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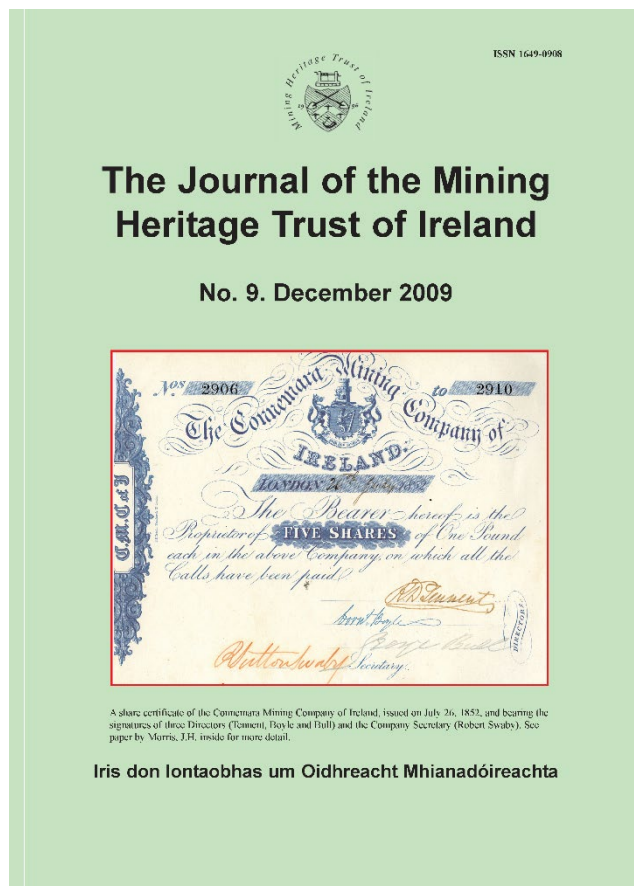
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THE IRISH ROAD TO LEADVILLE

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Abstract: Leadville, Colorado at 10,200 ft. in elevation, was the site of one of the greatest silver rushes in American history. By 1880, Leadville had become the most Irish town in the American West, with nearly 2300 Irish-born persons; close to ten percent of the population. The 1880 Federal Census Report for Lake County, Colorado, and the baptism and marriage records of Annunciation Parish in Leadville, offer us valuable information about the origins of Leadville's Irish population. This article attempts to construct a loose map of the migratory networks of 19th century Irish miners, networks that lead to and away from Leadville and its great silver boom. *Journal of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland*, 9, 2009, 43-56.

IRISH MINERS IN MIGRATION

To better understand the Irish population in Leadville during the 1880s, it is helpful to glance back at the 1870 Federal Census for Colorado Territory. This offers us a snapshot of Colorado's earliest Irish communities. Long before Leadville's silver boom, Colorado's Irish population was small and scattered. Out of a total of 41,030 persons listed in the 1870 Federal Census for Colorado, 1,614 of them were born in Ireland: 3.9%. The 1870 Federal Census does not allow us to identify second- or third-generation Irish Americans, but adding their numbers to the Irish-born population might push the total Irish population in 1870 Colorado to somewhere between 7-10% of the total population.¹

According to the 1870 Federal Census, the largest concentration of Irish-born persons in Colorado in 1870 lived in Gilpin County, in the gold-mining district of Central City/Blackhawk/Nevada, where 489 Irish-born residents represented 6.4% of the population. Nevada City had the highest percentage of persons born in Ireland, 9%, followed by Blackhawk at 6% and Central City at 5%. This correlates with the work of Lynn Perrigo in her social history of Central City, who writes that the Irish, "at first tended to segregate themselves in Nevada City and maintain a degree of clannishness."²

Denver City and the area of Arapahoe County outside of Denver had the only other large Irish population at that time. Two hundred and fifty-seven of Denver's 4,759 residents in 1870 were born in Ireland: 5.4%. There were just as many Irish in the rural areas of Arapahoe County outside of Denver. Nearly two-thirds of these-157 out of 256-were listed as part of a railroad-building crew, every one of them single, with an average age of thirty-one. Other mostly Irish railroad gangs are listed as working in Douglas County, south of Denver, and near the town of Kit Carson on the eastern plains. Table 1 reflects the various areas of Colorado in 1870 with the most Irish-born residents. Table 1 also lists the most common occupations for Irish men and women in each respective area.

The great majority of Irish men who immigrated to Colorado during this time were either miners or railroad workers, and to a lesser extent soldiers, laborers, and farmers. Table 1 paints a picture of the early Colorado Irish, scattered in pockets throughout the state. Nearly all the Irish miners were working in Gilpin County, with a few dozen in Clear Creek and Lake (future site of Leadville) counties. Irish railroad workers were scattered in locations in Douglas, Greenwood, and Arapahoe County-for the most part in the plains south and east of the city of Denver. Several dozen Irish soldiers are listed in Weld County (Ft. Sedgwick), Costilla County (Ft. Garland), and in Ft. Reynolds near Pueblo.

Irish women represented 24% of Colorado's Irish-born population in 1870. Out of seventy-three wage-earning Irish women in 1870 Colorado, forty-nine of them worked as domestic servants: 66%. Also revealing is that seven percent of the wage-earning Irish women in early Colorado were married. Table 2 lists the most common occupations of Irish women in 1870 Colorado.

COLORADO'S EARLIEST IRISH NETWORKS

Where did these Irish immigrants in early Colorado come from? What kinds of migration patterns and networks did they follow? The only clue in the 1870 Federal Census lies with the birthplaces of the spouses and children of the 1,614 Irish-born residents. Since the 1870 Federal Census does not list the birthplaces of the subject's parents, we cannot identify Irish Americans, limiting the examination of Colorado's 1870 Irish population to Irish immigrants.³

An analysis of the gold-mining region of Gilpin County, with the largest population of Irish immigrants in early Colorado, along with Colorado as a whole, offers us clues as to where these Irish immigrants might have lived in North America and the British Isles prior to moving west. Table 3 lists the ten most commonly referenced states.

¹ Census of Population and Housing, 1870: Colorado Territory. U.S. Bureau of the Census. Heritage Quest Online. Web.

² Lynn Perrigo, "A Social History of Central City, Colorado, 1859-1900," (Ph.D. Thesis, Univ. of Colorado, 1934) 354.

³ The 1880 Federal Census does list parents' birthplace, allowing us to examine the lives of Irish Americans.

District	No. of Irish-born Residents	Irish as % of Total Population	Most Common Occupation of Irish Men/Number Employed	Occupation as % of total wage-earning Irish Men	Most Common Occupation of Irish Women/Number Employed	Occupation as % of total wage-earning Irish Women
Gilpin Co.— Includes Central City, Blackhawk, Nevadaville	489	6.4%	Miner/200	60%	Domestic Servant/18	86%
City of Denver	257	5.4%	Laborer/76	58%	Domestic Servant/27	68%
Arapahoe County (Outside City of Denver)	256	12.4%	Railroad Worker/157	64%	None employed	-
Weld Co.	83	6.7%	Soldier/20	41%	Seamstress/2	40%
Clear Creek Co.	77	4.7%	Miner/38	69%	Domestic Servant/2	67%
Greenwood Co/Kit Carson	73	14.1%	Railroad Worker/34	58%	Domestic Servant/2	100%
Douglas Co.	59	4.3%	Railroad Worker/43	73%	None Employed	-
Jefferson Co.	52	2.5%	Farmer-Farm Laborer/13	34%	None Employed	-
Pueblo Co.	44	1.9%	Farmer-Farm Laborer/21	58%	Domestic Servant/1	100%
Bent Co.	41	6.9%	Soldier/27	75%	Domestic Servant/1	100%
Boulder Co.	38	2.3%	Farmer-Farm Laborer/19	68%	None Employed	-
Lake Co.	27	5.2%	Miner/20	74%	None Employed	-
Costilla Co.- Precinct #1	22	8.6%	Soldier/8	47%	None Employed	-

Table 1
Colorado Districts with Greatest Number of Irish-Born Residents: 1870
Source: 1870 Federal Census for Colorado Territory

