

# Touring the Welsh Settlements of South Dakota, 1891

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## Introduction

One of the more detailed accounts of the Welsh settlements in South Dakota can be found in Chapter 32 of William D. Davies's *America, A Gweledigaethau Bywyd* [America, and the politics of life], written in Welsh and published by Joseph Williams in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, in 1897. The account was probably also published in *Y Drych*, the newspaper that employed Davies. Davies traveled through the eastern part of South Dakota in October and November 1891, visiting the various communities as a representative of the newspaper.

According to his earlier book *Llwybrau Bywyd* [The paths of life], Davies was born near Pen-boyr, Carmarthenshire, South Wales, on 15 June 1838. He received little formal education because of his family's poverty and his own poor health. After working for a few years in the South Wales coal and iron industry, he came to the United States in 1868, having at one time seriously considered becoming a minister of the Calvinistic Methodist church.<sup>1</sup> He spent most of his life, except for a trip to Wales in 1874, in Hyde Park and Scranton, Pennsylvania.

1. This Welsh church group, most memorably defined as "Calvinist in theology and Methodist in church government," was disbanded in 1919 when most of its members became associated with the Presbyterian church.

# AMERICA,

A

## GWELEDIGAETHAU BYWYD

YN CYNWYS DARLUNIAD O AMERICA, YN DDAAERYDDOL,  
AMAETHYDDOL, MWNYDDOL, LLAW-WEITHFAOL, MAS-  
NACHOL, GWLADWRIAETHOL, CYMDEITHASOL, A  
MOESOL, A CHYMYRY Y TALAETHAU UNEDIG.

AC YN YCHWANEGOL, CYNWYSA Y GYFROL, BENODAU  
AR RAI O BYNCIAU DYDDOROL Y DYDD, YN NGHYDA  
DETHOLION O "LWYBRAU BYWYD," CYFROL A  
GYHOEDDWDYD GAN YR AWDWR YN Y TAL-  
AETHAU UNEDIG, GAN

WILLIAM D. DAVIES,  
SCRANTON, PA., TALAETHAU UNEDIG AMERICA,

YR HWN SYDD WEDI BYW 25 O FLYNYDDAU YN AMERICA,  
AC WEDI TEITHIO Y DEUDDEG DIWEDDAF O'R  
CYFRIW O FOR Y WERYDD I'R TAWEL-  
FOR, FEL GORUCHWYLIWR TEITHIOL  
Y "DRYCH," ETC.

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Y TRYDYDD ARGRAFFIAD.

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MERTHYR TYDFIL:

JOSEPH WILLIAMS, ARGRAFFYDD, SWYDDFA'R "TYST."

—  
1897.

*The title page of America, by William D. Davies. Chapter 32 of this book contains the material, here translated, on Welsh settlements in South Dakota.*

*A literal translation of the title, subtitle, and author's credits reads: "America, and the politics of life: Containing a picture of America, geographically, agriculturally, as to its mines, its manufacturing, its businesses, its states, its social and moral condition, and the Welsh of the United States. And in addition, containing a series of chapters on some of the interesting points of the day, along with a selection from 'The Paths of Life,' a volume which was published by the author in the United States, by WILLIAM D. DAVIES, Scranton, Pa., United States of America, who has lived 25 years in America, and has traveled during the last twenty on the saddle from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans as the traveling supervisor for 'The Drych,' etc."*

His interest in Welsh settlements developed when he spent the period from October 1881 to March 1883 traveling around the settlements in the eastern and middle western states to raise funds for the reconstruction of the Hyde Park chapel of the Calvinistic Methodists, which had collapsed when a mine beneath it destroyed its foundations. He collected \$3,493.36 minus his own expenses. The reader will note that Davies found some people living in South Dakota in 1891 who had helped him collect for this project.

Davies, who had contributed letters, poems, and essays to several of the Welsh language publications in this country, ultimately turned to a career in journalism and in May 1883 became traveling supervisor for the *Drych*. His duties, as implied by his travel accounts, included visiting the Welsh settlements, calling upon the local agents (citizens who wrote news stories for the paper), and attempting to gain new subscribers. The reports of his travels appeared in the newspaper and, later, in the two collections of his works mentioned previously. The earlier book, *Llwybrau Bywyd*, includes accounts of his travels during the years 1883 to 1889. The second, *America*, in which the following material about South Dakota appears, deals with the period from 1890 to 1892. Both books include essays, poetry, and some autobiographical sketches. Davies died in 1900, presumably still associated with the newspaper.

*Y Drych* [The mirror], the newspaper's official title, is abbreviated consistently by Davies as *Drych*. One of the oldest of the Welsh-language newspapers in the United States, it was founded in New York City in 1851, but it was soon moved to Utica. Up until the 1920s, it was written exclusively in Welsh. But by the 1940s, it was almost entirely in English, and it is still being published today.

