

Winter 3-17-2015

# The Irish Ordnance Survey's Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland: Anglicization and Otherness

Reese C. Hentges  
reeseh@uw.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/history\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/history_theses)

 Part of the [Celtic Studies Commons](#), [European History Commons](#), and the [European Languages and Societies Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Hentges, Reese C., "The Irish Ordnance Survey's Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland: Anglicization and Otherness" (2015). *History Undergraduate Theses*. 19.  
[https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/history\\_theses/19](https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/history_theses/19)

This Undergraduate Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the History at UW Tacoma Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Undergraduate Theses by an authorized administrator of UW Tacoma Digital Commons.

**The Irish Ordnance Survey's Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland:**

**Anglicization and Otherness**

A Senior Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation  
Undergraduate History Program of the University of Washington Tacoma

By

Reese Hentges

The University of Washington Tacoma

March 2015

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Elizabeth Sundermann

## Acknowledgments

I am very grateful for all the support I received while writing my thesis paper and would like to now thank the many knowledgeable people who helped me with my research and writing.

First of all, I would like to thank my Thesis Advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Sundermann, who worked tirelessly while reading my paper and making corrections, answering my many questions, and was eager to share her knowledge about the British Empire with me.

I am grateful for all the help from Dr. Michael Kucher who instructed me in my research and challenged me to delve deeper and find primary and secondary sources I may have missed and Dr. Johann Reusch who helped guide me with my writing.

The librarians at the University of Washington at the Tacoma and Seattle campuses were very helpful and I thank them, especially Chris Blomquist from the map collection and Ekaterini "Poppy" Papadopoulou for helping me with beginning my research.

I would like to thank the friends that I made while doing my research and helping me along the way by listening to my concerns about deadlines, helping me figure out formatting, and being supportive of me. I could not have done this without my friends Chris Comery, Jordan Winters, Dan Price, and Jennifer Nguyen.

Lastly, I would like to thank my English professor Jamie Fitzgerald who began my interest in Irish History by introducing me to Irish literature, most notably the play *Translations* by Brian Friel and James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

## **Abstract**

By examining the power maps and language have over a nation this research reveals a correlation between the creation of the 1846 Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland and the decline of the Gaelic language at the expense of the English language. By examining Irish Ordnance Survey maps, Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, and other documents from the Irish Ordnance Survey while the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland this thesis demonstrates that the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland was a tool of imperialism used by Great Britain to culturally assimilate Ireland by changing the Gaelic place names of towns in Ireland to a new Anglicized form and promoting the use of English in Ireland.

## Introduction

The Irish Question is often referred to by the British as a cultural divide stemming from the many real and imagined differences between the Irish and the British, and from this divide conflict arose both when Ireland was a member of the United Kingdom as well as during Ireland's independence from the English crown. Being the dominant power between the two nations, Great Britain tried for centuries to conquer Ireland and with the 1800 Acts of Union were politically successful. The Acts created a formal merging of the Kingdom of Ireland and the Kingdom of Great Britain creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Despite this merger the relations between the two islands remained uneasy. In 1824, the Irish Ordnance Survey was established with the mission to create a new map of Ireland to better administrate Ireland and, secondarily, to help integrate Ireland into the British Empire.

The tumultuous relationship between the British and the Irish, especially since the mid-nineteenth century, has been and still is a relevant topic that is a sensitive part of Irish history which has shaped the political realities of the two countries that now share Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland created by the Irish Ordnance Survey was a detailed map that covered all of Ireland and was useful in governing Ireland but it was also, most importantly, a tool of empire that sought to Anglicize the Irish. The power of these maps as a tool for the suppression of the Gaelic language has largely been uncommented on but the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland were used to further Great Britain's nation building efforts in an attempt to include Ireland and the Irish people into a new British nationalism through geography and language.

## History of the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland

The Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland were both an important technological milestone in the history of cartography and documents that greatly shaped how people all around the world, including those in the United Kingdom, and even how the Irish themselves saw Ireland. The Irish Ordnance Survey was created by the British government to map all of Ireland at the six inches to one mile scale (1:10,560) which was a milestone for cartography as up until that time an entire country had not been mapped at that small of a scale. The Survey, conducted by the British Royal Engineers, was headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Colby with Lieutenant Thomas Larcom as the local director in Ireland. Along with creating the most scientifically accurate maps they could, Colby and Larcom also sought to create a “memoir” that would accompany the map as supplemental information on the history and culture of Ireland for each map sheet produced.<sup>1</sup> As would be expected of an undertaking of this magnitude, surveying Ireland was a long and laborious process. In 1846, Ireland’s thirty-two counties were finally mapped at a cost of £820,000 (around £86,000,000 in 2015) with about 2,000 people employed at the survey’s height.<sup>2</sup> The Royal Engineers of the Six Inches to a Mile Map of Ireland would consequentially have a huge impact on the depiction of Ireland through the maps that they created and the information that they gathered in their memoirs.

