Drych*, 8/27/1885. This phenomenon was also apparent in other immigrant communities in Iowa. See, for example, Robert Schoone-Jongen, "Dateline Orange City, Iowa: *De Volksvriend* and the Creation of Dutch American Community in the Midwest, 1874–1951," *Annals of Iowa* 69 (2010), 322–23.

such as Jon Gjerde and Leonard Dinnerstein incorrectly described the Welsh as “English-speaking.”²¹

In 1891, the first official census in Wales to include a question about language revealed that 54.4% of those living in Wales, which included tens of thousands of English and Irish people, spoke Welsh, with some 56% of Welsh speakers being unable to speak English.²² This figure greatly exceeded the proportions of those speaking Irish in Ireland and Gaelic in Scotland.²³ The extent to which the language was spoken in Wales before 1891 has received significant attention with Thomas Darlington asserting that approximately 80% of those living in Wales spoke Welsh in 1801 and George Ravenstein estimating 71.2% of the population spoke Welsh by the early 1870s.²⁴ Besides its proportional strength, the language also enjoyed a status far higher than the other Celtic tongues. By the mid-nineteenth century, thousands of books, journals, and newspapers were being published in Welsh, it had been established as the language of literacy and debate, and it fulfilled all the requirements of modern living for both urban and rural people.²⁵

Qualitative and quantitative sources demonstrate Welsh’s strength among the migrants who arrived in the United States

21. Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830–1917* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), 237; Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David M. Reimers, *Natives and Strangers: A History of Ethnic Americans* (New York, 2003), 111.

22. *1891 Census of England and Wales*, vol. IV (London, 1893), 81–82.

23. Irish speakers in Ireland constituted 19.2% of the population and 6.3% of Scots spoke Gaelic. Ian Mate, “Changes in the Celtic-language-speaking Populations of Ireland, The Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales from 1891 to 1991,” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 18 (1997), 321–22.

24. Thomas Darlington, “Language and Literature of Wales,” in *The Welsh People: Chapters on Their Origins, History, Laws, Language, Literature, and Characteristics*, eds. J. Rhys and D.B. Jones (London, 1900), 548–49; E.G. Ravenstein, “On the Celtic languages in the British Isles, a statistical survey,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 42 (1879), 579–636.

25. For an overall statistical survey of the language in nineteenth-century Wales, see Dot Jones, *Statistical Evidence Relating to the Welsh Language, 1801–1911* (Cardiff, UK, 1988). For an excellent study of all issues relating to the Welsh language in nineteenth-century Wales, see Geraint H. Jenkins, ed., *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains, 1801–1911* (Cardiff, UK, 2000).

during the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁶ In 1920, for the first time, the United States Census recorded the “mother tongue” of each foreign-born resident along with the mother tongue of each foreign-born individual’s parents. Although by 1920 the Welsh presence in Mahaska County had long since passed its peak, the linguistic background of those remaining clearly documents the language’s strength. Of the ninety-seven Welsh-born individuals with two Welsh parents recorded in the census of 1920 who listed either English or Welsh as their “mother tongue,” eighty-eight (90.7%) listed Welsh as their first language. This figure is much higher than the 37% recorded as Welsh-speaking in Wales in the United Kingdom’s census of 1921. This disparity was likely due primarily to the fact that most Welsh immigrants had arrived in the county decades earlier before Wales had experienced the full force of linguistic change.²⁷

There is, unsurprisingly, evidence of Welsh monolingualism in Mahaska County, as was the case in other areas of the United States in which the Welsh settled in any numbers.²⁸ The census of 1910 recorded, among several others, forty-five-year-old, widowed seamstress Sarah Williams and eighty-four-year-old widow Mary Hopkins as being monoglot Welsh.²⁹ There were also married couples who spoke no English. Seventy-five-year-old coal miner John Hopkins and his seventy-three-year-old wife Martha were also recorded as being unable to speak English,

26. W. D. Jones and Robert Owen Jones discuss language retention in “Welsh communities in Pennsylvania, USA and Patagonia, Argentina,” in *Language and Community in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Geraint Jenkins (Cardiff, UK, 1998). W.D. Jones, “The Welsh Language and Welsh Identity in a Pennsylvanian Community,” 281–86; Robert Owen Jones, “The Welsh Language in Patagonia,” 287–316. Robert Llewellyn Tyler considers the position of the language in an Australian community in “The Welsh Language in a Nineteenth Century Australian Gold Town,” *Welsh History Review* 24 (June 2008), 52–76.

27. *1921 Census of England and Wales* (London, 1923), 184.

28. Monolingualism appears to have been far more evident elsewhere. See, for example, Tyler, “Occupational Mobility and Social Status: The Welsh Experience in Sharon, Pennsylvania, 1880–1930,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 83 (Winter 2016), 9.

29. *1910 Census*, Oskaloosa, Ward 5, Mahaska, Iowa, roll T624_412, 7B; *1910 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, roll T624_412, 13A.

although they had been in the United States for forty-one years.³⁰ More surprisingly, the census reported that fifty-six-year-old farmer Thomas D. Jenkins and his fifty-four-year-old, Iowa-born, Welsh-American wife Mary were unable to speak English. Although it is difficult to believe that a fifty-four-year-old had spent her entire life in the United States without acquiring any English, clearly some individuals did not speak English or had only a very rudimentary command of it.

The degree to which Welsh immigrants transmitted the language to their children is impossible to quantify, as the censuses rarely recorded the first language of those born in the United States. Nevertheless, it appears very likely that the two American-born children of the aforementioned John and Martha Hopkins had been raised in Welsh, their parents' only language, as also must have been the case for the five American-born children of Thomas and Mary Jenkins. Indeed, Welsh-born couple, fifty-eight-year-old farmer John R. Bucknell and his thirty-eight-year-old wife Ellen were also recorded as speaking only Welsh as were their three Iowa-born children.³¹ Although the information was not required by the census, there are other examples of American-born individuals with Welsh parentage listed as being able to speak only Welsh. The census of 1910 recorded just that for fifty-three-year-old, Pennsylvania-born coal miner Paul Evans and twenty-seven-year-old, Indiana-born, divorcee Tegwith Parry. Fortunately for them, they lived at the same address as other Welsh-speakers, including the Bucknells, a further example of ethnic clustering at the micro level.³² It is clear, therefore, that the Welsh ethnolinguistic community in the county was of sufficient strength to enable immigrants and their children to lead their lives, for a while at least, without English.