As implied by Davies's account, the Welsh in South Dakota came primarily from Wisconsin, Iowa, and southern Minnesota rather than directly from Wales. Generally, the Welsh immigrants landed on the east coast, perhaps stayed for a time at such a place as Utica, New York, and then moved westward—usually to Ohio or Pennsylvania, later to Illinois and/or Wisconsin, then to Iowa or Minnesota, and later still to Nebraska, South Dakota, or Colorado. Some went all the way to the west coast. Davies's material about the neighboring settlements in Nebraska indicates that the Welsh arrived at about the same time in both states and were primarily attracted by the inexpensive farm land that was available there. The influx of the Welsh into South Dakota reached its height between 1870 and 1890. Cen-



sus figures indicate that 695 and 549 foreign-born Welsh resided in the state in 1890 and 1900 respectively.

The Welsh settlement at Powell, Edmunds County, was the largest of the various Welsh communities Davies visited in South Dakota in 1891. The history of Powell, which is better known than that of the other Welsh colonies in the state, illustrates some of the patterns and problems common to all Welsh settlements of the period. The community of Welshmen was guided to Dakota Territory in 1883 during the Second Dakota Boom by William E. Powell, a Welsh poet who was immigrant agent for the Milwaukee Road and an enthusiastic Dakota boomer. Davies had met Powell (also known as Gwilym Eryri) in Milwaukee early in 1883 before Powell had brought the Welsh to Dakota. "I saw Gwilym Eryri," wrote Davies, "in his office and found him surrounded by the produce of Dakota, large sheafs of wheat and corn, etc. and with the poet in the middle. He looks like a poet to say nothing of the poetry which fell from his lips . . . in presenting the glory of 'Paradisical Dakota,' because he has recently returned from looking at the charming sights which are to be found there. He intends to go there again soon."<sup>2</sup>

Powell led his group of Welshman—as many as three hundred people according to some accounts—to Edmunds County on 28 or 29 March 1883.<sup>3</sup> He had advertised widely in the East, especially in Wisconsin communities, for Welsh to join in his Dakota venture: "Welsh farm boys and itinerant farmhands were eager to own land which could be obtained at a small outlay of cash and immediately took advantage of the special excursion to South Dakota."<sup>4</sup> Many of the original Welsh settlers at Powell were bachelors, but within a short time, many had returned east or to Wales for brides. A group of single Welsh women later took homesteads in the county. Unmarried women came as workers in the homes of other families, and the community continued to grow through 1886.<sup>5</sup>

In the first years of settlement, 1883-1885, crops were good because of favorable weather and a higher than average rainfall. In 1886, 1887, and 1889, however, drought conditions prevailed,

2. William E. Davies, *Llwybrau Bywyd* [The paths of life] (Utica, N.Y.: T. J. Griffiths, 1889), pp. 142-43, trans. Phillips G. Davies.

3. See *Ipswich Tribune*, 20 Oct. 1966, and Willis Everson, "History of Welsh Settlement in Edmunds County from 1883 to 1895" (M.A. thesis, University of South Dakota, 1946), pp. 25-27.

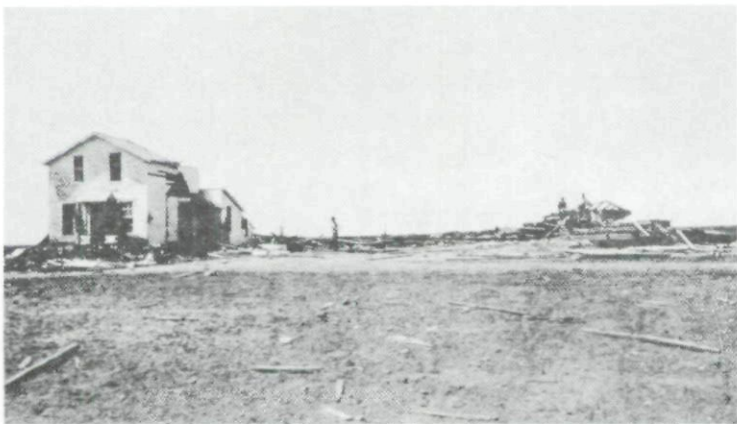
4. Everson, "Welsh Settlement in Edmunds County," p. 25.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

with grasshoppers compounding the problem. Prairie fires added their contribution to the poor farming situation, and a number of homesteaders left Dakota in those years. Nevertheless, a fair number of Welshmen remained in the area, as the census statistics above indicate, and their descendants continue to reside around Ipswich in Edmunds County.<sup>6</sup> Davies, in 1891, encountered many of these early pioneers and commented on their hardships, adding that Gwilym Eryri should not be ashamed of his choice of Dakota for settlement because "he is not accountable for the rain all the time."

