



Newsletter of the

# Irish Family History Forum

NGS Local Society Newsletter Award Winner 2013 and Runner-Up 2014

Vol. 25, No. 2

May–July 2015

## Forum Is the Irish Organization of the Year!

The Forum has been named Irish Organization of the Year by the Irish American Heritage and Culture Committee of the New York City Department of Education. The aim of the IAHC is to foster an understanding of the contributions of Irish and Irish Americans to the development of both New York City and the nation.

In announcing the award, the IAHC remarked that the Forum is an “exceptional organization” and noted “the crucial role it plays in promoting Irish genealogy research through lectures, workshops and [its] award-winning monthly newsletter. Your mission in the educational

process is aligned with ours.”

An awards ceremony and reception were held on March 27 at Borough Hall in Brooklyn. Forum members Kathleen McCarthy, Patricia and Tom Phelan, and Virginia and Joseph Rhatigan were in attendance as President Mike Carragher accepted the award.



Consul General Barbara Jones and Mike Carragher

In his remarks to the audience, which included Borough President Eric Adams and Consul General of Ireland in New York Barbara Jones, Carragher said the success of the Forum is due to a group of dedicated individuals volunteering their time and efforts. He described the goals and accomplishments of the Forum and encouraged audience members to preserve their family history.

**MAY 2**

### Tenement Museum Tour

A guided visit to the restored 1860s apartment of the Irish immigrant Moore family at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum on Orchard St. in Manhattan will be held on Saturday, May 2, from 10 to 11 a.m. We'll explore how the Moores, who left their home in the Five Points to start a new life in Kleindeutschland, dealt with being outsiders on Orchard St. Afterward we'll take a 90-minute walking tour of the neighborhood. To reserve a place on the tour, please email [newsletter@ifhf.org](mailto:newsletter@ifhf.org).

**MAY 18**

### Members Forum / Ask the Experts

Starting at 10 a.m., our members will share tales about famous, infamous, and interesting ancestors; family heirlooms, books, letters, or photos; and

research successes. If you would like to participate, please email [events@ifhf.org](mailto:events@ifhf.org). After the break, there will be an Ask the Experts session, in which a panel of genealogists will answer the audience's research questions. Note there will be no help session at this meeting.

**JUNE 20**

### The New York Gateway

New York has been at the heart of U.S. immigration and emigration since the 1600s. National genealogy speaker and podcast talk show host Jane E. Wilcox will discuss immigrant and emigrant groups and settlers, including the Irish; New York migration routes and methods of transportation; and the records that help in researching migrating ancestors in New York, including the 1865 New York State census. Jane Wilcox owns Forget-Me-Not Ancestry in Kingston, NY.

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
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PO Box 67, Plainview NY 11803-0067  
www.ifhf.org

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*Dedicated to promoting and encouraging  
the study of Irish genealogy and family history*

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Membership year is January 1 to December 31.

*United States:* \$20 Individual, \$30 Family

*Foreign:* \$30 Individual, \$50 Family

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## FROM THE BOARD

**Dues** In order to continue presenting a roster of expert speakers, publishing our quarterly Newsletter, and offering many other benefits to Forum members, the Board has voted for a small increase in annual dues. Beginning January 1, 2016, an individual membership will cost \$25, and family membership dues will be \$35.

**Volunteers** We're pleased to announce that Serena and Bill Brochu have volunteered to chair the Materials Committee, taking care of technical issues at our general meetings. We are still looking for a Hospitality Director to oversee refreshments, and we thank Kathleen Kane, Margaret DeAcetis, Jeanne Bayer, Kathleen McCarthy, and Evelyn Ludwig for their help in the interim.

In March, Serena Brochu, Susan Jaycox Murphy, John Sorli, and Eugene O'Neill represented the Forum at the annual Irish festival at Hofstra University. Our table was busy throughout the day as visitors stopped by to find out about their Irish surnames, learn about the Forum, sign up for our email list, and get sample copies of the Newsletter. Our thanks to all our volunteers.

**We're One of the Big Three** Recently Joe Buggy profiled the Forum in his Townland of Origin blog, calling us one of "the three biggest Irish genealogy societies" in the U.S. and "the premier Irish genealogy society in the New York metro region." Buggy described the Newsletter as "a fantastic resource to get in your mailbox every few months. In-depth articles, the latest Irish genealogy news, and people's experiences with their research are just some of the excellent features that one can read. Even if you live nowhere near Long Island, it is worth being a member just for the Newsletter."

### CONTACT THE FORUM

**Events:** [events@ifhf.org](mailto:events@ifhf.org)

**General information:** [info@ifhf.org](mailto:info@ifhf.org)

**Librarian:** [library@ifhf.org](mailto:library@ifhf.org)

**Newsletter editor:** [newsletter@ifhf.org](mailto:newsletter@ifhf.org)

**Publicity chair:** [press@ifhf.org](mailto:press@ifhf.org)

**Webmaster:** [website@ifhf.org](mailto:website@ifhf.org)

## Jim Hawkins Recalls His Days on the Bog

We received the following letter from Jim Hawkins, who entertained us at the annual Christmas party.



Firstly, I would like to thank the IFHF for having Diane and myself at your Christmas luncheon. It was wonderful for us to be with you and I am grateful that you gave me the opportunity to tell some more of my Christmas stories and songs. Thank you for a terrific afternoon.