Occupation	Percentage of Employed Irish Women	Number Single (S), Married (M), Widowed (W)
Domestic Servant	66%	49S
Washerwoman	7%	1M 4W
Teacher	7%	4S 1W
Cook	5%	3S 1M
Boardinghouse	3%	1M 1W
Seamstress	2%	1M 1W
Keeping Hotel	2%	1S 1M
Waitress	2%	2S
Nun	2%	2S

Table 2
Most Common Paid Occupations for Irish-Born Women in Colorado Territory, 1870
Source: 1870 Federal Census for Colorado Territory

Rank	Gilpin County Irish	% of total	Colorado Irish	% of total
1	New York	26%	New York	17%
2	Illinois	19%	Illinois	15%
3	Iowa	11%	Iowa	9%
4	Missouri	10%	Missouri	7%
5	Wisconsin	8%	Wisconsin	7%
6	Michigan	3.5%	Canada	6%
7	Ohio	3.5%	Kansas	4.5%
8	Kansas	3.5%	Pennsylvania	4%
9	Pennsylvania	3.5%	Michigan	3%
10	Canada	3%	New Mexico	3%

Table 3
In Ranking Order, the Most Common Birth States for Spouses and Children of Irish-Born Residents, Colorado Territory, 1870

These numbers suggest that the first Irish immigrants to come to Colorado—in particular, those who settled in Gilpin County mining camps—were largely from the urban centers of New York City and Chicago, along with more rural, agricultural areas of the Midwest. The high numbers for New York and Illinois could also have something to do with the high numbers of Irish canal workers in those states during the early to mid nineteenth century. Missouri's high ranking might be related to the large numbers of Irish miners in the mines near Joplin during the early 1870s.

The low numbers for Pennsylvania and Michigan are surprising, given the heavy mining districts in each state. These numbers changed dramatically as the Pennsylvania anthracite coal region enters the violent and vehemently anti-Irish era of the legendary Molly Maguires. By 1880, Pennsylvania is second only to New York in terms of states of origin for Leadville's American-born Irish, suggesting that a massive Pennsylvania to Colorado migration began in the 1870s.

Table 3 also helps us imagine the road that these Irish immigrants—many of them likely famine refugees—took as they migrated west. Larger numbers of Irish immigrants in the Gilpin County mining camps came from New York and Illinois. Many of these miners could have come from mining regions such as the lead mines of northwestern Illinois or the iron mines of northeastern New York State.

As Table 1 demonstrates, out of 522 persons listed in Lake County in 1870, only twenty-seven of them are Irish. Twenty of these are miners, presumably placer miners, near Oro City in California Gulch, about a mile southeast from what would later be named Leadville. Even as late as 1876, there were likely no more than a couple of dozen Irish miners living in Oro City and its surroundings, which by then, was a run-down gold camp that had seen its better years.

SILVER AND GOLD IN THE UPPER ARKANSAS VALLEY

In April of 1860, gold was discovered by Abe Lee at the top of the Arkansas River Valley, in a gorge south of Leadville that would come to be known as California Gulch. By 1865, thousands of miners were working California Gulch. This only lasted a handful of years, however, and by 1870 the numbers had decreased as most miners moved onto more promising locations.

The face of the Arkansas valley changed forever when gold miners in the area learned that the heavy dark sand-like waste that was clogging the sluice boxes was actually full of silver and lead. The black sludge was carbonate of lead carrying silver. Although the secret was kept for a couple of years, the silver rush was in full swing by 1877 and by 1880, Leadville was

nearly the largest city in the state.⁴ At its height, hundreds of people were arriving in Leadville each day.

In 1880, 2,081 Irish-born persons are listed in Lake County, Colorado. By comparison, Arapahoe County, where the city of Denver was located at the time, had 2,035 Irish-born citizens in 1880. Leadville very quickly became the most Irish place in Colorado, and in some ways it still is.⁵ The vast majority of the Leadville Irish of the nineteenth century traveled to Colorado because of Leadville. This drastic increase is largely the result of Leadville's legendary silver boom, which began in 1877 and gained momentum through the 1880s. Leadville developed an instant and extraordinarily large Irish community.

While many of these miners must have come from Gilpin County or early Denver, the majority was from newly developing networks of Irish miners extending across North America and the British Isles. The Leadville Irish of 1880 constituted one of the largest and most concentrated communities of Irish immigrants in the history of the state, and indeed in the entire Rocky Mountain region, a temporary community and one that has heretofore eluded historians. This was a massive ethnic community, the likes of which the young state of Colorado had never before witnessed.

IRISH MINING NETWORKS

As Timothy O'Neill demonstrates in his essay, "*Miners in Migration*," Irish miners moved within a vast network of mining camps. This network extended across the globe but was concentrated in the British Isles and North America. O'Neill concentrates his study on the connections between Irish copper mines in the Beara Peninsula of Ireland, Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and Butte, Montana. His research paints a direct link between the three copper-mining regions. O'Neill focuses on Irish copper miners, but what about Irish immigrants who mined coal, lead, silver, gold, and zinc? Do more extensive patterns exist if we look beyond the copper ties of the Beara Peninsula, the Michigan Upper Peninsula, and Butte? This article will attempt to expand our focus, to imagine the networks of Irish immigrant miners in much broader terms.

Migration patterns are a slippery subject to pin down, especially when dealing with miners, some of the poorest, most desperate, and most transient of immigrants; immigrants who left almost no trace of their lives, save for the piles of tailings that dot the landscapes where they toiled. Other than the Federal Census data, there simply is not much available that allows us a glimpse of these patterns except for the anecdotal oral histories of their descendants. The case of Leadville, Colorado calls us to re-imagine the *purpose* of migration patterns of Irish miners in North America. Were Irish miners in search of work in the types of mines where they had experience and knowledge, such as the copper miners in O'Neill's study? The evidence in

⁴ For a very good and brief summary of this early Leadville history, see Kathleen Fitzsimmons, "Silver City: The Tallest Town in America Grows Taller Still." *American Heritage* April 2000. For much more detail, see Don L. and Jean Harvey Griswold, *The Carbonate Camp Called Leadville* (The University of Denver Press, 1951) 22; Christian Buys, *A Quick History of Leadville* (Western Reflections Publishing Company, April 15, 2004); Edward Blair, *Leadville; Colorado's Magic City* (Boulder: Pruett Publications, 1980).

⁵ *Census of Population and Housing*, 1870, 1880, 1890: *Lake County and Arapahoe County, Colorado Territory*. U.S. Bureau of the Census.

⁶ Timothy O'Neill, "Miners in Migration: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Irish and Irish-American Copper Miners," in Kevin Kenney, ed., *New Directions in Irish American History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003) 61-77.

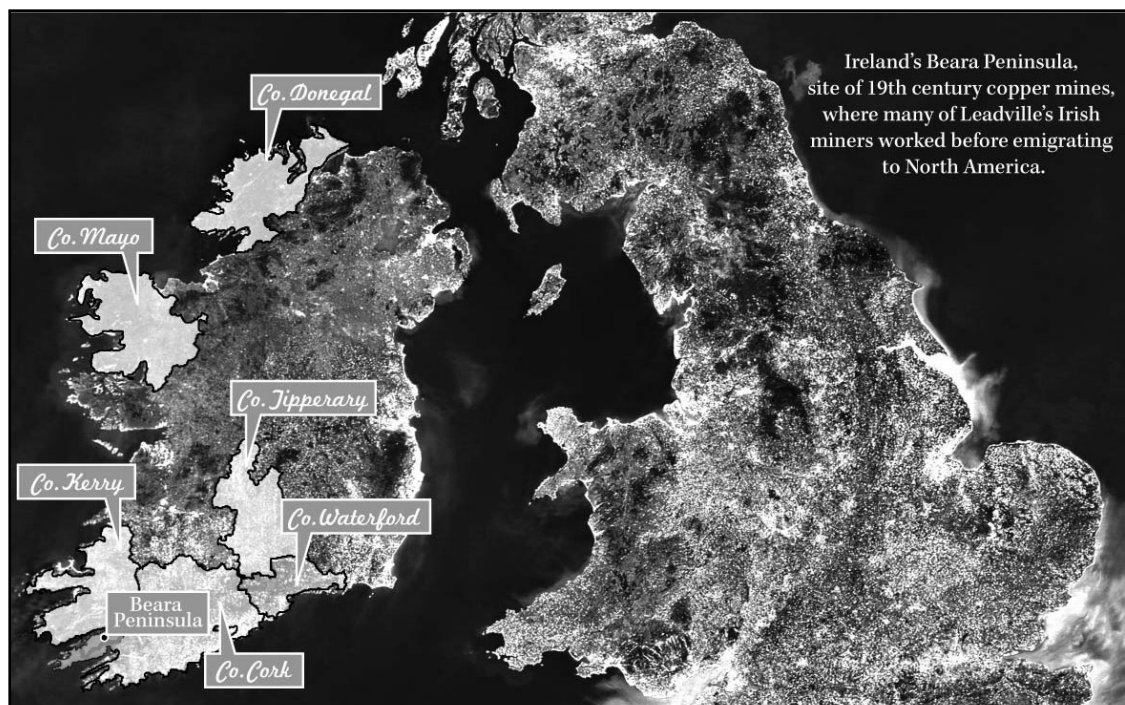


Figure 1: Location of Beara Peninsula and Most Common Counties of Origin for the Leadville Irish