In addition to the settlement at Powell, Davies also visited Welsh communities and individuals in Aurora, Miner, Lake, Marshall, Brown, and Moody counties during his 1891 tour of South Dakota. In some cases, Chapter 32 of Davies's *America, A Gweledigaethau Bywyd* contains the only printed information available about the Welsh who settled in these counties. The

6. Ibid., pp. 34-36; *Ipswich Tribune*, 20 Oct. 1966.




In 1911, a tornado destroyed most of the buildings in Powell, Edmunds County. The above ruins are those of the Big Shanty, which the Welsh settlers had built on their arrival in 1883. The building originally served as general headquarters for the group with many of them residing in it communally until individual shanties could be built. The Welsh pioneers also held church meetings and school classes in the structure (See Ipswich, "Home of the Yellowstone Trail," 1883-1958: 75th Anniversary Book [Valley City, N.Dak.: Brown Lithographing Co., ?1958], pp. 97-98).

## PENOD XXXII.

## GWIBDAITH TRWY SOUTH DAKOTA.

AR YMWELIAD AM Y TRO CYNTAF A SEFYDLIADAU  
CYMREIG DAKOTA.

 'R diwedd daethum i weled "Gwlad yr Addewid," South Dakota; a'r dref gyntaf yr ymwelais â hi oedd Plankinton (lle y cartrefa Edward E. Williams, a'i deulu, gynt o Dodgeville, Wis.—Yr oeddynt yn gadael y dref hono am y wlad newydd hon pan yr oedd y Cardotyn yn Dodgeville yn casglu at gapel Hyde Park, Pa., naw mlynedd yn ol). Oddiyno cyfeiriais i'r wlad i chwilio am y Cymry; ac ar ol myned rhyw chwech neu saith milldir i gyfeiriad y de-ddwyrain, cyrhaeddais fwthyn Owen Owen, yr hen lanc; ac, O! bobl anwyl, dyna olygfa! Gan na byddai ond rhyfyg i mi geisio ei darlunio, gwell gollwng llen dystawrwydd dros yr olygfa. Yn nesaf ymwelais â Hugh Hughes, a'i deulu, o Dodgeville—teulu siriol a chroesawus. Mae Hughes yn un o'r rhai beiddgar mewn digrifwch, ac yr oedd ar ei uchel fanau pan yn fy anog i adferteisio yr hen lanc sydd yn cartrefu yn ei deulu, sef Robert Roberts, brawd-yn-nghyfraith W. E. Powell, tywysog Dakota. Wrth wrandaw ar Hughes, gallwn feddwl mai un gwylaidd iawn gyda'r merched, ac heb ddysgu y ffordd i garu, yw Roberts; a dywedai Hughes wrthyf am ddyweyd wrth y merched fod Roberts yn llanc hawdd ei garu, a bod ganddo ddau chwarter *section* o dir bras Dakota, saith o geffylau, a thua 30 o wartheg. A gallwn i dybio wrth edrych ar



following translation of this account is quite literal, except that some of Davies's extremely long paragraphs have been broken up, and many of his sentences have been divided or combined. His rather idiosyncratic usage of numbers, capital letters, and abbreviations has not been altered. Except for *Drych*, words printed in italics in the following translation were printed in English in the original.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A SHORT TRIP THROUGH SOUTH DAKOTA.

#### ON A VISIT FOR THE FIRST TIME TO THE WELSH SETTLEMENTS OF DAKOTA.

Finally, I went to see the "Land of Promise," South Dakota, and the first town which I visited in it was Plankinton (where Edward E. Williams and his family, formerly of Dodgeville, Wis., lives. They were leaving that town for this new country when I was collecting funds in Dodgeville for the chapel at Hyde Park, Pa., nine years ago). From there I went to the country to look for the Welsh; and after going some six or seven miles in the south-east direction, I reached the cottage of Owen Owen, the old boy; and O!, dear people, what a sight it was! Because it would be rashness for me to try to describe it, it will be best for me to draw a curtain of silence over the scenery. Next I visited with Hugh Hughes and his family, from Dodgeville—a cheerful and gracious family. Hughes is one of those who is both daring and amusing, and he was in high spirits when I urged him to advertise about an old boy who is living with his family; that is, Robert Roberts, the brother-in-law of W. E. Powell, a prince in Dakota. By listening to Hughes, I was able to believe that he is a very modest one with the ladies, and that Roberts is one who has not been taught the way to love. Hughes said of him that, speaking of the ladies, Roberts is an easy lad to love because he has two quarter *sections* of rich Dakota land, seven horses, and about 30 cows. And I was able to consider by looking at the face of Roberts and listening to him that he would be perfectly willing to get a letter of love from some good looking girl whom he would like to be the wife of one of the great farmers of Dakota.