The census, however, recorded the great majority of Welsh-born immigrants as bilingual. Whether they spoke English prior to their arrival in the United States or whether they learned the language following arrival cannot be ascertained, although there

30. *1910 Census*, Harrison, Mahaska, Iowa, roll T624_412, 9B.

31. *1910 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, roll T624_412, 13A.

32. *1910 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, roll T624_412, 13A.

is evidence of English being acquired in their new home. William and Ann Griffith had arrived in the United States with their two sons David and Daniel in 1888. The 1920 census recorded all four as speaking only Welsh as well as two of their Iowa-born children, William and Maggie. Their two youngest children, James and Ester, also born in Iowa, were, however, recorded as being able to speak English.³³ Further, the census of 1910, asked whether each foreign-born individual spoke English, and both Thomas D. Jenkins and his Iowa-born wife were listed as being unable to do so. Ten years later, Thomas was not only recorded as being able to speak English, but also with English as his mother tongue.³⁴ While this example could simply be evidence of an eagerness to officially declare full integration into mainstream American society, it could also be attributed to another significant factor. Attitudes prevailing in Wales at this time caused many to see the language in a negative light, and this resulted in some making a conscious decision to deny any knowledge of Welsh and to make sure that their children spoke only English. Ultimately, the acquisition of English, widespread bilingualism, and a failure by Welsh immigrants to maintain and intergenerationally transmit their language would have removed their most immediate identifying characteristic.

IF THE WELSH COMMUNITY in Mahaska County was initially Welsh-speaking, how did that Welsh-speaking culture manifest itself? Welsh cultural activity was very much associated with religion, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, Protestant Nonconformity, the resistance to conforming to a country's state or established church, had become central to the idea of Welsh national identity.³⁵ On Sunday, March 30, 1851, a census revealed

33. *1910 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, roll T624_412, 9A.

34. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1920 Census* (Washington, DC, 1921), Oskaloosa, Ward 4, Mahaska, Iowa, roll T625_501, 2B.

35. For a discussion of this and related phenomena, see, for example, Prys Morgan, "Keeping the Legends Alive," in *Wales the Imagined Nation: Essays in Cultural and National Identity*, ed. T. Curtis (Bridgend, UK, 1986), 19–41, and Merfyn Jones, "Beyond Identity? The Reconstruction of the Welsh," *Journal of British Studies* 31 (October 1992), 338–39.

the Welsh to be considerably more religious than the English, with far more attending a church service and that Welsh people were primarily Nonconformist.³⁶ Of those attending the largest single service of the day at each place of worship in Wales, only 21% were Anglicans and 79% attended one of several Nonconformist denominations—25% Calvinistic Methodists, 23% Independents, 18% Baptists, and 13% Wesleyans.³⁷

The distinctions between the Welsh Nonconformist Protestant denominations were less concerned with differences in ritual and more with how the church was governed. Denominations such as the Congregationalists advocated for leadership by the entire congregation while the Calvinistic Methodists preferred a Presbyterian approach with an elected church government.³⁸ The growth of religious adherence in Wales in the nineteenth century was overwhelmingly confined to the Nonconformist denominations, and this was evident by the fact that in 1851 there were 2,813 chapels in the country, with a chapel having been completed on average every eight days between 1800 and 1850.³⁹ Indeed, in the 1860s, Henry Richard, the radical Liberal MP for Merthyr Tydfil, wrote, “The Welsh have provided themselves with more ample means of religious worship and instruction than can be found, perhaps, among any people under the face of heaven.”⁴⁰

The Welsh had taken this image with them in their migrations overseas and a frequently quoted article that appeared in *Y Drysorfa*, the monthly periodical of the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales, in 1854 made it clear that the Welsh themselves were both

36. Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, *Explorations and Explanations: Essays in the Social History of Victorian Wales* (Llandysul, 1981), 26–27. For a full discussion of the census, see 217–28.

37. John Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 1993), 427.

38. An excellent contemporary explanation is provided by *The Cambrian*, June 1886, 145. From 1880 to 1919, *The Cambrian* was one of the most popular magazines read by Welsh Americans.

39. Davies, *A History of Wales*, 359. Generally, in the case of the Nonconformists, the word “church” is used when referring to a denomination and “chapel” is used for the actual building.

40. Henry Richard, *Letters on the Social and Political Conditions of the Principality of Wales* (London, 1866), 23.

fully aware and proud of their religiosity in an international context:

Mae yn beth hynod a thra chysurus yn nodweddiad y Cymry, eu bod, i ba le bynag yr elont, os bydd rhyw nifer ohonynt gyda'u gilydd, yn sefydlu addoliad cymdeithasol yn yr iaith Cymraeg. Yn nhrefi mawrion Lloegr, yn y gweithfaoedd glo a hiarn yn Scotland, yn ngwahanol daleithiau America, . . . rhaid i ymfudwyr o Gymru gael clywed yn eu hiaith eu hun am fawrion weithredoedd Duw yn iachawdwriaeth gras.⁴¹

It is a remarkable and comforting aspect of the Welsh character that no matter where they go if there are any number of them together they establish a social place of worship in the Welsh language. In the great cities of England, in the coal mines and iron works of Scotland, in the various states of America, . . . the Welsh emigrant must hear of the great works of God in his own language.

In the United States, as many as 600 Welsh Nonconformist chapels were built in the nineteenth century, and the Welsh in Mahaska County were similarly zealous in establishing places of worship where they could adhere to their faith in their own language.⁴² R.D. Thomas reported that preaching commenced in Beacon as early as 1860. This took place in the home of the aforementioned John G. Jones until the official formation of a Welsh congregation under the Independent (Congregational) denomination in 1865.⁴³ According to Thomas, in 1872 the church had a membership of forty-two, a Sunday School numbering fifty and a congregation of one hundred.⁴⁴ The deacons of the church included coal miners John S. Morgan and Isaac Jones.⁴⁵ In 1878, *The History of Mahaska County* recorded the current pastor as C.D. Jones and described the church as financially buoyant with a

41. *Y Drysorfa*, August 1854, 266–67.

42. Davies and Davies, *Hanes Cymry America*, 320–25.

43. Thomas, *Hanes Cymry America*, 75; *1870 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, roll M593_408, 315B; *1880 Census*, Beacon, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 371A.