Colby led the effort to standardize the orthography (the way a language is written) of Gaelic in an attempt to standardize the names of Irish places since many people spelled the same place name differently from one another and often the Gaelic pronunciation had no clear English translation. The Royal Engineers were instructed by Colby to keep “name books” that were to

---

<sup>1</sup> McWilliams, Patrick. “Cartography and Utilitarianism versus Culture: Thomas Colby of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland.” *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* 43, no. 3–4 (2008): 183–216.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Andrews, *A History of the Ordnance Survey* (Folkestone, Kent, England: Dawson, 1980), 87.

contain all obtainable forms of the place name's spelling; including the common form, any alternative form, and any ancient forms as well as the source of these spellings, the local pronunciation, the topography of the area, and anything else of note.<sup>3</sup> With all this gathered information the Engineers would then add all the alternative spellings to their memoirs, though these alternative names would not appear on any of the Irish Ordnance Surveys' maps. Since the Engineers were not Irish, and did not understand the language, the Engineers had to rely on cooperation from the local peoples at hand. This cooperation proved to be difficult in many instances such when the Irish speakers did not know how to read or write Gaelic, if they were even willing to work with the Engineers at all.<sup>4</sup> This led Larcom to hire John O'Donovan, who was teaching Gaelic to Larcom at the time, to sort out all the data on place names and to publish the name that he believed to be correct. O'Donovan was put into in a difficult position of what to do with these place names: should the names be left with their Gaelic spelling, spell them in English how they sound phonetically, or maybe the English meaning of the place name should be used? In the end it was decided that the Anglicization of the Gaelic place names would be best so that English speakers would have an easier time pronouncing these place names.<sup>5</sup> The Irish Ordnance Survey was instrumental in the study and documentation of the Gaelic language and under Colby's leadership and guidance the Gaelic language's cultural, social, and linguistic history was thoroughly preserved in the memoirs that the Royal Engineers wrote.<sup>6</sup> Without the memoirs there would have been little recorded information on the linguistic development of

---

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Colby, "Instructions for the Interior Survey of Ireland, Lithographed at the Ordnance Survey Office."

<sup>4</sup> Gillian M. Doherty, *The Irish Ordnance Survey: History, Culture, and Memory* (Dublin; Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2004) 20.

<sup>5</sup> Andrews, *A History of the Ordnance Survey*, 89.

<sup>6</sup> Ordnance Survey of Ireland, "Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Vol 39: County Donegal II, 1835-36."

Gaelic throughout Ireland. That said, the Irish Ordnance Survey did little to preserve the popular usage of Gaelic in Ireland.

### **Literature Review**

Scholarly research on the Irish Ordnance Survey comes from two primary viewpoints: the cartographic and the post-colonial. The Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland was seen by post-colonial scholars as a process of nation building within Ireland by the British and took into account the historically antagonistic relationship between the Irish and the British, especially during the nineteenth century, rather than simply analyzing the technical process of creating beautifully detailed maps, which is the method used by the cartographic scholars. Writing in the 1960s and 1970s, cartographic scholars for the most part have written about the Irish Ordnance Survey in a scientific way detailing the technology used, procedures followed, and jobs of the surveyors from 1824 to 1846 with little social commentary. An early historian who researched Irish Ordnance Survey Maps, J. B. Harley, wrote *The Historian's Guide to Ordnance Survey Maps* in 1964, *Ordnance Survey Maps: a Descriptive Manual* in 1975, and contributed to *The Iconography of Landscape*. Harley primarily looks at the process of creating the Irish Ordnance Survey maps including key personnel such as Colby and Larcom; the technical aspects of creating a map with the ratio of six inches to one mile; and the process of editing these maps. The scope of the detail of the topography, roads, and towns within the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland is explained as well as the evolution of different techniques of calculating distances and methods used to portray the land's topography at such a close scale.<sup>7</sup> J. H.

---

<sup>7</sup> J. B. Harley, *Ordnance Survey Maps: A Descriptive Manual* (Southampton: Ordnance Survey, 1975), 71.



Andrews continued Harley's earlier work on the processes and goes into even greater depth on the Irish Ordnance Survey's creation the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland. *A Paper Landscape: The Ordnance Survey in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* was written in 1975 and is the most complete source of information on the Irish Ordnance Survey. Whereas Harley spoke generally about the technical side of the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland Andrews also looks at the surveyors and policymakers that were instrumental in conducting the Ordnance Survey.<sup>8</sup> The work done by these cartographic scholars would be used and built upon by the post-colonialist scholars from the late twentieth century onwards.

Post-colonial thought came to dominate the literature on the Irish Ordnance Survey from the 1980s into the twenty-first century. Scholars such as Edward Said and Linda Colley have influenced the research of the Irish Ordnance survey with their ideas about the relation between colonial powers and their subjects. Although Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism* deals with European, especially French and English, relations with their colonies in Asia it provides an insight on the power dynamics between an empire and its colony, in this case the relationship between the British Empire and Ireland.<sup>9</sup> Linda Colley in her 1992 article "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument" explains the mechanics of fostering a sense of nationalism within a group of people by portraying another group of people as something that they are clearly different from, thus turning the foreign peoples into the Other. *Reimagining the Nation State: The Contested Terrains of Nation-Building*, written by Jim Mac Laughlin in 2001, looks at the attempts of nation building within Ireland, by the British in the nineteenth century, to turn Ireland from a Gaelic colony into an Anglicized member of the United Kingdom. Gillian M.

