



# Common Currency

The Shared Inheritance of Ulster and North America

04 June 2015

CORN EXCHANGE, VICTORIA STREET, BELFAST



A conference hosted by:  
The Ministerial Advisory  
Group (MAG) Ulster-Scots  
Academy and Ulster Historical Foundation



# Common Currency

## The Shared Inheritance of Ulster and North America

'I am proud to be of Ulster Scots stock. I am proud to be, also, of Irish stock. I share these roots with millions and millions of Americans, now over 40 million Americans.'

PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON, SPEAKING IN BELFAST IN 1995

*Common Currency* is a one-day conference aimed at anyone with an interest in the deep and myriad connections between Ulster and North America across a broad range of themes including: history, music, commerce and the migration experience.

In addition to live music, the presentations, delivered by a mix of respected academics and cultural commentators, will demonstrate that the contribution of Ulster migrants to the development of North American society is more diverse, complex and important than the prevailing orthodoxy or the simple traditional narrative of frontiersmen clearing wilderness and fighting Native Americans, while living in the backwoods inventing bluegrass music, distilling moonshine, and waiting to become president.

The conference will reveal the nature of the deep relationship between Ulster and North America as will be evident in Alister McReynolds' thought-provoking presentation, "The gentle and thoughtful Scotch-Irish' – their contribution to civilisation rather than bloody empire creation', while Dr Johanne Devlin Trew will explore the many contemporary connections. Any discourse on Ulster and North America must cover the massive movement of people across the Atlantic and this topic will be addressed by Dr Linde Lunney in her talk on that seminal event, the 1718 migration, and Prof. William J. Smyth who will shed light on the migration of Ulster families to British North America and the emergence of Toronto, 'the Belfast of Canada'. The shared cultural contribution will also be evaluated as we benefit from the insight of musician and Director of the Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival, Colin Magee, who will also provide a musical contribution at what promises to be a memorable event. *Common Currency* will thus deliver an engaging mix of music, presentations and debate and will appeal to the student of Ulster and North American history and the lay person who wishes to learn more.

**DID YOU KNOW THE DOLLAR SYMBOL – \$ – WAS DEvised BY AN ULSTERMAN?**

Oliver Pollock, from the Bredry area of County Tyrone, emigrated to America in 1760 and became a successful merchant in Philadelphia, Cuba and New Orleans. He used much of his wealth to finance the revolutionaries in the War of Independence. He is often credited with inventing the dollar symbol.

## Conference Programme

DR FRANCIS COSTELLO: Ulster and the American South – a driven impulse, 1800–50

DR LINDE LUNNEY: Aghadowey, 1718 and the beginning of emigration – in 2018 should we celebrate or commemorate?

DR BRIAN LAMBKIN: Ancestral homes and family history: the case of the Mellons of Tyrone and Pennsylvania

ALISTER McREYNOLDS: ‘The gentle and thoughtful Scotch Irish’ – their contribution to civilisation rather than bloody empire creation

MARK THOMPSON: ‘How Sweet The Sound’ – hymns and hymnwriters from Ulster and North America

DR JOHANNE DEVLIN TREW: Whose diaspora? Whose migration? Northern Ireland’s overseas connections since the 1920s

GILLIAN HUNT: Ulster and North America – making family history connections

COLIN MAGEE: ‘An American Dream’ – a song of emigration to the New World

PROF. WILLIAM J. SMYTH: The enduring connection – Ulster migration to British North America and the emergence of Toronto, the Belfast of Canada

## About the Speakers

Dr Francis Costello is visiting research professor, Institute for Conflict Transformation and Social Justice (QUB).

Dr Linde Lunney is a researcher and writer in the Dictionary of Irish Biography, a project in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

Dr Brian Lambkin is Director of the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies at the Ulster-American Folk Park and co-author of *Migration in Irish History, 1607–2007*.

Alister McReynolds is a former Principal and Chief Executive of Lisburn Institute of Further and Higher Education and author of *Kith and Kin: The Continuing Legacy of the Scotch-Irish in America* (2013).

Mark Thompson was Chair of the Ulster-Scots Agency from 2005–09. His background is in the creative industries and he has a wealth of experience in bringing Ulster-Scots heritage to the wider public.

Dr Johanne Devlin Trew is a lecturer at the Institute for Research in Social Sciences in the School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy. In 2013 she published, *Leaving the North: Migration and Memory, Northern Ireland, 1921–2011*.

Gillian Hunt is Research Officer with Ulster Historical Foundation and one of the Foundation’s regular speakers during its annual lecture tours in North America.

Colin Magee is a songwriter, collector of songs, television producer and community worker. In 1994 he started the Eagle Wing Festival and conference exploring themes of emigration. As Director of Panarts he has created the Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival and continues to organise music events in both cities.

Prof. William J. Smyth is President Emeritus of National University of Ireland Maynooth and is a former professor of Geography. He has published widely on Irish links with Canada his latest book is *Toronto, The Belfast of Canada* (2015).

FROM ULSTER TO CANADA  
**The Life and Times  
of Wilson Benson, 1821–1911**

by Cecil J. Houston  
& William J. Smyth

A new publication from  
Ulster Historical Foundation  
due June 2015



## Where and When

The conference will take place on Thursday 4 June, 9:00am to 4:45pm, at the Discover Ulster-Scots Centre, Corn Exchange Building, 1–9 Victoria Street, Belfast, BT1 3GA.

## Registration and Further Information

The event is free of charge but **registration is essential as places are limited**. To reserve your place contact Ulster Historical Foundation, 49 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6RY. Tel: (028) 9066 1988 or E-mail: [enquiry@uhf.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@uhf.org.uk)

## Conference Organisers

*Common Currency* is a conference hosted by the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) Ulster-Scots Academy in partnership with Ulster Historical Foundation. This important conference is free to attend and light refreshments and lunch will be provided.

This project is supported by the  
Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG)

**Ulster-Scots Academy**



Department of  
**Culture, Arts  
and Leisure**

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