44. Not all those attending services were church members.

45. *1870 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, roll M593_408, 311A, 313A.

membership of around fifty. The author also clearly indicated that Sunday services, both morning and evening, were conducted in Welsh. The church had a Sunday School presided over by coal miner Christmas Evans.⁴⁶ Edward George Hartmann, in his survey of the Welsh in the United States, noted that this church closed in 1916, and the only other church nearby that offered services in Welsh was the Carbonado Welsh Presbyterian church, which opened in 1884 and closed in 1901. Two other Welsh chapels emerged in the county in nearby Given Township: a Congregationalist chapel founded in 1875 that continued well into the next century and a Presbyterian chapel that existed from 1878 until 1900.⁴⁷

Unlike most areas of the United States where the Welsh numbered more than a few score, Mahaska County saw the long-term existence of only one Welsh denomination, the Independents. The Mahaska County Welsh, therefore, avoided the inter-denominational rivalry that existed elsewhere between the Baptists, Independents, and Calvinistic Methodists, which resulted in sustained animosity and divided communities for decades. The downside of this seemingly positive development was that individuals with a denominational allegiance that was stronger than their allegiance to their nationality worshiped in non-Welsh speaking churches. This resulted in many individuals conducting much of their communal life in English and not in Welsh.

Even those who remained within a specifically Welsh denomination would have experienced a change in the language of their religious life. Evidence of language shift in Iowa's Welsh churches is scant, but Cherilyn Ann Walley, in her monograph on the Welsh in Iowa, reveals that the Welsh Congregational Church at Old Man's Creek in Johnson County was preaching bilingually by the 1890s, whereas the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church of Lime Springs in Howard County held out until the 1920s.⁴⁸ Whatever

46. *The History of Mahaska County*, 514; *1880 Census*, Beacon, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 368C.

47. Hartmann, *Americans from Wales*, 172.

48. Walley, "The Welsh in Iowa," 128–30. If this was the case, the people of Lime Springs were defying Governor William Harding's 1918 ban on the public use of languages other than English.

the exact time and process of language shift in Mahaska County's Welsh churches, it certainly took place as it did everywhere else.

ALTHOUGH RELIGION HELD a central position, Welsh cultural expression was not confined to the religious sphere and included *cymanfaoedd canu* (singing festivals), literary meetings and the *eisteddfod*, the great Welsh festival based on prose, poetry, musical, and choral competition.⁴⁹ In 1885, a report about an *eisteddfod* held in Oskaloosa on Christmas Day appeared in *Y Drych*, and a detailed analysis of the *eisteddfod* reveals the nature of Welsh cultural expression, its linguistic ethos, and importantly, the diverse backgrounds of those taking part.⁵⁰

The occasion was popular among the Welsh of the district; "Daeth canoed yn nghyd o'r sefydliadau Cymreig cylychynol, sef Long Creek, Given, Beacon, Excelsior, Williamsburgh, Kirkville, &c.; ac y mae yn bur debyg iddynt gael eu boddloni yn mhob peth." (Hundreds came from the surrounding Welsh settlements, such as Long Creek, Given, Beacon, Excelsior, Kirkville, etc. and they were most certainly fully satisfied.) Cross referencing the names of individuals involved in this *eisteddfod* with census returns provides a clear indication that the attraction of this high-brow cultural activity was not confined to a particular class, age group, or gender. It appealed to the community as a whole. This diverse cross-class gathering and the use of Welsh differentiated the Welsh from other migrants from the United Kingdom.

Among the notable individuals in attendance were the Rev. Richard Hughes of Long Creek and the Rev. T.D. Thomas of Red Oak.⁵¹ The judges for the various competitions were as follows: music, J.P. Jones of Chicago, who is recorded on the census of 1880 as a stonemason; recitation, Rev. Thomas and coal miner D. R. Lewis of Beacon; prose, the Rev. Thomas E. Hughes of Williamsburg; poetry, G.H. Humphrey, who had journeyed from the Welsh stronghold of Utica, New York, to judge this most

49. For an explanation of the style and significance of the *eisteddfod*, see Hartmann, *Americans from Wales*, 139–55.

50. *Y Drych*, 12/31/1885.

51. Unless otherwise indicated, all the following individuals were born in Wales.

important of Welsh competitions.⁵² Following the singing of the Welsh national anthem, the morning session commenced with poetic addresses (anerchiadau barddonol) by coal miner Jenkin Rees, the Rev. J.M. Jones from Beacon, and James Thomas, a farmer from Given.⁵³

There were six competitors for a rendition of the song "Bugail Aberdyfi" (the Aberdovey Shepherd), with the prize shared between J.B. Lodwick, a grocer who had traveled from Youngstown, Ohio to compete and John M. James of Kirkville.⁵⁴ Maud Williams, the daughter of a local farmer, won the recitation for under fifteens.⁵⁵ The Pryddest poetry competition, which focused on the subject of "Goffadwriaeth am y Cadfridog U.S. Grant" (In Honorable Memory of General U.S. Grant), received eight entries and was won by grocer Thomas J. Powell of Coalburgh, Ohio.⁵⁶ J.B. Lodwick and John G. Thomas, who went by the bardic name Eryr Tawe (the Eagle of the River Tawe), shared the prize for the solo baritone competition, "Gogoniant i Gymru" (Glory to Wales).

Following a very able speech (wir alluog) from Hughes and a long, interesting address (maith a dyddorol) from Welsh-American attorney G.C. Morgan, poetic addresses continued, including

52. *1880 Census*, Chicago, Cook, Illinois, roll 191, 469B; *1880 Census*, Des Moines, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 436C.

53. *1880 Census*, Des Moines, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 447B; *1900 Census*, East Des Moines, Mahaska, Iowa, 19.

54. *1880 Census*, Youngstown, Mahoning, Ohio, roll 1046, 316B.

55. *1880 Census*, Des Moines, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 441A.

