

1806 1613 **BELFAST**
NASHVILLE
SISTERCITIES SINCE 1994



**THE
BELFAST
NASHVILLE
STORY**



The Hermitage, Nashville.



Belfast City Hall, opened on 1 August 1906.



1806 1613 BELFAST NASHVILLE SISTERCITIES SINCE 1994

Belfast and Nashville, 2 unique cities in 2 different countries, thousands of miles apart. What could they possibly have in common?

Actually, a lot more than you might think.

Nashville's history is full of names that have a deep resonance in Northern Ireland. From Presidents to preachers; pioneers to entrepreneurs, Ulster Scots emigrants and their descendents have played a fundamental role in the creation and development of Nashville.

Nashville's story is an Ulster story too, and the Sister City relationship between Nashville and Belfast is a fitting reflection of this.



BELFAST NASHVILLE SISTER CITY SUMMARY

The connection with Nashville has a special significance because of the very strong links between Ulster and the Tennessee capital. The region's connection with Tennessee dates from the Scots-Irish settlement of the area in the eighteenth century to the diverse relationships and cultural ties that link Belfast and Nashville today.

Since the Memorandum of understanding was signed in 1994 to promote cultural, tourism and business development opportunities between the Belfast and Nashville, the relationship has flourished.

There is great merit and significance in developing such a relationship and over recent years the initiative has resulted in many collaborations between our two cities. Numerous linkages have ranged from Habitat for Humanity, our Visitor and Convention Bureaus, academic, educational projects and cross community exchange visits, urban design, genealogy with the Ulster Historical Foundation and of course country music and song-writing (last year Nashville made Belfast's Van Morrison an honorary citizen of Nashville and honoured his contribution to country music).

200 YEARS OF NASHVILLE

In 2007 Nashville marked the 200th anniversary of its incorporated existence using Belfast City Council's 15-month long 'Celebrate Belfast' programme of events as its role model. A highlight of the connection between the two cities is the Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival which promotes and strengthens our Sister City Link and enhances our cultural exchange.

The Sister City Link sends out a positive message of our cities internationally and enhances our tourism potential, bringing more people from Nashville to Belfast, which is of course now made easier with the Continental Airlines flight directly from New York to Belfast. The Sister City connection enables Belfast City Council to raise the profile of Belfast as a vibrant European destination and to market and promote new cultural tourism products including the Guide to Tracing Your Family History and the Music Guide to Belfast.

NASHVILLE ADVISORY GROUP

Belfast City Council co-ordinates its own Nashville Advisory Group which includes representatives from the leisure and cultural sector, historical groups, genealogy associations, community development, media and educational organisations. Numerous future activities have been planned to strengthen the Sister City relationship and achieve tangible cultural, tourism and economic development between the two cities. This includes joint marketing between our Visitor and Convention Bureaus and Media, developing Researching Family History projects with the Ulster Historical Foundation.

"A NIGHT IN NASHVILLE"

A key highlight in 2007 will be the Celebration of the 200th Anniversary of Belfast's Sister City surrounding a Civic Visit from Mayor Purcell. A large scale public concert, A NIGHT IN NASHVILLE, will be held at Custom House Square on 29th June. A superb line-up of top musicians features Van Morrison protégé Bap Kennedy, whose first (Steve Earle produced) album was made in Nashville with Nanci Griffiths, the acclaimed singer songwriter Brian Houston ("an Irish treasure" and who received Alt Country Album of the Year for Thirteen Days in August) and will be headlined by Nashville's brilliant Kevin Montgomery. Also look out for the Bluegrass Broken String Band who play traditional, raw acoustic Appalachian Mountain Music at its best.

"This is a very exciting development which will have real impact on Belfast's tourism industry. Nashville is our sister city and our visit there during its 200th anniversary celebrations has further strengthened and enhanced our special relationship.

It is now up to us to harness this and take it one step further. There is tremendous opportunity for developing the tourism potential between Belfast and Nashville, and as a result of this visit we are in a position to broaden the cultural tourism package aimed at the US market.