Secondly, I want to compliment you for the great newsletter that you publish. After all of the rush and business of Christmas, I finally got the time to read and enjoy it. It is a terrific publication.

Finally, I wanted to say how much I appreciated Jim Regan's "Cutting the Turf" [*Newsletter*, Nov. 2014–Jan. 2015]. He not only explained the background and methods of cutting the turf, but he also captured the feelings and spirit of the Turf season.

Growing up in Westmeath, I spent many days with my father, my Uncle Jack, and my cousins in the "bog," as we used to say. As children we didn't neces-

sarily look forward to the hard work that was involved (we were the "catchers"), but just being together with our families and friends was a joyful experience. Jim is so right about the voracious appetites one would get. The sandwiches and tea that were made in the bog were better than the finest wine or steak you'd get anywhere!

I got my first shave in the bog. I was 17, back home for the first time since we left in 1957, and had peach fuzz on my face. At the end of the day, my cousins pinned me down and gave me my first shave. I can still see the moment so clearly and the "craic" we all had in the process.

Along with members of the Irish Arts Center, I spent four summers living in the village of Corraun in Achill Island, Co. Mayo. In 1979-80, I stayed on for the winter and I cut my own turf from the bank that was owned by Corraun House. I remember those days with great joy and a sense of satisfaction at what I had accomplished. We had enough turf to get us through the winter. One of the locals, Sean Gallagher...came across to me one day while I was cutting the turf with the slane. He watched for about 15 minutes and said, "You know, for a Yank, you're not bad with that yoke in your hands." Could one get a better compliment!

Thank you, Jim Regan, for such a terrific article.

### "Ask the Experts" Is a Hit

The newest benefit of Forum membership—Ask the Experts—has turned out to be a hit with our members. As one patron remarked, "Thanks to the genealogist I talked to, I was able to break through a brick wall I'd been banging on for a decade."

Here's how it works. A help desk staffed by several experienced genealogists is available at the general meetings from 10:45 to 11:15 a.m. Members have the opportunity to obtain some expert research advice during a one-on-one consultation.

A sign-up sheet is made available starting at 10 a.m. Sign up for a five-minute slot, and then be sure to show up at the help desk on time. Have your question ready—it should focus on one issue, not an entire family. Bring any documents that might clarify things for the genealogist.

Note there will be no private Ask the Experts session at our May 18 meeting. Instead, we'll hold a public Ask the Experts session and take queries from the floor.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

With this issue, we're pleased to introduce an "Irish Genealogy Primer," a column devoted to discussing some basic resources in Irish genealogy research. In our initial offering, Education Director Kathleen McGee takes a look at Griffith's Valuation.

In future issues, the Primer will focus on such topics as the Tithe Applotment Books, the Registry of Deeds, and Irish civil and church records. If there's a subject you would like to see addressed in the Primer—or if you would like to write a Primer article—kindly email [newsletter@ifhf.org](mailto:newsletter@ifhf.org).

As always, we welcome articles on your research experiences, the occupations and traditions of Irish ancestors, World War I ancestors, etc. And please send us your research tips, book reviews, photographs, family search queries, and event news.

Thanks to all who assisted with this issue, especially Joe Rhatigan, Margaret DeAcetis, Jim Regan, Kathleen McGee, and Ann Raymont.

—Patricia Phelan

# RESEARCH TIPS

## PLAINVIEW FHC HOLDS IRISH RECORDS

A search of [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)'s online catalog using the keyword "Irish" yields 25,470 results. About 500 of these are available on microfilm on extended loan at the Family History Center in Plainview, NY. Extended loan means the item is part of the permanent collection, so patrons do not have to order the film or wait for it to arrive. Films are available for viewing whenever the FHC is open; no appointment is needed.

The Irish collection at the Plainview FHC can be found in microfilm drawers 23–31. It includes civil birth, marriage, and death indexes; Tithe Applotments and Griffith's Valuation; censuses; parish registers; probate records; and more.

The Family History Center, located at 160 Washington Ave., is open as follows:

- Tuesday, Thursday: 10 a.m.–2 p.m., 7–9:30 p.m.
- Friday: 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
- Saturday (except third Sat.): 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

Volunteers at the FHC, many of whom are members of the Forum and experienced in Irish genealogy research, are available to assist you.

## LYNBROOK FHC OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The Family History Center at 10 Peninsula Blvd., Lynbrook, NY, is open Tuesday and Friday from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., and by appointment on Tuesday and Friday from 6:30 to 9 p.m. and on Sunday from 4 to 6 p.m. For an appointment, contact Cheryl Bourdet at [lynbrooknyfhc@gmail.com](mailto:lynbrooknyfhc@gmail.com) or 917-554-6296, or phone 516-599-8079 when the center is open.

## IRISH TIMES ARCHIVE

You can subscribe to the online archive of the *Irish Times* for €12 (about \$13) a month. The archive dates back to 1859. Go to [www.irishtimes.com/archive](http://www.irishtimes.com/archive).

