



## **WEST COUNTRY DIASPORA: SOME TRANSPORTED CORNISH TRAITS IN A NINETEENTH-CENTURY WISCONSIN MINING COMMUNITY**

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**René Pérez Tissens**  
Universidad de Salamanca

**T**his paper attempts to examine the diasporic trajectory of West Country features, specifically Cornish speech, in the United States during the nineteenth century. The analysis is framed within the migratory waves of miners from the area of Cornwall and Devon who moved to the vast pockets of workable land in Wisconsin, Montana and ultimately California. These miner migrants settled and transformed the geography of the area as well as perpetuated a cultural bloodline still felt today in places such as Mineral Point (southwest Wisconsin). Evidence of Cornish talk during the 1850-60s, as gleaned by Copeland (1898), present in letters from Cornish migrants (Birch 1985-86) and later expected by Holway (1997-98), seems to be rich enough to be explored from a dialect survival angle. This paper examines this evidence from the perspective of surviving transported dialects overseas to determine whether a repertoire of Cornish linguistic traits was identified and employed in nineteenth-century Mineral Point, its perdurance and whether it fell in disuse. For this purpose, data gleaned from Copeland's reports will be analysed qualitatively in light of nineteenth-century monographs on the dialect of Cornwall as well as contemporary studies in order to ascertain its authenticity and sociocultural weight. The paper seeks to contribute to research on

the Cornish dialect and its diaspora beyond the boundaries of the old country.

**Keywords:** nineteenth-century Cornish dialect; enregisterment; mining communities; Wisconsin

## 1. Introduction

“Among the immigrant groups which made a considerable contribution to the development of the United States and of the American way of life the Cornish people must be reckoned.”  
(Rowe 1959, 4)

The transportation of English to overseas communities that were the result of the vast imperial reach of the United Kingdom has been the focus of attention of research in recent years (Hickey 2004, Kytö 2004). Settlements and colonies beyond the Atlantic, the implementation of the speech of colonisers, the mixture of tongues in areas with high migratory density and the overall conjunction of varieties of English in extraneous locations, such as the Australian encampments of prisoners, have created a landscape of diverse linguistic phenomena. In this scenario, many scholars have devoted pages to the study of linguistic behaviour outside the United Kingdom. Raymond Hickey (2004) poses questions such as “the survival of features from a mainland source,” the “independent developments within the overseas communities,” or the overall “contact” between “co-exist[ing]” languages alongside English, as well as the processes of creolisation (1). Interest in the testimonies of migrants established permanently on American soil has been fostered through the correspondence of Irish migrants, where Charles Montgomery (1995, 1997a) contemplates the impinge of Ulster Scots on American English; other studies incorporating regional British varieties in epistolary form are also considered by Bermejo-Giner & Montgomery (1997).

This paper seeks to address migratory movements from the communities of Cornwall and Devon to the American Midwest, and the transportation and survival of some Cornish traits, imported to

the United States during the nineteenth century, in the area of Wisconsin, more specifically Mineral Point. Thus, this paper considers, firstly, the sociohistorical context behind the migratory fluxes from British soil to America. Secondly, it presents an exposition on the survival of non-standard dialects and their transportation overseas. Thirdly, it outlines early commentary on western British dialects and the main linguistic features recorded in Cornwall by antiquarian and contemporary sources. Finally, it takes into consideration these sources along with Copeland's (1898) information regarding recognised Cornish traits in Mineral Point to prove items that were acknowledged and indexed in England at the time had been successfully transported to Wisconsin. Holway's (1997-98) expectations on arriving to Mineral Point a century later is used to judge the gradual disuse of those transported items throughout time and their eventual loss.