This will have clear economic benefits for Belfast: last year alone 6.8 million visitors came to Belfast and contributed £324 million to the city's economy, helping to support nearly 18,000 full-time jobs."

Lord Mayor of Belfast
Cllr Pat McCarthy

1. BACKGROUND

Appropriately for our story, the Sister City concept was inaugurated by US President Dwight D Eisenhower in 1956 to establish greater friendships and understanding among the people of the USA and other nations.

Appropriate because Eisenhower was granted the Freedom of Belfast on 1st June 1945 when commander of the allied forces preparing for the invasion of Europe. In those days, Belfast echoed to the sound of American voices, although any sons of Nashville amongst them must have bristled at the local epithet for the US troops – ‘Yanks.’

On May 22nd 1995, Belfast Northern Ireland and Nashville Tennessee became Sister Cities. The Charter of Sister City Relationship was signed by the then Lord Mayor of Belfast Hugh Smyth, and the Mayor of Nashville Philip Breseden.

So just how deep are the historical connections between the two cities?

Eisenhower Monument, Belfast City Hall.



US President
Dwight D Eisenhower

2. ORIGINS OF BELFAST

People have lived in the area around Belfast since the earliest of times, although its growth into a major city is, in terms of the island of Ireland, relatively recent. The Norman knight John de Courci built the first castle here around 1177, probably on the site of an ancient Irish fortress, but it wasn't until the early 1600s that Belfast became an important town.

The Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement of east Ulster, which began in May 1606, brought large numbers of Scottish settlers to the area around Belfast. The fledgling city began to blossom and grow.

Following the success of his associates Hamilton and Montgomery, King James I initiated the settlement of Jamestown, Virginia one year later in May 1607. Then, in September 1610, he proceeded with the Plantation of the west of Ulster. These three projects were closely intertwined. Belfast quickly became an economic success and in 1613 the city was granted its Charter of Incorporation by the King.

High Street Belfast.