## INDEX TO MARRIAGE NOTICES

An index to 2,712 marriage notices published in Lansingburgh, NY, newspapers from 1787 to 1895 is available at the Troy Irish Genealogy Society website. The marriages occurred throughout New York State, in other states, and in foreign countries. Most entries give the names of the bride and groom, residence, marriage date, and newspaper where the notice appeared, along with the date, page, and column number. Go to [www.troyirish.com](http://www.troyirish.com), click on Projects, and then choose Marriage Notices Appearing in Lansingburgh Newspapers.—*Kathleen McGee*

## UNCORK THE PAST

If you go to [www.corkpastandpresent.ie](http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie) and click on Trace Your Ancestors, you'll find a list of databases on the left. These include indexes to Cork wills, marriage license bonds, and birth/marriage/death notices.

## PHOTO DAY

Interviewing relatives is one of the best things you can do when beginning to research your family history. One way to do this is to organize a "Photo Day." A friend gathered all her old photos and asked her sisters to do the same. They then spent an afternoon identifying who was in the photos and when and where they were taken. "Photos trigger memories," my friend said, noting that the Photo Day resulted in her siblings not only helping identify the people in the photos but also sharing stories they had heard about them.

Knowing my mother had a collection of old photographs, I decided to have my own Photo Day with her. Some of her photos were in albums, but most were in shoeboxes or envelopes. Very few had any notations. As we went through the photos she identified who was in each of them, and when and where they were taken: "That's my grandmother Mary," "This one is your grandfather Eugene as a young man in the Merchant Marines," "Here's one of my cousin Raymond; he was a World War II hero," and so on. Looking at the photos triggered many memories, and she began telling me stories about the people in them, the names of their parents and siblings, who they married, and the like. In all, the Photo Day provided a trove of information about my ancestors.—*Jim Regan*

*If you have a research tip you'd like to share with our readers, please email [newsletter@ifhf.org](mailto:newsletter@ifhf.org).*

## National Conferences 2015

**JUNE 4–7:** *Genealogy Jamboree*, Burbank, CA. Sponsored by Southern California Genealogical Society. <http://genealogyjamboree.com>.

**JULY 28–31:** *Family History and Genealogy Conference*, Provo, UT. <https://ce.byu.edu/cw/cwgen>.

**SEPT. 21–25:** *15th Annual British Institute*, Salt Lake City, UT. Includes course in tracing Irish ancestors. Sponsored by International Society for British Genealogy and Family History. <http://isbgfh.org>.

# Irish Genealogy Primer: Griffith's Valuation

by Kathleen McGee



Although some 19<sup>th</sup>-century census fragments exist for a few counties in Ireland, most of the census records for that time period were pulped or lost in the Four Courts fire. As a result, the first available complete census is the one taken in 1901. However, Griffith's Valuation, a

land valuation taken in the mid-1800s for tax purposes, can be used as a substitute for the destroyed censuses.

## HISTORY

During the early 1800s, taxes paid by landlords and tenants were subject to the whims of the assessors. Tenants complained bitterly that the tax rates were inequitable, and they called for a fairer system of taxation to be managed by a centralized government authority.

In 1825 Sir Richard Griffith was appointed head of the Boundary Department of Ireland. He oversaw a commission to establish a uniform measure of acreage and to conduct a survey of all the civil boundaries in the country, including county and townland boundaries. As his men staked out the boundaries, they also created topographical maps and a survey of all of Ireland. Before the first valuation in 1825, some areas used the Irish statute measure and some the English statute measure, which use different values for an acre. After the valuation, everyone used the English measure, so if you find the size of your ancestor's holding changed, this is why.

There were three land valuations in all. The most famous of these, the one carried out between 1848 and 1864, is known as Griffith's Valuation.

Before the valuation of 1848 could begin, maps needed to be created to show townland boundaries. Thomas Colby was assigned to create topographical maps for use by the valuator for the 1848 valuation. Townland names were standardized and recorded in a Name Book to be used by the surveyors. Griffith tried to make the townland names as near to the original as possible by checking the name with various local jurisdictions. John O'Donovan, an Irish scholar, was employed as a consultant to help standardize Irish townland names. Some of the townland names have changed over time or have variant spellings. For example, the townland with the name Pottlebawn in 1824 Grand Jury Lists was changed to Pottlebane on the six-inch to the mile Ordnance Survey maps.<sup>1</sup>

## RESEARCHING GRIFFITH'S

To research Griffith's, you should at least know your ancestor's county of origin (hopefully you have found this in records created during your ancestor's lifetime). If your ancestor had an uncommon surname, it may be possible to determine the county using Griffith's. You must be cautious though. A surname I am researching—Noble—shows up in only a few counties, with Fermanagh having the predominant distribution, but my ancestor came from Kildare, which had one of the smallest distributions of the name.

