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Irish-American Montanans' Reactions To The Easter Rising

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IRISH-AMERICAN MONTANANS' REACTIONS
TO THE EASTER RISING

A PAPER SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF
HI 499 HISTORY HONORS THESIS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY
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This thesis has been approved for honors recognition for the Department of History.

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# CONTENTS

SIGNATURE PAGE .................................................................................................... ii

PREFACE ................................................................................................................ iv

CHAPTER

1. THE EASTER RISING ........................................................................................ 1

   Chapter 1 Notes ............................................................................................. 12

2. AN IRISH-AMERICAN IDENTITY ................................................................... 15

   Chapter 2 Notes ............................................................................................. 25

3. IRISH MONTANANS' REACTIONS TO THE EASTER RISING .................. 28

   Chapter 3 Notes ............................................................................................. 41

4. MERGING IRISH AND AMERICAN CULTURES IN MONTANA ............ 42

   Chapter 4 Notes ............................................................................................. 45

WORKS CITED ....................................................................................................... 46
PREFACE

The following thesis is an examination of Irish culture in Montana in the context of Irish-American Montanans’ responses to the Easter Rising.

Chapter One discusses the Easter Rising itself. The Easter Rising occurred in Dublin, Ireland, in April 1916. There were mounting causes that all related to British rule. Leadership for the Rising is attributed to Patraic Pearse, James Connolly, and Tom Clarke. During Easter Week, these men led Irish militias through Dublin and their goal was to establish an Irish Republic. While the Irish were only able to hold the city for a week, they became national and international martyrs upon their executions. Their deaths only increased support for Irish freedom.

Chapter Two discusses the Irish-American experience and how Irish arrived in Montana. Irish-Americans of the famine migration tried to maintain their cultural traditions. In some cases, Irish immigrants attempted to move from urban centers, to the west. They brought their traditions with them, including hatred for the British and membership in associations that supported Ireland’s freedom movement. Some Irish settled in Montana, especially in Butte and Helena where they brought these traditions.

Chapter Three delves into primary sources and specifically examines how Irish organizations in Montana preserved Irish culture in an effort to support Irish freedom. Montana’s Irish promptly established branches of the Robert Emmet Literary Society and the Ancient Order of the Hibernians. Once
in Montana, Irish-Americans maintained connections to Ireland’s freedom movement.

Chapter Four is a conclusion containing final thoughts on reactions of Irish-American Montanans to the Easter Rising. Finally, Chapter Four identifies a broader perspective and explains why American involvement in World War I was a turning point for Irish-American Montanans.

I would like to express my great appreciation for all who helped me with this project. I appreciated this learning experience and especially want to thank Professor Robert Swartout, for his patience, guidance, and advice. As well, Professor Jonathan Matthews and Professor Gillian Glaes gave invaluable feedback and direction. Also, the assistance I received at the Montana Historical Society and Butte-Silver Bow Archives was extremely helpful. Finally, thank you to my family and friends for their support throughout this process.
CHAPTER 1
THE EASTER RISING

The Easter Rising, in Dublin on April 24, 1916, is identified as the turning point in Ireland's road to independence. The successive week of fighting is inextricably intertwined with Irish history: colored by literature, marked by violence, and recognized as key to Ireland establishing some semblance of independence from Great Britain. The following explains the causes, chronology, and consequences of the Easter Rising.

The morning of Monday, April 24, 1916, began as any other weekday in Dublin. Shops opened and Dubliners began shuffling about their daily tasks. Even the local Irish Volunteers began practicing their daily military maneuvers. Unbeknownst to locals, British officials, and even to some of the Volunteers themselves, the maneuvers were anything but practice. British officers questioned, "Will these bloody fools never tire of marching up and down the streets?"1 Given the history of conflict between Ireland and Great Britain, it is remarkable that the British even thought that the Irish might "tire." The English had influenced Ireland for some 800 years prior.2 Had the Irish truly "tired," they would not have graced each century with some kind of rebellion against English rule. As the years dragged on, less time passed between rebellions and more organization occurred. By 1916 specific internal and external factors dictated the timing of the Easter Rising.
Beginning on Easter Monday, the military facet of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), joined by the Irish Citizen Army, set out on supposed routine military maneuvers. General James Connolly made the order to turn and take control of Dublin's General Post Office, which surprised many of his own men who received mixed messages about the possibility of a rising. By the end of the day Irish rebels captured and subsequently held positions throughout the city of Dublin, chosen as a "centerpiece" for the Rising, in hopes of gaining the support of other Irish and sparking a country-wide rebellion. Once rebel positions were held, Patraic Pearse read a declaration of an Irish Republic and spoke of setting up a temporary government until a permanent Irish government could be voted upon after the defeat of British rule.

Positions around Dublin included St. Stephen's Green, a park filled with holiday visitors, the General Post Office (GPO), where the leaders of Rebellion had their headquarters, the Four Courts, where Ireland's Judiciary was housed, and numerous distilleries, public houses, a couple of bakeries, and the homes of willing and unwilling Dubliners. The rebels held these positions until the following Saturday when Pearse sent word of an official surrender. Connolly issued a final dispatch that "... all sounded magnificent; and really that was all that mattered." He commented on the militias' success, bravery, and valuable efforts. He wanted to ensure that the Volunteers knew that they had fought for a worthy cause, and at the same time put out a message to the public that legitimized the Rising.
British intelligence and forces were at first caught by surprise, but soon retaliated and forced an unconditional surrender on the part of the rebels.\textsuperscript{11} Though the British were victorious, there were numerous points throughout Easter week when the British were confused, unsure, disorganized, and, overall, inept.\textsuperscript{12} Consequences of the Rising included Irish and Irish-Americans enthusiasm for Irish independence and ultimately, achieved independence.

The factors that coordinated to support the Easter Rising were political and social. The causes were also were multi-faceted and cumulative. Home Rule, as well as the lasting effects of rampant landlordism, and the Potato Famine contributed to the Rising. Also, the international conflict of World War I contributed to the chosen time for the Rising. Socially, the development of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and Irish nationalism, domestic and abroad, reinvigorated nationalist Sinn Fein groups.\textsuperscript{13} These factors combined to facilitate support for militant action.

