



Newsletter of the  
**IRISH FAMILY HISTORY FORUM**  
*An Irish Genealogy Society Since 1991*

Vol. 31, No. 1

February–April 2021

## Annual Board Elections Held

The Forum's annual elections to fill open positions on the Board of Directors were held via Zoom on November 21.

The following Board members were reelected to serve an additional term:

*VP, Programs:* Patricia Mansfield Phelan

*Director:* Mary Ann Kane

*Director:* Peter Kane

In addition, Director John "Jack" Mullarkey was elected Treasurer, and Susan Rock was elected Corresponding Secretary.

Jack Mullarkey joined the Board as a Director in 2019. With his election as Treasurer, the Board now has an open Director position. Any member interest-

ed in taking this position should send an email to us at [volunteers@ifhf.org](mailto:volunteers@ifhf.org).

Susan Rock joined the Forum in 2019 and quickly became a contributor to the Newsletter, providing our members with interesting and informative articles. She is a retired university administrator and adjunct professor of English at LIU Post. Her Irish ancestors are primarily from Cork and Clare plus a bit of North Leitrim and East Sligo.

She is active in many hereditary and lineage groups including the Mayflower Society and the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She is a former president of the Long Island chapter of the Colonial Dames XVII Century.

### FEBRUARY 20

#### Ask a Genealogist

Starting at 11 a.m., Education Director Kathleen McGee and professional genealogists Marie Scalisi and Patricia Phelan will be available via Zoom to answer your research questions. Whether you need to know what research step to take next or where to find an Irish record online or how to break down a brick wall, the panel will try to help you. Please email your queries to [programs@ifhf.org](mailto:programs@ifhf.org) by February 15. Questions will also be accepted during the program.

### MARCH 20

#### Family Stories; Irish Death Customs

The Forum will mark St. Patrick's Day with a special two-lecture webinar live from Dublin. At 10 a.m., Eileen M. Ó Dúill, CG, will discuss making sense of family stories, the starting point for much genealogical research. Then at 11:30 a.m., Sean Ó Dúill will lecture on the death and burial customs in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland.

Eileen Ó Dúill is research director of HeirsIreland, a genealogy research business. With 24 years of experience in more than a thousand international estates, she is one of Ireland's leading genealogists.

Sean Ó Dúill has published many articles on Irish folklore. He has lectured to family historians in Ireland and the U.S. and was the keynote speaker at the National Genealogical Society annual conference in 2005.

### APRIL 17

#### Irish Ancestors in Scottish Records

This live webinar will take us to Glasgow, where Irene O'Brien will describe both local and national sources for tracing Irish ancestors in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland. The program will begin at 11 a.m.

O'Brien will cover ScotlandsPeople, which includes Scotland's vital records. She will also discuss the types of records, such as Poor Law records, that can be found in Scottish local archives, using Glasgow City Archives as an illustration. Finally, church records for various denominations will be discussed.

O'Brien, city archivist at the Glasgow City Archives, established the Scottish Council on Archives, the lead strategic body for archives and records in Scotland; she is now its honorary president. She frequently lectures on Scottish and Irish family history.

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
IRISH FAMILY HISTORY FORUM, INC.

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

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**Committees**

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The *Newsletter of the Irish Family History Forum* is published quarterly. Submissions are welcome. Send to the above address or email [newsletter@ifhf.org](mailto:newsletter@ifhf.org).

The views and opinions expressed in letters to the editor and bylined articles are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Irish Family History Forum.

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**Annual Membership**

U.S.: \$25 Individual, \$35 Family / Foreign: \$30 Individual

**Member of**

National Genealogical Society  
Genealogy Federation of Long Island  
Irish Family History Society

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## Change in Meeting Format

General meetings of the Forum are usually held on the third Saturday of the month, from September to June. However, due to the pandemic, our regular in-person meetings have been temporarily suspended and are instead being held via webinar. In advance of each meeting, members will be emailed a webinar notice with sign-in information.

We have also had to halt our in-person Ask the Experts sessions, but any member who needs assistance with a research question can email us at [programs@ifhf.org](mailto:programs@ifhf.org).

We look forward to being able to resume our in-person meetings sometime in 2021.

## CONTACT THE FORUM

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**Volunteers:** [volunteer@ifhf.org](mailto:volunteer@ifhf.org)

## Evelyn Ludwig, RIP

It is with a great sense of sadness that we learned of the passing of our beloved Treasurer and dear friend, Evelyn Ludwig, on November 3.

Besides serving as Forum Treasurer for the past six years, Evelyn is best remembered for her willingness to help out wherever she could, whether it was making the arrangements for our annual Christmas party, greeting people who stopped at our booth at the yearly Hofstra Irish Festival, or volunteering for other events in which the Forum participated.

At our monthly meetings, Evelyn was always one of the first to arrive at the library to help set up the Forum displays, assist the Hospitality group with



the refreshment table, greet participants, accept checks for membership renewals and special events, and help sign in members when needed.

