

## **SOPHIE COLSON - 2024-25 TRAVEL AWARD WINNER**

### **PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE TRAVEL AWARD PROJECT**

The North American Festival of Wales celebrates its 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania this August.

Founded to celebrate America's Welsh heritage, Pennsylvania was home to one of the biggest Welsh settler populations. This festival, which began in 1929, celebrates its relation to the Welsh culture every year in a different location across the US.

This festival explores the history and culture of Wales and its connection to Americans with Welsh ancestry. It is held 28<sup>th</sup> August to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024, (which is Labour Day weekend in the US) and is hosted by the North American Wales Foundation.

My article will ask the questions: We've heard of Irish Americans, but what about Welsh Americans? Did Welsh people migrate to America en masse, and why don't we know much about it? Are Americans as fond of their Welsh heritage as they are with their Irish? What was the Welsh role in colonising America? And what does it mean to be Welsh?

Welsh migrants moved to the US in the early 1800s, where they helped reshape the mining industry in coal-rich areas such as Ohio and Pennsylvania.

St Davids society of Pittsburgh was started in 1882 and celebrates Welsh heritage in America. The festival, and this society, are both in Pittsburgh, and I will be attending this event to speak to those with Welsh-American heritage, and learn about the festival, why they celebrate it, and how it started. I'd then travel to Philadelphia to explore the ways that Americans celebrate their Welsh ancestry day-to-day, and how aspects of Welsh culture are built into the fabric of the city. In Philadelphia, there is the Welsh Tract, what is now the Main Line, which was intended to become a Welsh colony when English-born settler William Penn sold 40,000 acres to Welsh quakers avoiding religious persecution. Originally, the area was going to be called New Wales, but King Charles II insisted on naming it Pennsylvania after Penn. Along the Welsh Tract are places like Knapp Farm, Powel House, Radnor Quaker Meeting house and many more buildings which hold ties to Welsh migration and, later, the American Revolution.

Welsh culture is still evident in contemporary Pennsylvania, too. What is rumoured to be one of the world's best Welsh Rarebits is in a 'British pub' called The Dandelion, in Philly. It's ranked 7<sup>th</sup> on the food atlas.com.

The article I'll produce will look at the way the Welsh have influenced the area and how American's perceive this history, as well as touching upon Wales' involvement in colonising Pennsylvania. It will look at how Americans with Welsh ancestry embrace their heritage, and how Welsh culture has changed in contemporary Pennsylvania as its been shaped over time by American history.

I decided I wanted to become a travel journalist when I was 15, and first visited Uganda. Having a travel article like this will not only add to my CV and professional portfolio but may also allow me to publish my first piece in a large media organisation, thus kickstarting my freelance career. I would also like to use this trip as a springboard for my own media, the start of a newsletter and social media account which can begin to showcase my passion for travel.

**Sophie Colson**  
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