56. *1880 Census*, Hubbard, Trumbull, Ohio, roll 1070, 159C; *1900 Census*, Hubbard, Trumbull, Ohio, 11. Poetic compositions, which featured so frequently in Welsh cultural life, can be divided into two categories. Firstly, the free meter, which include the "Pryddest," the "Pennill" and the "Can," the latter of which can be set to music. Secondly, and far more complex, are the "Cynghanedd," which is a system of complex alliterative poetry that developed in medieval Wales. Of these, the "Cywydd" is a poem of indeterminate length of seven syllable rhyming couplets in full alliteration and the "Englyn" is a stanza of four lines to the same rhyme in full alliteration. The working men who had mastered the complexities of these systems were aficionados indeed. The intricacies of Welsh language poetic composition are addressed by Alan Lloyd Roberts in *Anghenion y Gynganedd* (Llandyssul, UK, 1974).

one from O.C. Roberts, a retired farmer from Cleveland.⁵⁷ The celebration of bardic skills in Welsh society was apparent. The *Y Drych's* correspondent even noted, "Hawdd canfod oddiwrth frwdrydedd y gynulleidfa fod i'r bardd hwn le cynes yn nghalon pawb" (it was easy to see from the enthusiasm of the audience that this poet has a warm place in everyone's heart). The joint winners of the competition for recitation of "The Burial of Sir John Moore" were ten-year-old Nellie M. Williams, the daughter of a Welsh coal miner, and twelve-year old Jennie Jones, the daughter of a Welsh-born farmer.⁵⁸ Both girls had been born in Iowa. The competition for song composition on the subject "Yr Ymgeisydd Aflwyddianus" (The Unsuccessful Candidate) received, rather appropriately, no entrants worthy of the prize. Indeed, the judges suggested that the six competitors could go home singing their songs to themselves! (Dywedodd y beirniad y galasai pob un o honynt fyned adref gan ganu ei gan ei hun.)

In the Englynion poetry competition on the subject "Yr Hyrddwynt" (The Surge), David Jones, a farmer from neighboring Keokuk County, prevailed over four other entrants.⁵⁹ O.C. Roberts won the essay competition against seven others writing on the subject "Sefyllfa Ddarostyngol y Gweithwyr, yr Achosion o hyny, a Moddion eu Dyrchafiad" (The Subjugation of the Workers, the Causes of this Situation and the Means of their Advancement). Annie Morgan of Long Creek beat five others for "Y Gan Genedlaethol" (The National Song). The soprano solo was won jointly by Mary Ann Rees and Annie Price both of Beacon, the wives of coal miner Jenkin Rees and stone mason John R. Price, respectively.⁶⁰ The required song was "When the Midnight Moon," again providing a clear indication that English was by no means excluded from the proceedings. A party from Kirkville in Wapello County won the prize from a field of eight for their

57. *1880 Census*, New Sharon, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 353, 216C; *1880 Census*, Winterset, Madison, Iowa, roll 353, 140D.

58. *1880 Census*, Beacon, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 369B; *1900 Census*, Pleasant Grove, Mahaska, Iowa, 4.

59. *1880 Census*, Prairie, Keokuk, Iowa, roll 348, 5B.

60. *1880 Census*, Des Moines, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 447B; *1880 Census*, Beacon, Mahaska, Iowa, roll 354, 369B.

English rendition of "Sleep my Lady Love." J.M. Jones then sang "Hen Wlad y Menyg Gwynion," a song with a significance not immediately apparent outside the Welsh community.⁶¹ There were further competitions for song, chorus, brass band, and musical composition (cyfansoddiadau cerddorol), the latter won by an individual under his bardic name of Gwilym Gwent, who hailed from Plymouth, Pennsylvania.

One could continue to provide extensive examples, but the point is made. Welsh cultural expression was based on music, recitation, and literature, especially poetic competition, patronization was widespread, and both participants and the audience were drawn not only from the ranks of white-collar professionals but also from a wide spectrum of Welsh immigrant society, primarily the working class. In addition, it appears that at least initially, the proceedings and competitions were taking place overwhelmingly in Welsh.

Cultural activity among the Welsh of Mahaska County was not short-lived, yet it was also not immune to the forces of acculturation. A report in *Y Drych* of the eisteddfod held at Oskaloosa's Masonic Opera House on Christmas Day 1899 indicated the changing nature of the festival.⁶² The proceedings were led by Oskaloosa's Rev. R.W. Hughes who led the audience in the singing of the "hen don adnabyddus" (old, well known tune) "Dyma Geidwad i'r Colledig" (Here is a Saviour for the Lost).⁶³ The audience was then entertained by Prof. Jenkins of the town's college who spoke on "Yr Eisteddfod, y Cymry a'u Talentau" (The Eisteddfod, the Welsh and their Talents). This was followed by a speech from W.D. Evans on "Yr Hen Wlad a'i Breintiau" (The Old Country and its Privileges), and a further unnamed address by coal miner Jenkin Rees (who was still involved fifteen years

61. In the nineteenth century, the judges at Welsh court sessions were presented with a pair of white gloves if they had no criminal cases to deal with. This custom led to the saying "Hen Wlad y Menyg Gwynion" (The Land of the White Gloves) and to the notion that Wales was a place free from serious crime. For an explanation, see T. H. Lewis, "Y Wasg Gymraeg a Bywyd Cymru, 1805-1901: II Agweddau Diwydianol a Chymdeithasol," *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymrodorion*, part 2 (1964), 222-36.

62. *Y Drych*, 1/4/1900.

63. 1900 *Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 15.

later).⁶⁴ The joint winners for recitation of the first psalm were mine laborers Richard Brazel and William Rees.⁶⁵ Afterward, miner T.L. Rees led the choir in a rendition of “Duw Mawr y Rhyfeddodau” (Great God of Wonder).⁶⁶ Accompaniment on piano was provided throughout by two Welsh-American music teachers, Sarah Williams, a coalminer’s daughter, and Lillian M. Hughes, the daughter of a pastor.⁶⁷

At first glance, therefore, much of the proceedings appear to have been in Welsh and to have involved overwhelmingly Welsh participants. However, change was apparent. Although the conductors of the three choirs were all Welsh-born, the piece performed was in English: “Awake Aeolian Lyre.”⁶⁸ The winner of the girls recitation competition for “Evelyn Hope” was Welsh-born thirteen-year-old Blodwen Brazel, but the winner of the girls solo for “I am Ashamed” went to Ida Cox, the daughter of Virginia-born butcher Thomas and his Connecticut-born wife Nellie, neither of whom had any known Welsh connections. Similarly, an excellent recitation (*adroddiad campus*) was given by nine-year-old Lester Wooster, the son of American couple Alfred and Lucy, both without any documented Welsh links.⁶⁹ The evening session was addressed by a Judge Dewey, and prayers were led by New Yorker, J.W. Somerville.⁷⁰ The male parties competition was for “The Song of the Wood Cutter” and “There, Little Girl Don’t Cry,” and was shared between the very unWelsh sounding Lincoln Wood Choppers and the Givenites. The singing competitions for chorus, trio, duet, and solo were almost entirely in English including “All Through the Night,” “Will I Find My Mama There?” “Glee of the Evening,” “The Rose of the Summer,” “Out of the Deep,” “Angel Voices,” “The Trumpet Shall Sound,”

64. *1900 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 6.