After selling the *Drych* to Roberts, and "The Paths of Life" to Hughes, Frank (one of the famous horses of Dakota) went with me

in his carriage to the home of William Parry. And although Frank was being held by his ears, I considered that he was a faithful and willing servant to do good works, because after going with us to the end of the day's travels, he went with his young master, little Hughes, to their home quietly. After having a night to renew my strength, Griffith Parry and Prince and I went in the cart around about to see the Welsh of the district. Richard Oliver and his family, formerly of the Waukesha, Wis., district, are among those who saw a hard time in Dakota between bad crops and bad health. Richard M. Parry and his family, also of the Waukesha district, I am able to believe, are doing fairly well on half a mile of land with some 400 to 500 sheep, but he lost the companion of his life about two years ago. John L. Reynolds and his family, formerly of Maesteg, Glamorganshire, South Wales, are an amusing group except that the health of Reynolds is bad. Thomas Jones and his family, also from the Waukesha district, are looking cheerful and hearty. And there is the family of David T. Williams who was away from home in the Black Hills working. Mrs. Williams and the children are doing well on the farm. I returned to enjoy the hospitality of the family of William Parry who are living comfortably in Dakota on a three-quarter *section* of land. Mrs. Parry is the daughter of the old faithful deacon, formerly of Seion, and after that of Jerusalem, Wales, Waukesha, Wis., but who departed during the past year to the Jerusalem which is up in the heavenly Canaan. Parry and his family moved from Waukesha, Wis., ten years ago to Spain, Wyoming. Six years ago they left there for this place. I spent the Sabbath with Rees E. Jones and his family, the overseer of the *Drych* in the district, and one of the family of Park, Waukesha. Mrs. Jones is the daughter of Watkin J. Evans of the same district and who moved to Plankinton, Dakota, about ten years ago. They were the first Welsh to settle in this neighborhood. Despite the dry years in a new land, they are doing well on 480 acres of excellent land. They got an excellent crop of various grains this year. I went also to see the Rev. J. G. Harrison, but although he was in the middle of dust and busyness because he was threshing by hand, we had a good deal of conversation. I believe that Mr. Harrison is farming and not preaching, because he is not preaching to the small church of the Calvinistic Methodists at present because he feels that they are too weak to support a minister, for there are only some 12 Welsh families at the present time. But they expect to see additional Welsh coming to this fruitful and beautiful land after this productive year.



After being accompanied by the dear Rees E. Jones in his carriage back to Plankinton, I took the carriages of the Chic., Mil., & St. Paul back to Mitchell and from there to the North through Woonsocket, a new and flourishing town at the Junction of the Southern Minnesota and the James River Division. I was able to come across only two Welsh, but if some Welsh person should be compelled to remain over night in the town, there is a comfortable place in the Dumont House.

I turned my face to the East once again for 30 miles until I reached Roswell. And from here I went six miles to the North until I arrived at the Welsh area where I got a comfortable resting place among the family of Thomas Williams who had come here eight years ago from the Foreston, Iowa, district. By looking at them and their property, one is convinced that they are industrious and successful because they have raised ten children, all of them are living, and six of them have become married and live near the old people except for Richard, and he is living near Blaenycæ, Wis. Mr. Williams was a soldier for the last two years of the Civil War, and was present when Lee and his soldiers laid their weapons down. And on the morning that I am writing these notes, there came to my hand through the *express* an old crooked stick which had been polished from a *laurel root* and which Mr. Williams picked up on his original visit at the field of Hatcher's Run, Virginia, after the War. He gave it as a present to his father; that is, Richard Williams, Nant, near Cambria, Wis., and on his death it came to be the property of Evan Hughes, a tailor from Racine, who drowned in lake Michigan recently. And today the famous stick came back into the hands of its original owner, and it is likely that it will remain in the family from age to age as a family *relic* for hundreds if not for thousands of years.

There are some fifteen Welsh farmers in the district, almost all of them from Wisconsin. They include Thos. Williams, Nant, the brother of the owner of Lwyn Mwyn, Bark River, Wis., but after that of Lime Spring, Ia., and the families of their children; four of the children of Edward Morgan of Bark River who have purchased farms; three of the Felix's from the Waukesha district; and three of the children of Howell Jenkins; T. T. Thomas; two of the children of William Lewis of Foreston, Ia., etc. The Welsh in this district are in a hopeful mood concerning their circumstances in the face of the good crop of this year. The land is good and it has a beautiful appearance to it, but they, like the Welsh of Plankinton, in the religious sense are a little pale because this is a new area, and the Welsh have divided themselves, with the

younger people having formed a Presbyterian church and the old people and some of the youths holding religious meetings as a Calvinistic Methodist church with the Rev. John Isaac Hughes preaching to them about once a month. Of course, they also have special sermons from special preachers whom they have found acceptable to themselves.