## 2. Sociohistorical Context: Mining and Migration

The British English expansion overseas has been largely studied in recent years (e.g. Kirwin & Hollet 1986 on Newfoundland English; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1997 on the Ocracoke brogue). Colonial, administrative, and entrepreneurial purposes, as well as migration provoked by social discomfort in Britain, established a persistent flux to North America. Hickey (2004) informs us that “the dissemination of English beyond the island of Britain has a history which is over 800 years old, beginning with Ireland in the late twelfth century” (10). As is well known, this was largely motivated by a series of acts beginning in 1841 with the Pre-Emption Act, followed by the Donation Land Claim in 1850, the Homestead Act in 1862 and the Southern Homestead Act in 1866, which projected a possibly bright future for British and European settlers more generally. Swathes of land conceded by the US government to incoming tenants for reasonably low fees<sup>1</sup> helped expand new

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<sup>1</sup> The Homestead Act of 1862 indicates that prices ranged from “one dollar and twenty-five cents, or less, per acre; or eighty acres or less of such unappropriated lands, at two dollars and fifty cents per acre”.

settings and entice possible newcomers from the other side of the Atlantic, pressured by economic difficulties and lack of work opportunities.

Migration came from all parts of Europe in different sizes and frequencies. In the case of the United Kingdom and of the West Country in particular, Cornwall and Devon, possessed a history of mining that allowed these counties to prosper and establish a prolific industry. Schwartz (2006) is more specific: by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Cornwall “had emerged as a center of technological innovation in deep-lode mining and steam engineering” becoming “one of Britain’s earliest industrial regions with a distinct and specialised extraregional commodity export: copper ore” (171). Rowse (1969) indicates that “the dozen square miles or so around Camborge and Redruth were at that time the most heavily [...] mined area in the world” (161). Production seemed to have reached outstanding peaks, topping 209,000 tons by 1856 (161). Improvement in infrastructures consolidated a working relationship with the more industrialised and commercial areas of the country, moving goods and people by train and canals, as well as roads that were tended to and maintained thanks to the Turnpike Trusts, which worked by means of “organization[s] that financed road improvements by levying tolls and issuing mortgage debt” (Bogart 2005, 2). However, discomfort following the lack of jobs and unbeneficial salaries in the first half of the nineteenth century pushed workers to look somewhere else and examine other possibilities, especially overseas.<sup>2</sup>

According to Rowse (1969, 202), Edward James of Camborne (1804 - 1845) is reported to be the first Cornishman to ever arrive directedly in the United States. In 1830, he followed the usual route at the time, which involved crossing the Atlantic to land in Quebec, moving over to Cincinnati and St. Louis, and ultimately arriving in Mineral Point. Schwartz (2006) indicates that the dense

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<sup>2</sup> This scarcity of jobs was mainly due to a process of de-industrialisation occasioned by a “terminal decline created by the restructuring of the global mineral economy” (Schwartz 2006, 171).

migratory traffic moving from the area of Cornwall had set up a network for newcomers to facilitate the translocation of their communities to territories in the US (172). This migration worked reversely as well, meaning that Cornish people already in America would also consider returning home. This may have been prompted by nostalgia or conceived of as an attempt to engage future migrants to move to the US. Thus, 1830 can be seen as the onset of Cornish migration to Wisconsin. Its rich lead-layered mountains were attractive for prospective migrants, although this state was not alone in receiving migrants from Cornwall at the time. California, Michigan and Pennsylvania also took in throngs of Cornish miners enticed by their lands. Notwithstanding this, Wisconsin seems to be unique in this context as it still retains a clear and tangible Cornish legacy. Towns such as Dodgeville, Mineral Point, Hazel Green, Linden and Shullsburg are amongst the urban hubs Cornish newcomers arrived in (Schwartz 2006, 172). All in all, the average number of Cornish people in the Lead Region could be estimated around 7,000 in 1850 and 10,000 by the turn of the nineteenth century (Rowse 1969, 216). Economic differences between Cornwall and Wisconsin were notable to the point that there was no reason to stay behind in England where salaries were half the ones in America: according to Copeland (1898, 314), because salaries “[ranged] from \$12 to \$13 a month [...] (t)he mine laborers thought they could do better in America”. Considering such revenue, the Cornish may have found that travelling to the US was more profitable, as Copeland’s (1898) comparison between the prices of goods in England and Wisconsin seems to indicate in Fig. 1:

The Cornish settlers that arrived in Wisconsin and other mid-western states became generally known as *Amerikanyon gernewek* (or “American Cornish”), and left a linguistic legacy in these territories where their dialect had been already identified as a “socially recognised register of forms” (Agha 2003, 232).