In recognition of the contributions she made to the success of the Forum, the Board of Directors honored Evelyn with the Forum's 2019 Certificate of Appreciation and named her "Volunteer Extraordinaire," a designation she so justly deserved.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Evelyn's loving husband, Joseph; her children; and her grandchildren.

*Suaimhneas síoraí dá hanam uasal.*  
Eternal rest to her gentle soul.

## From the Board of Directors

### BYLAWS UPDATED

The Forum's bylaws, established at the time of our formation, have served us well over the years. However, they were written at a time when we were a small local organization and communicating with our members was limited to monthly in-person meetings, postcards, and the Newsletter. Almost three decades later, our membership now includes individuals throughout the country as well as in Ireland. We have expanded our communication options to include email, our website, and Facebook, and when necessary, our meetings can be held via Zoom.

With these advances, the Board of Directors asked the Bylaws Committee headed by Bill Kane and Marie Scalisi to begin a project to revise and update the bylaws. Their work was recently completed, and so the revised bylaws will be presented to the membership for its approval at our February 20 meeting, which will be conducted via Zoom.

Prior to the meeting, the recommended bylaws will be posted to the Member Resources section of our website, allowing our members to review them in detail. In addition, an email describing the voting process will be sent to all members.

### ZOOM COORDINATOR

When we first started having Zoom webinars in place of our regular in-person meetings at the Bethpage Library, we all thought it was a temporary fix. However, as we continued holding webinars, we began to see that Zoom enabled us to reach members not living in the local area. It has also allowed us to present speak-

ers from across the U.S. as well as in Ireland and Scotland. Therefore, when we are allowed to resume our general meetings, we have decided to present lectures in a dual format: in person at the library and via Zoom for those who cannot attend in person.

As a result, the Forum is establishing a Webinar Committee to oversee the monthly production of the Zoom meeting. We are looking for members who are familiar with—or who are willing to learn about—running Zoom meetings or webinars. They would serve as behind-the-scene panelists, setting up the meeting and, when needed, working with the speaker to establish the necessary connections. If you are interested in helping out or if you would like more information, please email [volunteer@ifhf.org](mailto:volunteer@ifhf.org).

### IT'S YOUR FORUM

As always, we encourage our members to contact us with their ideas for the Forum. Have you heard a speaker you might recommend? Do you have a suggestion for a field trip? Is there a topic you'd like presented at a general meeting? Do you have an idea for the Newsletter or website? Do you have a suggestion for how we might improve our services?

If so, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at [info@ifhf.org](mailto:info@ifhf.org).

### OUR MEMBERS

Congratulations to Forum member Alec Ferretti, who was recently elected to the Board of Directors of the Association of Professional Genealogists.

# TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL GENEALOGY SEARCH

by Kathleen McGee

*Editor's note: In response to our request for members to share research tips they have found helpful, our Education Director, Kathleen McGee, has compiled the following list of tips.*



**READ:** Read genealogy books, newsletters, LDS research guides, and a basic research guide or how-to book such as *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., by Val D. Greenwood; *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., by John Grenham; or one of the various Flyleaf Press books

relating to Finding Your Irish Ancestors.

**LEARN:** Attend genealogy seminars, webinars, conferences, workshops, and meetings of genealogy groups. Take online genealogy courses, such as those offered by the Family History Library. Each month the library posts a calendar of upcoming free online classes and webinars on FamilySearch.

**JOIN:** Join a group that specializes in researching the ethnic group or geographic area you are researching, and join other genealogy groups, such as the NYG&B and NGS. There are also many Facebook groups specializing in Irish genealogy.

**USE INDEXES AND ONLINE SOURCES:** Use Steve Morse's one-step webpages, as well as indexes and paid databases such as Ancestry. FindMyPast has indexes to Archdiocese of New York Catholic parish records, which often include place of birth. The German Genealogy Group has indexes to naturalizations and New York City births, marriages, and deaths. If a database requires a fee, remember that most hobbies require you to buy equipment or materials.

**BE OPEN TO VARIATIONS IN SPELLING:** Your ancestor's name may be spelled in different ways in different records, or indexers may have made a transcription error. Jim Reilly, one of the Forum's founders, once said he had found his family's name spelled fourteen different ways.

**BE AWARE OF ALTERNATE NAMES:** Know the nicknames and the Latin name for the people you are researching. For instance, in Ireland, Teasie and Tessie are nicknames for Teresa, and in Latin, William is *Gulielmus*.

**REVIEW YOUR FINDINGS:** Periodically go back over your research findings as you may have learned something new that connects to the work you did earlier.

**ASK FOR HELP:** Let others know who you are researching and where. They might be able to assist you. Tell other people about your research dilemma, and they may suggest a resource you haven't tried or a different way of approaching the problem.

**CONSULT THE EXPERTS:** Don't be afraid to ask for help. Librarians may not be genealogists but they know how to access research materials. Family History Center and National Archives volunteers also have a lot of knowledge and experience. Also be sure to utilize the services of the Forum's Ask the Experts program.