From Roswell I took the train for nine miles to Howard where I was received at the station by the poet and the cultivated literary man, Ifan Cynidr Parry. He is an earnest worker in whatever thing he takes on to do. And it is important that he should be a great worker because he runs his farm himself, and his wife and he run a *restaurant* and shop successfully in a building of their own on the chief street in the center of the town. Furthermore, Mr. Parry is up to date with national affairs such as being a Prohibitionist, and also he is with all his heart a part of this new party of the people. The more that one is in his society, the clearer to all become his glittering abilities and principles. He enjoys judging the poets, the musicians, and the people who recite.<sup>7</sup> And as to the *elocutionists* and the great reciters, he places Ben. Griffiths before Bardd Coch [The Red Bard]<sup>8</sup> because the latter mispronounces vowels, etc. He also considers that Miss Lizzie G. Harris excells Cynonfard in eloquence. But he put a prohibition on me to make mention of all his opinions. He wished me to send his best wishes to Dewi Cwmtwrch, John Jenkins of Scranton, and others of his old friends.

I did not come across more than one other Welshman in Howard; that is, Hugh L. Hughes of Portage, Prairie, Wis., who runs the extensive Lumber Yard in the town. After saying farewell to the Parry family; that is, Mrs. Parry (the sister of D. D.

7. I. C. Parry of Howard is listed as one of the judges of an *eisteddfod* held on 5 March 1891 at Powell, South Dakota. The *eisteddfod*, a Welsh cultural institution, was designed to allow community members an opportunity to display their literary and musical talents in a competitive environment. The *eisteddfod* had a long history in Wales, dating back to the twelfth century, and these Welsh settlers continued the tradition in their new homes. The one held in Powell in 1891 provided for competition in the areas of essay writing, formal speaking, poetry, extemporaneous speaking, and singing. See Everson, "Welsh Settlement in Edmunds Country," pp. 10-11 and App. B.

8. This name, along with Cynonfard, Dewi Cwmtwrch, and Gwilym Eryri (William E. Powell) later, is technically called a bardic name. Partly because of the scarcity of Welsh surnames, poets and other writers would assume a name for use in literary competitions. Some of these names, like Bardd Coch, are physical descriptions—presumably this poet had red hair; others, like Gwilym Eryri, "William of Snowden," identify the poets' home districts.



Jones of Scranton) and their sons and a sweet, lively, and understanding girl; Parry and I went in his carriage for about 11 miles in the easterly direction until we reached the Welsh district where there are about 40 Welsh families who were full of greetings, industrious, and hopeful in their circumstances because of the good crop of this year. Because of the multitude of them, I was not able, somehow, to observe the families of each one of them one by one although that would have been, upon consideration, a very pleasant thing to have done. In a religious sense, things seem favorable in the church of the Calvinistic Methodists under the care of the Rev. John Isaac Hughes who is respected and successful as a minister. There is a beautiful congregation there, a chapel full of those of all ages and of various talents. And because I was in their midst for Sunday and the Sunday School, I had the advantage of seeing their various talents, and I consider them to be comparable in praiseworthiness to the churches in the old settlements in the East, since it seems that nothing but a year or two of additional agricultural success will make the church self-supporting and strong. Doubtless it will be good for the friends of the Rev. John Isaac Hughes to hear that he and his family in their intentions are well on the way to succeeding as a family in both an agricultural way as well as a churchly one. There is an English Presbyterian church in the district, and some Welsh belong to it such as the Rev. R. W. Jones. I was glad to see the two Welsh ministers friendly and speaking respectfully of each other.

From Winfred, I took the carriages of the Chic., Mil., & St. Paul for 147 miles in a northerly direction to Aberdeen, a young and beautiful town where there are some five thousand inhabitants—the central city of the extensive and rich Dakota prairies. The Chic., Mil., & St. Paul runs from it in four directions, the Chic. & N. W. in two directions, and the Chic. & G. W. in two directions. But the business there is low at the present time because of the failure of the crops during the past two years. I was not able to discover more than four Welsh families in the town; they are the Rev. D. T. Rowlands, who is recovering after his late illness; Wm. O. Williams, who keeps a large *livery stable* there; Mrs. Mary J. Cardy and her sons; and E. G. Davies and his family.

I took the Chic., Mil., & St. Paul for 26 miles to the West again, to Ipswich, the county seat of Edmunds Co., which perhaps contains a thousand people, and several of the chief inhabitants are Welsh. There is J. H. Hughes, the sheriff, and John Williams, the son of Benjamin Williams of Picatonica, who is in the Recording



Office. James D. Jones, formerly of Bristol Grove, Minn., is the postmaster and his brother is helping him. Jones has a large *drug store*. Also J. Picton and T. H. Williams have a shoe selling business; Robert J. Roberts works as a wood cutter; J. Owens is a blacksmith; and E. O. Williams sells clothes and is doing well at it. L. E. Evans and his brother, formerly of Newark, have a *hardware store*; Wm. D. Jones is a butcher, and several other Welsh are much respected there. There is also Griffith Jones, the old agent for the *Drych*, who is in his bed suffering from bad health, and outside of the town is John E. Thomas, formerly of Summit Hill, Pa., who owns two quarter *sections* of farm land within a mile of the city and is doing well. D. D. Rees, of Caernarvonshire, South Wales, has built the most beautiful house in the town and is ready to receive a woman for his comfort. He owns two or more farms. John Prosser is keeping a successful *livery*. It is likely that there are more and that I would be able to give their names if I were more familiar with the place. Morris and Davies, the *ranchers*, live in the town part of the time and on the *ranch* which is about 20 miles to the North West.

