

University of New Hampshire

University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository

Faculty Travel Reports

Global Education Center

Fall 2007

Lucy Salyer, Associate Professor of History, travels to England and Ireland

Lucy Slayer

University of New Hampshire - Main Campus

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/international_travel

Recommended Citation

Slayer, Lucy, "Lucy Salyer, Associate Professor of History, travels to England and Ireland" (2007). *Faculty Travel Reports*. 23.

https://scholars.unh.edu/international_travel/23

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Global Education Center at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Travel Reports by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact Scholarly.Communication@unh.edu.

~ Faculty Travel through CIE

International Perspectives

Center for International Education

LUCY SALYER, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

Professor Lucy Salyer traveled this summer to England and Ireland. While in England, she presented a paper at the Anglo-American Conference of Historians held in London and conducted research at the National Archives of the United Kingdom located in Kew. She also spent a week at the National Archives of Ireland and the National Library of Ireland, both in Dublin.

In this Issue

Featured Stories
Additional Articles
Faculty Travel Reports

Download this
newsletter as a .pdf

Center for International
Education Home



Professor Salyer in Kew, England

As an American historian, my research usually takes me to rather mundane places – the National Archives in Washington, D.C., the Massachusetts Historical Society, the California State Library in Sacramento, to name a few. This summer, I was fortunate to expand my scholarly horizons as I traveled to London and Dublin for three weeks, with the assistance of a grant from the Center for International Education, to participate in a conference and conduct research in various archives. While it may not have been the best time to visit those cities, with their record-breaking rainfall and the plummeting value of the dollar, the trip proved very beneficial in developing scholarly contacts and gathering material for my book project.

I am currently writing a book, tentatively entitled “Pledging Allegiance,” on the history of American citizenship law since the Civil War. The book begins with a major issue in citizenship law after the Civil War: the right to give up one’s citizenship and pledge allegiance to a new sovereign. It tells the story of Irish American nationalists, the “Fenians,” who launched attacks on Canada and traveled to Ireland to foment rebellion against British rule in the 1860s. While their objective

was Ireland’s independence, the Fenians sparked an international crisis over the boundaries of national citizenship as the Irish Americans were arrested and tried for treason as British subjects. The British government refused to recognize their American citizenship, obtained through naturalization, insisting that anyone born within Britain (including all of Ireland at the time) remained a British subject for life. Some Fenians were sentenced to death while others were ordered to serve long prison terms at hard labor. The Fenian trials provoked an uproar of protest in the United States and led to the passage of the Expatriation Act of 1868 and the negotiation of Naturalization Treaties with several European countries which explicitly recognized the right of individuals to immigrate and become citizens of new lands.

I had the opportunity to present a paper on my research in London at the annual meeting of the Anglo-American Conference of Historians, sponsored by the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London. The conference draws scholars from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Europe with an interest in British history. This year's theme for the conference—"Identities: National, Regional and Personal"—fit well with my own interest in the shifting boundaries of national allegiance. I met several scholars studying immigration and citizenship and received very helpful feedback from Irish historians who have a deep interest and knowledge of the Fenian movement of the 1860s. I hope it is only the beginning of an international scholarly exchange.

Most of the time, however, I spent in the archives, trying to gather as much material as I could in a short time. I spent two weeks at the National Archives of the United Kingdom, located in Kew, England, and one week at the National Archives of Ireland and the National Library of Ireland in Dublin. After going through the usual period of adjustment – getting to know the staff, understanding the unique rules of each archive, trying to decipher the handwriting and acronyms used by bureaucrats and officials from 150 years ago–, I found I had a treasure trove of material. I read correspondence from the highest level officials in the foreign offices of each country, police reports from the sergeants on the Dublin Police force, letters from the Fenian prisoners to officials and to their friends and families, and official registers documenting the arrest and treatment of each prisoner. I was able to view photographs and physical descriptions of many of the leading Irish American Fenians; the British government in Ireland used photographs as a mean of identifying and tracking prisoners for the first time when it arrested hundreds of suspected Fenians in 1865-1866, leaving future historians a rich visual record of the Fenians. All of these documents allowed me to gain a variety of perspectives, seeing the issue from the position of the national policy makers as well as from those most directly involved at the local level. My research was not limited to the archives. Perhaps the most enjoyable part of my trip was exploring the Fenians' history on foot through the city of Dublin, finding the now abandoned courthouse where they were tried, the houses they took refuge in, and the prisons in which they were incarcerated. The Kilmainham Gaol, now a museum, has housed many of Ireland's political prisoners, including the Fenians, over the past two centuries. A tour of that prison and the cells from which the prisoners wrote their appeals provided me with a much better sense of their physical and social context. (As a side benefit, it also provided wonderful examples on the historical developments of prisons and criminal justice which I will draw on in my legal history courses.) It also led to one of the most fruitful discussions I had in Dublin; a casual question to the man operating the museum's bookstore led to an hour-long conversation as he turned out to be very knowledgeable about the Fenians' history in Ireland.



Kilmainham Gaol, the prison in which the Fenian prisoners were held in Dublin, Ireland

I returned with more than enough material to complete the section of the book on the Fenians and the issue of expatriation. The trip also provided the groundwork for another possible book, focused solely on the Fenians. So, as they would say in Dublin, "thanks a million!" to the CIE for helping to make the trip possible.