**NOTIFY FAMILY MEMBERS:** Tell everyone in your family you are doing genealogy research, and ask them for any records and information they may have. If you don't know who has the family bible, ask around; an in-law or distant cousin might have it. If your relatives know you are looking for a particular object—say, a picture—they may dig it out for you. So many times have I heard, "But I didn't know you were looking for that." Email your findings to your family in an informal newsletter to keep them interested.

**KEEP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** If you convince yourself a record can't be found, you might stop looking. If you think a brick wall can never come down, you might give up. But don't give up; instead, review the preceding tips. One of them might just be the key to your success.

*Do you have a research tip you'd like to share with us? Please email [newsletter@ifhf.org](mailto:newsletter@ifhf.org).*

## ***Beannachtai na Feile Padraig Oraibh!***

*St. Patrick's Day blessings upon you!*

May your St. Patrick's Day  
be touched by a bit of Irish luck,  
brightened by a song in your heart,  
and warmed by the smiles  
of the people you love.

# From Trash to Family Treasure

by Kerri Tannenbaum



I work part-time for a senior move management company. We help senior adults pack, downsize, and sell their personal belongings through private sales and online auctions. Sometimes we move their belongings to an assisted living community or nursing home, and other times, after a death, we empty the con-

tents of a house to prepare it for sale.

While working on a number of cleanouts, I couldn't help but look at the items in the houses through the lens of a genealogist. Beyond the everyday stuff, like furniture, housewares, and clothing, there were so many objects that would have been a sin to throw away.

My company ensures that many things are sold to those who can appreciate them or donated to charities that can match them to people in need. Even so, sentimental items that would have no value in a sale or auction were often poised for the dumpster. I thought there had to be a better way. When a homeowner's children or grandchildren did not appreciate the meaning or family history value of certain pieces, I often encouraged them to put the items aside, since they could not be replaced.

Following are some suggestions on how to ensure that your belongings with family history significance become family treasures and are passed down from generation to generation.

**Family heirlooms:** One client was ready to throw a carved wooden cane into a lot for sale. She told me the cane was related to her great-grandfather's arrival in the U.S. I convinced her to keep it, write up its story, and pass it along to her children and grandchildren. One idea I suggested was to document the story and attach it to the cane as a keepsake; another idea was to display it in a shadow box with a placard noting who owned it and when.

Do you own an item that tells a story about an ancestor? Think about ways you can share the story and associate it with an object that is significant to your family. It may be something that an ancestor owned, or you can decide that something of your own is a family heirloom. For example, I bronzed my daughters' baby shoes and plan for those to be passed down for many generations to come.

**Old photos:** Time and again, I find black-and-white photos stuffed in random drawers and boxes of my clients' homes. Their children usually don't know who the people in the photos are and so have no attachment to them. Often, no one is alive to identify who the people are. If you possess old photos, I encourage you to write on the back who is in each photo and the place and approximate year it may have been taken. Be sure to use a writing instrument that does not damage the photo, such as a no. 2 lead pencil, and to write at the bottom of the back of the

photo. If a pencil does not work on the photo, then use an acid-free scrapbooking pen with black ink and apply light pressure.<sup>1</sup>



**Yearbooks:** In my work I never fail to find school yearbooks that no one wants. So, I get permission from the homeowner or their children to donate the yearbook to an organization that recognizes its genealogical value. There are quite a few places that accept yearbooks.

For instance, the library or archive of the school that issued the yearbook may be interested in the copy to fill in missing years in its collection. In addition, the German Genealogy Group on Long Island accepts donations of yearbooks from all over the U.S. to add to its databases.<sup>2</sup>

Each family's history is unique. Be sure the treasures you have are preserved so your own family can appreciate them for many generations. Otherwise, see that they are donated to a genealogical organization that will preserve them. Maybe, just maybe, you will have helped your own descendant researching your family history in the future.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>“4 Easy Ways to Label Family Photos,” *Ancestry* ([www.ancestry.com/corporate/blog/4-easy-ways-to-label-family-photos/](http://www.ancestry.com/corporate/blog/4-easy-ways-to-label-family-photos/) : accessed November 30, 2020).

<sup>2</sup>“Yearbooks and Commemoratives,” *German Genealogy Group* ([www.germangenealogygroup.com/records-search/yearbooks.php](http://www.germangenealogygroup.com/records-search/yearbooks.php) : accessed November 30, 2020).

Preserve your memories,  
keep them well,  
what you forget you can never retell.

—*Louisa May Alcott*

# RECOMMENDED BOOKS

by Patricia Phelan

***Researching Presbyterian Ancestors in Ireland*** by William Roulston (Ulster Historical Foundation, 2020). Many Irish genealogy researchers are descended from Irish Presbyterians. Roulston, UHF research director, examines the different branches of Presbyterianism in Ireland and discusses the records produced by these denominations and how to access them. Among these are records of individual congregations, baptismal and marriage records, burial ground records, gravestone inscriptions, personal papers of ministers, and much more.

