Migrations

Text Under Revision

With the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in the 12th century, Nolans began to wander farther afield. Some are believed to have distanced themselves ending up, for example, in County Galway, while others, especially in the context of the Crusades, may have sought closer ties ending up, for example, in France. The "De Nollent" family of Normandy which traces its ancestry back to the times of the Crusades is believed to be an example of the latter case but further research is required to establish a definitive link to the Nolans of Ireland.

Aside from these few possible early wanderings, the Nolan families and their ancestors lived, from time immemorial, in the province of Leinster, predominantly in County Carlow. It was only at the beginning of the 17th century that Nolans began to emigrate in large numbers to other parts of Ireland and beyond. This was largely precipitated by continuing troubles between, on the one hand, the native Irish and the Old English (i.e. the descendants of the early Anglo-Normans), and on the other, the English Planters and those who wished to impose Protestant parliamentary rule over Ireland.

In 1601, the Irish chiefs lost a major battle against the English in Kinsale. A few years later, in 1607, the northern Earls, unable and unwilling to live under English domination left for the courts and armies of Europe. Many accompanied them. This paticular event, now refered to as the Flight of the Earls, stripped Ireland of effective leadership for many years thereafter. At first slowly, then with more intensity, young men and families, following the example of the northern Earls, left their homeland seeking to improve their lot.

In the mid-1600's came the Cromwellian land confiscations and then in 1691 the loss of a major battle by the Irish in Limerick. At this point in time, many officers and soldiers, now refered to as the "wild geese", fled to the Continent in the hope of returning some day.

The last decade of the 1700's saw the "transportation" of a large number of individuals to other parts of the world, e.g. Australia, brought on by the need to free-up space in overcrowded prisons and to reduce the amount of monies paid out in welfare.

The failed Rebellion of 1798 also resulted in more "transportations" for those who were lucky enough to be spared from a hanging. In the 1800's, economic pressures in Ireland had reached the point where many more young men and families, seeing only a bleak prospect of making a living for themselves, opted to emigrate and to re-establish themselves elsewhere. The colonies in British North America and the newly independent United States looked particularly attractive.

In the mid to late 1840's, failed potato crops several years in a row precipitated a massive outward flow of Irish people bound for America, however many of them never made it, dying on overcrowded, ill-equipped ships or while waiting in quarantine stations on the other side of the Atlantic.

Besides the direct emigration out of Ireland, there were also secondary migration patterns. Two patterns of note are the migration of Nolan/Nowlan loyalists from the US to Canada at the end of the American Revolution and, starting around the 1830s, the migration in the other direction as more and more Irish emigrants were attracted by the generally milder climate of the US and the many new jobs being generated by the US economy e.g. building the Erie canal.