Home Rule theoretically represented Ireland's peaceful independence from England while maintaining representation in the British Parliament.\textsuperscript{14} Home Rule fostered resentment of "young men in the rest of Ireland who still resented any integration of their country at all into Britain's political and economical structure and the consequent disappearance of their own nationality."\textsuperscript{15} Home Rule in Ireland was a statute in British law when the World War I broke out, but implementation was delayed until the end of the conflict.\textsuperscript{16}
World War I is described by many historians as “England’s difficulty” and “Ireland’s opportunity.” Ireland’s history of taking advantage of Great Britain’s preoccupation was not a new methodology. In terms of World War I, Irish revolutionaries made sure that they took full advantage of Great Britain’s sacrifices in World War I. Rebels thought Great Britain was occupied elsewhere and therefore weakened. If Great Britain did not have the time or patience to stop an Irish rebellion, the Irish might be successful.

With the onset of World War I, the British once again put Home Rule on the back burner indefinitely. Nationalistic Irish leaders from all political affiliations recognized that Irish independence would not come in the near future, as Great Britain was occupied elsewhere. This represented a common resentment toward British politics and resulted in a united force where even the Irish section of British Parliament was viewed as “chains around Irish necks.” It is clear that deferring Home Rule, supposedly until after World War I, agitated Irish nationalists to the brink of rebellion.

Historically, economic troubles were a driving force behind an Irish desire for rebellion. Landlordism was rooted in the English legacy of taking over Irish-owned land. Irish families were affected by landlordism, an economic system that left ethnic Irish without rights to their land and at the mercy of British landlords. Landlordism marginalized the Irish population economically and continued to fuel anger and resentment among the Irish population. Related to landlordism, the Irish potato famine once again kindled disgust with British government. The Irish potato famine lasted approximately
from 1845 to 1855 and left Ireland impoverished and with little hope for the future. Mostly a "social catastrophe" perpetuated by British negligence, the Irish potato famine left many Irish disenchanted with British rule and still others fervently in favor of violent rebellion. The potato famine caused a massive exodus to the United States where Irish immigrants brought with them much resentment toward Great Britain.

The movement of Sinn Fein was important to the build-up of the Easter Rebellion. Sinn Fein was originally Ireland's attempt to imitate Hungarian nationalists in their struggle for independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For Irish rebels this meant refusal to participate in the British government and providing all of their own governmental services until the controlling government ceased to be necessary. Sinn Fein symbolized the feelings of Irish nationalists, associations, and rebel participants opposing British rule. Proliferations of Irish literature, from the 1700s to the early 1900s, are connected to militant Irish nationalism and led to the insurrection of Easter week, 1916. Literary works and the revival of Irish heritage led to a rise in Irish nationalism and ultimately the rebellion itself.

The causes of the Easter Rising are intertwined with an increased interest and popularity in being ethnically Irish. In order for nationalism to exist, there must first be a sense of ethnic pride that develops into nationalism. This could be marked in Ireland by a change in writing styles from purely Celtic folklore to portraying ancient Celtic figures as warriors. There were new ideas that were "expressed as antitheses: past vs. present,
agricultural community vs. industrial collective, small moral nation vs. decadent empire, intuition vs. reason, Gaelic vs. English. But for the unsophisticated mind of the man on the street, it meant simply Ireland vs. England.\textsuperscript{22} Irish authors attempted to make a connection between the glory of Celtic past and the independent Ireland of the future.\textsuperscript{23}

Irish writing and philosophy turned away from British subject matter and shifted toward Irish subject matter. A representation of this shift was the Gaelic League founded in 1893. The Gaelic League spread "enthusiasm for folk literature and the Irish language beyond the confines of the intelligentsia to the entire populace. Now in drawing rooms and pubs, the revival of Irish was the topic of conversation."\textsuperscript{24} Authors also called upon all Irish people to adopt Irish practices and turn from English influences.\textsuperscript{25} Citing the three goals of the Irish poetic "crusade," "creation of a new form of literature, a new philosophy, and a new Irish nationalism," helps illustrate a shift of Irish pride to Irish nationalism.\textsuperscript{26}

These factors led to a movement in Ireland and among the Irish American population. The central organization involved in the Easter Rising was the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Organizations like the IRB took full advantage of the surge of Irish nationalism and a rebellion was planned. Three leaders joined to create the Military Council of the Irish Republican Army whose job was the organization and execution of the Rising. The average member of the IRB was not privy to the actions of the Military Council. In fact, the majority of members did not even know it existed.
The first of the Military Council member was Patraic Pearse, a philosophical leader and mouthpiece for the Irish Republican Army, and later the Irish Republic. Patraic Pearse is often described as a messianic figure who took the ideas of Irish writers and made the connection to militant nationalism in "brilliantly ambiguous speeches." Pearse was known for the schools he founded, his oratorical abilities, and his desire for Irish freedom. At a pivotal time in Irish history, Pearse fought for the glory and freedom of Ireland by participating in the Easter Rising--what he conceived as a fated rebellion. This martyr-like status endeared Pearse to his contemporaries.

Tom Clarke, on the other hand, was less melancholy. Clarke organized the IRB, and the Rising was his brain-child. Clarke was especially important because he had connections to American support after his release from English prison. Incarcerated for his involvement in previous organizations and rebellions, Clarke was a living legacy of the Risings of the 1880s. Clarke returned to Ireland after prison and once again was involved with the Irish revolution. Clarke could easily be described as a die-hard, literally and figuratively, who craved rebellion to propel Ireland into independence. Even when Home Rule looked like it might succeed, Clarke and his followers pursued an Irish uprising. This kind of fervent, and sometimes blinding, belief in militant rebellion as a means to achieve independence can also be seen in the leadership of James Connolly.

Commandant General James Connolly was the man in charge of the "first Army of the Irish Republic" Connolly was idealized as a fervent Marxist
who managed to integrate nationalist rebellion with his convictions. He once wrote: “Only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland.” He believed in the working class as a political machine and also as a fighting force against the British.

Connolly was invited to be a member of the Military Council, though his socialist leanings conflicted with others' goal of a democratic Ireland and at first did not make him an appealing candidate for inclusion in the planning. As Home Rule was ignored and then postponed by the British government, Connolly became drawn to militant rebellion as the only option and started the Citizen Army, a separate military faction founded to help protect Irish nationalism and establish a workers' republic. Connolly never thought that a capitalist government would openly attack its own structures and believed all battles would be fought against British infantry. With these beliefs in mind, though contrary to Pearse, Connolly went into battle with considerable hopes for success.