Powell is located 12 miles to the south of Ipswich.<sup>9</sup> I drove to the home of D. M. Jones, half way between the two towns before resting. And then I went to visit the brothers<sup>10</sup> Rowlands, D. D. Jones, D. Jones, W. D. Jones, Peter Evans, Evan G. Jones, Robert Jones, George Morris, John Jones, and D. A. Jones, and went all the way to the home of John P. Hughes where he is caring for two of the daughters of Mr. Benjamin Williams, the agent for the *Drych* in Picatonica, Wis. He also is taking the responsibility for the family of J. P. Hughes, and his sister is teaching the children of Dakota concerning the duties of life. After a night of rest I went back some miles in a southwesterly direction and saw John Lewis, R. Reneman, John Davis, John Evans, and the family of D. Lamb, Mrs. J. J. Williams, D. Evans, John B. Evans, and went all the way to the homes of John W. Williams, the old lad, where I lodged for another night. Then I visited Thomas Owen, John J. Jones, John Richards, Mrs. Roberts, Joseph Williams, Hugh Evans, Thomas Davies, Richard H. Williams, Owen R. Thomas, William U. Williams, Levi Davies, and O. E. Williams, one of the

9. For a detailed account of the Welsh group at Powell, see Everson, "Welsh Settlement in Edmunds County."

10. Davies uses "brother," and occasionally "father," in a nonliteral sense. He apparently means that the person in question is an officer or at least a member in particularly good standing in the Calvinistic Methodist church. "Father" appears to refer to a person of both considerable age and high religious reputation.

old conductors of the Beggar<sup>11</sup> at Foreston, Iowa, nine years ago; and I enjoyed myself in his home over the Sabbath. That afternoon he went with me to the chapel of the Calvinistic Methodists, and the strange preacher<sup>12</sup> was asked to preach in the place of the Rev. R. V. Griffiths. But because the Sabbath was windy, the congregation was a little bit thin. They have a large and tasteful chapel. From there I went to the larger and more beautiful chapel of the Congregationalists, and I heard their minister, the Rev. J. T. Lewis, give an educational sermon on the story of Ruth and Naomi. But in the evening he gave way to the strange preacher.

On Monday, I left there for the house of W. U. Williams and to see the Welsh of Powell City. The first of those was Daniel Williams, and after that D. T. Hughes, the mayor of the town, and the old brother Morgans the blacksmith. From there I went to see John J. Rees, and finally I visited with Llyellyn, the postmaster and the only merchant in the town. Powell is not booming like Tacoma and Seattle, but I did not see either an empty store or an empty house in Powell City. Then I went to the outskirts of the town and to the home of the Rev. R. V. Griffith, O. Thomas, D. D. Jones, Wm. T. Jones, Griffith Jones, Hugh Evans, Hugh Roberts, and Hugh Griffith, the former agent for the *Drych*, who has been sick in his bed with three forms of sickness so that there is fear for his recovery. Next I visited Seth Lewis, the Rev. J. T. Lewis, John L. Morris, Thomas M. Evans, Thos. A. Evans, W. Thomas, Griffith Pritchard, Thomas R. R. Jones, D. Morris, the Rev. John H. Griffiths, Evan Jenkins, Owen Jones, Rowland Williams, Evan Williams, John Pugh, E. S. Williams, Thomas Lloyd Davies, and John Griffiths. Now I have named the Welsh of the Powell

11. When referring to his trip to raise funds for the Hyde Park chapel, Davies frequently calls himself *Cardodyn*, the Welsh word for "beggar."

12. The "strange preacher" is probably Davies, who, like many religious people in this church at the time, was allowed to preach occasionally despite his lack of formal training. Judging from other material in his travel accounts, his favorite subject was prohibition.

Main street of Ipswich, 1890





district fairly completely, but it is likely that scores have forsaken the place having given slander to the new territory. That is, it is good land, beautiful in its appearance and strong in its soil. I believe that there is no reason for Gwilym Eryri to be ashamed of the choice that he made for a place for a Welsh settlement because he is not accountable for the rain all the time. I am able to think that the Powell district will succeed in the future if it should happen that the Welsh keep their hold on there and remain. It is likely that their *crop* was lighter last year than it was in any other part of Dakota, and the Russian gall added to the anxieties of the people besides the dryness of the last three years. Because of unfortunate variety of the new land, it is a little hard for our compatriots who got here before this time, and, as a consequence, their houses are a little poor and small.