James Hamilton

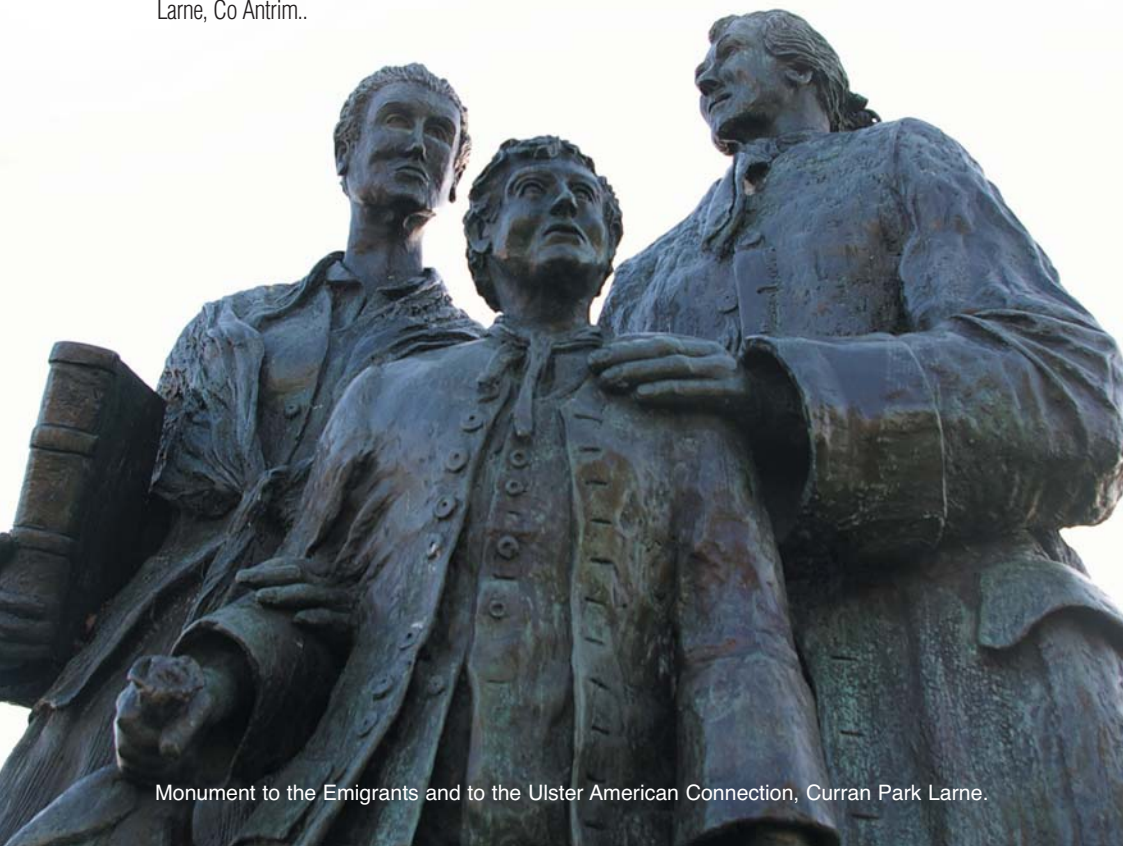


Hugh Montgomery

3. EMIGRATION AND REVOLUTION

The first attempted emigration from Ulster to America was only 23 years later. The voyage of the renowned Eagle Wing from Groomsport, County Down to Massachusetts in 1636 failed and the 140 emigrants returned. For almost the next hundred years, there were only a few attempts to emigrate to the New World; in 1717 that the next significant emigration ship, the Friends Goodwill, left Larne for Boston.

This time the emigration was a success and the real story of Ulster-Scots influence in the New World had begun. Today you can view a monument to this epic trip at Larne, Co Antrim..



Monument to the Emigrants and to the Ulster American Connection, Curran Park Larne.

The 1700s saw a huge Ulster-Scots emigration to the New World. It is estimated that over 250,000 Ulster-Scots made the transatlantic journey during the century.

However, life in the New World often turned out to be less favourable than they had hoped. Many of Ulster Scots rallied against the oppressive policies of the English Crown. They had bitter experience of the suppression of their religious and civil liberties in the Old World and were determined not to see this repeated.

In fact, the American Revolution of 1776 was described as a “Scotch Irish Presbyterian Revolution”. It is said that around one third of General George Washington’s army were of Ulster-Scots descent.

Back in Ulster, the new US Navy won its first naval battle in Belfast Lough when John Paul Jones captured the English warship HMS Drake on April 24th 1778 “much to the admiration of Ulster folk ashore, who vigorously supported their kinsfolk’s struggle across the Atlantic.”



It is also claimed that Washington said “If defeated everywhere else, I will make my final stand with the Scotch-Irish (Ulster-Scots) of my native Virginia”. It would be the children of these first Ulster-Scots emigrants to Virginia who would soon push westward to establish Nashville.

Spirit of 1776.

4. ORIGINS OF NASHVILLE

Nashville was founded in 1780 when James Robertson and John Donelson led two groups of pioneers from Watauga in upper East Tennessee to establish the settlement they originally named Nashborough.

Robertson led the advance party, arriving on Christmas Day in 1779. His parents had left east Antrim for Virginia in 1735, so the connection between Nashville and Ulster is there from the city's origin.

This group of pioneers was joined four months later on April 24, 1780, by Donelson, another Ulster-Scot from east Antrim. With him from Watauga came 60 families.

On May 1 the settlers signed a document called the Cumberland Compact which contained the articles for self-government and provision for the election of public officials. This document was signed by 256 of the settlers. One only has to look down the list of names to see the Ulster-Scots roots of these first citizens of the fledgling Nashville.

On the Cumberland Compact monument at Fort Nashborough are the names of the people who signed the document, including Anderson, Armstrong, Boyd, Bradley, Buchanan, Burgess, Cameron, Campbell, Coleman, Cowan, Edmonston, Espey, Fleming, Fletcher, Freeland, Foster, Gibson, Guthrie, Hamilton, Henderson, Hood, Jackson, Johnson, Lindsay, Marten, Maxwell, McAdam, McAdoo, McCartney, McCutcheon, McMurray, McMurtry, McWhirter, McVay, Mitchell, Montgomery, Moore, Morris, Newell, Newton, Patrick, Phillips, Price, Reid, Russell, Seaton, Shannon, Shaw, Simpson, Smith, Thomas, Thomson, Turner, Webb, White, Williams, Willson and Woods - all familiar surnames here in Northern Ireland. It is likely that many of these people were descendants of emigrants from Ulster, or perhaps emigrants themselves.