Leadville directs us to the idea that Irish miners gravitated to the jobs, not the metal. Mining skills were transferable; coal miners could learn to mine copper; copper miners could learn to mine silver. In Leadville, where the greatest silver boom in the history of North America took place between 1877 and 1893, Irish miners came from mining camps across North America and the British Isles, representing every imaginable kind of mine. The lesson of Leadville is that it was the job that mattered, and miners could learn to mine anything under the earth.

Historians of the Irish in America need to look more closely at migration networks, not only among families or parishes, but also among those who shared the same skills and searched for the same kinds of work. The records of Leadville paint a picture of very tight networks; Irish people using word of mouth and migrating across continents in very distinct patterns that made use of the best information about the most promising jobs in different regions at different times; movement as social agency and resistance to established labor norms—movement as hope. Hope for Irish miners in the late 1870s and 1880s was at 10,200 feet, in the hard rock mines of Leadville. By 1880, nearly 2,500 Irish-born persons resided in Leadville and the surrounding gulches. They stayed just long enough for us to see their silhouettes.

THE BEARA CONNECTION

In his work on Irish miners in Butte, Montana, David Emmons demonstrates how a large portion of the Irish miners in Butte was from the copper mining district on the Beara Peninsula in west County Cork.⁷ In the Beara Peninsula, the Allihies copper mines and, later, the Berehaven copper mines, employed

thousands, many of them imported Cornish miners. These mines were started in 1811 and largely abandoned during the 1880s, although they continued to be worked on and off into the twentieth century. Daphne du Maurier based her novel *Hungry Hill* on this Beara copper mining history. The novel explores five generations of miners and their struggles.⁸

A strike occurred in the Berehaven mines in 1868. According to R.A. Williams, oral tradition in Beara has it that this strike was instigated by miners who had migrated from the copper mines of Knockmahon, in County Waterford, where there had been a strike in 1866. Many of the landless workers left the mines and migrated to the workhouses in Castletownbere, the largest town in the Beara. The complaints of the Irish miners rested upon meager wages and the idea that Cornish miners received substantially more pay and better living standards. After the mines changed ownership in the late 1860s, they suffered from mismanagement and financial troubles, essentially drying up in the 1870s and early 1880s.⁹ More prosperous and efficient copper mines in North America won the day. Beara author Daniel O'Brien cites this local ballad, which explores the desperation and injustice in the Berehaven mines that led to mass emigration:

The Old Berehaven Mine

Come all ye old Berehaven boys that toil both night and day,
I will sing for you a verse or two if you will attention pay,
Tis about this cruel mismanagement we had from time to time,
Which caused many a slave and others to leave the old Berehaven mine.

Twass opened by four Wicklow boys of mining little knew,
And when it progressed rapidly with prospects fair indeed,
It was opened by the Puxleys and managed by John Reed.

⁷ David Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Univ. of Illinois Press, 1989).

⁸ Daphne du Maurier, *Hungry Hill*, (London: Gollancz, 1943).

⁹ For detailed information on the history of these copper mines, see R. A. Williams, "The Berehaven Copper Mines" *British Mining*, no. 42, May 1991. See also Daniel O'Brien, *Beara, A Journey Through History* (Beara Historical Society, Castletownbere, West Cork, Ireland, 1991) 113-121.

We cannot praise the Puxleys, I'll tell the reason why,
 They caused us to eat the Indian meal and kept our wages low.
 They spent their dimes in foreign climes on the choicest of
 high wines
 And their orders were to starve us out in the old Berehaven
 mine.
 It was in the good year 1815 as I do chance to write
 There was copper in this good old mine which at times was
 brought to light.
 Then they sent Henry Pascoe, that reprobate of prime,
 To become a second captain in the old Berehaven mine.
 He longed to be promoted, he kept running to and fro,
 At length he was made manager and John Reed was forced to
 go.
 Oppressed by those cruel tyrants we could no longer stand,
 We struck to oppose him and joined both heart and hand,
 And when we used to walk about in abject poverty,
 Which caused many to roam far from their home across the
 deep blue sea.
 There is a rumour going about how this old mine was sold
 Unto a foreign company for a vast amount of gold.
 When Crean became manager Keeelogue he did lay low,
 He invented new machinery and let the water flow. ¹⁰

At the same time that these copper mines in the Beara were collapsing economically, the hard rock mines in Leadville were beginning to flourish. Emigration was the natural consequence. As O'Neill's work demonstrates, many made their way to the Michigan Upper Peninsula and Butte. Many others, however, found their way to the silver rush of Leadville. Still others must have hopped from mining town to mining town, working for a time in Michigan, Leadville, and Butte, as well as other mining camps along the way.

Historian Jay P. Dolan points out that the years 1877-79 were particularly harsh for those in western Ireland: "With a poor harvest in 1877 and again in 1878 and 1879, the west of Ireland was once again on the brink of starvation." ¹¹ By the spring of 1883, local newspapers in County Cork expressed the agony and frustration that was felt when thousands of local workers began to abandon Ireland, along with the hope that they would be treated with dignity and respect in their new homeland:

Emigration from Queenstown [Cobh Harbor near Cork City]

During this week, probably the largest number of emigrants for any week of the season will have taken their departure from Queenstown for America. In the forecast we have made, we fancy the number will be about 3250...The emigrating class are all of the peasant type, the greater portion being young women and men in the prime of life or health. ¹²

Still They Go

With a vengeance, it may be said, emigration has set in in West Cork this year. On the days arranged to catch the numerous steamers leaving Queenstown, crowds of strong, active, and intelligent young persons may be seen leaving the stations of the Cork and Bandan railway. On Wed., no less than 120 emigrants left between Bantry, Skibereen, and the different stations on the line up to Balinea. Turn where one will amongst the peasantry, nothing is talked or thought of but emigration. The sorrowful and dismal feel needs no comment. It tells its own sad tale of woe. Turn where you will, the most heartbreaking scenes are to be witnessed, for nothing but poverty and wretchedness of the deepest kind could induce the native Irish to fly from their humble home in such numbers, leaving behind parents, friends, whom in the majority of cases are doomed never to meet again in this life. How deplorable that no greater remedy than the emigrant ship is not sought to provide a home and the necessities of life for our people. Truly may it be said that there is something rotten, truly rotten, in the state which sends away annually thousands of its sons and daughters, the picked bones and sinew of the country, leaving the old and infirm, the remnants of misery, the very wrecks of poverty and starvation. Happy for those who go, at all events to know that they leave for a country where their skills will be valued, their intelligence appreciated, and their labor rewarded." ¹³

This part of Ireland experienced tremendous suffering during the nineteenth century. West County Cork had been among the hardest hit areas during the legendary Great Potato Famine during the 1840s and 50s. Nearly half of the town of Skibbereen died of the fever or emigrated. ¹⁴ County Cork sent more of its sons and daughters to North America than any other county in Ireland. ¹⁵ The failure of the Beara copper mines, coupled with famine conditions during the late 1870s, reignited these emigration patterns to North America.