## ***Tracing Your Poor Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians***

by Stuart A. Raymond (Pen and Sword, 2020). Many of our immigrant ancestors were poor. In this handbook, author Raymond looks at the history of the poor and discusses the various ways they survived, including almshouses, workhouses, crime, and emigration. He describes the many records in which the poor can be found, such as those of poor law unions, charities, friendly societies, quarter sessions, and bankruptcy.

***A Guide to Tracing Your Family History Using the Census*** by Emma Jolly (Pen and Sword, 2020). Are you researching ancestors in U.K. census records? Then this is the book for you. Author Jolly describes in detail the U.K. censuses from 1841 to 1911 and analyzes later censuses too. While she focuses on censuses in England and Wales, she examines those in Ireland, Scotland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man as well. She also presents information about websites where researchers can access these censuses.

***Roots for Kids: Finding Your Family Stories*** by Susan Provost Beller (Genealogical Pub., 2020). Want to get the youngest generation interested in genealogy? Then why not start with *Roots for Kids*, which helps children learn about their family's history by collecting their family's stories? As they do so, children will discover their ancestors' nationalities, traditional foods, and where their surnames come from. They will also develop research skills, such as how to ask questions, build timelines, compile family group sheets, and organize information.

***The Star and the Shamrock*** by Jean Grainger (independently published, 2019). A little-known story from World War II is that of the Refugee Resettlement Farm in Millisle on the scenic Ards Peninsula in Co. Down. Here, in the late 1930s, came Jewish children who had escaped Nazi Germany on the Kindertransport.

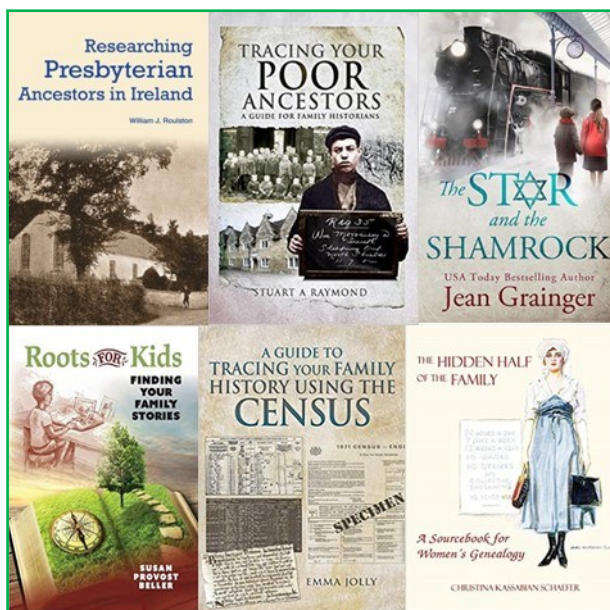
This scenario serves as the backdrop for Jean Grainger's novel about two children, Liesl and Eric Bannon, who leave Germany for England as part of the Kindertransport, eventually settling with their Irish guardian on the Ards Peninsula. In the meantime, in Berlin, their mother, determined to reunite with the children she had to send away, struggles to survive the Nazi regime. *The Star and the Shamrock* is the first volume in a four-book saga about the Bannon family.

***The Hidden Half of the Family: A Sourcebook for Women's Genealogy*** by Christina Kassabian Schaefer (Genealogical Pub., 1999). In the past, most women were not allowed to own property, make a will, vote, obtain military pensions of their own, enter into contracts, or retain or regain lost citizenship if they married an alien. Finding women in genealogical records, therefore, presents

researchers with unique challenges.

In this sourcebook, author Schaefer advises researchers to look closely at areas where their female ancestors interacted with the government and the legal system, which required the identification of all parties, be they male or female. She emphasizes both federal and state laws that indicate when a woman was allowed to hold real estate in her own name, devise a will, enter into a contract, and so on. Among the federal records discussed are immigration records, passports, naturalization records, censuses, land records, military records, and records dealing with minorities. Also covered are state laws regarding common law marriages and marriage and divorce registration.—*Recommended by Karen McLoughlin*

*Have you read a genealogy or Irish-themed book you would like to recommend to our readers? Please email [newsletter@ifhf.org](mailto:newsletter@ifhf.org).*



# Researching Burial Permits

by Alec Ferretti



Before a cemetery can inter a body, it must first receive a burial permit from the municipality that issued the death certificate. The cemetery then files the permit with the clerk in the municipality where the cemetery is located. This process may sound unexciting, but it provides genealogists with a secret bullet in their arsenal.

When an individual's death certificate cannot be located but the cemetery is known, it is sometimes possible to obtain the burial permit. The permit not only provides much of the information found on the death certificate, but it also specifies where the certificate was filed. There are several reasons why one might need this record:

- The individual died in New York State after 1956 or in New York City after 1965. For these years, we currently have poor access to death indexes. In the case of New York City, we have none whatsoever. As for the rest of the state, the indexes are published with a rolling 50-year delay; however, they do not specify the location where the individual died, which is the place the certificate was filed. The only way to locate the death certificate would be to write to the New York State Health Department and wait about two years for them to conduct a search.