From the beginning, the Military Council integrated necessary outside support into their planning. Its members did not believe the Irish people could have any long-term freedom without outside help. Since Germany was the enemy of England, she became the ally of Ireland. The Military Council's plan was "to start the fight alone and obtain German assistance later." The IRB developed an in depth description of a three-pronged attack on British-controlled Dublin involving IRB seizure of Dublin, a German naval invasion, and a coordinated rebel attack throughout the Irish countryside.
historian cited a "tart reply from Berlin, 'Sending German submarines to Dublin harbour impossible. Landing troops equally out of the question.'" Most historians attribute the rebels' faith in the success of the Easter Rising to the presumed promise of German help. Some continue that the Germans were only interested in aggravating the British, but needed complete assurance of Irish success before they aided Ireland. This assurance was never attained and German support was lost.

At the conclusion of the Rising, there were 1,351 tallied casualties, including Irish rebels, civilians, and British soldiers, though this is only the official statistic and historians imply there were more. One-hundred-seventy-nine buildings, that encompassed the center of Dublin, were irrevocably damaged with monetary costs amounting to two and a half million pounds. The most important of all statistics was that shortly after the Easter Rising, fourteen of the rebels, including Pearse, Clarke, and Connolly, were court-martialed and executed by the British. Some two thousand others were detained. A swelling of local Irish resentment immediately followed the executions. These acts by the British government were condemned by the population and viewed as barbaric, gratuitous, and overly-harsh.

In response to pending executions, the Irish Party (members of British Parliament) warned of "the extreme unwisdom of any wholesale shootings of prisoners. . . . So far feeling of the population in Dublin is against the Sinn Feiners. But a reaction might very easily be created." This warning illustrates how popular opinion regarding the rebels and the Rising shifted
among the local Irish. This popular opinion stretched across the ocean and also affected Irish-Americans.

The Military Council, IRB and Irish citizens did achieve the victory they wanted when Irish independence was achieved five years after the Easter Rising. The Easter Rising was a successful catalyst for Irish independence and started the political process that ended in independence. Even though the original plans of the Rebellion went awry, the Easter Rising was indisputably the mechanism that pushed Britain to acknowledge Ireland. There was disapproval from the international Irish population for the martyred rebels as well as a public outcry among local Irish. These were both new elements of the Irish rebellion because they suggested united feelings that Ireland should be independent from the United Kingdom. Ireland found itself in a position to demand independence.

Many Irish-Americans related to the leaders of the Easter Rising because the leaders brought something to the table to which Irish Americans could relate: Pearse, a passionate nationalist spirit who combined Celtic culture with a modern desire to free Ireland from England; Clarke, incarcerated in the name of Irish freedom and with great Irish-American connections; and Connolly, who advocated workers rights, a theme all too familiar to Irish immigrants working in the factories of America.

Irish-Americans could relate to the struggles still faced by many Irish, namely prejudice, economic strife, and desire for Irish identity. Irish-Americans felt they should have left such problems behind, but they found
that many followed them to America. This connection, based on hardship, bred support in the United States where Irish immigrants attempted to cultivate a future while still connecting to their past.
CHAPTER 1 NOTES


3 Coffey, 7.


6 Foy and Barton, 52.

7 Foy and Barton, 125.

8 Caulfield, 53.

9 Foy and Barton, 69.

10 Caulfield, 246.

11 Foy and Barton, 156.

12 Caulfield, 21.

13 Sinn Fein is a Gaelic phrase pronounced “Shinn Fain,” and means “We rely on Ourselves.”

14 Caulfield, 13-14.

15 Caulfield, 14.

16 Caulfield, 14.


19 Coogan, 4.

21 Caulfield, 14.

22 Thompson, 8.

23 Thompson, 19.

24 Thompson, 40.

25 Thompson, 42.

26 Thompson, 44.

27 Foy and Barton, 30.

28 Coffey, 6.

29 Thompson, 118.

30 Foy and Barton, 3.

31 Caulfield, 22.

32 Caulfield, 22.

33 Foy and Barton, 7.

34 Coffey, 5.

35 Coffey, 58.

36 Foy, 1.

37 Foy and Barton, 133.

38 Devoy, 458.

39 Caulfield, 15.

40 Caulfield, 29.

41 Caulfield, 27.
42 Caulfield, 248.

43 Coffey, 261.

44 Caulfield, 277 and 288.

CHAPTER 2
AN IRISH-AMERICAN IDENTITY

They came with scant belongings and plentiful hope. Irish immigrants made up just ten percent of all immigrants to America between 1820 and 1970, but spikes of Irish immigration gave the United States a green tinge.¹ Irish emigrants left for typical reasons: religious intolerance, lack of economic opportunity, and the lure of American life. Irish emigrated because they lacked access to profitable land in Ireland.² Irish immigrants to America were also a new kind of immigrant: predominately Catholic, rejecting a rural life, and absolutely anti-British.³ Irish-Americans also soon met resistance to their immigration, resulting in poverty, alienation, and intense feelings of inferiority.⁴ These factors caused a unique group to form that came together and carved out its own distinctive identity across America. The Irish clung to their traditions and shared experiences as they made their way in the New World.

The Irish first immigrated to the American British colonies. They were seeking a new land with new and different opportunities. The number of Irish that immigrated to the British colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is unknown, but is generally estimated at 300,000 to 500,000.⁵ These initial migrations are explained by famine, failed Irish rebellions, and the allure of North America.⁶ Unfortunately, the New World offered disappointments and discouragement. While upward mobility was possible in the colonies, the Irish were still considered the lower segment of society.
Many ended up as indentured servants who exchanged a period of servitude for passage to America. A small minority of Irish paid their own way to the Americas. Still, the Irish immigration was slow and inhibited by a lack of financial independence.  

Many Irish who settled in the Southern region of America were absorbed into the Protestant population. The most notable examples of this assimilation were immigrants not adhering to Catholicism. With no firm Church presence, many Irish simply joined the Protestant population. Many were not particularly seeking religious freedom and therefore did not have a significant reason to come together. The gradual flow of Irish immigrants consisted mainly of those who wanted a new life in the New World, those who were British soldiers from colonial times, or those who were generic labors.  