This timeless connection between the Beara Peninsula, in west County Cork, and places such as Butte and Leadville reveals itself in many ways. On a 2004 research trip through the Beara via bicycle, this author met the president of the local historical association, Gerdie Harrington, who revealed that until recently, the deaths of Irish Americans in places such as Butte and Leadville who have roots in the Beara were announced in mass. ¹⁶ Harrington marched down the main street of Castletownbere, introducing this author to people in various pubs who had family connections to Leadville. ¹⁷

¹⁰ Daniel O'Brien, Beara, *A Journey Through History* (Beara Historical Society, Castletownbere, West Cork, Ireland, 1991).

¹¹ Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008) 190-91

¹² *West Cork Eagle* 21 Apr. 1883.

¹³ *The Eagle and County Cork Advertiser* 12 May 1883.

¹⁴ The traditional song and poem *Revenge for Skibbereen* speaks to this.

¹⁵ The legendary Great Potato Famine took place during the years 1845-1852. During this time, nearly two million people emigrated from Ireland, the vast majority of them to North America. Over one million Irish people died from the effects of hunger. See Cathal Poirteir, ed., *The Great Irish Famine* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995). See also Cormac O'Grada, *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

These connections exist in poetry and verse. Emmons makes reference in his work on an Irish American song popular in Butte that referenced, "hobos from Kerry, hoboos from Cork." Riobard O'Dwyer, a legendary local historian in the Beara Peninsula who has published extensive family histories based upon oral histories that he has collected over the years, provides the following anonymous poem about Beara history:

An Exile From Bere

Lonely I sit here in sorrow and sigh
For loved ones afar o'er the deep,
Thinking of home till the tears dim my eye
No comfort, alas, but to weep.
At night in my dreams-how strange it all seems-
Their dear, kindly faces I see;
Then I wake in the gloom remember my doom-
An exile from Bere by the sea

The winter wind sighing through dark leafless trees
Sends a chill through the core of my heart
Though bright glows the fire, unfanned by love's breeze
Its flame can no warmth impart;
And, with its bright light, thought too takes its flight-
Old forms in the embers I see;
Then I start in the gloom, my god what a doom-
An exile from Bere by the sea ¹⁸

Local histories and oral tradition in Leadville also speak to this connection to the Beara Peninsula in County Cork. Former Leadville residents, in interviews published in local histories, mention an area called Carbonate Hill, or "Chicken Hill" south-east of downtown, which was said to be full of Irish immigrants from County Cork. A group of Corkonians in the Graham Park area east of Leadville were known as the "Utes" for their habit of screaming "war whoops" as they approached town. A saloon run by Mike Keefe on east sixth street was said to be a favorite spot for the town's Corkonians. ¹⁹

Rank	Beara Peninsula	Leadville City Directory-- 1881	1880 Federal Census—Lake Co., Colorado
1	Sullivan	Sullivan	Sullivan
2	Harrington	Murphy	Murphy
3	Shea	Moore	Ryan
4	Murphy	Ryan	Lynch
5	Leary	Kelly	Kelly
6	McCarthy	O'Brien	O'Brien
7	Lynch	Burns	Burns
8	Kelly	Murray	Shea
9	Dwyer	Reilly	Powers
10	Crowley	Kennedy	Fitzgerald
11			Harrington
12			McCarthy

Timothy O'Neill, in his work on Irish copper miners in the Michigan Upper Peninsula and Butte, does a remarkable job of using surname searches to draw connections between these mining regions. A surname search reinforces this historical bond. As O'Neill points out, the most common surnames in Ireland have remained remarkably consistent over the centuries, allowing historians to determine with reliable accuracy where immigrants came from. A surname analysis between the Beara Peninsula and Leadville further demonstrates the closeness of these ties. Table 4 lists the most common surnames in the Beara mining district from the Griffiths Valuation Records of the mid-nineteenth century, as revealed by Timothy O'Neill, and the most common Irish surnames from the 1881 Leadville City Directory and the 1880 Federal Census of Lake County, Colorado (Leadville mining district).

The differences between the Leadville city directory and the Federal Census for Lake County is likely due to the fact that the city directory did not list the miners who lived and mined in the surrounding areas, all of which were heavily populated with Irish immigrants. The city directory tended to list the more established residents, those who lived closer to town and enjoyed a more permanent residence.

As with Butte and the Michigan Upper Peninsula, there is a strong surname correlation between Leadville and the Beara Peninsula. The eight most common Beara names all made the top twelve most frequent surnames from the 1880 Federal Census for Lake County. The prominence of the name Sullivan also supports this connection. Irish surnames Powers, Fitzgerald, and O'Brien are among the most frequent names in other nineteenth century Irish mining districts such as Knockmahon, in County Waterford, and Avoca, in County Wicklow, which likely explains their connection to Leadville. Burns could be related to the Byrnes that are common in the Avoca area. ²⁰ Nearly every one of Leadville's leading Irish surnames, with one or two exceptions, can be found on O'Neil's

Table 4
Irish Surname Frequency of Beara Peninsula, Compared with Leadville City Directory and Federal Census of 1880 for Lake County, Colorado. Listed in Order of Frequency
Sources: Leadville City Directory, 1881, Lake County Library, Leadville, Colorado; O'Neill, "Miners in Migration," 69; Census of Population and Housing, 1880: Lake County, Colorado, U.S. Bureau of the Census

¹⁶ Personal interview with Gerard "Gerdie" Harrington, summer 2004. Harrington lives in Castletownbere, County Cork and runs the local historical society. For more information about family history connections between the Baera Peninsula and the U.S. see the work of Riobard N.T. O'Dwyer, who has compiled a very impressive collection of local family genealogy, based upon hundreds of interviews, including, *Who Were My Ancestors? Genealogy of the Castletownbere Parish, County Cork, Ireland* (Astoria, Illinois: K. K. Stevens Publishing Company, 1989).
¹⁷ Harrington himself mentioned that his mother-in-law had family members who lived in Leadville in the later nineteenth century.
¹⁸ Riobard N.T. O'Dwyer, *Who Were My Ancestors? Genealogy of the Castletownbere Parish, County Cork, Ireland*.
¹⁹ The Lake County Library has several short, informal, local histories. These include an anonymous piece called *History of the Sixth Street Irish*. See also Michael Donovan, "Whatever Happened to the Leadville Irish?" *Mountain Diggings* 3.1 (Lake County Civic Center Association, April, 1973) 12-21. See also Ed Larsh and Robert Nichols, *Leadville, U.S.A.* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1992) 214-225.

lists for the three large copper mining areas in Ireland. Just as with the Butte and Michigan Upper Peninsula copper mines, the connection is strongest for the surnames from the Beara region.

Nostalgia for the life that these immigrants left behind is communicated through song and poetry. Riobard O'Dwyer, a local historian in the Beara Peninsula who has collected a massive amount of local family history, collected the following poem, written "many years ago" by a Beara "exile" in the United States about his home in Coulagh Bay in Beara:

I once was one of a seineboat crew
that fished from Cahir Strand
And coursed the waters of Coulagh Bay
to the west by Claonagh land
We then crossed over to Carrigeel
and home by the break of day
Out boats filled up with the silvery fish
we caught in Coulagh Bay

I was one of the Urhan football team
and played in the center line
When we won the challenge matches
with a dash that was counted fine
From west to east, from north to south
we always held the sway
Though now we're scattered far and wide
away from Coulagh Bay

I danced with the boys and girls at the bridge
on the eve of a summer's day
Where the stream flows down to Travara Beach
on the southern side of the Bay
We danced and sang the whole day long
We passed the time away
And we were happy with the simple life
At home at Coulagh Bay

I worked in the mine in the far out West
for three and a half a day
I toiled for two years on a Texas ranch

for very little pay
But where'er I was and whate'er I saw
I must always truly say
There's no place in the wide, wide world
like the shores of Coulagh Bay

I often dream of Coulagh Bay
as it looks on a summer's day
When the seagulls call, the gannets dive,
and the shoals of the fishes play
But when I think of the dance at the bridge
I am lonely far away
And I long and sigh to be back again
by the shores of Coulagh Bay. ²¹

THE ROAD TO ANNUNCIATION CHURCH

The records of Annunciation Catholic Church, built by Irish immigrants in 1879 and still serving a largely Irish Catholic community on Leadville's east side, make this connection and much more. The Annunciation marriage and baptism records list the birthplaces of many, but not all, members listed in each entry.