- The individual died outside New York. If they moved away or simply died while traveling, locating their death record might be problematic.
- The individual died locally, but is not found in the index due to a clerical error at the time the index was created or to poor scanning when the indexes were digitized.

For example, Rose Mondello is buried in Pinelawn Cemetery in Farmingdale, New York. I wanted to obtain her death certificate, but I was unable to do so because I didn't know what municipality she died in. To solve this issue, I submitted a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request to the Town of Babylon (the jurisdiction responsible for the portion of Pinelawn in which she was buried) for the burial permit for Rose Mondello.

I eventually received the document, which indicated she died at Nassau County Medical Center (now known as Nassau University Medical Center) in the Town of Hempstead.

The burial permit contained much of the information that the death certificate would have. It provided her date and place of death, age, and cause of death and, of course, the name of the cemetery. This one even provided the specific plot location, which sometimes cemeteries are unable to find. Keep in mind that burial permits from different states and time periods may be more or less detailed. None in my experience has ever contained parents' names.

In another instance, I wanted to know where Frances Corbo was buried but I was not entitled to her death certificate. I assumed that she was buried in New York City but I did not know this for a fact. I was able to FOIL the burial permit from New York City, which informed me that Frances Corbo was buried in St. John's Cemetery in Middle Village, New York.

Although this may sound simple, there are actually a number

of hurdles to getting burial permits. Besides your knowing where the person is buried, the municipality must have retained the permit. Towns are required to keep these permits permanently, but not all municipalities follow the rules. Furthermore, New York City has its own system; it only keeps burial permits for five years. All older ones are allegedly purged.

The larger issue is that the legal status of burial permits is in dispute. According to New York State Public Health Law 4147, "The death certificate, burial permit or any other record of death or interment, as defined by article forty-one of this chapter, [...] shall not be sold or offered for sale for commercial, promotional or profit-making purposes." PHL 4174 also states that "no certified copy or certified transcript of a death record shall be subject to disclosure under article six of the public officers law." In my nonlawyer's opinion, this clearly means that burial permits, uncertified and used for research purposes, are subject to FOIL and are public records.

When I use this rationale to request permits, towns will often balk. The NYS Department of Health has

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH Bureau of Biostatistics - Vital Records Section				
Pinelawn Interment# 74,166				
<b>Burial - Transit Permit</b>				
Name	First Rose	Middle Martin	Last Mondello	Sex Female
Date of Death	December 8, 1988	Age 90	If Veteran of U.S. Armed Forces, War or Dates No	
Place of Death	City, Town or Village East Meadow		Hospital, Institution or Street Address Nassau County Medical Center	
Cause of Death	Cardiopulmonary arrest			
Medical Certifier	Name A. Rodrigues, MD	Title		
Address East Meadow, New York				
Death Certificate Filed	City, Town or Village Hempstead		District Number 2950	Register Number 234
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Burial	Date December 12, 1988	Cemetery or Crematory Pinelawn Memorial Cemetery		
<input type="checkbox"/> Cremation	Address Pinelawn, New York			

Burial permit for Rose Mondello

*See Burial Permits, p. 8*

# In Genealogy, You're Never Done

by Maureen Winski



I've been working on my family tree since my uncle Peter died in Ireland in 1980. Ever since then, I've been collecting names and dates and stories and documents. I took my first trip to Ireland in August 1981, and I have now been there too many times to count.

My mom, Bridget

Kieran, was born and raised in Carrickleck, Co. Meath, a couple of miles from Kingscourt, Co. Cavan. Her parents were Emily Lynch, who was born in Co. Meath, and Anthony Kieran, a native of Co. Monaghan.

In 1949, Mom came to New York, where her aunt, Bridget Mary "Sissy" Lynch, was living. While we always knew we had Lynch relatives in the U.S., we were not aware of any from the Kieran line. We had Lynch "aunts" who were really my mother's second cousins. I would go to wakes with my mom and meet other Lynch relatives. I tried to keep the relationships all in my head, but eventually I decided to put them on paper to see how we were all connected. In 2016, I even wrote a book about my Lynch family, *The Family of Luke Lynch and Anne McCormick*.

The next time I went to Ireland, my 80-year-old uncle, Paddy Kieran, asked me when I was going to write about the Kieran side. I got to work doing just that, and in 2017 I published *The Family of Laurence Kieran and Catherine Byrne*. Word got out in Ireland, and as a result, that summer I met even more second and third Kieran cousins.

A year later, a third cousin from California, who I did not know, contacted my second cousin, Colm Kieran, an undertaker in Kingscourt. Colm put her in touch with me, and that's when I discovered that a branch of the Kierans had gone to New York in 1851, eventually settling in St. Paul, Minnesota. My mom's great-great-aunt Bridget Kieran and her husband had emigrated to the U.S. about 100 years before my mother did. But I doubt that my mom, who is deceased, ever knew this. My uncle Paddy said that in the mid-1800s there wouldn't have been much communication once someone left Ireland and went to America. So contact between the American and Irish branches of the Kierans must have been lost.