65. *1900 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, 11, 18.

66. *1900 Census*, East Des Moines, Mahaska, Iowa, 17.

67. *1900 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, 6; *1880 Census*, Beacon, Mahaska, Iowa, 354, 369B; *1900 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 15.

68. *1900 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, 11; *1900 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 4.

69. *1900 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 13.

70. *1900 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 1.

“If I were a Rose,” “All Glory to His Name” and “Round About the Starry Throne.”

References to poetry, very much the crown jewel of Welsh literary achievement, were conspicuously absent. The eisteddfod was, by this stage, dominated by choral performance and resembled more a singing concert than a literary competition. The event had obviously retained its popularity, as evidenced by a full house (oedd y ty yn orlawn), but it was no longer confined to the Welsh community and the Welsh language. While many of the participants hailed from the same diverse socio-economic backgrounds as earlier gatherings, the ethos and language of the eisteddfod had clearly transformed.

The *Evening Times-Republican* of November 26, 1908, included an article on an eisteddfod held at Albia, in neighboring Monroe County. While noting the presence of individuals such as Welsh-born lawyer John R. Price and coal miners W.J. Evans and J.W. Lewis the report also revealed that “fully 90% of the program is given in the English tongue.” Indeed, it stated with complete frankness, “Originally the Eisteddfod was limited to Welsh people and everything conducted in the Welsh tongue, but after a time the Eisteddfod extended its field of usefulness and now most of the program is in the English language.”⁷¹

QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE clearly indicates that while Welsh had certainly been the language of community activity in the early years of the Welsh presence in Mahaska County, a language shift had occurred by the early years of the new century. This, of course, applied to other ethnolinguistic groups in Iowa and, indeed, elsewhere in the United States. J. Neale Carman, in his formidable work on foreign language groups in Kansas, identified what he termed the “critical year” when the native language passed from habitual use among foreign-born communities in the state, a major milestone in the process of acculturation. For the Welsh, Carman argues, that year fell between 1885 and 1918.

71. *Evening Times-Republican*, 11/26/1908. 1910 *Census*, Albia, Ward 4, Monroe, Iowa, roll T624_414, 10A; 1910 *Census*, Guilford, Monroe, Iowa, roll T624_414, 20B, 7A.

Similarly, William D. Keel indicated that the German Mennonites of south central Kansas began switching to English after 1900, and Emory Lindquist documented the transition among Lawrence's Swedes a little later.⁷² In Iowa, Walley described the extent to which other smaller ethnic groups—the Dutch, Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes—preserved and promoted their own languages and cultural identities and suggested that the Welsh experienced a similar process.⁷³ While such comparisons are valuable, the process of change undergone by the Welsh immigrant community differed significantly from these groups. Jon Gjerde and others have clearly indicated that some midwestern immigrant communities successfully preserved their language for generations, sometimes to the chagrin of the host community.⁷⁴ Indeed, Roger Daniels described the persistence of the German language in some areas into the fourth and fifth generations, something that did not occur in even the most isolated and intensely Welsh communities and certainly not in Mahaska County.⁷⁵

Despite the immigrant experience in the United States, Welsh linguistic acculturation must also be understood with reference to developments in contemporary Wales that were having profound effects on the status of the language. The report of a Royal Commission established in 1847 to assess educational standards in Wales, dubbed by the Welsh "Brad y Llyfrau Gleision" (The Treason of the Blue Books), declared:

The Welsh language is a vast drawback to Wales and a manifold barrier to the moral progress and commercial prosperity of the people. Because of their language the mass of the Welsh

72. J. Neale Carman, *Foreign Language Units of Kansas* (Lawrence, 1962), 2:234; William D. Keel, "Deutsch, Däätsch, Döötsch and Dietsch: The Varieties of Kansas German Dialects after 150 Years of German Group Settlement in Kansas," in *Preserving Heritage: A Festschrift for C. Richard Beam*, eds. Joshua R. Brown, Leroy T. Hopkins Jr., and William D. Keel (Lawrence, 2006), 41–42; Emory Lindquist, "The Swedish Immigrant and Life in Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 29 (Spring 1963), 11.

73. Walley, "The Welsh in Iowa," 65–83.

74. Gjerde, *The Minds of the West*, 107–09.

75. Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York, 1990), 152.

people are inferior to the English in every branch of practical knowledge and skill. . . . His language keeps him [the Welshman] under the hatches being one in which he can neither acquire nor communicate the necessary information. It is the language of old fashioned agriculture, of theology and of simple rustic life, while all the world about him is English. . . . He is left to live in an underworld of his own and the march of society goes completely over his head!⁷⁶

The Blue Books stated that the Welsh were, “never found at the top of the social scale” and divorced from the benefits of progress, defined in terms of material wealth, by their adherence to the Welsh language.⁷⁷ While the report caused uproar, many Welsh people at the time were in general agreement with the commissioners. Indeed, from then on some Welsh people came to regard the language as a hindrance to progress and even to abandon it altogether. Therefore, there were forces at work within the Welsh community in the United States from which other ethnic groups were spared. Some Welsh people were not merely experiencing the natural process of linguistic assimilation in their new home but also endeavoring to go beyond the requirement of obtaining a command of the lingua franca and actively seeking to deny their linguistic inheritance.⁷⁸

Linked to this was an eagerness to become part of the host community, an eagerness not necessarily replicated in Iowa’s other non-English speaking immigrant communities. There is, for example, no evidence of a Welsh response to Governor Harding’s ban on the public use of languages other than English during World War I.⁷⁹ A prime example of Welsh immigrants asserting their American identity in a political context occurred in Wisconsin in 1889, when the State Assembly passed a law

76. Quoted in Robert Owen Jones, “The Sociolinguistics of Welsh,” in *The Celtic Languages*, eds. Martin Ball and James Fife (London, 1993), 547.

