Calvinists Incorporated: Welsh Immigrants on Ohio's Industrial Frontier

ISSN 0003-4827
Copyright © 1999 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use, not for redistribution.

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.10239

Hosted by Iowa Research Online
I was especially impressed with the objectivity of the writing. The authors are, after all, employees of the LDS church, and the book is printed by a subsidiary of the church-owned Deseret Book Company. It is a compliment to the publisher as well as to the authors that the publication is so objective. For example, the authors pointedly state (113) that many early English converts were mainly interested in a chance to emigrate to the United States—a fact not usually mentioned.

Like Bennett's book, this one would have been even better if the authors had a more detailed personal knowledge of the trail, had been more out in the dirt and experienced the power of place and the spirit of locale. Otherwise, the book deserves a rave review.

In conclusion buy, read, and enjoy both books!


REVIEWED BY CHERILYN A. WALLEY, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Anne Kelly Knowles's *Calvinists Incorporated* is a detailed and insightful study of Welsh immigration to Jackson and Gallia Counties, Ohio, in the nineteenth century. Using a wide variety of sources, from Welsh-language periodicals to local histories to personal correspondence and business records, Knowles fleshes out the often sketchy story of immigration for an oft-overlooked ethnic group in America. She is concerned not only with the usual questions of how and when people immigrated, but also digs deep into the reasons people immigrated. Borrowing heavily from the field of geography, Knowles examines migration patterns within Wales, links those patterns to eventual emigration from Wales, and then ties the migration and emigration to eventual immigration to southeastern Ohio.

*Calvinists Incorporated* begins with a general introduction to the topic of Welsh immigration to the United States, concentrating on the second wave, from 1795 and 1850. In that section, Knowles also educates readers about various patterns of Welsh immigration, including chain migration. Knowles argues that local circumstances combined with national economic trends to determine the timing of migration and emigration. After examining in depth the factors influencing internal migration patterns, especially in Cardiganshire, Knowles moves on to describe factors prompting emigration from Wales. Religion,
politics, and economics all combined to encourage emigration, but the ultimate decision was always a highly personal one. Two families in identical external situations often made opposite choices about emigration. In the third section of the book, Knowles examines Welsh participation in the charcoal iron industry in Jackson and Gallia Counties, and the Welsh communities' settlement in general. Knowles concludes that while the Welsh modeled their business practices after their American competitors, ensuring market viability, the Welsh instinctively used conflict-resolution techniques within their businesses that they had learned in their Welsh churches and communities. This distinct way of shaping personal and business interactions set the Welsh apart from their neighbors. Throughout the book, Knowles skillfully interweaves the influence that religion always seemed to have in the lives of the Welsh.

Knowles's work is an invaluable contribution to the study of Welsh-Americans, taking the subject to a new level of academic scrutiny. Her methodology is a lesson in tenacity and synthesis, showing that the Atlantic Ocean need not necessarily be a barrier to detailed immigration studies. And the use of geographical, or spatial, analysis to explain history adds a dimension of clarity that would otherwise be lacking. Most valuable for those interested in the history of Iowa, and of the Midwest in general, are Knowles's insights into the topic of immigration. She tries to get at the elusive but all-important reasons that people choose to leave their homelands, make a harrowing journey across land and sea, and start their lives anew in a strange place. Those reasons make up part of the immigrants' very being, their character, and influence their approach to life in their new home. The entire Midwest has a strong foundation of immigrant settlers; thus to understand the immigrants' motivations would be to better understand the heritage of the entire region. Knowles presents no startling conclusions or explanations that can be applied to all immigrants, but she provides a model for further inquiry into other ethnic groups and other settlements.


REVIEWED BY DAVID A. WALKER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

The sesquicentennial of James Marshall's discovery of gold in California renewed historical interest on that significant topic. The best contribution is Malcolm Rohrbough's Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and