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### Moving to a New Land

Nineteenth century Welsh emigrants who settled in southwestern New York State came from nearly every county in Wales. Obituaries show that almost seventy percent came from western Wales, particularly Pembroke, Cardigan and Caernarvon.<sup>1</sup> Many first settled in the central New York Welsh settlements in Oneida County before migrating to western New York. Most were agricultural emigrants—dairy farmers with butter and cheese production skills.

Information flow in the form of personal guides and guidebooks provided valuable help for emigrants. Preparations included the selling and disposing of material goods and property. Goods that were expensive and scarce in America would be pre-purchased and packed for the trip. Money might be exchanged for gold coins as they were internationally accepted.

On the day of departure, friends and family (some would walk for miles) gathered to say farewell. Tears flowed, promises were made to write, and good-byes were said. *Penillions* (verses) might be composed to honor the departing ones, like this stanza from a poem written by Reverend James Richards for Reverend Thomas Roberts. Roberts was on his way to America where he served the Welsh Baptists at Freedom, New York.

May there be true fellowship for you  
When you come among strangers,  
And then moving to a new land  
Will not weigh on our soul.<sup>2</sup>

As sailing time neared, the family might walk to the port if nearby. An old story tells that William E. Williams of Pwll Ciw walked 15 miles from Aberdaron to Porth Dinllaen with his family in 1832 and arrived in America six weeks later. The family first settled in Oneida County, New York before coming west to Freedom, Cattaraugus County in 1846.

Those leaving from North Wales usually embarked from the English port of Liverpool; those from South Wales might leave from any number of coastal ports such as Milford Haven or Cardiff. For those going to the northeastern United States, the ports of destination were New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Montreal, Canada.

Sometimes, "emigration fever" swept through an entire Welsh neighborhood, leaping from house to house like an epidemic. Groups of families and individuals might all leave Wales at the same time, on the same ship. Often they were influenced and guided by an individual or family member who had already successfully emigrated to America. This is what happened in the spring of 1851 in the Rhiwaedog district in the old county of Merioneth, North Wales. It is the story of how one Welsh family came to the Cattaraugus Welsh Settlement in western New York. Their experience illustrates several key emigration concepts: information flow, localized chain emigration and stage migration.

#### From Bala to Freedom

The Rhiwaedog district sits at the southern end of the Vale of Edeyrnion, just east of the Bala Lake outlet where the River Dee flows on towards the northern coast of Wales. Rugged moorland around Garth Rhiwaedog (Rhiwaedog Hill) and Garth Goch (Red Hill) was dotted with small farms, quarries, gravel pits, and Nonconformist chapels.

Delwyn Roberts, a researcher living in nearby Dolgellau writes: "The chapel at Llwyn Einion was more than a place of worship, as this was a very close community. I can imagine many nights of discussions, poetry and David Lloyd Davies, who had emigrated to America, with his

brother John Davies, who was a deacon for twenty five years at the chapel." <sup>3</sup> Perhaps at Capel Llwyn Einion talk turned to America and the locals heard stirring accounts of the "land of promise."

Visions of a new life in America would have contrasted starkly with the reality of life in Rhiwaedog. Rhiwaedog farms were small, some with as few as fifteen acres, and families were large. The once flourishing eighteenth-century textile industry had declined. Besides farming, there was little other employment, unless one migrated to the industrial urban centers in South Wales or England. Frequent crop failures, unscrupulous landlords and tithe rates caused further discontent. The people of Bala were leaving. In April 1850, for example, the *Forest Queen* sailed from Liverpool with 150 Welsh passengers from the Bala area.<sup>4</sup>

In such a place and circumstance not far from Bala, John J. Jones, his wife, Jane, four sons and three daughters were tenant farming on twenty acres called Tyn-y-wern or "farm near the marsh." <sup>5</sup> When Jones cut down a small ash tree on the farm, he was brought before his landlord, Richard Watkin Price of Rhiwias, and fined five pounds for the offence. Ash wood, being flexible yet strong, was a highly valued wood for axe handles. Jones felt unjustly treated.<sup>6</sup>

In late 1850, a visitor from America arrived at Castell Hen, the other side of Lake Bala. Native son John D. Pugh, who emigrated from Wales to Ohio in 1844, returned to visit his parents, Daniel and Elizabeth Pugh. Brother, Hugh, a tobacco exporter, had moved to Liverpool. Hugh was well acquainted with the logistics of emigration. In 1847, he wrote to his brother, "... thousands are coming here and are having to return without a place - I had a hard time sending people from Llanuwchllyn away as the ship was full and many had to go on the next ship ..."<sup>7</sup>

The Bala area must have buzzed with talk of America. The Pugh brothers may have met in the local chapels with those considering emigration. Apparently, some of the families did spend the winter preparing to leave Wales for in May 1851 when John Pugh returned to America, his brother Hugh and at least twenty men, women, and children from the Rhiwaedog district sailed

with him from Liverpool on the *Forest Queen*.<sup>8</sup> Among this party was the entire family of John J. Jones. With the tree-cutting incident and an oppressive landlord in recent memory, Jones decided to leave Wales and go to America.