---

<sup>8</sup> J. H. Andrews, *A Paper Landscape: The Ordnance Survey in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Chapter 5.

<sup>9</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 49.

Doherty's 2004 book *The Irish Ordnance Survey: History, Culture and Memory* recounts the objectives of the Royal Engineers and the effect the Irish Ordnance Survey had on the Gaelic language, history, and culture. The work of post-colonialist scholars has shed a new light on the importance of the Irish Ordnance Survey's Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland as one revealing the political and cultural relationship between the Irish and the British in the first half of the nineteenth century as well as the pressures faced by the Irish to assimilate their cultural identity into being more English.

### **Ireland as a Member of the United Kingdom**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century when The Act of Union formally brought Ireland into the fold of the British Empire as a new member of the United Kingdom the English had a very different relationship with Ireland than it did with Scotland and Wales, the other members of the United Kingdom. Ireland was seen as a colony of the British Empire before Ireland's union with Great Britain and was treated in the same manner, as a colony, even after the Acts of Union.<sup>10</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the British sent English and Scottish settlers to establish plantations in Ireland, which is often regarded as England's first colonial endeavor and the view of Ireland as a colony persisted into the nineteenth century. The shared British identity amongst the English, Scottish, and Welsh allowed for them to see the Irish as an outsider to their culture and facilitated the process of viewing the Irish as an Other.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 327.

<sup>11</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 314. An Other is a group of people that have been defined by another group as having opposing qualities of defining group such as the group that defines the Other believing themselves to be civilized while the Others are uncivilized.

Perceiving the Irish as an Other allowed the British to treat Ireland as a colony. Ireland's predominantly Celtic and Catholic identity, and thus not a British identity, was an obstacle to overcome in the nation building of Ireland and could even threaten the stability of the Union.<sup>12</sup> For Great Britain, the Irish Ordnance Survey could provide some remedies for Ireland's problem of being culturally different through Anglicization.

Before the nineteenth century a survey of the magnitude that was conducted by the Irish Ordnance Survey for the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland was never attempted by the British Empire. A scale of this size allows for greater accuracy, smaller details of the land could be clearly represented on the map which allowed Great Britain to record valuable information on its new acquisition.<sup>13</sup> Great Britain would use the place names on the maps that the Irish Ordnance Survey created would be used to integrate Ireland into the United Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> Anglicized place names on the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland would be used to facilitate the transition from a Gaelic speaking society into an English speaking society. A large scale detailed map of England, Scotland, or Wales was not of as great an importance and could wait; special attention was given to Ireland because of its status as Other, being the least British member of the United Kingdom. The swiftness of forming the Irish Ordnance Survey, a little more than twenty years after the Acts of Union, attests to the strained relationship between Ireland and Great Britain.<sup>15</sup> England, Scotland and Wales were in a more harmonious

---

<sup>12</sup> Jim Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State: The Contested Terrains of Nation-Building* (London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2001), 43.

<sup>13</sup> Ordnance Survey of Ireland, "Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland."

<sup>14</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 239.

<sup>15</sup> McWilliams, "Reactions to the Ordnance Survey: A Window on Prefamine Ireland." *New Hibernia Review* 13, no. 1 (2009): 54.

relationship with one another because of their shared histories, Protestant religion, and governance so the attention of Parliament focused first on how best to make Ireland a productive member of the United Kingdom. Once the surveying of Ireland was completed then the next area of contention, Scotland and northern England, were to be surveyed at the scale of six inches to a mile.<sup>16</sup> The surveyors moving from Ireland to Scotland and eventually the north of England, and not to the south of England where most of the power in the British Empire resides, shows how the surveying of land and the creation of maps were used by the British to exhort power and control over the more un-British parts of the United Kingdom with Ireland at the fore. The South of England was the dominant force in the United Kingdom politically, economically, and culturally and required less interference by government agencies whereas Ireland required much more government attention and necessitated the establishment of the Irish Ordnance Survey.

### **The Power of Maps**

The Irish Ordnance Survey was created by the British military and the purpose of the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland was to consolidate knowledge and power, much like most maps created before 1824 were. Although Ireland was a member of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland that does not mean that all was well in the realm. The problem of properly raising taxes, which was antiquated at best, was the overt reason for the demand of a survey of Ireland.<sup>17</sup> This gave the British the perfect opportunity to create the Irish Ordnance Survey and begin work on a complete map of Ireland. This new map would not only help with taxation

---

<sup>16</sup> Harley, *Ordnance Survey Maps*, 71.

