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For an archived snapshot of the story as it appeared between 2020 and 2023 on

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Dublin Core

Title

The Pollecoffs of Holyhead

Subject

Holyhead

Caergybi

Immigration

Mewnfudiad

Creator

Nathan Abrams

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/YD6N-QDZ2>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Coverage

53.43291690752208, -4.623397681851371

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

To this day, older residents of Holyhead fondly remember Pollecoff's department and drapery store that operated on Market Street for over sixty years.

Story

Residents of Holyhead fondly remember Pollecoff's department and drapery store for its 'elegance and quality'. Its owner, Solomon Polliakoff, was born in Russia in 1867. He emigrated to the United Kingdom to escape persecution and to better himself here. On entry, an immigration official who was unable to understand and/or spell his original name allegedly altered its spelling. Together with his brother Philip and their widowed mother, they arrived at the port.

Phillip and Solomon started out as pedlars, travelling the countryside of north Wales where they learnt to speak English and 'kitchen' Welsh. In 1893, Solomon opened a store on Market Street in Holyhead that was also known as 'The Golden Lock' because a 'golden lock' once hung from the corner of the building now (Ty Cyfle). No one seems to know why it was there as the shop was always called Pollecoff's or Pollies. The lock was taken down every couple of years to be painted gold. It was taken down one year and never put back. The lock was taken to Pwllheli for painting as the main shop was there. None of the other shops had a golden lock, only Holyhead.

Philip and Solomon opened further stores in Bangor, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Caernarfon, and Pwllheli. The shop in Pwllheli still bears their name. The former store in Bangor is being converted and will be known, in future, as Pollecoff House.

Solomon died in 1944 and Philip took over his store. In 1947, the *North Wales Chronicle* reported how 'Mr Pollecoff is well known throughout North Wales, and he now possesses two of the largest businesses in North Wales—Bangor and Holyhead...In his early days, he learned the Welsh language before English. Mrs Pollecoff has played a very great part in developing the business, she has learned the Welsh language very thoroughly, although she was born in Liverpool and resided there until her marriage.'

Philip died in 1954 and the store in Holyhead closed in the 1960s, but Market Street is still known locally as Pollecoff Hill.

The Pollecoffs were well-integrated into the commercial, civic and cultural life of Holyhead and local newspapers contained many references to family members taking part in educational and cultural activities. One of Solomon's daughters performed as one of six violinists in the Holyhead Amateur Orchestral and Operatic Society's performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'The Gondoliers' in 1914.

When the Central Welsh Board's Examination results were published in the October of the same year, another daughter, Fanny Pollecoff, achieved the eighteenth position in Wales and was the sixth-highest female candidate. Later, in 1917, she became the first female to graduate in Chemistry from the University of Liverpool. She later gained a doctorate in chemistry and worked as a researcher at the Chemical Institute at the University of

Heidelberg in Germany, where she published many academic papers. She retired to Malaga in Spain where she died in 1983.

The above is, of course, a mere snapshot, but they do suggest a family who were very much accepted into the local community and who contributed to it.

Factoid

Related Resources

Official Website