All of these early Irish immigrants were most often incorporated into the Protestant population.

Before the Irish potato famine, the least likely to leave Ireland were the poorest and wealthiest. Small land owners and those who could afford to get ahead after paying land rent tended to emigrate. These Irish were pushed to emigrate because of economic pressures as more and more people divided less and less available land. Familial holdings were subdivided over and over. Potatoes were the best way to feed a large family on a small tract of land.

Ireland also experienced an economic breakdown when industrialization took the place of domestic industry during the early eighteenth century. Domestic industries were cottage industries ran by the
women of the household or community, but those had no place in a newly industrialized Europe. Along with immigration to the United States, there was also a movement to British industrialized cities.\textsuperscript{11} Ireland's agriculturally-based economy had few resources to offer those who wished to excel. Since the Irish economy lacked diversity, if times were bad they had no alternative resources on which to depend.

Irish immigration picked up mid-way through the 1800s. The catalyst that pushed Irish to America was the Irish potato famine and the feelings of defeat that ravaged their poorest. The Irish potato famine lasted from 1845 to the early 1850s. The potato famine occurred when Irish potatoes were infected with a fungus that shriveled the potato plant.\textsuperscript{12} Many farmers could not feed their families, let alone pay their rent. While the potato blight itself was unavoidable, "the Great Famine was largely the result of Ireland's colonial status and grossly inequitable social system."\textsuperscript{13}

The British tired of political headaches and financial outlay over Irish issues; they merely wished to secure Ireland politically, militarily, and commercially. When the potato blight hit, the British provided little to no aid, citing their own superiority as cause, and as a result, many Irish starved or were forced to relocate.\textsuperscript{14} When the British government realized the dire situation in Ireland, it was too late. A defeated, squelched, and stifled people, the Irish experienced the last insult with Great Britain's apathy.

Some local agencies helped those who were greatly in need. About forty percent of the population, or 3 million Irish, received services that mostly
consisted of a food supply. Still, this was not enough for the poorest of Ireland. When the blight diseased the potato plant, the very poorest of Irish were affected immediately. An entire sector of society was eliminated from the equation in Ireland; they either died or moved. The deprived of the population starved first and died first. The poor were the first to leave in a massive exodus that occurred from 1845 until the turn of the century. Irish sold their land, their only source of cash, and headed for America.

The highest flux of immigration from Ireland was directly related to the Irish potato famine. From 1841 to 1910, there were Irish streaming off ships in the hundreds of thousands, most the victims of bleak situations in Ireland. These were primarily referred to as "push immigrants," because they did not leave by choice. The Great Famine, coupled with long standing economics problems and Irish disgust and disappointment with the British government, were all push factors that led to Irish emigrating from Ireland.

In the years directly following the potato famine, Irish immigration to the United States soared to over nine-hundred thousand. For the first time assimilation did not readily occur among immigrants because they had an enclave and a massive support group consisting of earlier immigrants and immigrants in like situations. The concept of an Irish ethnic enclave was not developed until there was a significant number of Irish who felt the need to band together. Pushed from their homeland, Irish immigrants of the Post Famine period were poor, rural farmers and had to adapt to an urban landscape. Similar to other immigrant groups, the Irish believed the best way
to survive was to group together. They bonded over Catholicism, lack of funds, and mutual hatred of the British. Later Irish immigrants "found themselves socially segregated—by choice and by necessity—and little affected by any melting pot process." 

Once in America, after an arduous journey and immigration inspections, Irish immigrants started to make connections with those who came before them. Associations sprang up in America and Irish immigrants found a welcome reminder of home from already established Irish immigrants. A later discussion of associations and nationalist groups will explain this point.

Though some were successful in other veins of work, the majority of Irish immigrants barely made ends meet in unskilled labor positions. The result was a low socioeconomic class of foreigners in a strange and inhospitable country. Many thought they might find their best opportunities somewhere else. There began a movement west, and the spread of Irish culture resulted in Irish enclaves peppering American territories such as the Montana Territory.

Some Irish chose to move west because they were adverse to assimilation and the Atlantic coast became less and less welcoming. Spurred on by a search for higher chances of moving up the labor ladder, Irish settlers, many second-generation, took advantage of new unskilled jobs available in the west. The movement of Irish immigrants west can best be attributed to a lack of jobs in urban areas. While there are records of Irish property ownership and instances of upward social mobility, second-
generation Irish moved west to find more prosperity than their parents achieved in eastern cities.\textsuperscript{23} Some first-generation immigrants moved west after being disappointed by poor employment and little to no social mobility.

Many Irish hoped that if they moved west they could move up and fulfill their rags-to-riches dream instead of just moving from extremely unskilled labor to somewhat unskilled labor.\textsuperscript{24} For example, “the further west they went, the better the Irish did. Thus, both the first and second generations did better in Philadelphia than in Boston or New York, better in Detroit than in Philadelphia, better in Denver than in Detroit, and best of all in San Francisco. . . . In Denver as early as 1890, 30 per cent of Irish-born males were working in skilled trades and 15 per cent in business, the professions and while-collar jobs, figures that were comparable to those of the native-born.”\textsuperscript{25} More opportunities in the west meant more Irish moving away from urban centers in the east. By 1850 there were about 150,000 Irish-born in the Midwest. An Irish journalist (English records are not deemed accurate) of the time reported that “chain immigration” occurred when Famine immigrants sent $120,000,000 to their countrymen.\textsuperscript{26} The support from earlier immigrants was a significant factor in moving west, not only financially, but communally as well.

No matter where they started, Irish immigrants brought their traditions and values. The one value that held true was a passionate hatred for Great Britain.\textsuperscript{27} As one reporter pointed out, “Is there any nationality which has become so entirely a passionate romantic sentiment as the Irish? The largest
halls will be crowded by the most rapt and enthusiastic audience to hear a fervid orator denounce the invader and despoiler, and prophesy that from her ruins and her desolation Erin will rise again in triumph."^28

This was also true in the Montana Territory. Early frontiersmen, such as General Thomas Francis Meagher, landed in Montana Territory and set an Irish precedent. Notable for his participation in the Civil War and later his appointment as Secretary of the Territory of Montana, Meagher never lost his connections to Ireland.^29 It was "common knowledge" that he was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood.^30 This nationalist organization was bent on autonomy from Britain and membership was proof of one's dedication to that cause.^31 Further explanation of the Fenian Brotherhood will follow.