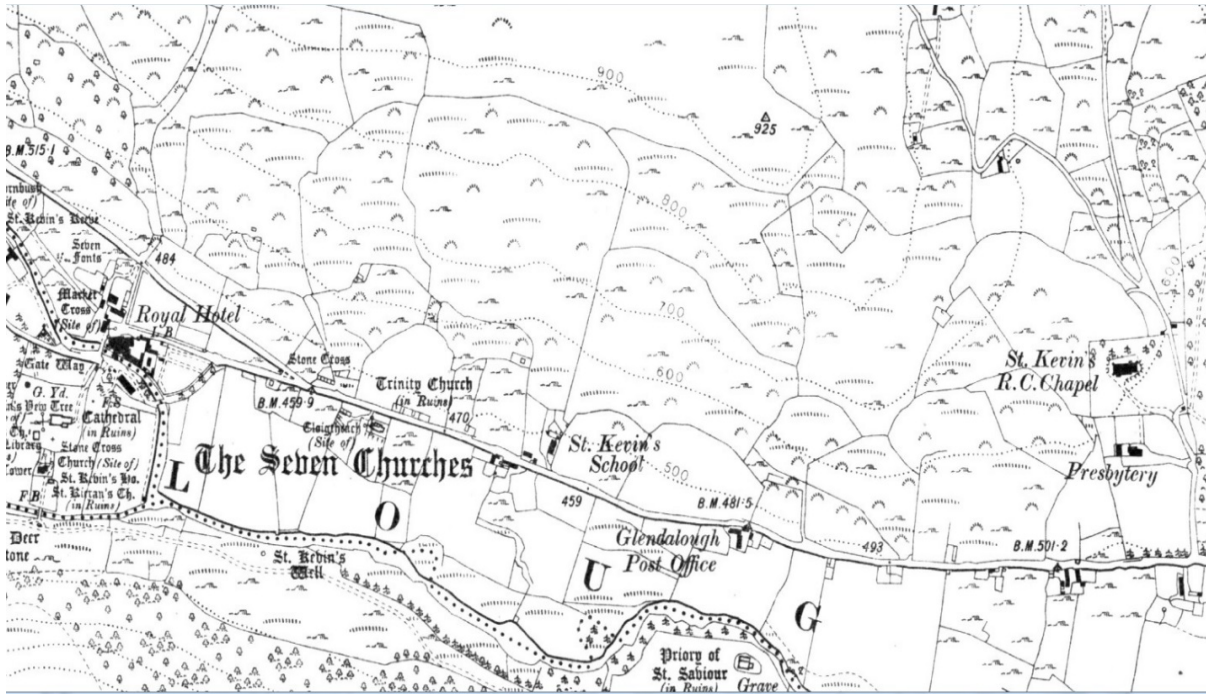
<sup>17</sup> Andrews, *A Paper Landscape*, 13.

though, it would also allow for the British Army to further integrate the newly acquired island into the new British nation. Maps are powerful tools of empire that are wielded by those with power over those without and defines the relationship between the two.<sup>18</sup> By creating the most up to date and mathematically accurate map of Ireland, with place names of their choosing, the British Army defined for citizens of the United Kingdom and all over the world the image of Ireland, an image from the British point of view. To further control the new citizens of the United Kingdom a survey of the land and people would help inform those in power, the British, what kind of resources are at hand, the social makeup of the people, and the local histories and culture of their new subjects. The more knowledge a government has over the land and people that it governs the easier it is to manage, tax, and exert control over.<sup>19</sup> A map with a scale as small as The Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland was able to achieve all these objectives for a more effective rule over the newly acquired territory of Ireland for the British Empire by closely detailing nearly every aspect of Ireland from north to south and east to west.

---

<sup>18</sup> J. H. Andrews, *Maps in Those Days: Cartographic Methods before 1850* (Dublin; Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2009), 464.

<sup>19</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 36.



**Fig. 1:** Ordnance Survey of Ireland, “Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland.”

This Six Inches to One Mile Map of Glendalough is from University College Dublin’s archives. Notice the detail of the map and how the ownership of land is drawn as well as the naming of individual buildings such as the churches and the Royal Hotel.

Maps throughout history have been decorated with imagery to evoke various feelings, such as dragons and sea serpents in unexplored waters to invoke fear and danger or religious motifs and kingly heraldry to show the power and majesty of the land’s ruler, but the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland that the Irish Ordnance Survey created has no decorative imagery at all. The lack of imagery and symbolism is in itself a form of symbolism that leads the interpreter of the map to conclude that the map being viewed is scientific and thus an undisputable fact.<sup>20</sup>

No monsters, flowery details, or other romantic and fantastical designs on the Six Inches to One

<sup>20</sup> Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels and J.B. Harley, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design, and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 299.

Mile Maps of Ireland gives the maps a sense of realism that previous maps lacked.<sup>21</sup> The austere design of the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland fits with enlightenment ideas of utilizing empirical methods to perceive the world and aimed to present itself as based on science and therefore unbiased. Maps are not purely objective though because although a distance may be measured scientifically there are often political motives behind some of the information provided on the map which is intended to be interpreted as an objective fact.<sup>22</sup> The distances between towns and other numerical data can be safely said to be objective facts proven by measurements but other information such as the place names on the map are subjected to the will of those that create the maps, much like the Irish Ordnance Survey's control over what gets placed on the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland.