You can access Griffith's Valuation at the free website [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie). You can search

*See Griffith's Valuation, p. 6*

VALUATION OF TENEMENTS.								173
PARISH OF DRUMLANE.								
No. and Letters of Reference to Map.	Names.		Description of Tenement.	Area.	Rateable Annual Valuation.		Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property.	
	Townlands and Occupiers.	Immediate Lessors.			Land.	Buildings.		
	<b>DERRYVONY—</b>							
	<i>continued.</i>							
17	Terence Reilly, .	John Browne, .	Land, . . . . .	1 1 5	1 0 0	—	1 0 0	
18			House, offices, and land, . . . . .	7 0 12	4 15 0	0 15 0	10 5 0	
19	Thomas Browne, .	Earl of Lanesborough	Land, . . . . .	1 1 3	1 5 0	—		
20			Land, . . . . .	4 0 25	3 10 0	—		
21	Earl of Lanesborough,	In fee, . . . . .	Bog, . . . . .	51 0 14	0 15 0	—	0 15 0	
-	a	Michael M'Avenue,	Free, . . . . .	0 1 20	0 4 0	0 6 0	0 10 0	
	a	Myles Reilly, .	House, offices, & land, . . . . .	8 10 0	1 4 0	10 0 0		
22							Earl of Lanesborough	House, offices, & land, . . . . .
	b	Hugh Reilly, .	House, offices, & land, . . . . .	6 12 0	0 18 0	7 10 0		
							c	Patrick Fitzpatrick,
23	Geoffry Morton, .	Same, . . . . .	House, offices, and land, . . . . .					

### *Griffith's Valuation, from p. 5*

using just a surname, but without a county you may get a large number of hits, sorted by county. When I did a search for the name Murphy, the website returned 25,625 entries. The surname Tackenburg, however, returned only one entry, in Kildare. Tackaberry, a variant of Tackenburg, returned thirteen entries, two in Kerry, one in Kildare, and ten in Wexford. Griffith's Valuation combined with other sources can help you focus your search on specific counties.

The valuation contains information, provided in several columns, about both tenants and the land they lived on.

- In the left-hand column, *No. and Letters of Reference to Map*, are numbers and letters that correspond to the Ordnance Survey Maps created by the surveyors. At six inches to the mile, these maps were quite detailed.

- Under the next column, *Names*, are two subheads: *Townlands and Occupiers* and *Immediate Lessors*. The occupier was the person who paid taxes to the landlord for the land he or she occupied. Sometimes a few people in a townland had the same name, and so you may find a word in italics—called an *agnomen*, or *identifier*—after the occupier's name. To distinguish between individuals with the same name, sometimes the father's name was listed, or identifying words were used, such as “black” to indicate the person with the black hair. Sometimes “senior” and “junior” were used. Be careful, as this usage doesn't denote any specific relationship, only that one person was older than the other. They *may* have been related but you should not draw any conclusions.

The immediate lessor was the person to whom the taxes were paid. He or she may have been the actual landlord or an intermediary who collected taxes for the landlord. If you see the words “in fee” in this column, it means the occupier owned the land.

- The next column, *Description of Tenement*, includes information such as house, garden, office, yard, land, etc. Be aware that some of these words have a different meaning today; for instance, an office was a shed.

- In the next column, *Area*, is information on the size of the holding in acres, roods, and perches, the system of measurement used at the time.

- *Rateable Annual Valuation* and *Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property*, the next columns, give the value of the land and buildings separately and combined. (In some versions of Griffith's, these categories are listed under the heading *Net Annual Value*.)

Based on the tax assessment you can draw some conclusions about your ancestor's social status. For instance, a large property with a low assessment may

indicate the land was of poor value for farming and consisted of bog or other undesirable conditions.

Just because your ancestor does not appear in Griffiths does not mean he or she did not live in the location; another person may have been paying the taxes. Sometimes you will see a few people listed on the same holding, which may indicate other family members occupying the land jointly.

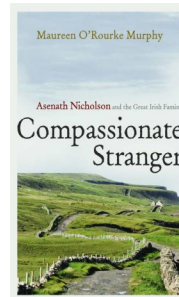
Much information can be gleaned from Griffith's Valuation. If you would like to learn more about the history of the valuation and the nuances of this record, I recommend James R. Reilly's *Richard Griffith and His Valuations of Ireland*, which is available in the Forum Library, as well as for purchase at genealogical.com.

#### *Note*

<sup>1</sup> James R. Reilly, *Richard Griffith and His Valuations of Ireland* (Clearfield: 2000).

## BOOK NEWS

Maureen O'Rourke Murphy is the author of *Compassionate Stranger: Asenath Nicholson and the Great Irish Famine* (Syracuse University Press, 2014). *Irish America* magazine notes that the book is “not only a notable academic achievement but is also a readable and tantalizing story.” Asenath Nicholson was involved in the abolitionist, temperance, and diet reforms of the 1800s before she left New York in 1844 to “investigate the condition of the Irish poor.” She walked alone through almost every county in Ireland and reported on conditions in the rural areas. *Ireland's Welcome to the Stranger*, her account of her travels, was published in 1847. After the Famine struck, Nicholson returned to Ireland to do what she could to assist the people—first in Dublin and then in the west of Ireland where the suffering was greatest.



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New additions to the Forum Library include *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland: The Kindness of Strangers* (Bloomsbury, 2013), in which author Christine Kinealy looks at the role of worldwide charities and personal donations during the Famine.

Also available in our Library is the NYG&B's *New York Family History Research Guide and Gazetteer* (2015), a comprehensive guide to local and regional resources as well as key topics in New York State family history.

# Lives of Our Irish Ancestors: Coming Home to Brooklyn

by Jim Regan



My grandfather Joseph O'Regan was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1891 to Limerick natives Mary (Grimes) and John O'Regan. Just a few days after giving birth to her fifth child in eight years, a son named James, my great-grandmother Mary O'Regan passed away from com-

plications associated with childbirth.