Of those listed as born in Ireland, nearly one third are listed as being from Cork. Several listed specific towns and places that seem to refer to the Castletown-Bearhaven copper mines in the Beara Peninsula: "Baerhaven," "Bonhaven," "Barhaven." Table 5 lists the percentage of Irish-born Leadville residents from various counties, in both the marriage and baptism records.

As demonstrated in Table 5, the Knockmahon copper mines in Waterford and the Avoca mines in Wicklow account for the large numbers from those counties. Bill Mulligan, in his work on Irish miners in the Michigan Upper Peninsula copper mines, has found that many Irish miners came to the U.S. from mines in Tipperary. Des Cowman, an historian of Irish mining history, writes that there were no mines in Mayo, Donegal, Down, and Tyrone, and very few in Galway or Kerry. ²²

Marriage Records		Baptism Records	
Cork	37%	Cork	28%
Mayo	10%	Mayo	9%
Tipperary	5%	Waterford	8%
Waterford	4%	Tipperary	7%
Kerry	4%	Kerry	5%
Donegal	4%	Wicklow	4%
Cavan	3%	Galway	4%
Galway	3%	Donegal	4%
Kilkenny	3%	Down	3%
		Tyrone	3%

Table 5
Percentage of Leadville's Irish-Born Residents from Various Counties as Listed in Annunciation Baptism and Marriage Records
Source: Annunciation Church Marriage Records (1882-1908) and Baptism Records (1878-1888)

²⁰ Timothy O'Neill lists the common surnames from these mining areas as well in his article, "Miners in Migration." Surname-frequency analysis brings with it many potential difficulties. Irish surnames have many different spellings. Many Irish immigrants dropped the 'O' or the 'Mc' portions of the names. Multiple spellings of the same name also presents difficulties. In addition, many names such as Burns, Brown, Smith, McDonald, are common throughout the British Isles.

²¹ This poem was shared in January 2005 by Riobard O'Dwyer, a local historian in the Beara Peninsula, at <http://newsarch.rootsweb.com/th/read/Beara/2005-01/1104781070>.

²² Among other writings on mining history in Ireland and the British Isles, see Des Cowman, "Life and Labor in Three Irish Mining Communities" *Saothar: Journal of Irish Labour History* 9, 1983.

How do we explain the large numbers of Leadville Irish from Mayo, Donegal, Kerry, and Galway? Many more people emigrated from western counties than from other parts of Ireland during the nineteenth century, and this seems to fit the overall pattern of Irish immigration. Poverty and desperation were much more difficult in the west of Ireland.²³ Nonetheless, it is important not to assume that all Irish miners came to North America after having worked in Irish mines. Many likely decided to head west and give mining a try after finding railroad, canal, or factory work deplorable.

Taken together, the Annunciation Church and Federal Census birth records suggest that many, and perhaps most, of the Leadville Irish lived in mining regions before they stepped foot in Leadville. These transient workers followed established migration networks that included the British Isles, Canada, and the U.S. The Leadville Irish came predominantly from the west of the island, in the rugged, Gaelic-speaking areas known for producing the so-called "wild Irish." Peasants in these counties along the west coast knew much suffering and hunger in the nineteenth century and these areas have a long tradition of sometimes violent resistance to English rule, traditions that they would need to draw from as they faced the industrial labor system of post Civil War U.S. Indeed, these traditions of labor organizing and Irish nationalism appeared immediately in early Leadville. Two massive miners' strikes brought the entire state of Colorado to its knees, the first in 1880 and the second in 1896-7. Both of these strikes were organized and led by Irishmen.²⁴

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

The Annunciation records and the 1880 Federal Census also hint at the degree to which these networks extended across the Irish Sea and beyond. Eighteen percent of the European-born Irish at Annunciation were born in either England or Scotland,

and a few in Wales. One is even listed as being born in Bombay. These were the children of Irish parents who had moved throughout the British Empire for various jobs, many of them mining. Of those Leadville residents with Irish parents in 1880, eighty were born in England and sixty one in Scotland, more than those Irish who were born in all but a handful of U.S. states. Table 6 ranks the birthplace frequency for those Leadville Irish who were born outside of the U.S., based upon the 1880 Federal Census for Lake County.

In the Annunciation marriage records from 1882-1908, which list the birthplace of the subject's parents, there are more Irish listed as born in England than in any place except New York and Colorado. Those born in Scotland are not far behind. The baptism records from 1878-1888 reflect a smaller percentage, but still only three states outrank the English-born Irish. Table 7 reflects where the Leadville Irish who were born outside of the U.S. came from, as reflected in the Annunciation baptism records: Table 8 lists the Leadville Irish in the Annunciation marriage records born outside of the U.S.

Since the marriage records reflect a later time span than the baptism records, it appears that toward the turn of the nineteenth century, there was a slight increase in England and Canadian-born Irish and a slight decrease in Irish coming directly from Ireland or Scotland.

Several of the Leadville Irish are listed as having been born in Wales. None of the Leadville Irish, however, are listed as having been born in Cornwall, where thousands of mining jobs were available. Leadville had a very large Cornish community. Irish mines were known as having been full of Cornish miners, who imported the skills they learned in Cornish mines, but the Leadville records suggest that Cornish mines did not employ many Irish miners.

Country of Birth	Percentage of Lake Co. Irish born outside of U.S.
Ireland	82%
Canada	12.5%
England (including Wales)	4.3%
Scotland	3%

Table 6
Birthplaces for Lake County Irish Born Outside of the U.S., Listed in Ranking Order of Frequency
Source: *Census of Population and Housing, 1880, U.S. Bureau of the Census*

Country of Birth	Percentage of Overall Birthplaces listed in Annunciation Baptism Records
Ireland	78%
Canada	11%
England	6%
Scotland	5%

Table 7
Percentage of Leadville Irish Listed in Annunciation Baptism Records (1878-1888) Born in Places Other than the U.S.
Source: *Annunciation Catholic Parish Baptism Records (1878-1888)*

Country of Birth	Percentage of Overall Birthplaces listed in Annunciation Marriage Records
Ireland	72%
Canada	14%
England	10%
Scotland	4%

Table 8
Percentage of Leadville Irish Listed in Annunciation Marriage Records (1882-1908) Born in Places Other Than the U.S.
Source: *Annunciation Catholic Parish, Marriage Records (1882-1908)*

²³ Nearly every study of nineteenth-century Ireland reveals that the western and southern regions were the poorest in the country. See R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) 322.

²⁴ Kevin Kenney, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998). Kenney traces the legendary Molly Maguires of the Pennsylvania Anthracite region to County Donegal.