The more subtle reason for surveying Ireland was to more completely incorporate the island into the British Empire. The creation of the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland was a tool of nation building that by-passed cultural identities and sought to enact a new British nationalism that included Ireland.<sup>23</sup> This is where the Anglicization of place names in Ireland comes into play, as a way of helping make Ireland more British. The control that the British Army had over the creation of the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland, which was the best map of Ireland for many decades to come, gave the British power in defining Ireland. This control allowed for those with the power, the British Army, to dominate the naming of Ireland and limit the Irish in voicing their own thoughts on the matter of place names.<sup>24</sup> A places' name

---

<sup>21</sup> Ordnance Survey of Ireland, "Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland."

<sup>22</sup> Cosgrove, Daniels, and Harley, *The Iconography of Landscape*, 287.

<sup>23</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 228.

<sup>24</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 32.

can often inform those that hear or read the name the place's cultural, national, and linguistic heritage which in turn reflects the heritage of the place's residents. Although the local Irish speakers were contacted and consulted during the surveying of Ireland the final decisions on what would ultimately appear on the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland was not in their hands but in the hands of the British Empire. The Royal Engineers, being an extension of the British Empire, were enacting the political will of the Empire whether they knew it or not.<sup>25</sup> The role of the Royal Engineers in Ireland during the surveying of the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland was a small but important role in the grand scheme of incorporating Ireland's people into Great Britain's culture.

### **The Irish as Other**

The thing that was troubling about the Irish from the perspective of Great Britain was the strong influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland and the perceived backwardness, laziness, and drunkenness that was attributed to the Irish character by the English. The creation of the Irish as an Other, following the theoretical work of Said, has been a process employed by the English, and later Great Britain, for centuries as a way of creating a sense of superiority over the Irish and making the Irish seem alien.<sup>26</sup> Alienating the Irish had many benefits for Great Britain such being able to claim that colonizing Ireland would bring about positive social and economic change to the island. One method of making a society seem inferior is to assign names and labels to them that are degrading and often politically charged. Many of the surveyors, in their memoirs,

---

<sup>25</sup> Cosgrove, Daniels, and Harley, *The Iconography of Landscape*, 279.

<sup>26</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 202-203.



referred to the Irish as “natives,” “aborigines,” and “primitive” no matter of their social status.<sup>27</sup> These terms used by fellow members of the United Kingdom show an unfavorable opinion of the Irish that was not uncommon amongst folks from across the Irish Sea. Importantly however, Colby and Larcom did not hold these negative opinions of the Irish and even admired the character of the Irish and the country. Colby and Larcom did not see the problems in Ireland as a result of any kind of attribute to their race but to the lack of capital, infrastructure, and disadvantageous government policies.<sup>28</sup> The positive outlook on the Irish from Colby and Larcom helped to cull the animosity within the ranks of the Royal Engineers but the prevailing view that the Irish were inferior to the British remained. The Royal Engineers saw Ireland and the Irish as a problem to be solved, the problem being that the Irish were not British enough. The subjugated state and its people are looked at by their subjugators as a territory to transform into one similar to their own society.<sup>29</sup> During the surveying of Ireland the Irish were not British enough to be truly welcomed into the United Kingdom until they lose their Otherness, or in another way of saying it, their Irish-ness, specifically their Gaelic tongues.

### **The Role of Language**

One of the most important aspects of a nation’s identity is their language and the British sought to impose the English language upon the Irish to weaken their cultural identity which was barring the Irish from being fully integrated into the United Kingdom. Communication in Ireland

---

<sup>27</sup> Doherty, *The Irish Ordnance Survey*, 45.

<sup>28</sup> Doherty, *The Irish Ordnance Survey*, 44.

<sup>29</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 207.

was a problem for Great Britain because practically no one from Britain could understand Gaelic, let alone speak it themselves, which made governing Ireland much more difficult.<sup>30</sup> Gaelic was the strongest divisive force that the British faced when dealing the Irish, even stronger than Ireland's Catholicism or Ireland's geographic separation from Britain.<sup>31</sup> If English was spoken in Ireland then the Catholic Church would have been the subject of attack for the British but Gaelic was the predominant language in Ireland which made it the strongest social force in Ireland and thus the logical target for the British to attack in order to culturally assimilate Ireland into a British nation. Long before the Acts of Union the British were shaping the language on Ireland by their imperialist presence on the isle. The colonization of The Pale and Northern Ireland with English and Scottish plantation workers, as well as English maps and other official government documents from the eighteenth century, helped to Anglicize Ireland before the Irish Ordnance Survey.<sup>32</sup> Many of the nineteenth century inhabitants of Ireland, the descendants of the English and Scottish plantation owners already spoke English and these English-speaking Irish tended to be of higher economic status than most of the Irish and had a large influence on governance of the area in which they resided. So even before the Irish Ordnance Survey was established there were pockets of English speakers in Ireland that were actively Anglicizing the land. These areas of English speakers were agents of imperialism, making headway in the Anglicization of Ireland, and a threat to the Gaelic language and therefore the Irish identity.<sup>33</sup> These areas were local, not on the national level like the Irish

---

<sup>30</sup> Doherty, *The Irish Ordnance Survey*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 191.

<sup>32</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 170.

<sup>33</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 191.

Ordnance Survey would be, but were an important starting point for spreading the language of Great Britain to Ireland.