Also in the Montana Territory there were a significant number of jobs in the growing mines. While these were not especially desirable jobs, what was desirable was the number of Irish in the industrial community. One such community was Butte, Montana. Industrialization, essentially the mining industry, provided a kind of "security" that Irish immigrants did not and could not hope to find in their homeland--security of a somewhat reliable future and security that the future would be better than the past.^32 There were a number of unskilled labor jobs in mines, especially in Butte, Montana, where copper was king.

Marcus Daly epitomized the Irish success story. Originally from County Cavan in Ireland, Daly rose from a telegraph messenger in New York to a farm laborer in California, and eventually to a mine owner in Butte, Montana.^33
His story drifted to the east coast where Irish-Americans, disheartened with city life, were looking for a change. Much of Butte’s success was credited to Marcus Daly, who recruited Irish by advertising success in Butte; it helped that he was Irish and openly preferred Irish workers in his copper mine. Marcus Daly’s support of the Irish settler and the boom produced by the Anaconda Copper Mining Company brought Irish to Butte.\textsuperscript{34} Daly’s life story was even cited as another reason to hate the British. The explanation was based on the Irish belief that they were being squelched under Great Britain. Daly had risen above his status in Great Britain’s society, and thus could only be a successful businessman in the Irish-American town that boasted some of the “greatest smelters in the world.”\textsuperscript{35} Irish laborers on the east coast were drawn to this kind of rags-to-riches story. They believed that they too could be successful in Butte, America.

Once lured to Montana, the Irish quickly moved to establish the comforts of home. These comforts included Irish organizations and associations.\textsuperscript{36} Irish organizations sprang up in Montana as a means of maintaining an ethnic identity based on a common culture.\textsuperscript{37} This was a means of binding the group together for reassurance, survival, and, it was hoped, economic success.

Capitalizing on bitter resentment toward the English, there were many associations whose agenda was to support Ireland gaining independence from the British Empire. The most notable of these associations and organizations were the Irish Land League, the Fenian Brotherhood, the Clan-
na-Gael, the Gaelic League, and the Ancient Order of the Hibernians. Ireland experienced a resurgence of Irish nationalism in Ireland and it was supplemented in America and the west.

The Irish National Land League in America was established in 1880 to support specifically the Irish movement toward independence.\textsuperscript{38} Funding from America poured in and even those who did not necessarily have the means to give gave nonetheless.\textsuperscript{39} The Land League was considered more conservative than other more radical groups. The Irish Nationalist Land League also drew support from second-generation Irish and upper-middle to upper-class Irish.\textsuperscript{40} The broad support for these groups grew from widespread resentment towards Great Britain and a desire to free Ireland from her control.

Members of the Clan-na-Gael were described as "pure" nationalists.\textsuperscript{41} John Devoy, Irish revolutionary, took control of the Clan-na-Gael, or United Brotherhood, in 1817, upon his release from British prison. The purpose the Clan-na-Gael was to stir up and keep alive any remaining Fenien sentiments in America. Known for extremism and radicalism, the Clan-na-Gael was important in drumming up support for Irish in the homeland.\textsuperscript{42} The Fenien Brotherhood, a branch Irish Republican Army, was also bent on establishing an Irish republic through whatever means necessary. A secret society, the Fenien Brotherhood in the United States provided support to the IRB in Ireland. The IRB busily set up militias in Ireland and the Fenien Brotherhood in the United States established "Circles" where members met.\textsuperscript{43}
The Ancient Order of Hiberians was also a popular association among Irish Americans. The AOH upheld Irish honor in the American press and entertainment by squelching anti-Irish or stereotyped Irish information. Their goal was to encourage middle-class Irish, who were a growing force in the mid-1880s, to stand up to age-old criticism from the British Empire.\textsuperscript{44} This was particularly successful in the west where AOH groups sprang up. Butte, Montana, boasted one thousand members in 1903, making it the second largest AOH club in America.\textsuperscript{45} Ireland’s support in the west, especially in Montana, and Butte specifically, would prove important in the years to come. Irish Montanans’ opinions of rebel movements in Ireland showed their dedication to Ireland’s freedom and their everlasting connection to their homeland.
CHAPTER 2 NOTES


4 Kenny, 171.


6 Miller, 138.

7 Miller, 141.


9 Kenny, 50

10 Fallows, 16.

11 Kenny, 51.

12 Miller, 281.

13 Miller, 286.

14 Fallows, 16.

15 Miller, 284.

16 Fallows, 17.


18 Griffin, 143.

19 Fallows, 6.

20 Fallows, 2.
21 Fallows, 7.
22 Kenny, 149.
23 Kenny, 150.
24 Kenny, 150.
25 Kenny, 150.
26 Moe, 6.
27 Fallows, 5.
28 Griffin, 91.
29 Moe, 7
30 Forney, 188.
31 Forney, 79.
33 Miller, 313.
34 Forney, 241.
35 Emmons, 195.
36 Emmons, 108.
37 Fallows, 8.
38 Miller, 540.
39 Emmons, 54.
40 Miller, 545.
41 Miller, 539.
42 Miller, 441.
43 Forney, 80.
44 Miller, 498.
45 Emmons, 109.
CHAPTER 3

IRISH MONTANANS' REACTIONS TO THE EASTER RISING

There has always been a significant Irish population in Montana. For the purposes of conciseness this chapter will concentrate on the reactions of Irish-American Montanans in Helena and Butte. Also, the best way to measure support, or lack thereof, for the Easter Rising is found in minutes from Irish associations and in newspapers of the day. Both of these sources will be examined here. Upon examination of the sources, a determination will be made as to whether Irish-American Montanans had a distinct reaction to the Easter Rising, or if other factors impeded their concern and interest in Irish politics.