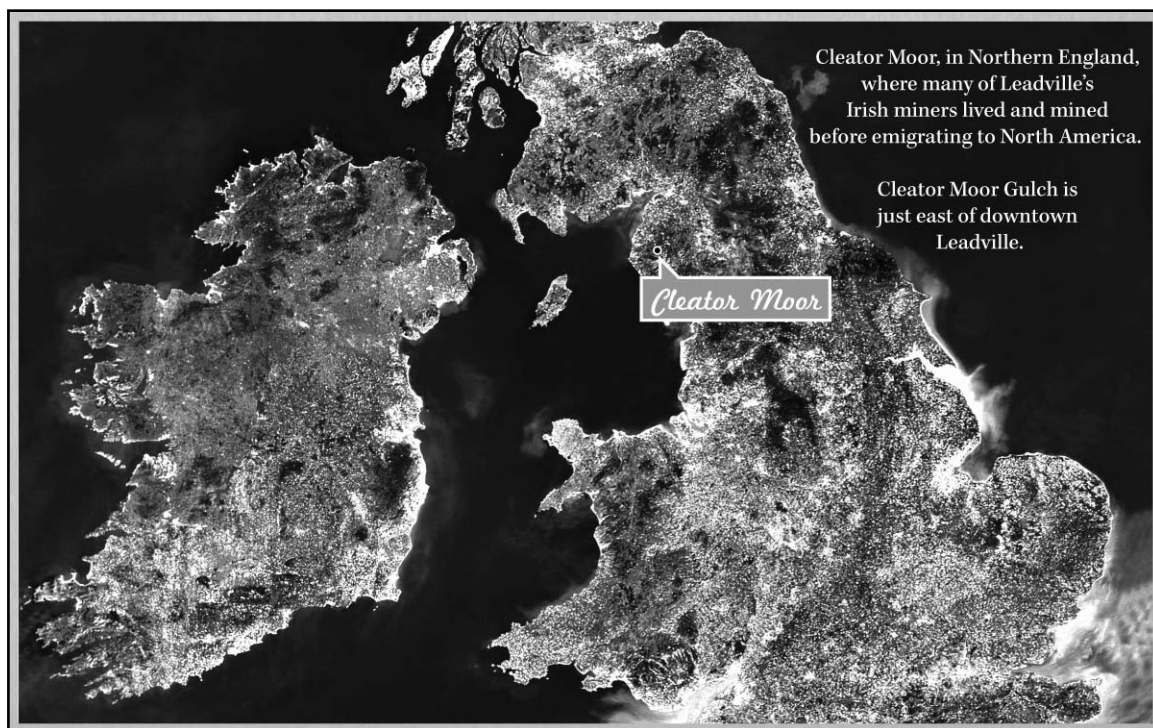


Figure 2. Location of Cleator Moor in Northern England

The Baptism and marriage records also offer clues about specific locations in England and Scotland. Urban areas such as London, Liverpool, and Glasgow are represented, but the majority of references point to areas in northern England such as Leeds, Cumberland, and Yorkshire, areas where mining jobs were numerous. In fact, a mining district roughly one mile east of Leadville carries the name "Cleator Moor Gulch." Cleator Moor is a town in the Cumbria district of northern England with a long history of iron ore and coal mining (see Figure 2). Cleator Moor is still referred to today as "Little Ireland" due to the long history of Irish miners who settled there and scratched a living in the mines. Local Leadville historian Michael Donovan writes of a group of Irish miners who had immigrated to Leadville from Cleator Moor, implying that Irish immigrants who came from England or Scotland retained their Irish identity.

There was a sizeable colony in Cleator Moor Gulch, better known as Stray Horse Gulch. They lived a little below the present site of Finntown [A small Finnish community that existed in Stray Horse Gulch]. These people had lived for generations in the coal and iron mining town of Cleator Moor, in Cumberland, a county in the north of England. Yet, they still retained their Irish characteristics and insisted on being called Irish.²⁵

This connection survives in the oral tradition of the descendants of the Leadville Irish. Leadville Irish residents William and Edward Kerrigan related the following history to local historian Ed Larsh about the *Cleator Moors*: "These people had lived in an Irish community, retaining their Gaelic ways and customs. They were Irish to the core and resented being called English."²⁶

A letter printed in the *Whitehaven News* in 1896 sheds valuable light upon the networks of communication that Leadville's *Cleator Moor* community maintained with other Irish miners in Cleator Moor. The letter, signed by "A Cleator Moor Man," illuminates the kind of competitive spirit that existed between mining regions:

Sir, - As your old-established journal is the principle medium of communication with the jolly miner lads of West Cumberland, I have no doubt it will be gratifying to the boys of the Cleator Moor district to know that Cleator Moor men won the great Inter-State drilling competition. Such universal interest was never before witnessed in Colorado. All parts of the United States were represented in the competition, and it is supposed at least 100,000 dollars changed hands on the result. The great bone of contention lies between the two great mining states, Colorado and Montana. I send you a copy of *The Herald Democrat* containing a full report of the great contest. Cleator Moor can boast of her sons as the greatest miners on earth. She can also boast in other respects, as a Cleator Moor man was elected by a large majority as one of the magistrates for Lake County, Colorado...Tom Burns, one of the earliest Cleator Moor men to come to Leadville, died here last December, after returning from a visit to Canny auld Cumberland. I am sure these little items of news will be of interest to your Cleator Moor readers.

A Cleator Moor Man, Leadville
Colorado, February 27th, 1896.²⁷

²⁵ Michael F. Donovan, "Whatever Happened to the Leadville Irish?" in *Mountain Diggings* April, 1973: 12-13.

²⁶ Ed Larsh and Robert Nichols, Larsh, *Leadville U.S.A.* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1992) 218.

²⁷ *Whitehaven News*, March 19, 1896. in WCMRG Review [West Cumberland Mines Research Group], No. 26., 2000. The town of Whitehaven, England is just west of Cleator Moor and the mining region.



Figure 3. The Two Most Common Birthplaces for Leadville Irish Canadians Canada

Very few studies deal with the history of working class Irish emigrants to the U.S. who first traveled to England, Scotland, Wales, and beyond in search of better opportunities. Much work remains to be done in this important area, one that challenges many of the preconceived notions about Irish immigrants to the United States.

As demonstrated in Tables 6, 7 and 8, Canada was foremost among the other parts of the British Empire, which Irish immigrants abandoned for Leadville. Save for New York and Pennsylvania, Canada was the most common birthplace of origin for Leadville's Irish Americans. According to the Annunciation baptism and marriage records, somewhere between sixteen and nineteen percent of the North American-

born Irish in Leadville were born in Canada. Birthplaces listed in the Annunciation records and the 1880 Federal Census supplies us with a good deal of local references in Canada, enough to begin to draw conclusions about the Irish in nineteenth century Canada who made their way to Leadville. For these working class migrants, national borders meant little. They were simply following the most promising job leads.

Large urban areas such as Montreal and Quebec City are referenced, along with eastern areas such as Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and quite a few references to New Brunswick and the St. John area. By a long shot, however, the great majority of the birthplaces in Canada for the Leadville Irish are in Nova Scotia. It is likely that many of the Leadville Irish were

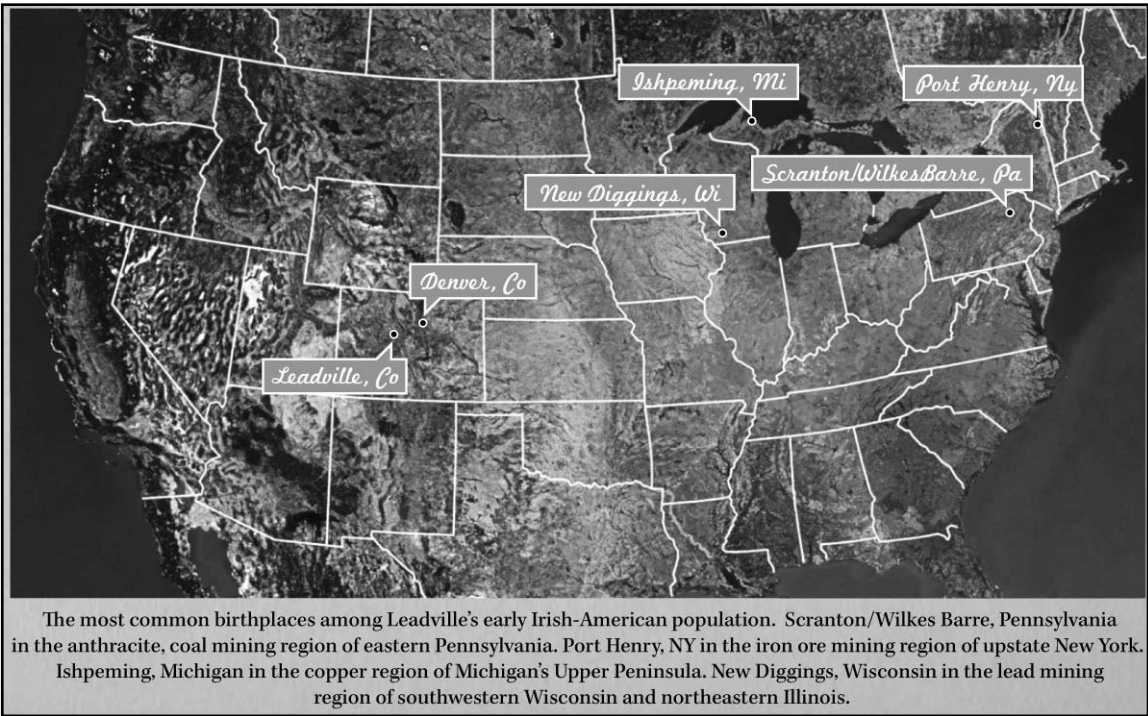


Figure 4. Most Common U.S. Birthplaces for Leadville Irish Americans

born into coal mining families in the Cape Breton area of Nova Scotia. The 1880 Federal Census for Lake County lists numerous miners from Nova Scotia, most of them with Irish born parents and/or Irish surnames. The Federal Census reveals that most of them lived and worked in the Stray Horse Gulch area east of town. Once again, the type of mine did not seem to matter as much as the opportunities that were thought to exist in the next place of employment. Nova Scotia played a major role in the migratory and cultural networks of Irish miners in North America and more work remains to connect these dots.