### **Transitioning from Gaelic to English**

The transition from Gaelic place names to English proved to be challenging for O'Donovan, the Royal Engineers' expert on the Gaelic Language. O'Donovan was faced with attempting to decide on the best name to use on the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland from all the various spellings and pronunciations of place names that were recorded in the "name books." Many places that had their own names were consolidated and one name was given for a collection of nearby places that previously had their own names by O'Donovan in an attempt to simplify the naming process. The Royal Engineers return to O'Donovan's office with their "name books" containing names for every geographic feature and little cluster of houses that were in O'Donovan's mind, irrelevant.<sup>34</sup> Now lost on the new Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland were place names that may not have been important from an outsider's perspective but were part of the history and culture of those who resided there and will reside there in the future. O'Donovan also came across the fact that there was often no agreeable way of pronouncing or spelling many of the Gaelic place names. In many instances out of a group of eight people none of them could agree upon the correct pronunciation of a certain place name in question.<sup>35</sup> The confusion on the correct pronunciation of places would require O'Donovan to make the ultimate decision on the correct pronunciation based off of the information collected in the name books

---

<sup>34</sup> McWilliams, "Reactions to the Ordnance Survey." 66.

<sup>35</sup> Hugh Dorian and Breandán Mac Suibhne, and David Dickson, *The Outer Edge of Ulster: A Memoir of Social Life in Nineteenth-Century Donegal* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 56.

and memoirs. Based off all the data collected O'Donovan then identified common root words and sought to find a suitable English transition for them which would often not reflect their original Gaelic meanings. One of the most common place names in Gaelic was *baile* which translates to English as "town" and was transitioned to Bally on the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland but Bally was also used as a transition for *béal* which translates to "mouth," as in the mouth of a river.<sup>36</sup> In the ensuing transition from Gaelic to English sounding equivalents not only did the pronunciation change but the meaning of the place's name was lost as well.

The problem for the Gaelic language was that the Royal Engineers were not in Ireland to make a map for the Irish but for the United Kingdom. The people that would make the most use of the new maps would be people of high social status with wealth and power in England, those in Parliament and capitalists who would like to develop Ireland. The Irish Ordnance Survey's main concern was making sure that the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland was easily read and understood by English speakers.<sup>37</sup> For all the work that the surveyors did to record the language, history, and culture of the lands within their memoirs the result would be a plea of acceptance to English sensibility. The new place names were often altered so much that they were unrecognizable to their previous Gaelic names. From a random selection of a hundred towns that had their names Anglicized forty-six had names that were nowhere to be found in any "name book" or any other official documents.<sup>38</sup> From this sampling about fifty percent of place names bore no relation to their previous Gaelic names which demonstrates the importance the O'Donovan placed on the accessibility for English speakers rather than the cultural significance

---

<sup>36</sup> O'Neill, Charles E. "New Meaning in the Map of Ireland." *America* 170, no. 9 (1994).

<sup>37</sup> Andrews, *A Paper Landscape*, 125.

<sup>38</sup> Andrews, *A Paper Landscape*, 125.

of the Gaelic names for the Irish. Further weakening the presence of Gaelic speakers in Ireland was the emigration of the poor and rural Irish populations to industrial centers in England and Scotland and to the United States decreased the proportion of Gaelic speakers in Ireland and increased the relative amount of English speakers.<sup>39</sup> Emigration from Ireland further strengthened the presence of English speakers in Ireland because those of English and Scottish ancestry from the plantations did not leave Ireland because of their economic position in Ireland as land owners. Being in positions of power gave these English speakers greater power and influence over the Irish that they would be in contact with either because they had Irishmen and women working for them, owned the land or buildings that the Irish lived in, or were involved in the local government. Jobs, living space, and governance are crucial to a family's wellbeing which gave authority to the English speakers who occupied important positions within Ireland.