The sudden death of his wife on that tragic day, March 21, 1895, left my great-grandfather John in a most difficult position. Here he was with five children including a seriously ill newborn. As he was the only one in his family to emigrate from Ireland, he did not have any relatives close by to help him. His mother, Mary (O'Brien) O'Regan, and all of his nine siblings and their families were living in his hometown, Kilfinane, Co. Limerick. In addition, his late wife's parents, Edmond and Ellen (Dunworth) Grimes, and a number of her siblings also lived in that area.

After much soul-searching, John O'Regan realized he could not properly care for his children on his own and he would have to look for help from his family back in Ireland. He contacted his sister Bridget and her husband, John Cudmore, and they offered to have the children stay with them in their home on High St. in Kilfinane.

According to the *UK Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960*, Joseph O'Regan, 5, and two of his sisters—Mary, 8, and Catherine, 7—left for their aunt's home sometime in December 1895. Their brother James had died on July 22, and their 2-year-old sister Ellen stayed in New York with their father. Their 32-year-old widowed aunt, Annie Grimes, had traveled from Kilfinane to New York to accompany the three children on their journey to Ireland aboard the SS *Laurentian*. This steamship, owned by the Allan Line, was a passenger ship primarily used to transport emigrants traveling from England and Ireland to Canada. For this particular voyage, the ship departed from New York, traveling to Halifax and on to Queenstown (Cobh) before arriving in Liverpool on Christmas Eve.

Upon the O'Regans' arrival in Queenstown, arrangements had to be made for the final leg of their trip to Kilfinane. Why they chose this roundabout route is unknown, but one would suspect cost was a factor. Traveling between Canada and England was far less expensive than taking the more direct route

from New York to Ireland. The ship itself was also designed for low-cost emigrant travel. Out of the 1036 passengers the ship could accommodate, only 36 were in first class; the remaining thousand were all in steerage.<sup>1</sup>

While I am sure my grandfather and his sisters had wonderful adventures with their many cousins during the more than three years they lived in Kilfinane, Joseph and his sister Mary missed their father greatly and longed to return to their home in Brooklyn. Catherine, on the other hand, had become very attached to her aunt Bridget and wanted to remain in Ireland.

While the children were still in Ireland, their father, John, met Mary Riley, and on September 11, 1898, the couple married. Now that he was married and had his new wife to help care for his children, John was able to start getting his life back together, and so he made arrangements for Joseph and Mary to return home to Brooklyn. Based on Ellis Island passenger ship records, John booked passage for the two children on the RMS *Umbria*, sailing from Queenstown (Cobh) on March 19, 1899.

The day my grandfather Joseph left Kilfinane for the 50-mile or so journey to Queenstown must have been one of mixed emotions for him. On one hand, he was going home to Brooklyn to be reunited with his father. On the other hand, he knew this would probably be the last time he would see his sister Catherine, his grandparents, and the many aunts, uncles, and cousins he had met during the previous three years.

There is no record of how Joseph and his sister got to Queenstown, but it is assumed that relatives took them on the journey by a horse- or donkey-drawn cart, the standard method of travel at the time. A review of the *Umbria's* manifest does not reflect the names of any direct relatives accompanying the children on the voyage, nor was anyone from Kilfinane listed. There was, however, a young couple, James and Ellen Noonan, listed on the manifest. They were from Galbally, a town 9 miles from Kilfinane, and their final destination was also Brooklyn. John O'Regan's sister Margaret was married to a Noonan, so perhaps arrangements were made for the couple to watch over the O'Regan children during their seven-day, 2848-nautical mile journey home.

The *Umbria*, built in 1884 by John Elder & Co. in Glasgow, was one of the last ships built for the Cunard Lines to be fitted with auxiliary sails. The *Umbria* and its sister ship the RMS *Etruria* were the largest liners

*See Coming Home to Brooklyn, p. 8*

# May First: The Ancient Feast of Beltaine

by Jim Regan

The ancient feast of Beltaine, which on the Irish calendar marks the ushering in of the pastoral summer, was traditionally held on May 1. This was the time of the year when livestock were brought out to graze in the fields. Considering that most of our Irish ancestors were farmers, Beltaine (derived from the name of the Celtic god of light, *Bel*, and the old Irish word for fire, *tene*),<sup>1</sup> would have had special significance for them.

The woman and children prepared for the feast by gathering wildflowers. The flowers were then made into garlands and used to decorate doors and windows. Yellow flowers such as primrose and marsh marigold were favorites.

In the late 1800s, during the time of my great-grandparents, decorating a small thorn tree for Beltaine was popular. The tree, known as a May Bush, was decorated with brightly colored flowers, ribbons, and painted shells. The tree was kept outside the house so that all could enjoy it. In some areas, a community May Bush was set up in a central location, and each family brought something to place on it. Music was played, and the townsfolk sang and danced around the bush.

Bonfires were generally lit on the local hills on Beltaine Eve. Seen as a symbol of the sun, the fires were lit to ensure there would be a good supply of sunshine for the animals and crops, as well as for the people. The fire and smoke symbolically protected

livestock, crops, and dairy products from any harm from natural and supernatural forces. Everyone from the surrounding area would gather around the bonfires. Local musicians performed for the crowd, and there were dancing and singing throughout the night and early morning hours.