The 1880 Federal Census for Lake County, Colorado lists eleven persons born in Nova Scotia with Irish-born parents. Aside from Nova Scotia, the other area of Canada that appears numerous times in the Annunciation and Federal Census records is an area at the southeastern tip of Ontario: Glengarry County. Eleven persons with Irish-born parents are listed as having been born there. Nearly all of those listed as having been born in Glengarry County all carry the surname McDonald. In fact, a Leadville newspaper makes a reference to a "Glengary House" in an 1880 article, "On October 30, a call went out for all of Leadville's Scotsmen to meet that evening at the Glengary House... for the purpose of forming a Caledonian Club."²⁸ These were Ulster Scots Catholics whose ancestors were among the first European settlers in this region. Some had been born in Ireland and others in Canada. The surname McDonald was nearly the most common surname in Leadville in 1881.²⁹ This Ontario County was named after Glengarry, Scotland, where the County's first European settlers were from.

30

UNITED STATES

Both the Annunciation marriage and the baptism records, along with the 1880 Federal Census, list birthplaces for those born in the U.S. Many of the entries are very specific, but most simply reveal the state where the person was born. The baptism records, which cover the years 1878 to 1888, reveal that 40% of the Annunciation-Irish in those years were born in the U.S. A study of the birthplaces of those married at Annunciation between 1880 and 1908 reveals that 58% were born in the U.S., 31% of them in Colorado. By the 1890s and the turn of the century, most of the Irish in Leadville were second or even third generation.

The entries in the Annunciation records for the American-born Irish are very revealing because over half of these entries list specific counties or towns. This makes it possible to construct a kind of miners' highway, the stepping stones that Leadville's Irish miners and their families seemed to take as they crossed North America on their way to Colorado. Tables 9 and 10 list the most common states of birth for the U.S. born Annunciation Irish:

The 1880 Federal Census for Lake County reinforces these numbers. The birth states for second-generation Irish Americans, along with birth states for their parents, spouses, and children, were all tallied in order to create a kind of "Irish trail" across the U.S.; a trail that reflects a great deal about Irish migratory patterns in nineteenth century American mining camps. Table 11 paints a map of the places that the Leadville Irish lived prior to moving to Leadville, listing the top-ranking

Rank	State of Birth	Percentage
1	New York	21%
2	Pennsylvania	19%
3	Wisconsin	11%
4	Michigan	9%
5	Illinois	6%
6	Iowa	5%
7	Massachusetts	3%
8	Ohio	3%
9	Missouri	3%

Table 9
States of birth, in Ranking Order, for U.S.-Born Annunciation Irish (Excluding Colorado), as Listed in Marriage Records (1882-1908)
Source: Annunciation Catholic Parish Marriage Records 1882-1908

Rank	State of Birth	Percentage
1	New York	23%
2	Pennsylvania	21%
3	Illinois	10%
4	Wisconsin	9%
5	Michigan	8%
6	Ohio	5%
7	Massachusetts	4%
8	Missouri	3%
9	Indiana	2.5%
9	Virginia/D.C.	2.5%

Table 10
States of Birth, in Ranking Order, for U.S.-Born Annunciation Irish (Excluding Colorado), as Listed in Baptism Records (1878-1888)
Source: Annunciation Catholic Parish Baptism Records 1878-1888

²⁸ Don L. and Jean Harvey Griswold, *History of Leadville and Lake County, Colorado: From Mountain Solitude to Metropolis* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society in cooperation with University Press of Colorado, 1996) 724.

²⁹ Leadville City Directory, 1881. Available in Lake County Library, Leadville, Colorado.

³⁰ This niche of Leadville's "Irish" provides us with a reminder of the hidden limits of sources such as church records and Federal Census reports. Because they might have been third or fourth generation Americans by the late nineteenth century, most Ulster Scots residents in places like Leadville are ignored when one is only paying attention to the "birthplace" columns. Furthermore, attending to the records of a Catholic church, albeit nearly entirely Irish, ignores the protestant Irish in Leadville. Unfortunately, records for 19th century Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches in Leadville are not available.

Rank	State of Birth	Percentage
1	New York	24%
2	Pennsylvania	19%
3	Michigan	8%
4	Illinois	8%
5	Ohio	5.4%
6	Missouri	5.3%
7	Wisconsin	4.5%
8	Iowa	4%
9	Massachusetts	3.5%
10	New Jersey	2.3%

Table 11
States of Birth, in Ranking Order, for Leadville's Irish Americans, Including Parents, Spouses, and Children, as Listed in 1880 Federal Census Report for Lake County
Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1880: Lake County, Colorado. U.S. Bureau of the Census.

states of birth for Leadville residents, their spouses, and their children in the 1880 Federal Census for Leadville's Irish Americans.

All of the tables are remarkably consistent, demonstrating that nearly half of the U.S. born Irish in Leadville came from New York and Pennsylvania. Surprisingly, where specific counties or towns are listed, New York City and Philadelphia are hardly mentioned at all. Instead, nearly all of the references specify places in the Adirondack/Lake Champlain region of extreme northwest New York State and the Anthracite coal-mining region of eastern Pennsylvania.

The 1880 Federal Census offers clues to these connections. In one particular Lake County mining district near Leadville, referred to as "86th District" in the Federal Census, a heavily Irish area known as Stray Horse Gulch, 44 of the Irish residents (41 men and 3 women) are listed as having been born in "York State" while only 35 (32 men and 3 women) are listed as having been born in "New York."³¹ Nowhere else is "York State" mentioned. Where exactly is "York State"? The Annunciation records help us answer this question, with fifty-five birthplace references that offer *specific* areas in the state of New York. Thirty of these birthplaces fall within a relatively small area in the Adirondack mountains, just west of Lake Champlain, places such as Clinton County, Port Henry, Plattsburgh, Essex County, and Mineville. Iron mines have dotted the Adirondack mountains since the eighteenth century. Most of these are west of the Lake Champlain towns of Plattsburgh and Port Henry, places such as Mineville. A local historian in northwest New York who worked for half a century in the Adirondack iron mines, writes of those times:

For more than a hundred years following the War of Independence, there was a steady flow of immigrants to the Champlain Valley and Adirondacks. They were from many nations and of diverse tongue...They came from France, Italy, Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Rumania, Hungary, Ireland, Wales, Spain...The Adirondack industry was a melting pot of these nationalities. They became skilled miners, millmen, and furnacemen. My grandfather, James Farrell, came from Ireland in the 1870s and found employment in the mines at Fisher Hill. He sent for Mary Ryan Farrell and two small sons whom he had left in Ireland. She arrived in New York with her children, including a third son aboard ship off Newfoundland.³²

This connection to the Adirondack region does not mean that many of the New York-born Leadville Irish did not come from New York City. Indeed, it is a certainty that many of those whose birthplaces are listed as simply "New York" did in fact come from New York City. Nevertheless, the Leadville-Adirondack connection offers us a glimpse of a different kind of migratory pattern, one with miners possibly migrating in groups, staying together from one job to the next, making use of vast oral networks of information, following the lead of those they knew and worked with, trusting the spoken word and staying with their own kind. It shouldn't come as a surprise that the migratory patterns for Irish miners were vastly different than for other kinds of workers. The great majority of the Leadville Irish were not the New York City/Philadelphia/Chicago Irish, fleeing Irish ghettos to find their fortunes in the Rockies.