My newfound California cousin, Jean, had grown up in Minnesota. She shared her research findings about the family who came to America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and I sent her a copy of my Kieran book, which dealt with the part of the family that mostly stayed in Ireland.

Coincidence is a funny thing. When I started doing genealogy, I joined the Forum, which was

originally a chapter of an Irish genealogy group in Minnesota. After a few years, the New York group broke off and formed its own organization. For a while, I kept my membership in the Minnesota group, but believing I had no relatives in that state I stopped my subscription after a few years. I have since rejoined that group.

In the 1970s, my sister stayed with a family on a farm in Minnesota for two weeks during her summer vacation. Imagine, she could have been close to our relatives! Many years ago, a friend and I were in Minnesota visiting the Mall of America. If I knew then that I had relatives in that state, I would have made it a genealogy trip.

So now my Kieran book needs revising. As we all know, in genealogy you're never done.

## Burial Permits, from p. 7

NEW YORK CITY		THE CITY OF NEW YORK - DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE						
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE		OFFICE OF VITAL RECORDS						
February 29, 2016 02:36 PM		PERMIT TO DISPOSE OF OR TRANSPORT HUMAN REMAINS						
EVENT: (CHECK ONLY ONE) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DEATH <input type="checkbox"/> SPONTANEOUS TERMINATION <input type="checkbox"/> INDUCED TERMINATION		CERTIFICATE NUMBER 156-16-008846						
NAME	First, Middle, Last	AGE	SEX	DATE OF EVENT	MONTH	DAY	YEAR (YYYY)	
	Frances Carbo	85	Female	02	26	2016		
PLACE OF EVENT	NEW YORK CITY	BOROUGH	NAME OF HOSPITAL OR INSTITUTION OR STREET ADDRESS					
	Brooklyn		2440 Ralph Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11234					
CERTIFIER	NAME OF PHYSICIAN OR MEDICAL EXAMINER'S NUMBER		METHOD OF DISPOSAL		CREMATION APPROVED BY:			
	Christopher Borck		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INTERMENT <input type="checkbox"/> CREMATION		MEAL Christopher Borck			
PLACE OF DISPOSITION	NAME OF CEMETERY OR CREMATORY (OR DESTINATION)		CITY OR COUNTY AND STATE		DATE OF DISPOSITION	MONTH	DAY	YEAR (YYYY)
	St. John Cemetery		Middle Village, New York		03	02	2016	

### Burial permit of Frances Carbo

instructed towns in its *Local Registrars Procedures* manual to treat permits as they do vital records: that is, to only allow direct descendants to have access to records less than 50 years old and to charge \$22 per copy, regardless of the age of the record. In my opinion, this is unlawful, and I am usually successful when I appeal denials. If you're looking to avoid fighting with town attorneys, it may be easier to simply pay the \$22 fee or, if the record is less than 50 years old, to ask a direct descendant to make the order. However, if these options are untenable, then appealing to the town is warranted.

For more information about the Freedom of Information Law and submitting a FOIL request, see [www.dos.ny.gov/coog/](http://www.dos.ny.gov/coog/).

### DID YOU KNOW?

There is a shrine to St. Valentine at the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Whitefriar St. in Dublin. Relics of the saint were given to the church in 1836 by Pope Gregory XVI. Every February 14, the shrine holds a blessing of rings for engaged couples. See [www.carmelites.ie/stvalentine.html](http://www.carmelites.ie/stvalentine.html).



# Lives of Our Irish Ancestors: Wedding Traditions

by Jim Regan



For our Irish ancestors, Shrovetide, the period between Little Christmas (Feast of the Epiphany) and Ash Wednesday (the beginning of Lent), was a traditional time to get married. Shrove Tuesday was the most popular day of all. This tradition goes back to at least 1563, when the Council of Trent codified the

long-held Catholic tradition that prohibited the celebration of marriages during Lent.

As such, Shrovetide was a very busy time for the *babhdoir*, or matchmaker. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, matchmaking was common in Ireland, and the marriages of our ancestors were often based not on love but on the size of the bride's dowry. Matchmakers were frequently used to facilitate the terms of a marriage between a groom's and bride's families. Once these terms were agreed upon but before the betrothal was announced, the bride's family invited the groom's family for dinner. Traditionally, goose was served at this meal. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier, while the goose was cooking, the bride's and groom's parents signed documents related to the upcoming union, such as land rights and the dowry. Once they had done this and the dinner was served, it was said that the groom's "goose was cooked." There would be no backing out of the marriage.

Unless our ancestors lived in or near a city, their opportunities to meet a potential partner were limited. Travel at the time was by foot or pony and cart or maybe horse. Especially for those in rural areas, travel was limited to the local area or perhaps to a fair or sporting event in a neighboring town. It was therefore common for an individual to marry someone who lived nearby.

Once Christianity was introduced into Ireland, the wedding ceremony was held at the local church of the bride or in the house of the local priest if the community did not have a church. However, during the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Penal Laws prohibited Irish Catholics from practicing their faith, marriages were often performed in the bride's home or in an open field, usually in a place of spiritual significance such as a holy well or a shrine.