	ENGLAND. <sup>1</sup>		WISCONSIN. <sup>2</sup>		
	Cornwall about 1840.	England in 1849.	1830.	1836	1850.
Beef per lb.....	\$ .12	\$ .14	.....	\$ .14-.15	.....
Butter per lb.....	.14	.30	.15-.20	.25-.31	.15-.20
Potatoes per bu.....	.12	.....	.37½	.50-.62	.....
Tea per lb.....	1.25	1.25	.....	.....	1.00
Sugar per lb.....	.12	.10½	.12-.13	.....	.05-.06
Flour per cwt.....	10.00	8.00	9.00	8.00-9.00	3.50-4.00

Fig. 1. Copeland's table with figures regarding prices of goods in England and Wisconsin (1898: 315)

### 3. Survival of Nonstandard Varieties of English

Transported or uprooted dialects underwent what Görlach (1987) defines as “colonial lag” (180), meaning that evolutive processes affecting the dialects in their original locations could take longer to be effective on the uprooted ones. What is more, Hickey argues (2004) that such lag could in fact become a parallel branch where the transported varieties develop their own changes over time instead of remaining “simply preserved versions of earlier forms of the language on the mainland” (9). An example of this can be seen in the evolution of the Irish uvular [ɣ], which is noticed in Newfoundland as an “independent development at this overseas location” (Hickey 2004, 37-38).

The spreading of the language overseas was mainly led by the “more conservative rural forms of English in the mainland” (Hickey 2004, 37).<sup>3</sup> The linguistic situation during America's colonisation is best explained in Kytö (2004), where she highlights

<sup>3</sup> Kytö (2004) points out that “from 1629 to 1640, 14,000 to 21,000 people left England for the New England counties [...] (t)he majority of them (coming) from five eastern counties between the estuaries of the Humber and the Thames” (123).

how “[t]he co-existence of an ‘early prestige language’ and of local dialects at the time of migration (in England) was of great importance to the unifying and diversifying tendencies influencing the language development in the colonies” (124). The mixture of peoples from different social classes meant that the “development took place [...] in favour of the prestigious Southern British English” whilst “lower-rank emigrants most likely had no supraregional features but kept strictly to their local vernacular, whatever that was” (124-125). Hickey (2004) lengthily considers a variety of features that did not survive transplantation to the overseas colonies in America, employing the Salem witchcraft trials as the base for his documentation, dated around the 1690s. Such features include the “lowering of /e/ to /a/ before /r/”, e. g. *marcy* ‘mercy’, the behaviour of “/f/ as a reflex of former /x/” or /x/ vocalisation, e. g. *dafter* ‘daughter’, or the “variation among high front vowels,” which Hickey comments that are bi-directional, e. g. *weches* ‘witches, amongst others (Hickey 2004: 42).

The survival of dialectal types was also dependant on the topography of the area, where “inaccessible, mountainous or isolated coastal regions keep the features which were characteristic of the input varieties” (Hickey 2004, 6). In the case of Cornish migrants, they established themselves in zones where workable terrain was available for mining, and the geography of the landscape in states such as Wisconsin or Montana appears to be wide and mainly composed of low hills, unlike the steeper areas in Appalachia (5).<sup>4</sup> It can be argued that the survival of Cornish traits in the American Midwest was made possible due to their strong cultural background and mass mobility to specific mining areas that were considerably less populated than multicultural territories such as the east coast. Although itinerant given their search for workable

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<sup>4</sup>Appalachian linguistic isolation has produced myths such as the idea that Elizabethan English is still employed in this area. Montgomery (1998) discusses this situation at length and debunks the idea. He considers it little more than a mere “romanticization of mountain life by outsiders, creating a link between “the mountains in general or at least with older, less educated people” (73).

terrain, they became one of the multiple representative communities that gave shape to the United States and whose legacy, if not their speech, has survived until today.