77. Quoted in John Aitchison and Harold Carter, *A Geography of the Welsh Language* (Cardiff, UK, 1994), 33.

78. See, for example, I.G. Jones, *Mid-Victorian Wales: The Observers and the Observed* (Cardiff, UK, 1992); Gwyneth Tyson, *The Language of the Blue Books: Wales and Colonial Prejudice* (Cardiff, UK, 1998).

79. Dorothy Schwieder, *Iowa: The Middle Land* (Iowa City, 1996), 188.

requiring that all schools in the state only teach in English. Unsurprisingly, this was fiercely opposed by many German speakers with children in Catholic and Lutheran parochial schools. For the state's Welsh population, however, this provided an opportunity to further express their loyalty to their adopted homeland. At their annual meeting in 1890, Wisconsin's Welsh Congregationalists resolved to support the controversial law in order to prove "conclusively the loyalty of the Welsh people to the laws and institutions of their adopted country."⁸⁰ This pattern of acceptance by the Welsh offers a stark contrast to the German community's response.

Welsh immigrants were also rarely subjected to negativity from their American hosts, which aided their assimilation. American host communities frequently lauded the intellectual and cultural abilities of the Welsh and associated these traits with Welsh respectability and acceptability. From the eisteddfod, the Iowa newspaper the *Evening Times-Republican* could state, "have come the greatest Welsh preachers, statesmen and public benefactors, many of whom have migrated to foreign countries and become worthy and prominent citizens in their adopted lands."⁸¹ This positive image contrasted the decidedly less than favorable reputations of other immigrant groups such as the Italians, Eastern Europeans, and the Irish who were frequently criticized for their disorderly and inebriate behavior.⁸² Gjerde referred to the negative portrayals of "rollicking" Irish and "irascible" drunken Germans and mentioned that *The Dubuque Times* went so far as to describe the Germans as "asses." He also provided several harrowing examples of the harassment of immigrant schoolchildren.⁸³

80. *Y Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, July 1890, 222, in Robert Humphries, "'Yn eu hi-aiith eu hunain' / In their own language: The settlement and assimilation of the Welsh in Iowa County, Wisconsin, 1840-1920" (MA Thesis, University of Wales, 2012), 78.

81. *Evening Times-Republican*, 11/26/1908.

82. See, for example, Gwilym R. Roberts, *New Lives in the Valley: Slate Quarries and Quarry Villages in North Wales, New York, and Vermont, 1850-1920* (Portland, ME, 1998), 260-63, 325-29, 332-39. In comparison to the Welsh experience, Roberts discusses the negative attitudes held towards these groups in their host communities.

83. Gjerde, *The Minds of the West*, 236, 243 and 233-34.

Certainly, the Welsh community rarely, if ever, encountered such unpleasantness.⁸⁴

The Welsh were also accepted religiously. As Nonconformist Protestants, they were spared association with Catholicism. In fact, at this time, Welsh people both within and beyond Wales harbored much anti-Catholic feeling, usually specifically manifesting itself against the Irish. Alan Conway has described this phenomenon as an almost “pathological hatred.”⁸⁵

Politically, Welsh immigrants became a solid bloc of Republican support.⁸⁶ Almost a decade after the Civil War, Thomas emphatically wrote, “Welsh citizens, almost without exception, have voted for the freedom-loving principles of the Republican Party . . . because the foundation of their platform is truth and justice; and their political activities have almost always been honorable to our government and universally beneficial to the people.” (Mae y dinaswyr Cymreig, bron yn ddieithriad, wedi pleidleisio dros egwyddorion ryddgarol Plaid y Gwerinwyr . . . am fod eu saflawr (platform) hwy yn sylfaenedig ar wirionedd a chyfiawnder; a bod eu gweithredoedd gwleidyddol hwy, bron ynddieithriad, wedi bod yn anrhydedd i’n llywodraeth ac yn llesol i’r bobl yn gyffredinol.)⁸⁷ Certainly, a review of the short biographies of Welsh citizens in both the American and Welsh press reveals overwhelming identification with the Republican Party.⁸⁸ If the Welsh found a natural home in the Republican

84. The only example of opposition to the Welsh in the United States that this researcher has encountered occurred in Granville, New York, when the established American churches in the town objected to the new arrivals holding services in their own language. Tyler, “Migrant Culture Maintenance: The Welsh in Granville, Washington County, New York, 1880–1930,” *New York History* (Winter 2018), 104.

85. Paul O’Leary, “When Was Anti-Catholicism? The Case of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Wales,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (2005), 308–25. Alan Conway, ed., *The Welsh in America: Letters from the Immigrants* (Minneapolis, 1961), 16.

86. T. Gerald (Jerry) Hunter, *Welsh Writing from the American Civil War: Sons of Arthur, Children of Lincoln* (Cardiff, UK, 2007).

87. Thomas, *Hanes Cymry America*, 68.

88. See, for example, the biographies of Edwin Perry and William E. Evans in Hedge, *Past and present of Mahaska County*, 305–06 and 480–84.

Party, this contrasted the overwhelming majority of immigrants who, according to Dinnerstein, found the Democratic Party “more attuned to their needs.”⁸⁹ This could be seen as a further indication of Welsh keenness to become part of the American mainstream and not to be associated with new immigrant groups who were more likely to be associated with the Democratic Party. Significantly, Welsh immigrants were also rather more likely to achieve citizenship than the other nationalities of the United Kingdom.⁹⁰

Other factors influenced the maintenance of cultural integrity and the viability of intergenerational culture and language transmission; among these, exogamy was of primary importance. Welsh immigrants were certainly willing to marry outside of their ethnic and linguistic group. By 1900, Welsh-born Jennie V. Carr, for example, had married Illinois-born, telegraph operator Clyde L. Carr whose parents hailed from New York and Illinois.⁹¹ Similarly, Welsh farmer Richard Hughes had married Illinois-born Mary J. Hughes.⁹² Also, for example, in 1900, the census listed Welsh-born farmer John D. Thomas as married to Caroline, the Ohio-born daughter of German immigrants, farmer John Smith, the Iowa-born son of Scottish immigrants married to Welsh-born Lizzie S., and German mine laborer John E. Ruygnabary married to Welsh-born Sarah.⁹³

In establishing marriage preference, information was collected from the census report for 1900 for all those Welsh-born men with two Welsh parents who had married in the United States. From that census, of the eighty-nine Welsh men recorded, twenty-eight (31.5%) had married Welsh-born women. A further

89. Dinnerstein et. al., *Natives and Strangers*, 156. The only major exception Dinnerstein notes were the Swedes.

90. Rowland Tappan Berthoff, *British Immigrants in Industrial America, 1790–1950* (Cambridge, MA, 1953), 140.

91. *1900 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 16.