## TRADITIONS

Following are some of the traditions associated with our Irish ancestors' marriages.

**Handfasting:** The phrase "tying the knot" comes from an old Celtic ceremony known as "handfasting," which dates back 2,000 years. Handfasting

was an engagement or commitment ritual that allowed a couple to live together for a year and a day to see if they were compatible; if they were not, they could separate. When Christianity took hold in Ireland, however, it was no longer acceptable for an unwed couple to live together. Still, the tradition remained and became part of the wedding ceremony. The couple held hands, with their wrists crossed. Then the priest or officiant wrapped a ribbon or cord around their wrists in a figure eight to represent infinity.

**Wedding dress:** Traditionally, Irish brides wore a blue dress. Like white, the color of choice in modern times, blue conveyed purity. It was also considered lucky for brides, as it was the color of fidelity and symbolized the bride's commitment to her husband. While the color of the dress may have changed over time, the idea that a bride should wear "something blue" remains today.

**Straw boys:** After the ceremony, guests returned to the bride's family home or other gathering place to celebrate the newly married couple and were treated to a night of food, music, singing, and dancing. It was common for the festivities to be visited by straw boys, or what we today would call "wedding crashers." Young men, dressed in hats, cloaks, and other disguises made of straw, joined in the celebration, with the leader claiming their right to dance with the bride and others as well. The straw boys were always welcome, as their presence added to the joy of the festivities, and it was believed they would bring good luck, wealth, and health to the newlyweds.

**Honeymoon:** After the wedding, the bride and groom were supplied with mead, a brew made of fermented honey. They were to share this unique brew from one full moon to the next. It was believed drinking mead would ensure a good beginning for the new marriage and would endow the couple with virility and fertility. It was also thought mead would protect the bride from being spirited away by the fairies. In Irish this period was called *mi na meala*, the month of honey; hence the origin of the term "honeymoon."

## SUPERSTITIONS

As with most days of importance to our ancestors, a wedding was associated with several superstitions:

- If the sun shone on the bride, the union would be blessed and the couple would have good luck.
- If the bride heard a cuckoo and saw three magpies, the marriage would be a happy one.
- The bride carried a horseshoe down the aisle, open side up, so the luck would never run out of the

*See Wedding Traditions, p. 10*

# Understanding Deaths in the Context of the Times

by Richard W. Klein



After attending the Forum webinar on November 21, I decided to heed speaker Rhoda Miller's advice on reducing clutter. It was time to tackle the papers I had accumulated in my search for my ancestors.

While I was looking through what I had collected on my quest to find my great-grandfather James Leddy, I

came across a death certificate for another James Leddy, a bricklayer who died in New York on February 16, 1890. He was not the James Leddy I was looking for, but I was intrigued by the cause of death recorded on his death certificate: "malaria – contracted while working at his trade in subway construction."

I didn't realize malaria was a problem in New York City in the late 19th century. Malaria is transmitted by mosquitoes, but this would not be known for several years after James's death. How did the doctor know James had contracted malaria while working on the subway construction and not somewhere else? The duration of James's illness was recorded as a month and a half. James most likely was bitten by an infected mosquito in late December,

which seems unlikely.

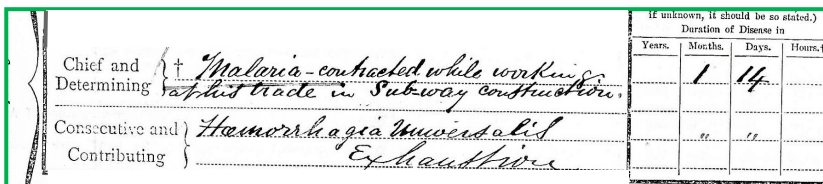
A quick search online and on Wikipedia turned up articles on malaria and miasma theory. In the 1890s, germ theory was not yet fully accepted; many people still believed in the miasma theory, which held that diseases were transmitted by exposure to bad air generated by rotting organic matter. Daniel McSweeney, the doctor who signed the death certificate, must have believed in the miasma theory and surmised the construction work had disturbed the ground, allowing the decaying material to release the bad air that killed this

James Leddy.

I also took another look at the death certificate for my great-grandfather, who died in 1882. But the

cause of his death was not legible. However, in parentheses, after the cause of death, the doctor had written the word "malarial," followed by a question mark.

Whether you are writing a family history or trying to understand the times your ancestor lived in, you should not only learn about the social climate of that time but also about the technical and scientific advances being made then. Knowledge of medical theories contemporary with your ancestor's life, combined with today's facts, can help you better evaluate the recorded causes of your ancestor's death.



## Wedding Traditions, from p. 9

marriage. For more good fortune, she placed a sixpence in her right shoe.