Thomas Francis Meagher set an example for Montana's Irish when he took the Fenien Brotherhood oath to "labor with earnest zeal for the liberation of Ireland from the yoke of England and for the establishment of a free and independent government on Irish soil. . . ." Following Meagher's example and traditional Irish practice, Montana's Irish established outposts of Irish associations, including the Ancient Order of the Hibernians, the Robert Emmet Literary Society (both branches of the Clan-na-Gael), the Gaelic League, and Friends of Irish Freedom. All of these associations' goals were to support Ireland in her quest for freedom.

Irish associations were formed in Helena starting in 1896, including branches of the Clan-na-Gael. As the population of Irish in the Helena
community grew, so did support for such associations. A prime is example of Irish Montanans’ support for Irish independence occurred within a few weeks of the Rising when one thousand Irish Montanan residents of Helena joined the Friends of Irish Freedom. The express purpose of the FOIF was to sustain the quest for Irish freedom. From one perspective, it is considered that the immediate reaction to the Rising would be a spike in support for the rebels’ cause. Conversely, in a growing and diverse community like Helena, this wave of support for rebels exemplifies the cultural connection between Irish American settlers and those in Ireland.

There was also a notable population of Irish in Butte. Twenty-five percent of Silver Bow County had been born in Ireland or were first generation Irish-Americans. This shows the high concentration of Irish settlers and explains Irish attempts to establish their own community directly drawing on their cultural experiences. There is also a record of when Butte’s branch of the Gaelic League was founded. After Dr. Douglas Hyde, leader of the Gaelic League at the time, visited Butte in 1906, the Gaelic League gained a post in the community. The Gaelic League is most noted for its preservation of the Gaelic language. Its influence spread the preservation of Irish culture and supported Irish independence.

The American Land League, America’s counterpart to the Irish Land League, found interest in Montana. There is confirmation that Butte, as with other distinctly Irish and mining based towns, contributed to the American Land League, which in turn directly contributed to the Irish Land League. The
Irish Land League’s main goal was to rid Ireland of British landlords. Many of the Irish who emigrated from Ireland had worked on farms and directly related to Ireland’s struggle to get rid of British landlords.⁶

The Easter Rising immediately captured the attention of Irish Americans. Some gave it no second thought; it was just another rebellion in Ireland. Irish Americans still supported the Democratic Party and the Catholic Church, both of which condemned the Rising. Public opinion in Ireland was that the Irish Volunteers were reckless and had no business declaring a republic. The tide of public opinion turned in Ireland, as well as in America, when the British enacted harsh martial law and executed rebels.⁷ Many Irish-Americans believed it their duty, once they were free from British rule, to make all efforts to free Ireland.⁸ While many had good intentions, it is found that there were possibly other priorities, and Irish nationalism created more noise than action.

There were complications for Irish settlers because even though the “language of Irish-American nationalism was threatening . . . there was little the Irish could do about liberating the homeland from three or four thousand miles away.”⁹ That distance was even longer when the Irish nationalist was in the West, but that did not deter Irish Montanans. They made sure that their voices regarding Irish nationalism were heard. Sometimes Irish Montanans’ thoughts and concerns were confined to their own meetings. Other times, their voices would be heard as far east as New York or Boston, when they were assured that their counterparts would send on the message. A further
complication was that many Irish settlers were in search of a new life and, while they enjoyed the cultural ties presented by Irish associations, they also enjoyed making their way in Montana.

Irish settlers found comfort in the towns of Montana. Most towns were only partly established and this left the opportunity for Irish to create their place in each town's societies. Once established, Irish associations set about their regular business. For example, providing money to a family who lost the bread winner of the family was common. As well, providing a temporary means of income to unemployed members occurred. Irish associations tended to maintain secrecy because much of their business spoke ill of the British government and took on a rebellious tone. There was the pending American involvement in World War I as well, which resulted in a heightened awareness of possible threatening ramifications.

British policies particularly fueled hatred towards the British government among Irish-Americans. The same was true in Montana, where Irish settlers, and their newly founded associations, took notice. At the same time though, there was a range of support from Irish Montanans.

The *Helena Independent*, *Butte Miner*, *Anaconda Standard*, and *Butte Daily Post* kept up with the events of Easter week. These papers received much of their published information from the London, Dublin, or New York branches of the Associated Press. What was revealing were the headlines and the articles that were specifically chosen to be printed by the respective papers. The *Helena Independent* and *Butte Miner* offered a more
conservative view of the Rising, while the Anaconda Standard and Butte Daily Post printed examples of local public support.

The Helena Independent first noted the Easter Rising on April 25th with an Associated Press article from London that reported, "Sporadic Sinn Fein Uprising Quickly Quieted by Soldiery: Irish separatist revolt seems to have been confined to Dublin – army and volunteers put down rioters, with what loss to Irish is concealed—only meager details given to public but government claims the upper hand." What is significant about this article is that it interpreted the Easter Rising as a random insurgency that was quickly quelled by British soldiers. In reality, while lasting only a week, the Rising caught British soldiers by surprise and relatively unprepared. It is not surprising that these sentiments came from London.

Midway through Easter week the Helena Independent reported that the "stronghold" of Irish rebels was broken and that four hundred rebels who were taken prisoner. The article continued that there were some rebels who were still holding positions. This point is significant because it suggests a changed perception toward the rebels and the rebellion; that the Easter Rising was actually a force that had to be fought. This is supported by articles in the Butte Miner.

A headline from the Butte Miner the day after the Rising reported: "Martial Law Declared Throughout Ireland." The paper continued, "Asquith, who yesterday had given reassuring news respecting the situation in Ireland, caused something of a flutter of excitement today . . . when he announced the
spread of the movement to other parts of Ireland." Herbert Henry Asquith was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the time.

The *Butte Miner* printed articles that portrayed the rebels as criminals. One headline read, "Murder is indiscriminate." An eye-witness account described how the Rising started, who was wounded, and where action took place. The highlight of the article was a story of the circumstances under which a young boy was shot. These images portrayed the Irish as vicious rebels.

The above stories represent one perspective: that the Irish rebels were barbaric and wasting their time. It might be inferred that since multiple articles were printed in Butte, Montana, condemning the Rising, there were community members who condemned the Rising as well. It is possible that the Montana press did not fully grasp the extent to which plans were made for the uprising, therefore tainting its understanding of the Rising. Newspapers’ local articles illustrated the political dichotomy between supporters of Marcus Daly, who started the *Anaconda Standard*, and those who followed William A. Clark, who founded the *Butte Miner*.