92. *1900 Census*, Union, Mahaska, Iowa, 3.

93. *1900 Census*, East Des Moines, Mahaska, Iowa, 19; *1900 Census*, Union, Mahaska, Iowa, 12; *1900 Census*, Oskaloosa, Mahaska, Iowa, 5; *1900 Census*, Garfield, Mahaska, Iowa, 16, 1.

Welsh-born	Two Welsh parents	One Welsh parent	American	Other	Total
56	25	4	36	40	161
34.8%	15.5%	2.5%	22.4%	24.8%	100%

Table II. Marriage Preference of Welsh-born in Mahaska County, 1900.

sixteen (18.0%) had married an American-born woman with two Welsh parents and four (4.5%) a US-born woman with one Welsh-born parent. A total of forty-eight men married within the group (53.9%). The remaining forty-one individuals (46.1%) had married Americans with no discernable Welsh roots, other immigrants, or other ethnic Americans. Therefore, nearly half of all Welsh-born men had married outside their own community. This could be explained, in part, by a gender imbalance that existed among migrants from Wales. In 1900, 349 Welsh-born people with two Welsh parents lived in Mahaska County; 191 (54.7%) were male. This phenomenon was evident in almost all migrant groups; only the Irish displayed a clear female preponderance.⁹⁴ Indeed, Gjerde quoted one immigrant bemoaning the fact that, "There aren't enough Norwegians to go around" and that Norwegians were forced to marry "others."⁹⁵

The figures for women, however, indicate that ethnicity was not the only factor in choosing a spouse; twenty-eight Welsh-born women married Welsh-born men (38.9%), nine (12.5%) married a US-born man with two Welsh parents, fourteen (19.4%) married an American man, and twenty-one (29.2%) married an ethnic American. When these figures are combined (Table II), the level of exogamy among the first-generation Welsh who had married in the United States is apparent.⁹⁶

This phenomenon was even more apparent in the second generation. Of the 128 American-born, married individuals with two Welsh parents listed on the census of 1900, only twenty-five

94. Daniels, *Coming to America*, 141.

95. Gjerde, *The Minds of the West*, 240.

96. A further forty-eight Welsh-born couples lived in the Mahaska County but had married prior to emigration. They all had married within the group.

Welsh-born	Two Welsh parents	One Welsh parent	American	Other	Total
25	10	9	56	28	128
19.5%	7.8%	7.0%	43.7%	21.9%	100%

Table III. *Marriage Preference Second-Generation Welsh in Mahaska County, 1900.*

(19.5%) had married a Welsh-born spouse; ten (7.8%) had married an American born spouse with two Welsh parents, and nine (7.0%) married an American-born spouse with one Welsh-parent. The remaining eighty-four (65.6%) had married outside the community. It is possible that some of the American-born individuals had more distant Welsh roots not identifiable on the census reports, but culture and language retention into the third generation would have likely been negligible.

This, of course, was a natural process, one undergone, with varying degrees of rapidity, by nearly all ethnic groups in the United States. However, Welsh communities in other areas of the country were far less exogamous. For instance, the census of 1900 reported that 85.4% of first-generation Welsh immigrants in Emporia, Kansas, had married within the group.⁹⁷ The reasons for this cannot be ascertained from the source material available. Certainly, during the initial stage, linguistic ability and religious/denominational allegiance would have been factors.

Perhaps of greater significance, however, is the fact that the Welsh communities in the United States with the highest levels of endogamy were those whose populations were drawn from a specific area of Wales. In his comprehensive work on the Welsh in the Slate Valley of New York and Vermont, Gwilym R. Roberts

97. Tyler, "Identity, Culture Maintenance and Social Mobility: The Welsh in Emporia, Lyon County, 1870-1930," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 38 (Summer 2015), 75. Interestingly, high levels of exogamy among the Welsh in Iowa did not, seemingly, cause any angst among community leaders. This was not the case in the Dutch communities in the state nor, indeed, among the Welsh in Australia. Schoone-Jongen, "Dateline Orange City," 321; Tyler, "Gender Imbalance, Marriage Preference and Culture Maintenance: The Welsh in an Australian Gold Town 1850-1900," *Llafur* 9 (2006), 14-28.

established that approximately 50% of Welsh migrants in the area hailed from two villages alone: Blaenau Ffestiniog and Bethesda, in northwest Wales.⁹⁸ Many immigrants would, therefore, have been acquainted in the homeland, and this would have had an impact on the likelihood of marrying within the community. This was not the case in Mahaska County. While Thomas reported that the majority of male household heads hailed from towns in the coal bearing region of southern Wales, this area was extensive and densely populated, and migrants in Iowa from this district would have arrived with limited pre-existing social networks.⁹⁹ This dilution of the Welsh community would have had major consequences for culture and language transference.

THE WELSH IN MAHASKA COUNTY, as with many other areas of the United States where they congregated in any number, had been attracted by a specific industry, and the continued vitality of the Welsh community depended on that industry. In Mahaska County, that industry was coal mining. By 1880, facilitated by the spread of the railroad, there were 450 underground coal mines operating in Iowa, with a total of 6,028 miners. The peak of production was reached during World War I, when some 18,000 Iowa miners produced over nine million tons of coal.¹⁰⁰ The 1880 census reveals that of the 151 Welsh-born men with two Welsh parents in the county for whom occupation was recorded, ninety-seven (62.9%) were listed as coal miners, twenty-eight, (18.5%) were farmers or farm laborers, twenty-four (15.9%) were engaged in a variety of blue-collar occupations and trades (masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, clerks, and bookkeepers) and four others (2.6%) worked in white-collar professions. On the census of 1900, of the 180 Welsh-born men at least 123 (68.3%) worked in the coal mines, whether as fully fledged miners or mine laborers, a further twenty-three (12.8%) were farmers, twenty-eight

98. Roberts, *New Lives in the Valley*, 33.

99. Thomas, *Hanes Cymry America*, 73–76.

100. Dorothy Schwieder, *Black Diamonds: Life and Work in Iowa's Coal Mining Communities, 1895–1925* (Ames, 1987), x.

(15.6%) were blue-collar workers or tradespeople, and six (3.3%) worked in white-collar occupations.