William Evan Jones, the second eldest son in the Jones family, was 14 years old at the time of emigration. Forty years later in 1891, he recalled the trip:

In 1851, I was living on it, the 'old boat', the 'Forest Queen.'; and I am thinking that I will never forget that time, because that was the time I got the measles, and between the measles and the seasickness, I remember that I was very sick. There were many Welsh on board--some from every part of Wales; but I was coming from the Bala district. One of the two Pughs of Cincinnati was our Captain. I saw in an old book of my father's the names of about twenty of those from the neighborhood of Rhiwaedog, and among them the family of Thomas Jones, formerly of the Garnedd, and our own family that is, the family of John Jones, Tyn-y-wern. Also the son of Edward Hughes of Pandy, and the son and daughter of Robert Roberts of Dolyfeurig; the daughter of John Davies, a shoemaker of Llwyneinion and a sister of the late Dewi Glan Peryddon (David Lloyd Davies, fl. 1881). There were several with the two Pughs from the neighborhood of the Parc. I would be pleased to get a word from all of them if they are alive.<sup>9</sup>

Following their arrival at the port of New York in June 1851, the group from Bala scattered. The two Pugh brothers went on to Cincinnati and the John J. Jones family went to Newport, Herkimer County, where there was already a community of Welsh Calvinistic Methodists. Others went to Ohio and the Midwest. Within a few months, before winter set in, the Jones family migrated further west to Cattaraugus where other Calvinistic Methodists from Newport had settled.<sup>10</sup> The Cattaraugus Settlement, formed about 1841, was well established and feeling growing pains by the 1850s. It already had two chapels and several hundred Welsh settlers.

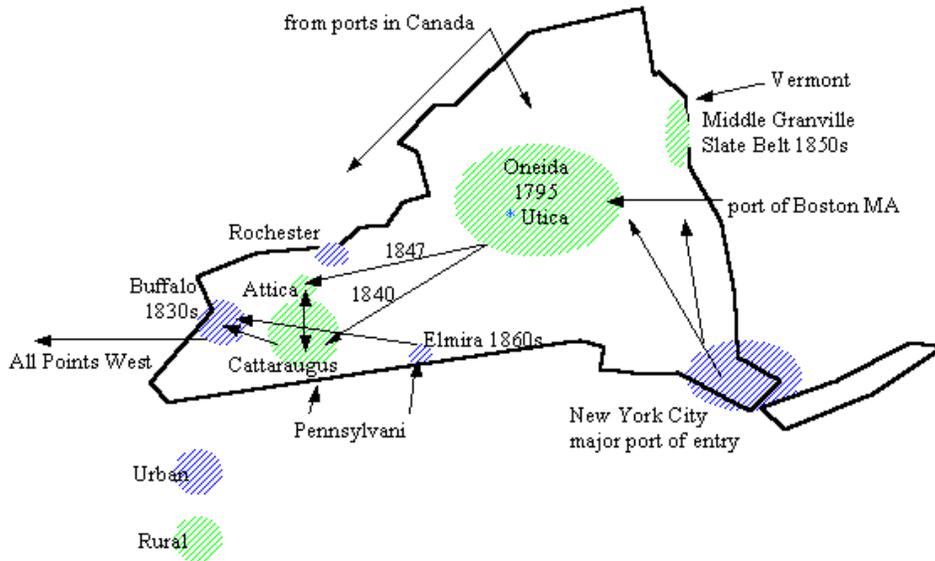
Within a few years, the Jones family's situation had changed dramatically. In June 1855, the census taker recorded what appears to be an immigrant success story.<sup>11</sup> The Jones family was

now living in a frame house on a 224-acre farm in Freedom, New York. The farm was worth \$3,584. Their major crops were hay (25 tons), oats (140 bushels), potatoes, apples, maple sugar, and butter (1800 lbs.). The Jones dairy herd was larger than average--18 milk cows. They also owned three horses, five swine, and one sheep. Total stock was worth \$687. The Jones family was also doing well spiritually. In 1854, they and other Calvinistic Methodists built a new Welsh chapel called Salem. Jones served as one of the first deacons. Moving to a new land allowed the John J. Jones family an opportunity to achieve a new degree of economic success and at the same time to retain at least some of their Welsh culture for several more generations.