- After the ceremony, the first person to congratulate the bride had to be a man. It was considered unlucky if a woman did this.
- Church bells were rung after a wedding to keep away evil spirits and chase away any discord in the marriage. If the wedding did not take place in a church, wedding guests were given bells to ring after the ceremony.
- Leaving the wedding, the bride traveled a different way than she had traveled to the ceremony. This was to symbolize a fresh start to her new life.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that, for our ancestors suffering through the Great Hunger and other depressed economic times, some of these traditions were beyond their financial capability. Hosting a goose dinner or a gathering after a wedding or even wearing a special blue dress was something they could not afford. They simply made due with what they had.



## An Irish Easter Blessing

May God bless you at Easter,  
and keep you all year through.  
May God give you all the faith  
it takes to make your dreams come true.  
May His love and wisdom always help  
to guide you on your way.  
May His light shine down upon you  
now to bless your Easter Day.

*Beannachtai na Casca oraibh!*

May the blessings of Easter be upon you!

# Have You Renewed Your Membership for 2021?

Membership dues for 2021 were due December 31. Benefits of membership include monthly genealogy lectures and Genealogy Tips sessions; a subscription to our award-winning quarterly newsletter; Ask the Experts sessions; access to our Irish genealogy library at the Bethpage Public Library; access to the Member Resources area of our website, including the Surname Database; borrowing privileges at our

John Rowane Memorial Library, housed in the Family History Center in Plainview, NY; and participation in special events, such as guided tours and museum visits.

Members also enjoy the camaraderie of—and can share their research experiences with—a group of dedicated genealogists.

## IRISH FAMILY HISTORY FORUM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ NEW MEMBER OR RENEWAL \_\_\_\_\_

STREET: \_\_\_\_\_

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

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ NEWSLETTER: PAPER \_\_\_ DIGITAL \_\_\_

INDIVIDUAL: \$25 (FOREIGN, \$30) \_\_\_\_\_ FAMILY: \$35 \_\_\_\_\_ DONATION TO THE FORUM \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to Irish Family History Forum and mail to Treasurer, IFHF, PO Box 67, Plainview, NY 11803, or join online using our website at ifhf.org.

## Notes from Our Members

Thank you for doing such a great job in having the meetings remotely. You do a lot of work and I love the Newsletter.—*Barbara McClorey*

I miss the excitement of the gatherings ...Thanks for the webinars!—*Ann Marie Lynch*

The recent webinars have been perfect for me as I can't really get to the monthly in-person meetings. I hope you can continue them post pandemic. Keep up the good work!—*Joanne Dillon*

## Welcome to Our New Members!

Paul Cullen, Lancaster, PA  
Valerie Lutz, Hatboro, PA  
Clare Moshensky, New Hyde Park, NY  
Regina Negrycz, Lakewood Ranch, FL  
William Orme, Brooklyn, NY  
Moira Rivas, Brookline, NH

## Thank You!

*Thanks to the following members for their generous donations to the Forum during 2020.*

Clare Barbadillo	Mary Lawlor
Kevin Delahanty	Ann Marie Lynch
Joanne Dillon	Timothy Lyons
Patricia Dillon	Maureen Murphy
Thomas Galligan	Paul McFarland
Philip Griffith	Karen and Frank McLoughlin
Patricia Hartkopf	Mary O'Hara
William J. Henderson	Kenneth O'Rourke
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Christine Izzo	Margaret Rorke-Carey
Agnes Kalemaris	Dolores Royere
Bill and Kathleen Kane	James Stehn
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## NATIONAL GENEALOGY EVENTS

### **FEBRUARY 25–27**

*RootsTech Connect: Celebrate Your Family Story.* This year the RootsTech conference will be entirely virtual and completely free. It will feature celebrity speakers, dozens of classes from speakers around the world, and various hands-on activities. Registration required. See [www.rootstech.org](http://www.rootstech.org).

### **APRIL 1–MAY 31**

*NERGC 2021: Springing From the Past into the Future.* The 2021 New England Regional Genealogical Consortium will host a virtual conference this year. The program includes three “Gathering Days,” with selected presentations and live chats with featured speakers. In addition, a set of 60 additional presentations will be available for viewing any time from April 1 to May 31. Throughout the conference a virtual exhibit hall will be open, and it will be possible to schedule individual appointments and video chats with many of the vendors at their “booths.” Registration required. For additional details, see [www.nergc.org](http://www.nergc.org).

### **MAY 19–22**

*NGS Family History Conference: Deep Roots of a Nation,* Richmond, VA. The conference will feature

more than 175 lectures by renowned speakers and an exhibit hall with a host of exhibitors. In conjunction with the recent merger of the National Genealogical Society and the Federation of Genealogical Societies, a special program, “Focus on Societies,” will be held on May 18. See [www.conference.ngsgenealogy.org](http://www.conference.ngsgenealogy.org).

### **JULY 25–30**

*IGHR 2021.* Institute of Genealogy and Historical Research, Athens, GA. A week of intensive study led by prominent genealogical experts. Various courses to choose from that last throughout the week. See [www.ighr.gagensociety.org](http://www.ighr.gagensociety.org).

In conjunction with this program a FamilySearch Family History and Genealogy Expo will be held at the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education and Hotel on July 24, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**DON'T LET THIS BE  
YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER...**

**RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!**