Second-generation Welshmen, although to a lesser extent, were also to be found concentrated in the mining industry. In 1900, of the 107 US-born men with two Welsh parents working in the county, sixty-one (57.0%) worked in the mines. A further twenty-one (19.6%) were farmers or farm laborers, nine (8.4%) were white-collar, and the remaining sixteen (14.9%) worked a trade or blue-collar job. In this way, the Welsh resembled the Swedes, who were largely involved in coal, but clearly differed from the largely agricultural Norwegians and Danes and the occupationally diverse Germans.¹⁰¹ In Mahaska County, the adherence of the Welsh to one industry was the major cause of community fragmentation.

By 1910, the percentage of first-generation Welshmen involved in mining, whether as miners, managers, or superintendents, had fallen to 43.8%; the more significant statistic was the dramatic fall in the number of Welsh people in the county regardless of occupation. Clearly, therefore, while the mining industry was attracting fewer Welshmen, there were fewer Welsh people living in the county for it to attract. By 1920, Mahaska County was home to a mere 106 Welsh-born individuals compared to 487 in 1890. The number of American-born individuals of Welsh parentage was also in sharp decline, falling from 346 in 1900 to 138 twenty years later, a drop that was not solely attributable to the high exogamy rates noted earlier. Walley effectively links the Welsh presence in the coal-bearing counties of Iowa to the development and decline of the coal industry and makes it abundantly clear that the reduction of the Welsh population in Mahaska County was directly related to the decline of the county's primary source of employment. Even though coal mining attracted thousands of people to Iowa, the industry was destined to be short-lived for several reasons. The railroads that first brought expansion to the coal industry had, by the 1920s, started purchasing coal from out-of-state producers. In addition, for a variety of geological reasons, it was difficult to develop the industry on a

101. Schwieder, *Iowa*, 188.

Decade	Pre-1850	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	Total
Number	5	11	27	28	60	4	0	135
Percent	3.7%	8.1%	20%	20.7%	44.4%	3.0%	0%	100%

Table IV. Immigration decade of Welsh-born in Mahaska County, 1910

larger scale in Iowa. The growing acceptance of fuel oil, natural gas, and electricity for heating homes and offices also negatively affected coal sales. As the industry declined, the county was no longer a magnet for Welsh colliers and many Welsh residents departed in search of employment elsewhere.¹⁰²

The assimilation of the Welsh community in Mahaska County was made nearly inevitable by the tailing off of immigration from Wales. Collated data regarding immigration year, as listed on the census of 1910 (Table IV), reveal that of the 135 Welsh-born individuals with two Welsh parents for whom immigration year was recorded, a mere four had arrived in the two decades following 1890 and none had arrived after 1900.

Welsh immigration to Mahaska County had virtually ceased by the 1890s, the peak years had long passed, and few Welsh people were arriving to replace those lost through death or migration. This decline preceded by decades the general decrease in Welsh immigration to the United States that occurred in the 1930s, related to the Depression and the impending war.¹⁰³ The collapse in the number of Welsh-born individuals and their children, from 723 in 1900 to 244 in 1920, sounded the death knell for the Welsh community in Mahaska County, and this collapse was directly related to the declining fortunes of the coal industry that had attracted most Welsh people to the county in the first place.

The Welsh people who had congregated in Mahaska County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries succeeded, however briefly, in establishing a vibrant, distinct ethnolinguistic

102. See Walley, "The Welsh in Iowa," 192–227 and 325–47, and Schwieder, *Black Diamonds*, 168.

103. Berthoff, *British Immigrants in Industrial America*, 5. Whereas 13,012 Welsh-born individuals arrived in the United States from 1921 to 1930, only 3,944 reached American shores in the following twenty years.

community. They were highly religious, adhering to a particular form of Protestant nonconformity, and successfully created a variety of Welsh societies and cultural groups that were carbon copies of those in Wales. Migrants from Wales were also differentiated not only from their hosts but also from fellow migrants from the United Kingdom by the fact that they primarily spoke a language other than English.

While the Welsh experience in Iowa differed from that of the other nationalities of the United Kingdom, it does not follow that their experience mirrored that of other non-Anglophone groups. The forces that saw John G. and William G. Jones seamlessly enter mainstream, white Protestant America differed in many ways from those affecting the Dutch, Swedes, Norwegians and Germans. Welsh migrants in Mahaska County were relatively few, never established residential propinquity, were overwhelmingly bilingual, highly exogamous, generally respected, and faced little or no opposition to their presence from the host community. Furthermore, Dorothy Schwieder points out, "All groups brought along cultural and religious practices, and all sought to perpetuate those practices not only for themselves but also for their progeny," yet some groups were more assiduous in this than others.¹⁰⁴ Gjerde quotes an immigrant from Norway who observed that the Norwegians in the United States were "more Norwegian" than those who remained in Europe, and a Swedish immigrant who argued that immigration to the United States actually created a "Swedish-American nationality."¹⁰⁵

In comparison, Welsh attempts at cultural maintenance appear feeble. They had, for example, nothing so organized as Dutch "colonization organizations," with the specific aim of establishing ethnic settlements.¹⁰⁶ In addition, developments in Wales that undermined the value of the Welsh language and culture undoubtedly provided some in the community with

104. Schwieder, *Iowa*, 201.

105. Gjerde, *The Minds of the West*, 228.

106. Brian W. Beltman, "Ethnic Territoriality and the Persistence of Identity: Dutch Settlers in Northwest Iowa, 1869–1880," *Annals of Iowa* 55 (1996), 101–37.

additional motivation to abandon their old-world characteristics and to become fully assimilated Americans. Yet it is important to acknowledge that the Welsh in this part of United States contributed much to the social fabric of their new home, and the large-scale participation by working people in an institution such as the eisteddfod remains an admirable testament to the depth of culture that existed among the Welsh in Mahaska County, Iowa.