As part of the ritual, our ancestors paraded their livestock between two of the bonfires, and some of them and their livestock would leap over the flames. It was believed the smoke from the bonfires blowing over the herd would protect them. After the fires died out, the ashes were spread over the fields in the belief they would protect the crops growing there.

As with any celebration, food played an important part in the activities. A Beltaine cake, made with eggs, butter, milk, and oatmeal and cooked over the bonfire, was a traditional part of the feast. When done, the Beltaine cakes were divided up among those present. As a way of protecting the livestock, each person offered a piece of the cake to the spirits. As a peace offering of sorts, another portion of cake was offered to animals such as the fox and birds of prey like the eagle that might harm the livestock.

After enduring this past winter, I am sure many of you will be joining me in looking forward to a Beltaine feast of our own.

*Note*

<sup>1</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

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***Coming Home to Brooklyn, from p. 7***  
then in service.

The ship originally accommodated 550 first-class and 800 second-class passengers. By the time Joseph and Mary made the journey, however, the ship had been reconfigured to hold 500 first-class, 160 second-class, and 800 third-class, or steerage, passengers. According to the manifest records, when the ship arrived at Ellis Island on March 26, 1899, there were 624 passengers on board. So although the manifest does not show what “class” a passenger was assigned to, we do know that based on the passenger count it would appear that even if Joseph and his sister were in steerage they most likely did not experience overcrowded conditions.<sup>2</sup>

From all accounts the voyage appeared to have gone smoothly, save for one newsworthy event: William Scott, a corn merchant from Liverpool, committed suicide while on board. He apparently stabbed

himself in the neck with a broken champagne bottle.<sup>3</sup>

One could only imagine the feelings Joseph had as the *Umbria* approached New York Harbor and he saw the Statue of Liberty. Unlike many others who saw Lady Liberty as the start of a new life in America, my grandfather must have seen it as a sign he was finally home.

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup>[www.norwayheritage.com/p\\_ship.asp?sh=laure;](http://www.norwayheritage.com/p_ship.asp?sh=laure;)  
[www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?206290.](http://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?206290)

<sup>2</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS\\_Umbria.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Umbria)

<sup>3</sup>“Tragic Suicide on the Ocean,” *New York Herald*,  
March 27, 1899.

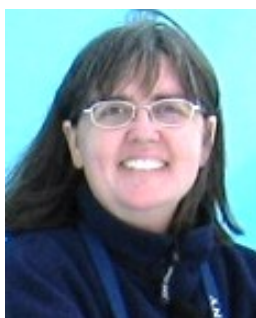
***Do You Know What a Genealogy Do-Over Is?***

For the answer, see Thomas MacEntee’s blog at [www.geneabloggers.com/announcing-genealogy-doover](http://www.geneabloggers.com/announcing-genealogy-doover).



# USING DNA TO RESEARCH YOUR IRISH ANCESTORS

by Ann Raymont



Back in the mid-1800s, we weren't even a twinkle in their eyes, but each of our sixteen great-great-grandparents passed down some DNA, which eventually came together to create you and me. And that DNA is something we can add to our toolboxes for researching our Irish ancestors.

Autosomal DNA testing, or atDNA, looks at DNA inherited from all your genetic ancestors for the last 200+ years. Although atDNA testing won't tell you what area of Ireland your forebears came from—at least not yet—what it can do is compare your DNA to samples submitted by hundreds of thousands of other people. The testing company will identify who in its database appears to be related to you, based on how much DNA you share. Then it's up to you to contact your new cousins, compare trees, and see if you can help each other knock down some of those infamous brick walls.

DNA testing can also add new evidence to a genealogy theory when a paper trail is good but not great. My most recent Irish ancestor, John Harrigan, came to the U.S. as a teenager in 1885. When he returned to Ireland for a visit in 1908, he stated in his passport application that he was born in Galway in 1868. Griffith's Valuation has dozens of Harrigans in other counties, but the only near match in 1855 Galway is a Cornelius Harigan, in the village of Callow (population: 28 households). Could this be John's family? I need more evidence.

One of my closest matches on FamilyTreeDNA indicated he had Irish roots, so I emailed him and suggested we might have a common ancestor. He wrote back that his grandfather was born in Callow. We're still working to confirm the exact relationship—it looks like my John Harrigan's mother, a Conneely, may have been his ancestor's sister. But at least I've narrowed down my search. There's not much in Irish genealogy that's more rewarding than finding the ancestral village.

That's one way to use genetic genealogy—by fishing! You cast your line and hope for a nibble. Another use is more targeted, and to do this, you need to find other people to test.

One of my brick walls is Michael Cahill. Born around 1824 in Ireland, he married in the U.S. in 1861. I have no idea what county he came from. What I do have is a third cousin, Linda, with whom I've

been exchanging family history. We know that Michael and his wife, Bridget, who was from Co. Clare, are our most recent common ancestors.

If Linda does a DNA test too, anyone who matches both Linda and me on the same chromosome segment must be related to us through Michael Cahill or his wife. If both of us match someone, for example, whose ancestors all came from Co. Kerry, then that's a good indication that our Michael Cahill may have come from Co. Kerry. There is still research to do, but DNA will have given us a new lead.