The *Anaconda Standard* and *Butte Daily Post* both printed articles similar to those described above. Their publications did differ because there were examples of local Irish Montanan support for the rebels.

The *Butte Daily Post* printed a call to all Irish-Americans on the 28th of April, just four days after the beginning of the Rising. "A mass meeting will be held in Hibernia Hall . . . for the purpose of forming a branch of the Friends of
Irish Freedom. Every man of Irish blood who believes that Ireland ought to be a free and independent republic and is willing to work to that end is urgently requested to attend.”

On April 29th, the Anaconda Standard also printed an advertisement that called for a meeting to form a branch of the Friends of Irish Freedom. The Anaconda Standard printed stories from the London Associated Press that disapproved of the Rising, but the mention of local support in both the Anaconda Standard and Butte Daily Post are key to understanding how Irish-American Montanans reacted.

While these articles described how the Easter Rising was perceived in the press, delving into meeting minutes from actual Irish associations offers a better look at Irish-American Montanans’ attitudes towards the Rising. Most importantly, the reactions illustrated in associations’ minutes tend to be those of Irish who wished to maintain a secure connection to a culture that supported Irish freedom. The following discussion covers minutes of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, or AOH, and the Robert Emmet Literary Society, or RELA, both of Butte. It is difficult to establish firm conclusions from meetings’ notes because there is much that is unknown, including the context of each meeting, if everything discussed was noted by the secretary, and the extent of each discussion topic. Considering all of this, notes from meetings are a valid means of gaining information about what Irish members valued.

Regarding Ireland’s struggle for freedom, these associations had similar perspectives: maintain a relationship with Ireland and support actions
to free Ireland from British rule. They differed in the level of aversion to the British government. The AOH was mostly concerned with the well-being of its members, while the RELA ensured that its meetings were a safe place to vent opposition to the British government.

The AOH, known for its somewhat conservative reactions and diplomatic means, emerged in Butte as a center to gather money for relief for Irish in Ireland. For example, in 1898, the AOH of Butte sent five-hundred dollars to Ireland for crop failure relief. The RELA, on the other hand, was more than ready to condemn the British government at every turn.

Mention of the Rising in AOH meeting minutes is sparse and sporadic. For example, on April 26th, AOH member Brother Murphy brought up the new business of “helping the Irish Volunteers movement in Ireland.” The motion was seconded that fifty dollars be sent to the Defense of Ireland Fund and it was passed. The second recorded mention of the Rising occurred on May 3rd when “Pat Shea . . . spoke . . . on the topic of Irish Freedom.” Also in the same meeting there was a motion passed to drape the AOH banner for three days in honor of the deaths in Dublin and London.

Finally, on May 10th a motion was seconded and passed that the meeting should adjourn early to prepare for a “joint session with the Divisions of the Ladies auxiliary to appropriately commemorate the execution of Patrick H. Pearse, Thomas J. Clarke, Thomas McDonagh and other Irish patriots by the English . . .” (These were all leaders pivotal to the implementation of the
Easter Rising.) This was a clear example of support for the rebels, as the AOH used the term “patriots” to describe the rebels.

These notes lead the reader to acknowledge that the AOH of Butte was moved by the Rising, took local action, and sent funding for the movement. However, the lack of extensive mention leads to the conclusion that the AOH was more concerned about other matters, such as inducting new members, disbursing sick benefits to members, and reading a daily dose of Irish history. These are all examples of preserving Irish culture, but there seemed to be little to no earnest pressure to act after the Rising.

Conversely, the Robert Emmet Literary Society had choice words about the Rising. The RELA was known for advocating extreme secrecy in their meetings and every member was referred to by number and not by name. With the assurance of secrecy, the RELA attracted members who spoke freely and this was reflected in RELA minutes. In a discussion at the conclusion of one meeting, “Brothers 13, 144, 76, 194, [and] 244 all spoke at length in condemnation of the murders of our brothers in London.”

This statement alone is representative of Irish Montanans’ connection to Ireland’s freedom. The choice of language, specifically “murders,” and “brothers,” adds to the forceful nature of this entry.

A week later, RELA members discussed the “murders of our Brothers at home,” “martyrs at home,” and the importance of “sticking together.” The most important point brought up at that particular meeting was a comment by Brother 58 who “hoped someone brave and daring enough would take
vengeance on the Arch Murderer ‘Asquith’. Here the minutes left no room to doubt this particular group’s loyalty to the Irish cause of freedom and the means by which is could be attained.

There was some discussion at the RELA meeting the following week about World War I, and how it might affect the fighting in Ireland. At the next meeting, a motion was passed to present an Irish Republic flag to the newly established Friends of Irish Freedom. By June 8th, some meeting business included a motion to send fifty dollars to the Irish Relief Fund. All of these smaller acts reinforce the RELA’s dedication to maintaining a connection with Ireland and its rebels.

A year later, the RELA still mentioned the Rising. For example, there were plans to commemorate the Easter Week Rising within the first few weeks of April. There were communications from “headquarters” about the “Irish situation” in May 1917, and then communications again from headquarters regarding America’s involvement in World War I. Finally, in December of 1917, the RELA made reference to “interesting talks” about the New Irish Home Rule Law and “matters concerning the Irish race in Butte. . .”

Because the RELA mentioned the Easter Rising so often in its meetings, it obviously supported the Rising to the point of supporting violence. AOH minutes dropped mention of the Easter Rising, and even a year later and it was not mentioned again, which is in keeping with the AOH’s
more conservative stance on Irish politics and its history of support Irish-Americans.

The most notable connection between the Easter Rising and Irish-American Montanans is found in the figure of Rev. Michael Hannan. Hannan was mentioned in a Montana Standard article in 1997 when his descendent, Tony O'Connell, conducted research regarding Hannan at the Butte-Silver Bow Archives. Hannan preached in St. Mary's Parish, in Butte, Montana, from 1912 until his death in 1918. An active member of the community, Hannan wrote extensively about his "very, very Republican views," which included writings about Irish nationalism. Hannan was mentioned in AOH minutes after the Rising when he spoke "on the topic of Irish Freedom." Hannan also wrote his own book, entitled Irish Leaders of 1916 - Who Were They? The book was donated to the Butte-Silver Bow Archives by an unidentified Butte resident.