Robertson and Donelson monument, Nashville.



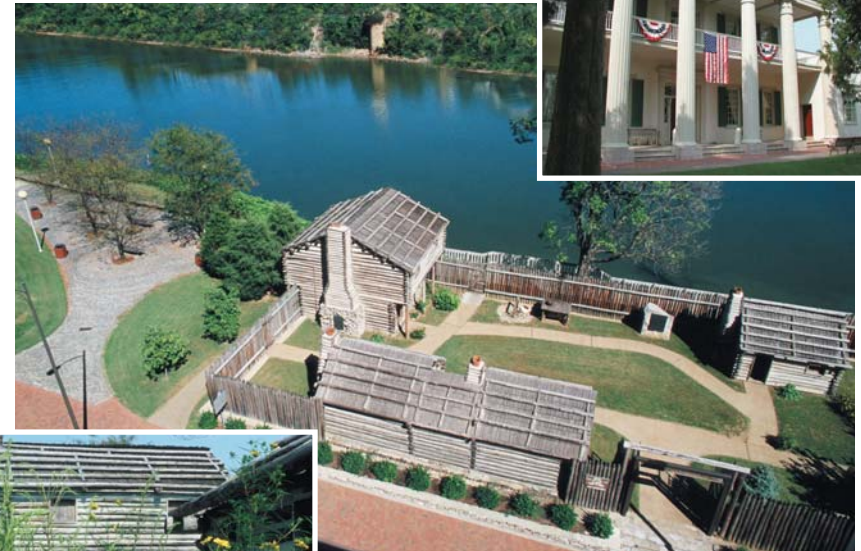
In 1784, the name of the settlement was changed from Nashborough to Nashville. Andrew Jackson, who was yet another son of emigrants from East Antrim, arrived in Nashville in 1788 to serve as public prosecutor. A dazzling career as politician and war hero lay ahead, culminating in his inauguration as the 7th President of the United States. In 1796, Tennessee was accepted as the 16th state of the Union, with Jackson as its first Congressman. Progress proceeded apace.

Nashville was incorporated in 1806 with a Mayor and six aldermen, with the Bank of Nashville founded in the following year. Made the permanent capital of Tennessee in 1826, Nashville is now one of the most important cities in the United States.

The Hermitage, Nashville.



Fort Nashboro, Nashville.



5. NASHVILLE CONNECTIONS

BY DR WILLIAM ROULSTON,
ULSTER HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

On 10 December 1872 the marriage took place in St James' Church of Ireland church in Belfast of John Nashville Villers Ryan and Charlotte Savage. The groom was a medical doctor and the son of William Villers Ryan. The question that naturally arises is how the groom acquired Nashville as one of his middle names.

The answer lies within a high-railed enclosure in the burial ground attached to Kilyleagh Presbyterian Church. Here are two marble memorials to the Ryan family, now sadly weathered and broken. The inscriptions provide a fascinating snapshot of the Ryan family history and commemorate several family members who died in America and elsewhere. One of them, William, was 'killed whilst trying to save life at a fire in New Orleans'. Another, John, died at Nashville, Tennessee, in 1862. This is not the only memorial in County Down with a Nashville connection. In the graveyard adjoining Drumbo Presbyterian Church a headstone commemorates James Welsh who was buried at Nashville in 1866 aged just 20.

TRACING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

In their own small way these memorials testify to the links between Ireland and Nashville. Many others with roots in this island made their way to Tennessee and many of their descendants are now seeking to trace their family history. There has never been a greater interest in researching Irish ancestors. Genealogy is increasingly seen as making an important contribution to tourism in Ireland, particularly cultural tourism. Every year thousands of people visit Northern Ireland looking for information on their forebears as well as have an enjoyable holiday. Many of them make a concerted attempt to visit the farm, village, town or area where their ancestors once lived. Thousands more search the internet for information or hire a commercial genealogist to carry out the work on their behalf.