Where should you begin? In the U.S., the primary companies offering atDNA testing are 23andMe ([www.23andme.com](http://www.23andme.com)), FamilyTreeDNA ([www.familytreedna.com](http://www.familytreedna.com)), and AncestryDNA ([www.ancestrydna.com](http://www.ancestrydna.com)). All charge about the same—usually \$99 plus shipping, although coupons or sales are sometimes available. If you have a subscription to Ancestry, you might test with them and then transfer the raw data to FamilyTreeDNA for an extra \$39. If you're



**John Harrigan with his son, John Lawlor, and his wife, Mary Helena Flynn, in 1896**

hoping to discover a distant cousin still in Ireland, FamilyTreeDNA has the most testers outside the U.S. However, this year Ancestry has started offering DNA testing in the U.K. and Ireland.

It is important to realize that the more distant the relationship between two testers, the greater the odds are that they won't be identified as a match. Experts suggest that two third cousins will be flagged 90 percent of the time, but two fourth cousins only fifty percent of the time; it decreases from there. So it's always wise to test the earliest generation available.

For more information about DNA testing, I recommend the International Society for Genetic Genealogy website at [www.isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal\\_DNA](http://www.isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA).

# VACATION IN IRELAND—AND RESEARCH YOUR ROOTS

Why not combine a vacation in Ireland this summer with an opportunity to research your Irish roots? A sampling of some upcoming Irish events of interest to genealogists follows.

## JUNE 28—JULY 5

### **Ancestral Connections: Names, Places, Spaces**

The Irish Genealogy Summer School at University College Cork offers a complete course in Irish genealogy research. Genealogical experts will give a series of presentations and hands-on workshops, both for experienced and beginning researchers. In addition, a number of field trips will be offered. *Information:* See [www.ucc.ie/en/ace-genealogy](http://www.ucc.ie/en/ace-genealogy), email [l.moloney@ucc.ie](mailto:l.moloney@ucc.ie), or phone 011-353-85-8721184.

## JULY 22—26

### **A Gathering in Co. Laois**

Mountmellick Heritage Society in Co. Laois will hold a Gathering in Mountmellick and Rosenallis to celebrate the life of William Edmundson, Father of Quakerism in Ireland. Events include heritage walks, talks, tours, cemetery visits including Quaker burial grounds, exhibits, music, dance, workshops, and entertainment. The event is open to all, and anyone wanting to celebrate or research Irish and Quaker ancestry will find it of special interest. There will be access to Quaker Archives in Dublin. *Information:* Email [mountmellickheritage@gmail.com](mailto:mountmellickheritage@gmail.com).

## AUGUST 21—22

### **The Genealogy Event**

The Genealogy Event will present a genealogy- and DNA-focused conference for those interested in beginning or enhancing their genealogy knowledge. Topics will include cemetery records; birth, marriage, and death records; genealogy and technology; surname origins; Irish genealogy resources; land records; Y-DNA and surname projects; DNA and adoptees; Irish surnames; Munster DNA project; Irish clans; and land records. There will also be roundtable discussions. The venue will be Fitzgerald's Woodlands House Hotel, Adare, Co. Limerick. *Information:* See [www.thegenealogyevent.com](http://www.thegenealogyevent.com) or email [info@bbnygroup.com](mailto:info@bbnygroup.com).

## SEPTEMBER 6—12

### **Tracing Your Irish Ancestors**

Trace your Irish and Scots-Irish ancestors and learn about the history of Ireland and your ancestors' lives and migration experiences through lectures and assisted research with genealogists in the Belfast and Dublin archives. There will also be excursions to Londonderry and the northwest, the Boyne Valley, the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies, and other sites. Sponsored by the Ulster Historical Foundation. *Information:* Email [enquiry@uhf.org](mailto:enquiry@uhf.org), phone 011-44-28-9066-1988, or go to [www.ancestryireland.com/family-history-conference](http://www.ancestryireland.com/family-history-conference).

## *Welcome to Our New Members*

Ronnie Alber, Islip, NY  
Mary Frances Altaner, Medford, NY  
Beverly Aulman, Syosset, NY  
Catherine Becker, Sea Cliff, NY  
Glenna Lee Bernard, Potomac, MD  
Richard Colligan, Flushing, NY  
Clare Curtin, Lynbrook, NY  
John Devitt, Havertown, PA  
Gerard Dilliman, Hopewell Junction, NY  
Patricia Chris Fogarty, East Yaphank, NY  
Thomas Galligan, Long Beach, NY  
Dorothy Gououles, East Northport, NY  
Margot Fan Gramer, Port Washington, NY  
Mary Hutchinson, East Norwich, NY  
Daniel Imhoff, Bario, PA  
Jerry Jennings, Madison, AL

Teresa Karicik, Broadlands, VA  
Barbara Kelly, New York, NY  
Mary Pat Kirby, Oceanside, NY  
Brian and Susan Lambert, East Setauket, NY  
Mary Ann Leonard, Islip, NY  
Mike McKeown, Mineola, NY  
Amy and John Morse, Manhasset, NY  
Brendan Mullins, Dublin, Ireland  
Doris and James McQuade, Westbury, NY  
Susan Robinson, Orlando, FL  
Kathleen Schroeder, Spokane, WA  
Michael Whitton, Astoria, NY  
Howard Williams, Lynbrook, NY  
Christina Williams, Hicksville, NY  
Jane Wulff, Lynbrook, NY  
Ellen Zetter, Plainview, NY

# Would You Like to Join the Irish Family History Forum?

Membership benefits include monthly genealogy lectures and help sessions; a subscription to our award-winning Newsletter; access to Ask the Experts and to the Members Only area of our website, including the

Surname Database; Library privileges; and participation in special events, such as guided tours. Members also enjoy the camaraderie of—and share research experiences with—a group of dedicated genealogists.