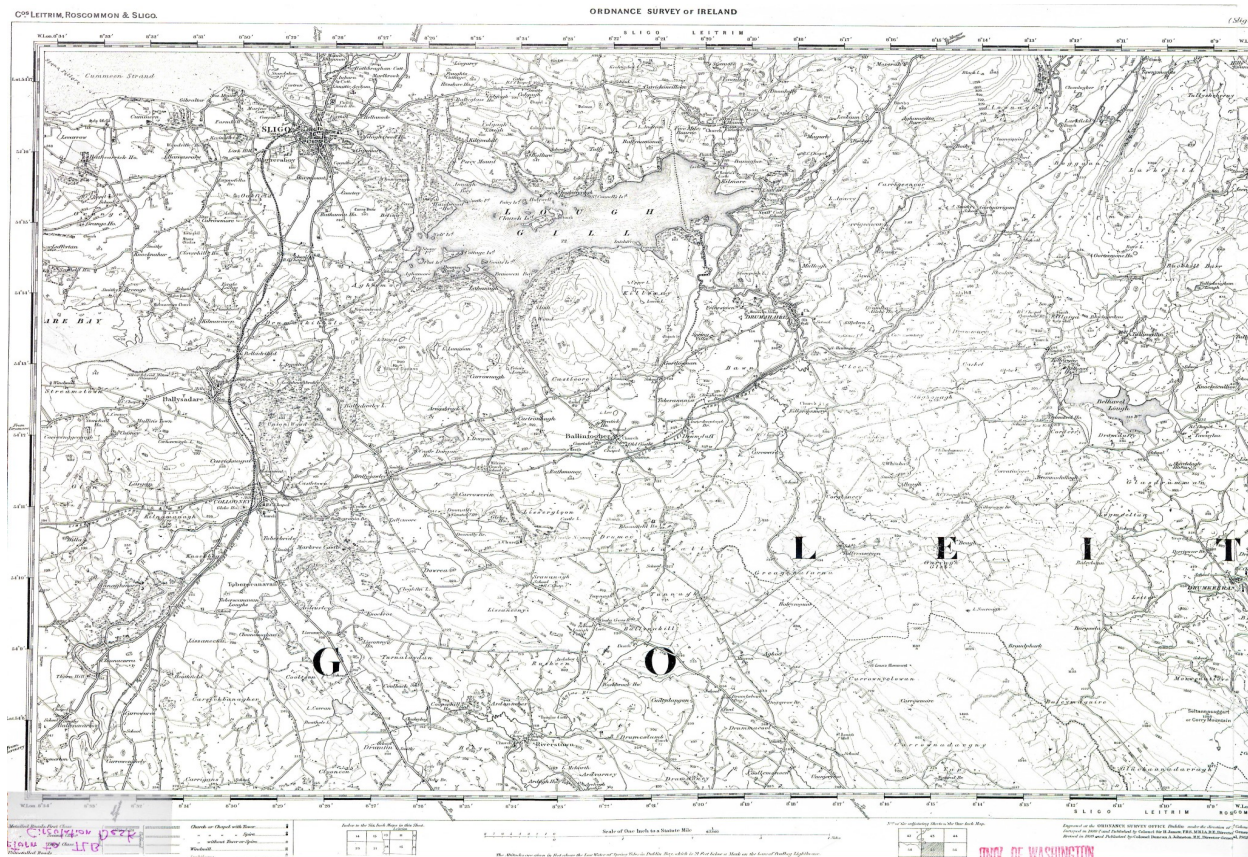
As English was the language of business and government institutions, such as the Irish Ordnance Survey, some Irish saw the benefits of adopting the English language and welcomed the switch from Gaelic to English. Compared to the rest of the United Kingdom, especially

---

<sup>39</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 179.

England, Ireland was an economically poor country with little infrastructure and was a predominately rural society. Many Irish were eager to embrace the Anglicization of Ireland and saw the process as progress that would lead to the modernization of Ireland.<sup>40</sup> English was the language of money and power in nineteenth century Ireland and those that wished for a better

**Fig. 2:** Ordnance survey of Ireland. 1901. “Counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo, Sheet 55”



Dublin: Ordnance Survey Office.

This map was created over half a century after the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland was completed and uses those maps to create a smaller scale (1:63,360) and was used into the twentieth century.

<sup>40</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 230.

economic future for their family often learnt English. Many Irish families went as far as adopting English names or changing their names to sound more English, including dropping the “O” and “Mac” prefixes. In Ireland, as well as all around the world, English was a powerful language that could improve someone’s station in life and was often taught to children so they would have a better chance of being successful as Ireland joined the United Kingdom.<sup>41</sup> Many families were aware of the benefits of learning English and were fine with assimilating into the English language by abandoning their Gaelic names as well. Most families kept their Gaelic names and used it when at home and around other Irish people while using another English name for when they are working with anyone from Britain.<sup>42</sup> Keeping their Irish names was the most popular option and showed that not all Irish were ready to give up their shared national identity.

Although Larcom was not optimistic about the future of the Gaelic language and believed that the Irish should adopt English sooner rather than later but he also wanted to preserve some of the Gaelic culture before it was too late. The total loss of the Gaelic language was not wanted by Larcom though and saw the retention of Gaelic songs, stories, and histories as crucial to the Irish culture.<sup>43</sup> English becoming the predominant language in Ireland was seen as an inevitable outcome to many in the Irish Ordnance Survey, including Colby and Larcom, and the memoirs were important tools for looking back on the Gaelic language and past of Ireland once English would take over the island.<sup>44</sup> With the help of the Irish Ordnance Survey and the completion of the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland in 1846, and other factors such as much of the land in

---

<sup>41</sup> Doherty, *The Irish Ordnance Survey*, 149.

<sup>42</sup> Doherty, *The Irish Ordnance Survey*, 141.

<sup>43</sup> Doherty, *The Irish Ordnance Survey*, 152.

<sup>44</sup> Ordnance Survey of Ireland, “Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Vol 39: County Donegal II, 1835-36.”

Ireland being owned by English speakers, the people in Ireland that spoke Gaelic were decreasing as each new generation of children grew up, ensuring the Anglicization of Ireland.