CIVIL REGISTERS AND CHURCH REGISTERS

For those who are interested in researching their Irish ancestry for themselves a basic understanding of sources and research techniques is essential. Civil registration of all births, deaths and marriages did not commence in Ireland until 1864. Non-Catholic marriages are registered from 1 April 1845. Civil registers of births and deaths for Northern Ireland are available from 1864 at the General

Register Office in Belfast. Civil marriages are also held here from 1922. Civil marriages 1845-1921 are still with local registries.

Prior to the introduction of civil registration one is largely dependent on church registers for information on family history. The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland has originals or microfilm copies of most of the surviving church registers for the province of Ulster for all of the main denominations. Some of these date from the first half of the seventeenth century, but most are post-1800. Gravestone inscriptions are of major importance in tracing family history, particularly if looking for individuals who passed away prior to the start of civil registration of deaths in 1864.

GRIFFITH'S VALUATION AND CENSUS

The first census was compiled in Ireland in 1821. However, nineteenth-century census returns were almost completely destroyed either deliberately on government order during the First World War or accidentally in 1922 at the start of the Irish Civil War. The earliest complete census for the whole of Ireland is the 1901 census, which is available at the National Archives in Dublin. The 1911 census is also available here for public inspection. The 1901 census for Northern Ireland is available on microfilm at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

In the absence of 19th-century census records, a source known as Griffith's Valuation assumes major importance. This was compiled c.1860 and recorded the names of all householders occupiers of rateable property in Ireland at that time. Detailed maps accompanying Griffith's Valuation mean that it is possible to pinpoint the precise location of an ancestral home. Griffith's Valuation is available in many libraries and also in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland where the accompanying maps may also be consulted. Revisions of Griffith's Valuation, noting changes in occupancy of properties, are available in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

Virtually all original wills probated before 1900 in what is now Northern Ireland were destroyed in Dublin in 1922. From 1858 to 1900 there are will books kept by each district registry which contain transcripts of the original wills. These are available on microfilm in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Before 1858 the administration of testamentary papers was regulated by the Church of Ireland. Will indexes survive for each of the dioceses in Ulster, some of which have been published. From 1900 original wills for Northern Ireland are available in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland also has available for inspection a vast array of additional sources for family history research. These include landed estate papers, tithe records, school records and workhouse records. It is worth spending some time in this archive looking for sources that will tell you more about your ancestors. The story of the Ryans is just one example of how an Ulster family has Nashville connections. Further research could reveal many more.

6. THE PAST: ULSTER-SCOTS OR SCOTCH-IRISH ACHIEVERS IN NASHVILLE

Given Nashville's origins, it is hardly surprising that so many of the city's institutions and most famous citizens have Ulster roots. The depth of Nashville's Ulster connections is breathtaking.

Adam Gillespie Adams, from Strabane, County Tyrone, founded the 2nd Nashville Presbyterian Church in 1842, and established the first cotton mill in Nashville. He became vice-President of the Scotch-Irish Society of America's Tennessee branch.

Brigadier General John Adams was born in Nashville, the son of Ulster-Scots parents who emigrated to America in 1814. He was placed in command of the Confederate Army in Memphis during the Civil War and was killed at the Battle of Franklin.

James Douglas Anderson was born in Nashville in 1867, of Ulster-Scots descent. He was an important journalist, author and lawyer.

Robert Armstrong was born in East Tennessee of Ulster-Scots ancestry, and was a distinguished soldier under Andrew Jackson. He ran for Governor of Tennessee in 1837 and was made US Consul to Liverpool, where he lived until 1852. He became the proprietor/editor of the Washington Union and was an adviser to President James Polk (also of Ulster-Scots descent)

John Bell was born near Nashville and served as Congressman from 1827 - 1841.