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## IRISH FAMILY HISTORY FORUM

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CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE (9 DIGITS) \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

INDIVIDUAL: \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ FAMILY: \$30 \_\_\_\_\_ CORPORATE: \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ RESEARCH RESOURCES DONATION \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to Irish Family History Forum and mail to Treasurer, IFHF, Box 67, Plainview, NY 11803-0067 no later than December 31. Membership year is January 1 to December 31.

## LOCAL GENEALOGY AND IRISH EVENTS

### UNTIL MARCH 18, 2016

*Saving the Famine Irish: The Grey Nuns and the Great Hunger.* This exhibition tells the story of the Sisters of Charity (aka the Grey Nuns) in Montreal, who cared for ailing and dying Irish immigrants during the summer of 1847. Quinnipiac University, Arnold Bernhard Library, 275 Mount Carmel Ave., Hamden, CT. Monday–Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.

### SATURDAY, MAY 2, 11 A.M.–3 P.M.

*Irish May Day Festival.* The Molloy College Irish Studies Institute celebrates Beltaine (see p. 8). 1000 Hempstead Ave., Rockville Centre, NY.

### TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2:30 P.M.

*Introduction to Genealogy Resources,* Tanisha Mitchell. Freeport Memorial Library, 55 E. Merrick Rd., Freeport, NY. Registration: 516-379-3274.

### SATURDAY, MAY 23, 10–11.30 A.M.

*Genealogy Orienteering: Using Maps to Find the Right Place,* George Morgan. Brentwood Public Library, 34 Second Ave., Brentwood, NY. Contact: Mary Ann, 631-273-7883.

### SATURDAY, MAY 30, 10–11.30 A.M.

*Genealogical Records of the Civil War,* Laura Congleton. Patchogue-Medford Public Library. 54-60 East Main St., Patchogue, NY. Registration: 631-654-4700. [www.pmlib.org](http://www.pmlib.org).

### SATURDAY, JUNE 6

*Global Family Reunion.* Billed as “the biggest family reunion” ever. NY Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., Corona, NY. <http://globalfamilyreunion.com>.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 9:30 A.M.–NOON

*Getting the Most Out of Digital Newspaper Searches,* Philip Hayes. Westchester Co. Genealogical Society, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, 600 Broadway (Rte. US 9), Dobbs Ferry, NY.

### MONDAY, JULY 13–SATURDAY, JULY 18

*21<sup>st</sup> Annual Catskills Irish Arts Week.* East Durham, NY. <http://catskillsirishartsweek.com>.

### MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 7 P.M.

*Irish American Night,* Lakeside Theatre, Eisenhower Park, East Meadow, NY. Bring a chair or blanket.

### MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2 P.M.

*Lies the Mushroom Pickers Told.* Talk by Irish novelist Tom Phelan. Venue: Freeport Library; see May 12.

### NY STATE FAMILY HISTORY CONFERENCE

The 2015 NY State Family History Conference will run from September 17 to 19 at the Syracuse-Liverpool Holiday Inn in Liverpool, NY. For information, go to [www.nysfhc.org](http://www.nysfhc.org).

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## ***Upcoming IFHF Meetings and Events***

**SATURDAY, MAY 2**

10 a.m. Lower East Side Tenement Museum Tour

**SATURDAY, MAY 16**

10 a.m. Members Forum

11 a.m. Ask the Experts

**SATURDAY, JUNE 20**

10 a.m. Help session with Kathleen McGee

11 a.m. Jane Wilcox, *The New York Gateway*

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19**

10 a.m. Help session with Kathleen McGee

11 a.m. Claire E. Keenan, *Irish Research in Ireland*

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17**

10 a.m. Help session with Kathleen McGee

11 a.m. Melissa Johnson, *Digitizing Your Research*

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21**

10 a.m. Help session with Kathleen McGee

11 a.m. Judy Russell, *Don’t Forget the Ladies*

### **ABOUT OUR MEETINGS**

General meetings of the Irish Family History Forum are held on the third Saturday of each month, from September to November and January to June, in the Bethpage Public Library, 47 Powell Ave., Bethpage, NY. There is ample parking directly opposite the library. Light refreshments are served. Everyone is welcome.

### **Read the Newsletter Online**

Would you like to read a digital version of the Newsletter rather than receive a printed copy? If so, visit the Members Only area of the Forum website, and look for the Newsletter Discussion Board. Issues are available starting with May 2013. Please note: If you haven’t registered for the Members Only section yet, email [website@ifhf.org](mailto:website@ifhf.org).