In the first sentence of the Preface, the goals of the writer were very clearly outlined. "Having no title in Ireland but that of invasion and armed occupation, England's first care was to hide the truth from the world." This clear message is supported throughout the preface with statements such as,

It required all the courage, determination all the pure-souled patriotism of a small band of devoted Irishmen to make a breach in the wall, a breach through which Ireland might look out on the world and see for herself, and the world look in and see Ireland. Hurling themselves against the might of the huge and brutal Empire those men focused public attention on Ireland. . . . People look on the brutal massacre; they stand idly by while one small nation is crucified. They have not the courage to make any attempt to stop the murder. Instead there is a
shriek from the press: "Why cannot the Irish lie down and accept slavery? Why do they object to their exploitation and spoliation by England? Will we ever have an end to the Irish 'Question?'" Yes – "Freedom is its answer and its end."28

While this excerpt is dripping with patriotism, it is a prime example of Irish-American Montanans support for the Rising, for Irish nationalism in general, and for the independence of Ireland more broadly.

Hannan introduced his book by making a reference to the impact that World War I had on public perceptions. "Men's hearts have been so perverted in every nation by the passion of prejudice and hatred... we can well understand how hitherto unknown men might pass unnoticed in their holocaust for themselves for the liberty of their country and their kind."29 This is a reference to Irish rebels. Hannan drew on current events, including America's involvement in World War I, to drive home his point that the leaders of the Easter Rising must be remembered as champions of Irish freedom. While this is an obvious assertion of Irish nationalism, the quote also emphasizes Irish culture as a means of attaining Irish freedom. At the same time, Hannan's distress over the tragedy of World War I shows his connection to an American identity. Some of Hannan's frustrations about Irish freedom could also be attributed to his perception of America's conflict of interests. Hannan, like other Irish-Americans, believed in Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, especially the right of all nations to self-determination. What Hannan perceived was a divergence from that philosophy where Ireland was concerned. Hannan believed that Ireland should be free, which was in
keeping with his ancestral ties to Ireland. Those beliefs were also in keeping with the philosophy of the leader of the United States, which was his new homeland. Hannan attempted to reconcile the two, but found himself adhering to his Irish heritage, as represented in his writings. This challenge might have emerged in other Irish Montanans to varying degrees.
CHAPTER 3 NOTES


3 Forney, 241.

4 *The Butte Miner*, 15 June 1906.

5 Miller, 417.


8 Emmons, 316.

9 Emmons, 5

10 Miller, 500.

11 Moe, 48.


13 *Butte Miner*, 28 April 1916.


15 *Anaconda Standard*, 29 April 1916.

16 *Butte Miner*, 19 April 1916.

17 Emmons, 26.

18 Ancient Order of Hiberians minutes, 1906-1913 & 1913-1925, OCO12, Box 2, Butte-Silver Bow Archives, Butte, Montana, April 26, 1916.


20 Ancient Order of Hiberians minutes, May 10, 1916.


23 Robert Emmet Literary Society minutes, June 8, 1916.

24 Robert Emmet Literary Society minutes, December, 20, 1917.


28 Hannan, iv.

29 Hannan, ix.
CHAPTER 4

MERGING IRISH AND AMERICAN CULTURES IN MONTANA

Historians have the benefit of hindsight. They gauge the long-term influence of people and events; therefore the Easter Rising is identified as a success because, as a direct result, an Irish republic was established.

Historians also know the influence of Irish in Montana: the legacy of mining, the Irish cultural demonstrations throughout the year, and the lists of Irish last names in phone books.

Montanans' reactions to the Easter Rising in Dublin were an instance of cultural integration. The Easter Rising acts as a microchasm and embodies Irish-American Montanans' assimilation. For example, Irish-American Montanans were in full support of Irish freedom and were not about to stand by while their countrymen were suffering, which shows their connection to Ireland. The Easter Rising increased support for prevalent Irish cultural Associations, especially the RELA. Individuals, such as Rev. Fr. Hannan, found much in the Irish situation to discuss with passion. This pointed to a confidence in Ireland's free future held by Irish Montanans.

At the same time, Irish-Americans wanted to integrate with the American community. This is supported by newspaper articles from the Associated Press, as well as AOH minutes. The goal of the AOH seemed to concentrate on helping Montana's Irish through hard-times and developing cultural connections, both American and Irish, through social activities.
Consequently, Irish-Americans wanted to remain Irish enough to maintain their unity, their sense of ethnicity. They also wanted to ensure that they achieved success in America and to do so, they had to let go of some of their anti-British attitudes. Some Irish-Americans feared there was misuse of funds, back in Ireland, as well as a lack of political leadership and motivation.¹ This drained some of their Irish nationalism. Time also played a role, as many Irish-Americans were somewhat removed from the Irish immigrants who first came to America. Second and third generation Irish-Americans, who accounted for many of the Irish in Montana, did not feel the same connection to Ireland. They found more importance in bettering their own lives in their new homeland.²

Irish Americans were torn between being Irish, and thus believing that every enemy of Britain was an ally to Ireland, and being American, thereby believing Great Britain was a precious ally. Irish nationalism in Montana was certainly fervent, but it was also fleeting. A choice eventually had to be made and the turning point for many Irish Americans came when the United States joined World War I in April, 1917. Harsh Sedition Acts were passed in Montana and left no room for anti-American sentiments. Any criticism of the “American idea,” in private meetings, or in the press, was met with harsh political condemnation.³

When American joined the side of Great Britain, Irish-Americans quelled their support for Irish nationalists. While it may have broken the heart of Irish-America, most Irish, including Rev. Fr. Hannan, held out hope that
President Wilson would help Ireland free itself from Great Britain. Irish-American associations publicly announced that they would not support insurrectionary activity in Ireland.

When America joined World War I it was the final chapter in Ireland's rebellion until the conclusion of the war. Irish culture and history are alive and well today, but there was a process that occurred. There was a shift from being an Irish immigrant to becoming an Irish-American in Montana, to just being American with roots in Ireland. What remained in Montana was a bastion of Irish culture and history that will forever be preserved.
CHAPTER 4 NOTES


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