

Finding out about my Irish/ German Heritage

Ann Thomson

(grandmother Esther Mick-Thomson, father Millar Thomson)

A highlight of my trip to Ireland was visiting the land that my great grandfather Daniel Mick left in 1848. Three sites helped me better understand conditions at that time and also the conditions when they first arrived in Ireland as refugees from Germany in 1709.

1. **New Ross** (20 minutes north east of Waterford)

There is a full-scale reconstruction of a famine ship the SS Dunbrody Emigrant Ship. This provides an opportunity to see the size and conditions experienced by many when escaping from famine conditions.

2. **Cobh** (east of Cork)

There is a marvelous Heritage Centre in the old railway station along the waterfront. An excellent series of exhibitions highlight the mass emigration during the famine years. This is a very informative display and includes other shipping details e.g., the last port of call by the Titanic.

3. **Rathkeale** (10 minutes west of Adare, Limerick Co).

The Irish Palatine Centre is a wonderful little museum/archive staffed by volunteers from mid May to mid September. We were there in early May and contacted Austin Bovenizer who arranged for Helen Mulcahy to meet us on the weekend. This was where my real awakening occurred. The emphasis is on the Palatines' innovative contributions to Irish farming and how their settlement conditions shaped the Irish Palatine identity. They were certainly unique due to their Protestant faith, their language, prior lifestyle beliefs and a strong work ethic. This set them apart from the local Irish people. (It was three generations before the German language was replaced by English in most households(.

I learned that the Micks & many other Palatines craved to settle in America. Some leaving as early as the 1760's. Although our ancestors left in 1848 they did not travel on a famine ship. Because of their farming crops as well as their kitchen gardens they were not dependent like the Irish on a diet of potatoes. The Micks sailed from the Limerick harbour aboard a privately owned ship that brought logs/lumber back from Canada. I assume this was not a luxurious voyage & although it was during the time of famine emigration there are no deaths recorded.

Excellent Resource Book:

People Make Places The Story of the Irish Palatines, Patrick O'Connor, 1989. Oireacht na Mumhan Books, Coolanoran, Newcastle West, Limerick Co, Ireland.

(Please note that Ann presented this report at the 2004 reunion.)