#### 4. Nineteenth-century Cornish Dialect

Awareness of the existence of a British western dialect dates back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. An early example can be found in George Puttenham's (1529 – 1590) renowned *The Art of English Poesie* (1590), where he wrote:

theirs is the purer English Saxon at this day, yet it is not fo Courtly nor fo currant as our Southerne English is, no more is the far Welterne mās speech: ye shall herefore take the vfuall speech of the Court, and that of London and the shires lying about London within lx. Myles, and not much aboue. (121)

Alexander Gill (1565-1635) would supplement this admonitory remark with his own in his publication *Logonomia Anglica* (1619), where he describes the western dialect in the following terms:

But of all the dialects the Western has the most barbarous flavour, particularly if you listen to rustic people from Somerset, for it is easily possible to doubt whether they are speaking English or some foreign language. For even now (...) English words are replaced by their own (...) [and] they have this peculiarity, that they alter certain irregular nouns of either number ending in z in order to distinguish the number, e.g. hooz hose. (103)

A general increase in the amount of related evidence is attested during the nineteenth century, comments that can be taken to inform our knowledge of the historical characteristics of south-western speech.

The geographical location of Cornwall proved to be fundamental to the perdurance of its native language until as late as 1777, when the last native speaker, Dorothy Pentreath, passed away. Cornered in the westmost area of England, the Celtic inhabitants of the peninsula retained the purity of their mother tongue until the outset of the Industrial Revolution, having resisted the overbearing influence of Saxon communities spreading throughout England (see



Jago 1882, Payton 2004). The most iconic and relevant piece of literature regarding the history of the Cornish language until the nineteenth century is penned by Frederick William Pearce Jago (1838 – 1892), who in 1882 published *The Ancient Language and Dialect of Cornwall*. In essence, it is a prolix treaty that recounts the beginnings of the Cornish tongue and the subsequent stages it underwent until it became a rich and recognisable dialect at the time of Jago’s book’s publication and, to this day, a cornerstone of nonstandard English. His work is without doubt a remarkable record of Cornish features, composed with the purpose to encapsulate a culture that the industrial momentum of the era could have erased completely.

In his book, Jago narrates how “the ancient Cornish was [still] understood, and spoken, from one end of Cornwall to the other” in the late sixteenth century, whilst by the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup>, “its use [was] confined to the Land’s End district, about St. Paul, and St. Just” employed mainly by workers and labourers (45). All but “scattered words are all that are left” by the end of the nineteenth century, he explains, which for him signifies the end of a language with outstanding lineage and pedigree. Jago considers the composition of the Cornish dialect in his era the combination both Cornish and English tongues, and that and points at a levelling process as the responsible for dialectal lexical losses (46-47).

Contemporary improvements in Jago’s society, among which locomotion<sup>5</sup> and refinement of roads stood out, as mentioned above, posed a peril to the survival of dialects. Jago also places blame on the ever-increasing educative system. It is in the classroom where ideology met language and pupils were instilled with what was considered an acceptable form of English, thus “bring[ing] about a great change in Cornish speech” (49). The diversity of the dialect leads Jago to consider it a “motley” given that it possessed a mixture of Cornish words, Old English ones and insertions of English words “used in a provincial manner” (52). Jago elaborates

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<sup>5</sup> Jago informs that the opening of the Cornwall railway in 1859, putting the county in contact with the rest of the country, “accelerated” the process of dialect levelling due to “greater intercommunication” (49).

further, providing a few paragraphs to consider the most elemental traits one could find in the speech of Cornwall at the time. Table 1 displays these features as presented in Jago (1882) with examples divided in phonological changes related to vowels and consonants:

Vowels	Consonants
“I is pronounced like <i>e</i> ,” e.g. <i>selver</i> “silver”	“the <i>s</i> (is pronounced) like <i>z</i> ,” e.g. <i>zaid</i> “said”
“the <i>e</i> (is pronounced) like <i>ai</i> ,” e.g. <i>raide</i> “read”	“the <i>f</i> (is pronounced) like <i>v</i> ,” e. g. <i>vaather</i> “father”
“the <i>a</i> (is pronounced) like <i>aa</i> ,” e.g. <i>traade</i> “trade”	“ <i>g</i> is almost always dropped at the end of a word,” e.g. <i>writin</i> “writing”
“the <i>o</i> (is pronounced) like <i>aw</i> ,” e.g. <i>awnly</i> “only”	Periphrastic “do”: “There is a frequent use of the word <i>do</i> ” (57), e.g. <i>I do know</i>
“the <i>u</i> (is pronounced) like <i>oo</i> ,” e.g. <i>oogly</i> , “ugly”	“In such words as <i>thick</i> , <i>thing</i> and <i>thin</i> , the <i>th</i> is pronounced not like a <i>d</i> , or like <i>th</i> , but in a manner half-way between the two,” e.g. <i>theek</i> , <i>theeng</i> , <i>theen</i>

Table 1. Traits of Cornish speech, collected by Jago (1882, 57-58)

Some of these features are coincidental with later descriptions of West Country English during the nineteenth century. Ihalainen (1994) also notices the quality of periphrastic “do”, and supplies the example “*they da peel them*,” along with the voicing of fricatives, transforming /s/ and /f/ into /z/ and /v/, e. g. *zay* ‘say’. Given the proximity of counties within the West Country, it is only normal that even a closer inspection like this one could not be precise since some of the traits listed above may still seep into neighbouring counties. However, it presents a more detailed account of what we should expect from Cornish speakers to have sounded like at that point in

time. Drastic changes from this moment forward cannot be anticipated given that, as Ihalainen (1994) explains, “it would seem that from 1776 till the second half of the nineteenth century dialects were stable” since “in the second half of the nineteenth century, an active policy to eradicate regional features” (205) was implemented in public schools to erase any trace of rurality and protect the English language (at least from the point of view of the prescriptivism from that era).

## 5. Mineral Point: An Exemplary American-Cornish Mining Community

Taking into consideration the information discussed thus far, it seems pertinent to return to southwestern Wisconsin and address Mineral Point as a case study of transported recognised Cornish traits during the nineteenth-century migratory movements. The situation of Cornish miners becomes substantially relevant, since Jago (1882) asserts that “[t]he miner holds to his peculiar form of speech, apparently with more tenacity than the husbandman” (54), meaning that miners could have secured the successful transplantation of their native speech to new communities across the Atlantic more efficiently than other Cornish demographic groups.

Rowe (1959) provides details on the movements of Cornish migrants in America. He indicates that “several went to Mexico to instal and work pumping machinery in silver mines,” yet “[in] the eighteen-thirties a fair number came to the lead mines of Wisconsin, there to build Cornish villages of white-washed cottages and ‘Methody’ chapels that were replicas of the hamlets from whence they came” (6). Rowse (1969) offers helpful insight regarding the migratory movement of Cornish people once in the Lead Region. He enumerates the principal areas in Wisconsin and thereabouts they moved to:

the southeastern part of Grant County, centering upon Platteville; the southwestern part of neighboring Lafayette County, around Benton and Shullsburg; almost all the southern half of Iowa County, including Mineral Point, Linden and Dodgeville. An, across the Illinois border, the northwestern part of Jo Daviess

County, focusing upon Galena. All this territory was, of course, one area [since] the Cornish tended to settle thickest where the best mines were. (Rowse 1969, 217)

It is among these that Mineral Point poses itself as an appropriate scenario to analyse the presence of Cornish dialect features.<sup>6</sup> Located in Iowa County, in the southwest part of Wisconsin, it was settled in 1827, an attractive point due to its vast mines of zinc and lead. The present population tops the 2,581 inhabitants in 2020, and the current number in 2023 is none the different to a significant degree. It occupies an area of 3.08 square miles, water and land combined, as per a report issued by the United States Census Bureau in 2020. Mineral Point is known for its annual celebration, the Cornish Festival, which in 2023 will take place in the last quarter of September. Mineral Point is also the location of a historic and emblematic site, Pendarvis, which is included in the National Register of Historic Places, and consists of nineteenth-century cabins that were inhabited by Cornish migrants. The name is a clue to its origins, reflected in the famous rhyme “By Tre Pol and Pen / Shall ye know all Cornishmen” (recorded by Carew 1602, 55).