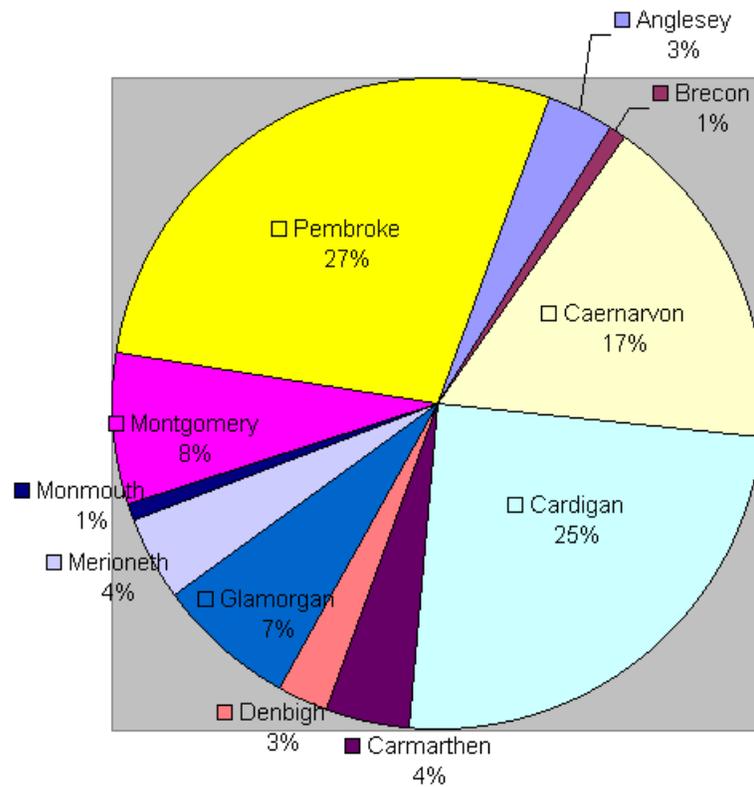
#### Sources

1. The Cattaraugus data is based on information for Welsh-born individuals gathered by Barbara Henry from genealogies, obituaries, census and other records.
2. *Y Wawr* (October 1885): 200-204.
3. Delwyn Roberts to Barbara Henry, February 22, 1993.
4. Gwilym Jones, *America, the Welsh Connection*. [www.rhiw.com/hanes\\_pages/america/to\\_america.htm](http://www.rhiw.com/hanes_pages/america/to_america.htm)
5. 1851 Wales Census, database, Ancestry.com ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) : accessed 23 Feb 2009), entry for John J. Jones Family, Llanfor, Merionethshire; citing HO107/2510, folio 70, p. 4, GSU roll 104281.
6. Einion Wyn Thomas, Area Archivist and Museum Officer, Archifdy Rhanbarthol/Area Record Office, Cae Penarlag, Dolgellau, Gwynedd, Wales, to Barbara Henry, July 21, 1993. Estate and family records of Price of Rhiwlas, Merioneth, 1609-1921.
7. Letters by emigrants to America: Hugh Pugh letter (November 17, 1847) Reference: NLW 19331E. The Wales-Ohio Project. <http://www.ohio.llgc.org.uk/>. The letters of John and Hugh Pugh, 1843-1852, brothers from Castell Hen, Bala, written from Liverpool, Columbus, Cincinnati and Portsmouth. Original copies at University of Wales Bangor (Bangor Ms 5417).
8. Information on the Pugh Brothers and this emigration appears in: Obituary of Hugh Pugh, *The Cambrian* (April 1891): 127; William E. Jones, letter in *Y Drych*, (April 23, 1891): 3; Dan M. Puw to Barbara Henry, July 4, 1993.
9. *Y Drych* (April 23, 1891): 3.
10. Obituary of Mrs. Jane J. Jones. *Y Cyfaill* (1865): 252-53.
11. 1855 New York State Census, Town of Freedom, Cattaraugus County, p. 256.

Map showing Welsh settlement in Upstate New York.



Cattaraugus Welsh Counties of



Origin