

III. Reviews

III-A. Book: Through One Family's Eyes

by Susan Hollingworth (2015), CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 352 pages

The book looks at a family from western Ireland whose members moved to the United States and to Australia. By mid-1800, there were many factors that influenced migration from Ireland. For this family, the 3rd generation offspring married into families at the new locales that had a history in the area. In terms of the U.S., the collateral families were in the colonial period prior to the Great Migration of 1630. Besides detailing three generations of the Irish family, the book looks at some events, such as the Witch Trials and armed conflicts with the natives.

Introduction

The book tells a story about a family of Irish Catholic descent that originated in the area of Ireland where, as the author notes, the Catholics were penned west of the River Shannon. The focus is on two brothers, and their offspring, who migrated to the United States and Australia. The material used by the author pulls together three disparate threads of research that had been done in mid-to-late 1900s independently in Ireland, England, the U.S. and Australia.

For the two brothers, the book identifies the children, who they married, and the offspring down to the 3rd generation. Additional material applies to families related by marriage. In terms of the U.S., some of these families had old roots back to the founding of the country.

A few interesting historical events get attention. For example, a chapter lists the relations who had been involved in the Salem Trials. In another chapter, we find names of many who were sent out to the colonies as a punitive means. The first person in the list, Alexander Gordon, was a Royalist Scot who was sent to New England by Cromwell as an indentured servant. Alexander was able to work his way to freedom and to find success in his new country. Another chapter looks at the later migration period to Australia.

The subjects of the chapters were Currigans of Kiltybranks; Leaving Generation; 1st Generation born: England, American, Australia; 2nd Generation born: America, Australia; Conflicts in the New World; Witch Hunts; Up to the 'Great Migration' (1630); Transported Convicts; Early Free Settlers, Australia. A relationship table collects siblings and gives the names by generation. For each of the 2nd generation couples, the children (3rd generation) and their spouses are listed.

One of the brothers, Dominick (1812-1877) married Elizabeth Rabbit (1816-1887). The couple did not leave Ireland. Four of their eleven children went to the U.S. One ended up in Australia. The remainder of the children stayed in Ireland. Dominick's brother, Patrick (1817-1893), moved to England and then to the U.S. With the marriages, to the 3rd generation, the united family covers the whole of the colonial period through the U.S. Civil War.

Commentary

Personally, the book was a joy to read in that it bridged the snippets that had been available before now that had come from the disparate research attempts. Copies of research results had been distributed over the years without much context being carried along. So, here, at last, was a coherent look. Too, the book is written in a story form, somewhat. That is, there is a breezy tone. So, from a macro-perspective, the book will be a valuable resource.

In terms of genealogical studies, there is more work to be done. One relative, who is a biological scientist, has talked of these types of writing as gossip; this person said that about another. At the

very least, the book can be a point of departure to future work as well as a reminder of people and things past; the author did succeed in keeping the material organized.

The approach is similar to hundreds of books that were written one-hundred years ago. Those family books had been motivated by the 300th anniversary. Now, we have the 400th anniversaries coming up. One thing that happened 100 years ago was that stories got written and spread around that were not truthful in fact.

We suffer the consequence of this effort today. Some organizations will not allow the use of a family book as a source.

The author mentions that trees were left on ancestry.com for use by the reader and subsequent researchers. The approaches provided by ancestry.com has helped raise the awareness of genealogy and helped some people research. But, they also are enabling propagation of information that may be partly right, in one sense, and downright erroneous in another.

But, that is an on-going problem; essentially, there is nothing new with that issue except that the modern tools allow a much faster spread. And, the computer has taken on its own provenance, so to speak, due to issues being confounded. Untangling knots with their digitized twists will be a common theme for future researchers.

The recommendation for this book is that a follow-on effort builds a site that provides sources of good prominence with a clear presentation of what is known. Conjectural views are not to be discouraged as long as they have their warning labels in place. We can point to several examples. The Thomas Gardner Society, Inc. has an interest in this work and how it ought to be presented.

Documents

The recent release of the movie by Ron Howard, based upon the book *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex* by Nathaniel Philbrick, affords one example for sourcing material. Nathaniel Philbrick provided an extensive Notes section for each Chapter. There are many other examples.

For each of the source material, some notion of provenance ought to be required.

Notes:

We accept, graciously, the acknowledgement that material from Gardner Research “provided a valuable resource tool for my work” (pg 102), however there was no contact about content of the book between the author and Gardner Research. Our quest to find Thomas Gardner descendants in Australia continues.

Dominick Currigan and Elizabeth Rabbit are the 2nd great-grandparents of John M. Switlik who is President / Researcher of TGS, Inc. (see Annals/Research at thomasgardnersociety.org).