Attraction to this location is based on its history, being one of the places where a true Cornish bloodline was felt and recognised by others in neighbouring communities (and which in fact is still celebrated today). The available records from American inhabitants noticed the difference in speech and customs and commented on it. Rowse indicates that “[w]hat struck people most, as in the Copper Country, was the strong and unmistakable Cornish dialect” (1969, 222). The integration of Cornish people into the new host society put in perspective what aspects of their original sociocultural background could still be preserved and which would be seen as different and eventually discarded to welcome new habits that were

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, its popularity invited other communities from England to settle in the area surrounding Mineral Point, such as Devonshire inhabitants (Birch 1985-86, 129). These migrants from Cornwall’s neighbouring county and spiritual Celtic sibling formed another community close-by that was named Devonshire Hollow, located “just east of Mineral Point [...] in a number of ravines [...] in northeastern Lafayette County” (129).

purely American. Barkan (2004, 341) comments on this in the following terms: “preserving homeland ties involve[s] the struggle to determine how far to go in adapting to the new host society, balancing cultural maintenance with cultural retreat as well as prior social connections with new social bonds” (quoted in Schwartz 2006, 176). There are reports which show how new inhabitants did not seem to quite grasp the lengths they had gone and how far apart from their homeland they were. This can be perceived in examples gathered by Rowse (1969), where he cites with a dialect rendering the statement from a man that was questioned whether he knew how far England was from America, to which he responded: “I cudn’ tell ‘ee ‘zackly, but ‘tedn’ far apart,” or the amazement registered on a woman who marvelled at the idea of the moon being the same for both Wisconsin and Cornwall, expressed thus: “Mary Ann, do ‘ee come out ‘ere. Do ‘ee see that moon? I reelly believe ‘tes the same old moon we d’ ‘ave in Cornwall.” (222).

The use of Cornish features was abandoned by those who moved further West. Given the distinct characteristics of their dialect, they were soon recognised and marked as different, some of them deciding not to employ their homeland speech. This is reported by a miner who decided to move to California in the peak of the gold fever, William T. George. Arriving in 1885 in California, he reported that: "I soon dropped my [Cornish] accent when I got to school here [Grass Valley]," he stated, "because everyone made fun of me." (Ewart 1998, quoted in Schwartz 2006, 176).<sup>7</sup>

## 6. Methodology and Data Analysis

This paper considers mainly the account provided by A. L. Copeland in 1898 as proof of Cornish dialect activity in Mineral Point during the nineteenth century and its survival. Such account is reviewed with a qualitative methodology, given the scarcity of available

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<sup>7</sup> This is perhaps part of the famous “melting pot”. To fit in, mix and not be singled out, which is why Cornish “made a concerted effort to become what Thurner has described as ‘un-hyphenated Americans’” (Schwartz 2006: 176).

material. Thus, features gathered by Copeland are displayed in a two-column table to indicate Cornish dialect examples and their Standard English counterparts. This is followed by a brief interpretation of phonological changes reflected in the spelling variants presented by Copeland. Such data is intended to represent the transported Cornish features to Southwestern Wisconsin. Additional reference to a nineteenth-century letter referenced in Birch (1985-86) is appended to illustrate dialect employment in a primary source during Copeland's timeframe. Data is then employed to contrast with Holway's (1997-98) indication that Mineral Point had lost most of its non-standard features, since none of the traits displayed in Copeland a century before are noticed.

## 7. Transported Cornish Features in Mineral Point and their Gradual Disappearance

In 1898, A. L. Copeland published what he called a “sketch of the Cornish in Southwest Wisconsin,” which, according to him, had not been “obtained (...) from books or newspapers” given that “no article, written upon this subject, ha[d] been found.” In fact, he claims that “(a)ll the information here given—little as it is—has been obtained in conversation with pioneers of the lead region, and by any personal observation of the manners and customs of the Cornish settlers” (301).