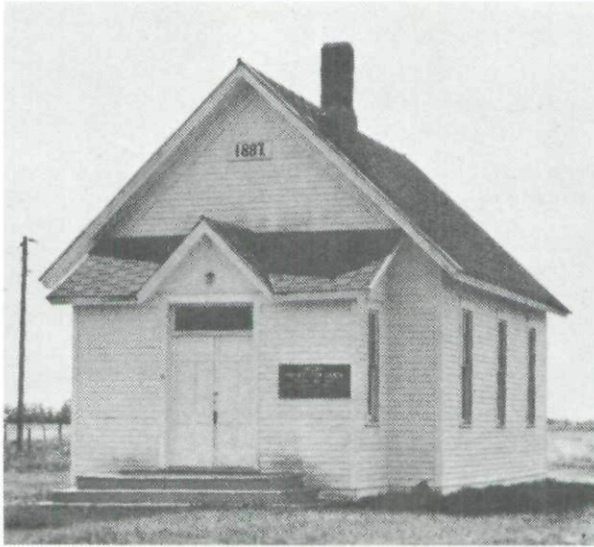
I went next to Plana, a town about ten miles to the east of Aberdeen. There are not many Welsh living in the town; none but only the Rev. Owen Jones and his wife. But there are three boarding houses (but two of them are empty), a Calvinistic Methodist chapel, the station of the Great Northern, the Post Office, a large store with a variety of saleable items which is run by Daniel Jones, the son of Thomas Jones of Lake Emily, Wis. It is worth mentioning that all the business of the town of Plana is run by this young Welshman.<sup>13</sup> He also is the postmaster. He runs a *granary* and he buys grain from the surrounding land in order to send it to far lands. Also he is the justice of the peace, the recorder of the borough, and a deacon who has been called by the Old Body<sup>14</sup> in the town. But according to the habit of the large merchants of the cities, Mr. Jones is living out in the country beyond the *city limits*. In the area surrounding the town there are about 25 Welsh families, and I visited with them in a general way, beginning with Robert Thomas and Robert Owen, a deacon, and their families where I felt completely at home at once. I went to see Thomas E. Williams and Thomas Ellis where I had a night

13. Welsh pioneers from Wisconsin settled the Plana area in 1881-1882. The town itself came into existence in 1887 when the Great Northern Railroad came through and D. D. Jones built a store, calling it Plana. See *Early History of Brown County, South Dakota: A Literature of the People by Territorial Pioneers and Descendants* (Aberdeen, S.Dak.: Western Printing Co., 1965), p. 79.

14. The parent church of Calvinistic Methodism in America, the Welsh Presbyterian Church of Wales, was affectionately named *Hen Gorff*, which is translated "Old Body." Use of this term in America seems to have been unusual. I express thanks to Dr. R. Lewis Jones of Mason City, Iowa, for this information and for assistance with footnote 17.



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*Welsh church at Plana*

of rest. Then I visited with John Hughes, John T. Williams, and Moses Roberts, who is still a great old friend of the *Drych*. It was necessary for me to stay the night with Morgan G. Jones and his family. He is the son of the old father, Evan E. Jones of Bangor, La Crosse, Wis., and Mrs. Jones is the daughter of the old brother, John Protheroe of the same place. I inform their friends in Wisconsin that they and their children are well and happy and remember them. Among the host, I visited at the home of W. J. Rowlands, and Mrs. Rowlands wished me to remember her to the people of Utica in a special manner, and especially her old friend, Mrs. Richard E. Roberts. I am able to believe that the Welsh of the district have held on well during the unsuccessful years which have passed by. The crops were light here as they were in Powell this year, and they averaged from five to fifteen bushels an acre.

The church of the Calvinistic Methodists looks fairly successful under the care of the young, hopeful man, Owen Jones, formerly of Chicago, and there is respectful talk by the people under his care. The membership of the church is about 50.<sup>15</sup> Some of the

15. An account of this Plana church group, written by the previously mentioned deacon Robert Owen, appears in *Early History of Brown County*, pp. 81-82.

Welsh from the Bath area go to the English-speaking church because the Welsh-speaking one is a bit too far away. I remained a night at Bath in the house of the only Welsh person who is there, T. J. Pritchard, the blacksmith. He and his wife take interest in nurturing "Pure Breed S. S. Hamburgs," and they are succeeding with it.