7. THE PRESENT:

The connections between Ulster and Nashville continue to this day. Belfast's links with Nashville are firmly rooted in the past. Yet this is far from being a mere historical connection. Both cities are determined that this special relationship should continue to thrive and grow, and that this rich common heritage should continue to be a cause of shared pride far into the future.

8. BELFAST NASHVILLE SONGWRITERS' FESTIVAL

The highlight of the connection between the two cities is the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival which promotes and strengthens our Sister City Link and enhances our cultural exchange. The celebration of the art of song writing enables us to discover more about the links between our shared musical heritage and the traditional roots of American song writing.

The annual internationally acclaimed Festival features world class and award-winning songwriters who will share their skills with budding Belfast songwriters and visitors from abroad. More than forty top artists perform in Belfast over a five-day period including headline acts Nanci Griffith, Colin Hay, Paul Brady and Lee Roy Parnell. Concerts feature Grammy Award winning Nashville songwriters such as Paul Overstreet, Richard Leigh and Gary Nicholson and top Nashville hit writers Tony Arata, James Dean Hicks, Ralph Murphy and Benita Hill. Local artists Bap Kennedy, Tommy Sands, Eleanor McEvoy, Don Mescall, Rod Paterson and many others perform in venues across the city.

ENDORSEMENTS

"And as for the city, for you sightseers, it is as beautiful as its people. I hope I have the opportunity of singing there again... Thank you Belfast Songwriters Festival for your kindness toward us; it will be difficult to match on any continent"

Richard Leigh, Nashville

"The Consulate is proud to support efforts that show off Northern Ireland's diverse and rich culture and also to bring American artists to Northern Ireland. One such event was the highly successful Belfast/Nashville Songwriters' Festival held in February"

Dean Pittman, US Consul General, Northern Ireland

"A truly brilliant festival. We are in love with Northern Ireland – the people, the country... the pubs"

Grammy Award winning songwriter Mark Selby, Nashville



Gruhn Guitars, Nashville.

9. THE FUTURE

Belfast has undergone a dramatic metamorphosis in recent years and with a multi-million pound investment in tourism infrastructure, increased air routes, award-winning hotels and a vibrant cultural scene, Belfast is now firmly on the European map as a short-break destination.

Belfast has a great deal to entice the increasing number of discerning tourists who choose their destination based on what culture and heritage it has to offer. The city's recent political history continues to attract inquisitive travellers from across the globe, however, more and more visitors are being drawn by Belfast's rich literary, musical and artistic traditions, many of which have resonance in Nashville. The city's wealth of industrial and architectural heritage is also proving increasingly popular with tourists and last year a record 6.8 million visitors came to the city.

Visitors can enjoy magnificent visitor attractions, award-winning restaurants, a range of superb hotels, from budget to luxurious boutique, and an ever-growing number of fascinating tours; by bus, taxi, foot and boat. To these you can add atmospheric bars, cutting-edge clubs, a burgeoning shopping scene, world-class theatres, galleries and live music. In acclaimed festivals, and through a packed calendar of cultural events, the city is lit up through the year with a fantastic variety of arts and entertainment.

But Belfast's greatest, and most unique, attraction is its people, whose enduring warmth and friendliness remain a welcoming truth, their distinct character and culture evolving with the new city as it merges with the old. As a new dawn breaks over Belfast's political landscape and from past times, glorious and hopeful, turbulent and extraordinary, a city has emerged where history is all around you, whose legacy and tradition lives on the stories, humour and vibrant culture of its people.

ULSTER-AMERICAN CONNECTIONS:

A Select List of Books and Booklets (compiled and annotated by Professor Michael Montgomery, University of South Carolina)

Published in the United States:

- Blethen, Tyler, and Curtis W. Wood, Jr. 1997.
Ulster and North America: Transatlantic Perspectives on the Scotch-Irish.
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- Chepesiuk, Ronald. 2000.
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- Ford, Henry Jones. 1915.
The Scotch-Irish in America.
- Griffin, Patrick. 1999.
The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World.
- Hanna, Charles A. 1902.
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America's Debt to Ulster



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