This statement seems to make the data collected by Copeland reasonably new and relevant to a study of enregistered traits of Cornish outside England. Given that it is merely an assemblage of picked-up expressions and words that cannot be quantified for comparison, I have applied a qualitative methodology.

The following examples in Table 2 are noted by Copeland, which are “still in use among the ‘thorough Cornish people’ of the old lead region” (1898: 324). Copeland did not catalogue them in terms of lexis, grammar or phonology, therefore they appear in the same order as given in his sketch:

<i>Art en</i>	‘Are not’
<i>I’d as lev do en as not</i>	‘I’d as leave do not’
<i>The bal</i>	‘The mine’
<i>Crabit</i>	‘Scarf’
<i>Cligy</i>	‘Candy’
<i>En</i>	‘Him’ or ‘it’
<i>Braav</i>	‘Excellent’
<i>Chack</i>	‘Check’
<i>Crib</i>	‘Lunch’
<i>Click-hand</i>	‘Left-hand’
<i>Dussen ‘ee</i>	‘Do you not?’
<i>Fuchin’</i>	‘Walking lazy’, ‘throwing away time’
<i>Forthy</i>	‘Bold’
<i>houzen</i>	‘Houses’
<i>Nist</i>	‘Near’
<i>Oo</i>	Pronounced as in ‘moon’
<i>Wor</i>	‘Was’
<i>Wessen ‘ee</i>	‘Will you not?’
<i>Iss</i>	‘Yes’
<i>To clunk</i>	‘To swallow’
<i>Gove</i>	‘Gave’
<i>Bould</i>	‘Bold’
<i>Gate</i>	‘Great’

Table. 2 Some examples of the Cornish dialect noticed by Copeland in Mineral Point (1898)

Given that Copeland did not purport himself to be anything but a half-Cornish antiquarian at heart, these examples only provide an explanation to clarify their meaning. However, some of the phenomena he notices can be also interpreted given they hint changes at a phonological level:

- *Lev* may imply a non-standard evolution of the FLEECE lexical set (Wells 1982).
- *En* is a recognised form of accusative in the West Country, vastly present in Devon as well (see Chope 1891, Hewett 1892).
- *Dussen* ‘*ee* may be a transfiguration of the more antique form “Doesn’t thee?”.
- *Houzen* appear to be an employment of t Old English weak noun plural suffix *-en*, noticed in words such as “children,” or “oxen.”
- *Wor* could possibly be an instance of what Trudgill addresses as the r-variant, whose employment is based on preference rather than a fixed evolutive tendency (see Trudgill 2020).
- *Gove* may be considered to present a case of diphthong shifting, from /ei/ to /ou/, given Copeland’s interpretation as it being “gave.”
- *Gate* appears to have dropped the “r,” given Copeland’s interpretation of it being “great.”

Copeland’s catalogue of features seems to be the largest available so far regarding Cornish expressions and words heard in the vicinity of Mineral Point. It represents a compact and comprehensive list of traits collected in the southwest of Wisconsin. Additionally, the following example extracted from a letter to John Pile, a Cornish migrant that became an important figure in Mineral Point as local reverend, could be added as a primary source where Cornish dialect is noticed: “make up your mind befor you leave that you wil not setell befor you get in the western part of America for thear you can purchas land at 10 schillings per acer.... whear *I be* it is selling for 50 or 60 dollars per acer and some 100 per acer” (quoted in Birch 1985-86, 134, my emphasis). Perhaps here the most relevant trait is the example of finite *be*: “*I be*.”



In the 1998 issue of the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Chester P. Holway and Larry A. Reed published a relevant piece to document their visit to Mineral Point and Taliesin (roughly 24 miles apart). Whilst Holway's paper is closer to a travelogue than anything else, it is of tantamount importance what he writes about his walking Mineral Point's streets in the late twentieth century:

It is on the tip of my tongue. I have re-hearsed it carefully, and I am sure I can say it nicely. I stroll up the main street of Mineral Point and nod pleasantly to friendly looking passersby. They nod back.