This point is further supported when we turn to Pennsylvania. Next to New York, the state with an incredibly strong connection to the Leadville Irish in the Annunciation records is Pennsylvania, where roughly one fifth of the U.S. born Irish were from. In the 1870 Federal Census, Pennsylvania barely makes the top ten states that make up the most common states of origin for Colorado's early Irish. By 1880, however, the Pennsylvania Irish are a prominent presence in Leadville.

In the case of Pennsylvania, the connection to a mining region is an easy one. Nearly every reference to a specific county or town, forty-four out of forty-eight, points to the great anthracite coal district of northeastern Pennsylvania. Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are each listed only once. Table 12 lists the names of the towns and counties, and the frequency with which they are cited in the Annunciation records. Asterisks represent towns and counties in the anthracite coal region.

We can also see this connection by looking at the names of Leadville's early mine shafts. Two mine shaft names correlate directly to the Pennsylvania anthracite region: Luzerne and Little Schuylkill. Luzerne and Schuylkill Counties both lie in the heart of Pennsylvania's anthracite region.³³ An obscure valley in Lake County, not far from Leadville, is named Lackawanna Gulch, after Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, also in the heart of the anthracite district. It must not have been a terribly difficult transition to move from mining hard coal to mining hard rock.

Following the hysteria of the legendary *Molly Maguires* during the 1860s and 1870s, an alleged secret society of Irish miners

³¹ *Census of Population and Housing, 1880: 86th District, Lake County, Colorado*, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

³² Patrick Farrell, *Through the Light Hole; A Saga of Adirondack Mines and Men*. (North Country Books, 1996).

Town or County	No. of References in Annunciation Records
*Luzerne County	12
*Dushore	6
*Scranton	5
*Wilkes Barre	5
*Carbondale	2
*Schuylkill County	2
*Sullivan County	2
*Ralston	1
*Newtown	1
*Wyoming County	1
*Plymouth	1
*Summit Hill	1
*Wayne County	1
*Bradford County	1
*Susquehanna County	1
*Yorktown	1
*Archbald	1
Blossburg	1
Johnstown	1
Pittsburgh	1
Philadelphia	1

Table 12
Birthplaces for Pennsylvania-Born Irish in Leadville, as
Listed in Annunciation Church baptism and marriage
records
*(*Represents towns and counties in the Anthracite coal region)*
Source: Annunciation Catholic Parish Baptism Records and
Marriage Records

who brought with them an ancient rural peasant tradition in Ireland to resist oppression with intimidation and sometimes violence, Irish miners were blacklisted and driven out of the Pennsylvania coal fields.³⁴ Nineteen alleged members of the Mollies were hanged in the late 1870s, at the same time that Leadville's silver rush was taking off. The Mollies' reputation for violence and secrecy followed these miners up to the Colorado mountains. When Dublin-born Michael Mooney led thousands of Irish miners on strike in 1880, the Colorado newspapers published sensational headlines, with one declaring, "Mob in the mines: The Molly Maguires take actual possession of Leadville."³⁵

Once again, while the traditional model for Irish migration across North America goes through Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago, Irish miners had their own trail. In the case of Pennsylvania, there was as much push as there was pull. After the Mollies were hanged, the Irish found themselves unwelcome in many parts of the anthracite region. They arrived in Leadville with years of experience not just in mining, but in resistance to injustice and oppression, skills that they would need to draw from sooner than they expected.

Other areas of the U.S. where sizable numbers of the Leadville Irish were born include Wisconsin, Michigan, and Illinois, each representing roughly 6-11% of the U.S. born Irish in Leadville. The copper mines of the Michigan Upper Peninsula represent nearly all of the references to Michigan, places such as Houghton and Ishpeming. One mine shaft in Leadville even bears the name Ishpeming.³⁶

Bill Mulligan, an historian of the Irish in America at Murray State University, is currently working on a book about Irish miners in Michigan's copper country. In a project overview, he writes, "Early mining communities in the Copper country had significant Irish populations from their establishment in the middle 1840s ... A significant proportion of these immigrants came directly from the copper mining district of the Beara Peninsula in west County Cork, Ireland and other significant groups were from the Knockmahon mines in County Waterford and several mining sites in County Tipperary." Mulligan also makes a direct link between the common Irish surnames in Michigan copper country and those in the Beara Peninsula, as well as with mining regions in Waterford and Tipperary.³⁷

The following is an excerpt of an advertisement for laborers, from the April 26, 1877 edition of the *Portage Lake Mining Gazette* near Houghton, Michigan. It speaks to the hardships faced in moving to Leadville (then referred to as *Oro City*), subtly warning potential workers of the difficulties. The ad also sheds light upon the relationship between contractor and laborer in late nineteenth century mining camps. The article is entitled "W.H. Stevens of Lake Superior Wants Laborers for Colorado."

That no misunderstanding may occur between the men that propose to go to Oro City, Lake County, Colorado looking for work, and myself and associates. I wish to state that our work is hard and heavy, placer and quartz mining, lumbering, wood chopping, burning charcoal and such like. It requires good, solid men, with well developed muscle, bone and nerve. The usual hours are from 7 to 12 and from 1 to 6-10 hours per day. We consider in chopping two cords of wood a fair days work; in excavating 10 cubic yards of good shoveling ground a good fair days work, one yard per hour.³⁸

The Annunciation records reveal fifteen references to specific towns and counties for Leadville's Michigan-born Irish. At least ten of these-places such as Ishpeming, Houghton, Delaware, and Rockland-refer to places in the heart of the copper mining region of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Two of the place names are unrecognizable. Detroit is referenced twice.

³³ U.S. Geological Survey. *Index to Shafts*. 1911. Available in Lake County Library, Leadville, Colorado.

³⁴ See Kevin Kenney, *Making Sense of the Mollie Maguires*. Kenney shows that most of the Mollies were from the rugged areas of north-western Ireland such as Donegal and Mayo.

³⁵ *Denver Tribune* 18 June 1880: 1.

³⁶ U.S. Geological Survey. *Index to Shafts*. 1911. Available in Lake County Library, Leadville, Colorado.

³⁷ William Mulligan, *From the Emerald Isle to the Copper Island: Irish Miners in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, 1845-1920*. Project Overview, pg. 1.

³⁸ *Portage Lake Mining Gazette* 26 Apr. 1877.

³⁹ A sampling of Irish residents of Denver in the 1880 Federal Census reveals that New York and Illinois, along with farming regions such as Missouri and Nebraska, are the most referenced places of birth for Irish men and women and their children. As with the 1870 population, these New York and Illinois Irish must have come from the more traditional Irish urban settings of New York City and Chicago.

Twelve of the twenty-three specific Wisconsin birthplaces referenced-places such as New Diggings, Iowa County, and LaFayette County-are within the lead mining regions of south-western Wisconsin and northwestern Illinois. Milwaukee is referenced only twice. The Illinois place names in the Annunciation records also solidifies this connection to some degree: six of the twenty-nine Wisconsin place names refer to the same lead mining area around Galena, Illinois. Several birthplaces in southern Illinois refer to areas in coal mining districts. Chicago is the only well-represented major city in the entire Annunciation records, with eight references among Leadville's Illinois-born Irish.

The complex trails that Irish miners and their families followed to Leadville represent a distinct migration network, one that miners of all ethnic groups must have also made use of. These networks are largely unexplored by historians. Irish miner networks were somewhat independent from the more traditional migratory patterns of the Irish in America, patterns that led many Irish immigrants to no-mining western cities such as Denver.³⁹ The trail begins in the mines of the British Isles and jumps the Atlantic to Nova Scotia, along the St. Lawrence River, down to Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks, to the Susquehanna valley of eastern Pennsylvania, across the Great Lakes to the Michigan Upper Peninsula and the Lead regions of southwest Wisconsin, and from there west to Nevada, Butte, Leadville, and eventually Cripple Creek and the Yukon. These migration networks were independent of the great urban slums in eastern and Midwestern cities where so many hundreds of thousands of Irish immigrants and their children lived. These networks challenge us to rethink the dominant narrative of the Irish in America-a narrative that has them settling only in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago and becoming police officers and politicians and domestic servants.

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