The day after that they went with me again to Langford, about 35 miles to the north-east of Bath, and the first Welsh persons whom I came across were W. Ap Williams<sup>16</sup> and his sons. There are not many Welsh in the town, but the few who are are among its chief citizens. W. Ap Williams is a *retired gentleman*; the Hon. Richard A. Rowlands and his sons run one of the largest stores in the town; Aneurin Owens, the son of W. Owens of Caledonia, Wis., and Robert, his son-in-law, from Blaendyffryn, Wis., are dealers in wheat; R. E. Jones, the son of Wm. W. Jones of Bath, runs a large *livery stable*; and the old brother, John T. Roberts, formerly from around Utica, N. Y., farms successfully near the town. Rowland Williams, the brother of Ap, is also in the town. This is all that I was able to come across there.

Spain is the central point of the Welsh in Marshall county. There is their *Post Office* and the goods store of Evan O. Jones, formerly of the Welsh Prairie, Wis., district. Also in the town is the working place of D. R. Jones, the blacksmith, formerly of Columbus, Wis., the station of the Chic., Milwaukee & St. Paul, and a chapel of the Calvinistic Methodists. The dwelling place of Evan R. Owen, formerly of Caledonia, is there. These are the ones who are supporting the town of Spain. Spain also has a pretty and debtless chapel and there was a numerous congregation in it on Sunday, October 25th when I was there and listened to the Rev. J. H. Griffith, of Powell, deliver two good sermons with a little of the old Welsh tinkle to them. The land is good and beautiful, and the soil is rich around Spain, and there are from 20 to 30 Welsh who own some of the land. They got fairly good crops this year, and it is possible to think that this will come to be a successful settlement in not too long a time.

The District Meeting<sup>17</sup> was held in Winfred the last day of October and the first of November. The meeting was begun at 10

16. *Ap* is the Welsh equivalent of "Mac" or "Fitz," all meaning "son of."

17. As the account implies, the Calvinistic Methodist church scheduled two- or three-day meetings of its clergy and interested lay people, usually four times a year, in various districts. The meetings included discussions, sermons, and church business. It was not unusual for a visitor to attend one of the meetings outside his home district as Davies does here.



o'clock on Saturday morning with Rev. J. Isaac Hughes, the minister of the place, presiding. He was elected the president for three years. The secretary of the meeting was the deacon, Henry Foulkes. All the churches were represented, and the services moved along easily in an intelligent spirit. This meeting showed that the people of Dakota are up to date in morals because it decided that it is not right for Christians to take part in horse racing. In the general assembly there was a good discussion on the fifteenth Psalm. On Friday night there was an English sermon by the Rev. R. V. Griffith of Powell; on Saturday night by the Revs. Owen R. Morris of Bristol Grove, Minn., and Joseph Roberts of Minneapolis; and at 10 o'clock in the morning of Sunday by Owen Jones of Plana and R. V. Griffith of Powell; at 2 by R. V. Griffith and Joseph Roberts; and at 7 in the evening by Owen R. Morris and Joseph Roberts. I feel that all the preachers were good, and the chapel was full of attentive listeners. One is able to expect good fruits in the Christian conduct of the people of the district.

As a conclusion to the kindnesses of the Welsh of Lake and Miner counties, I enjoyed a night of hospitality from the old brother, Rowland Pritchard, who is intending to go quickly to Oregon to see his relatives; then he accompanied me gladly to meet the train at Howard. After selling the *Drych* to Hughes and getting a handshake of *good bye* from the Parry family, I went with him to Madison and I visited at the home of John B. Jones, and then he went with me as far as Flandreau where I saw John H. Roberts, the butcher, formerly of the Waukesha, Wis., district, and after that of Clay Co., Iowa. He is looking well and he does an extensive business. I saw that faithful subscriber to the *Drych*, Owen R. Roberts and his family out at their farm. He and his wife also are natives of the Waukesha district, and I am able to believe that they are doing well. David Price of the same district was not at home, but I saw his wife. They had conducted me nine years earlier around Bethesda, Waukesha, and I sold the *Drych* to David G. Williams. I saw Mr. Bebb, another Welsh farmer; and then he went with me through Egan and Sioux Falls, to Sioux City, Ia., and thus I departed from the land of promise—Dakota.

Now I am able to testify that it is better than I expected—more flat land and more good land than I had seen in any other state in the Union, and good roads. I found the Welsh appearing to be better in their circumstances than I had considered that they would be before I saw them. It is also likely that the morals of the state are beyond those of the majority of the States, and the



proof of this is that it is a Prohibition State. In all my movements I did not see the effect of alcoholic drink on anyone, but I did see some Welsh condemning Prohibition in their spirits because they were not able to get alcoholic drinks even in the *drug stores* and because they believe that some of the Prohibitionists are hypocrites! These are strong *arguments* against Prohibition by those who call themselves Prohibitionists, are they not! All things considered, I am inclined to think that Dakota, within the next ten years, will be one of the greatest and most successful agricultural states. I pray that the blessing and protection from on high for Dakota and its people will never forsake them.

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