### **Public Reaction in Ireland**

Regardless of the acceptance of English by some Irish, Anglicization of Gaelic place names were viewed with contempt by the Irish population in Ireland which contributed to the hostile nature of Anglo-Irish relations from the mid nineteenth century to the present. The fact that the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland had around fifty percent of its place names Anglicized would be a point of criticism for the Irish against the British. The Anglicized place names were not popular amongst the vast majority of the Irish public and within Ireland's local governments.<sup>45</sup> This sentiment made many Irishmen and women question whether the Act of Union with Great Britain was for the best if there was little to no place for Irish culture within the United Kingdom. Irish nationalist and separatist movements would emerge in greater numbers and larger support after the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland were completed, such as the founding of Young Ireland in 1839 a few years before the completion of the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland and the creation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1858, in response to the attacks on their cultural identity by the British. These nationalists and separatists were less concerned with the economic policies enforced on Ireland and more concerned with Britain's cultural imperialism of Ireland.<sup>46</sup> Economic reform and progressive policies were not only welcomed but encouraged because of their perceived benefits that would

---

<sup>45</sup> Andrews, *A History of the Ordnance Survey*, 89.

<sup>46</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 14.



come from them, it was the loss of a national identity that was what took people to the streets and convinced the Irish who wanted to retain their cultural identity to join nationalist and separatist groups. Britain's attempt to bring Ireland into the United Kingdom and the centuries of slowly anglicizing Ireland lead to Irish nationalism which because of Ireland's position in the United Kingdom would become a separatist movement.<sup>47</sup> These Irish nationalists rejected the Irish Ordnance Survey's portrayal of Ireland on the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland because of its marginalization of their Gaelic culture from the place names, thus changing the mental image of Ireland from a Gaelic nation to an Anglicized nation.<sup>48</sup> Those reading the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland would see what the British Empire wanted to show you, not how Irish nationalists saw Ireland. The tensions within Ireland would ultimately, in 1922 with the Anglo-Irish Treaty, split Ireland politically into the independent Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland which would remain a member of the United Kingdom. Fighting between nationalist forces who want a unified Ireland and Unionists who support the United Kingdom continued into the twentieth and twenty-first century often splitting families apart with brother fighting brother for the future that they believed to be best for Ireland.

### **Conclusion**

The relationship between the Irish and the British has been hostile with the British seeing the Irish as an Other, a group of people that are for the worse different and used the Irish Ordnance Survey's Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland as a tool to further anglicize the United Kingdom's most un-British member. Better understanding the underlining acculturating

---

<sup>47</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 169.

<sup>48</sup> Mac Laughlin, *Reimagining the Nation State*, 235.

forces at work within the Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland helps to delve deeper into the rich and complex history of Anglo-Irish relations. Further research on the Irish Ordnance Survey and the Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland may be directed towards an analysis of the Royal Engineers' "name books" and their use for the revitalization of the Gaelic language, folklore, and culture from the late nineteenth century onwards as well as the use of the Anglicization methods developed in Ireland on other cartographic endeavors in other areas across of the British Empire. While the Irish Ordnance Survey's Six Inches to One Mile Maps of Ireland may get overlooked when research is conducted on Ireland's history, Anglo-Irish relations, or the rise and fall and rise again of the Gaelic language and culture in Ireland there is no denying that these maps were massively important in the development of Ireland culturally and politically both for the British cartographers who created them and the Irish people and landscape they represented.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Colby, Thomas. "Instructions for the Interior Survey of Ireland, Lithographed at the Ordnance Survey Office." Phoenix Park, Dublin, 1825.

Larcom, Thomas. "Report on the Ordnance Memoir of Ireland." The Queens University, Belfast, 1844.

Ordnance Survey of Ireland. "Six Inches to One Mile Map of Ireland." University College Dublin, Dublin, 1846.

Ordnance Survey of Ireland. "Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Vol 39: County Donegal II, 1835-36." Institute of Irish Studies, Belfast, 1997.

Ordnance survey of Ireland. 1901. "Counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo, Sheet 55." Ordnance Survey Office, Dublin, 1901.

### Secondary Sources

Andrews, J. H. *A History of the Ordnance Survey*. Folkestone, Kent, England: Dawson, 1980.

———. *A Paper Landscape: The Ordnance Survey in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

———. *Maps in Those Days: Cartographic Methods before 1850*. Dublin; Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2009.

Cosgrove, Denis E, Stephen Daniels, and J.B. Harley. *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design, and Use of Past Environments*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Doherty, Gillian M. *The Irish Ordnance Survey: History, Culture and Memory*. Dublin; Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2004.

Dorian, Hugh, Breandán Mac Suibhne, and David Dickson. *The Outer Edge of Ulster: A Memoir of Social Life in Nineteenth-Century Donegal*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.

Harley, J. B. *Ordnance Survey Maps: A Descriptive Manual*. Southampton: Ordnance Survey, 1975.

Mac Laughlin, Jim. *Reimagining the Nation State: The Contested Terrains of Nation-Building*. London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2001.

McWilliams, Patrick. "Cartography and Utilitarianism versus Culture: Thomas Colby of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland." *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* 43, no. 3–4 (2008): 183–216.

———. "Reactions to the Ordnance Survey: A Window on Prefamine Ireland." *New Hibernia Review* 13, no. 1 (2009): 51–72.

O'Neill, Charles E. "New Meaning in the Map of Ireland." *America* 170, no. 9 (1994).

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.