"Good morning," they say, or, "Fine day, isn't it?"

Not a single one will oblige me. I keep hoping to hear someone greet me with, "'Ow ist 'ee gettin' on, you?"

Then I shall answer, "Braav and keenly."

I never get the chance. Mineral Point is all American, too. (Holway 1998, 113)

In this brief reference to the features that are already familiar thanks to Copeland (1898) and some of the sentences recorded in Rowse (1969), Holway demonstrates that there was, as late as 1998, an expectation on the part of non-natives to find an indexed set of Cornish features still working in the area. Holway anticipated his presence would be met with the casual Cornish expressions alive during the migratory movements of the 1850s, known to him and understood as peculiar to the place. Yet he is disappointed to discover nobody would produce such sentences, which he assumes is due to the overall Americanisation of Mineral Point.

This situation seems to prove that the characteristics supplied by Copeland were still accepted as likely in the latter half of the twentieth century, defining the Cornish character and personality of the place. Thus far we could surmise that those features were recognisable at the peak of Cornish mining communities as part of their linguistic register and that their transportation from England to Midwest America had been successful. That Holway's fancy is not indulged by twentieth-century Mineral Point inhabitants probably leads us to conjecture that a process of de-registerment (Williams 2012, 55) took place at some point in time between Copeland's

sketch and Holway's purported travelogue. Cooper (2017) aptly exemplifies this process of de-registration with fossilised forms of the Yorkshire dialect; his explanation poses a scenario where "features are 'deregistered' to the point where their salience is lost altogether, and their meanings are virtually no longer understood by anyone" (50). It is most probable, nevertheless, to think that all vestiges of Cornish in Mineral Point have shimmered down to a few pieces of folklore, such as recipes, buildings and traditional clothing. We assume that, given the overall influence of General American, "varieties introduced at a later stage have a correspondingly slight influence" (Hickey 2004, 13). This could be the case of the Cornish dialect in Mineral Point.

## 8. Conclusion

Promises of a better and profitable future led Cornish people to embark towards American soil during the nineteenth century. Different records cast pertinent data concerning Cornish settlements in the Lead Region area, Mineral Point becoming the most pertinent in southwestern Wisconsin. This specific community displayed a series of nonstandard English traits that left a lasting impression and was recognisable by other US inhabitants in the area at the time. This situation supports the idea that some possibly enregistered Cornish dialect features were transported to the US from Cornwall and indexed a specific type of person, the Cornish miner, or cousin Jacks.

A. L. Copeland's (1898) commentaries on Mineral Point's Cornish community exhibit a set of recognised Cornish features, listed in antiquarian monographs at the time, which transported overseas during the migratory movements in the nineteenth century. During this time, Cornish settlers informed their neighbours back home about the situation in America with extensive missives detailing daily affairs and events. Such letters, as provided by Birch (1985-86), also show dialect traits coincidental with Copeland's timeline. However, by the end of the twentieth century those traits were no longer representative of a collective or community and

therefore have been progressively de-registered as the original Cornish miners those features were associated with eventually segregated and moved to other parts of the country. This fall in disuse and overall Americanisation of Mineral Point is represented in Howley's (1997-98) remarks during his visit to Mineral Point and thereabouts, where the cousin Jack persona is nowhere to be found and its speech gone.

Whilst this paper has examined existing Cornish traits in a single town of popular mining area for Cornish migrants during the nineteenth century, other parts of the US could have retained West Country or, specifically, Cornish features as well. This could be the case of the Smith and Tangier Islands in the East Coast, where the Ocracoke brogue has aroused scholar attention. Future research on these parts could be beneficial to form a comprehensive map of enregistered (and de-registered) West Country features overseas. Hopefully, this paper will generate more interest in the linguistic heritage of Cornish miners in the United States and its effect on contemporary American English.

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**Received:** January 29, 2023

**Revised version accepted:** June 5, 2023

