



Newsletter of the IRISH FAMILY HISTORY FORUM

An Irish Genealogy Society Since 1991

Vol. 31, No. 3

August–October 2021

NGS Honors the Newsletter Committee

“One of the reasons I am a member.”

“Bravo and thank you!”

“Congrats! Well deserved!”

“The Newsletter is excellent.”

“Thank you for your dedication.”

These are just a few of the comments we received when it was announced the Forum Newsletter had placed first in the 2021 National Genealogical Society newsletter competition, small society category (less than 500 members). The announcement was made on May 19 at the 2021 NGS family history conference. It is the ninth time in nine years that we’ve won or placed second in this contest.

The award recognizes the hard work, long hours, and creativity that volunteer editors devote to their newsletters.

Upon hearing the NGS announcement, Jim Regan commented, “As Editor, I am grateful the NGS honored the entire Newsletter staff for their dedicated work. Our Assistant Editor Patricia Phelan, Layout Editor Joe Rhatigan, Proofreaders Joanne Dillon and Kerri Tannenbaum, and Events Editor Maureen



Courtesy of the National Genealogical Society

Winski. I am also very grateful to all the Forum members who have submitted articles, research tips, and book reviews, for without such materials we would not have a Newsletter.

As one member wrote, “The Forum’s consistent track record of awards is an illustration of the hard work and dedication that goes into producing the Newsletter.”

Congratulations to everyone...again!

SEPTEMBER 18

John Grenham’s Irish Ancestors Site



In this webinar from Dublin, John Grenham will discuss his Irish Ancestors website (www.johngrenham.com), an excellent jumping-off point for Irish genealogy research. He will guide us through its nooks and crannies and provide a repertoire of tips and tricks to get the best out of the site.

A 33-percent discount off an annual subscription to Irish Ancestors will be available to all attendees.

Grenham is the author of *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors*, the standard reference guide for Irish genealogy, and *Clans and Families of Ireland*, among other works.

This meeting begins at 11 a.m.

OCTOBER 16

Using Vital Records



Melissa Johnson, CG, returns to the Forum with a lecture about how to use birth, marriage, death, and divorce records to build your family tree.

Discover records that can substitute for vital records that are unavailable, as well as records that can be located based on information found in vital

records. While geared toward beginners, this talk will also appeal to more experienced researchers.

Johnson’s specialties include but are not limited to DNA testing for adoptees and unknown parentage, dual citizenship, and lineage society research. *The general meeting takes place at the Bethpage Library starting at 10 a.m., with lecture at 11 a.m.*

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

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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 look forward to being able to resume our in-person meetings at the Bethpage Public Library, 47 Powell Ave., Bethpage, New York, on October 16, 2021, at 10 a.m. A webinar will be available for those who are unable to attend in person.

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Want to Join the Board?

The Forum's annual elections to fill open positions on the Board of Directors will be held at the general meeting on November 20. The following positions will be voted upon:

- President
- Executive VP
- VP, Membership
- VP, Newsletter
- Recording Secretary
- Directors - three

Over the next several months the Nominating Committee will be working to assemble a slate of qualified candidates for these positions. As with any all-volunteer organization, the Forum depends on its members to volunteer their talents, skills, and experience.

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a Board member and/or the specific responsibilities of any of these positions, please send an email to volunteer@ifhf.org.

Celebrating 30 Years!

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Irish Family History Forum. Please join us at the Irish Coffee Pub in East Islip, New York, on December 11 at noon to celebrate this special occasion at our annual Christmas luncheon.

At the party, we will honor our Charter Members, loyal members of the Forum since our very first meeting on September 14, 1991. These include:

- John Mulvehill
- Barbara Murphy
- Suzanne McVetty
- Laura Murphy DeGrazia

We will also pay tribute to the memory of our founders—James Reilly, John Rowane, Helen Murphy, Harriet Strembel, and Sr. Mary Caritas Bonifer—whose many contributions to the Forum will forever be with us.

Further details and a reservation form will be provided in the November-January Newsletter and will be sent via email to all of our members.

Our Members Share Their Family Stories

After the presentation about family stories that Eileen M. Ó Dúill gave at our March webinar, several members shared with us some of their own family stories. Here are two of them.

From Mary Beth Waters

I thoroughly enjoyed the webinar with the Ó Dúills. Eileen mentioned the use of newspapers in obtaining facts. This really hit home with me while researching my mother-in-law's tales.

There were many stories told by my mother-in-law, two of which I found to be somewhat true. First was the untold story of the tragic death of her maternal grandfather. She never knew how he died, just that no one would talk about it. In my search I found he was killed in a car accident in Brooklyn. The incident made the headlines in the *Daily Sun* on January 9, 1931, along with a photo and full details of the accident. The death was tragic and maybe too much for a 5-year-old to handle.

The second story revolved around her father's employment. During the Depression, she was told her father was working in a government program. Well, it was not the kind of government program that would first enter your mind. In the 1930 census, I found him residing in New York State in Sing Sing Prison. This information was confirmed by two

separate newspaper articles. By today's standards, his infraction would have been minor. Someone was very clever in telling his daughter about his absence.

My mother-in-law passed away before I started my research. In my case, sometimes family stories are better left "stories."

From John Fogarty

My father's aunt, Alice Cornelia Fogarty, was the storyteller in the family. It was her life's work to pass on to her grand-nieces and grand-nephews old family tales dating from the turn of the last century. One favorite concerned the night before the death of her father, Cornelius "Con" Fogarty (my great-grandfather) on April 4, 1918, in Watervliet, New York.¹

My Dad had one sister in Ireland...Mary Fogarty. And as the years progressed, they always kept up the friendship. But wasn't it funny? Dad never went back to Ireland...And this particular night when he was dying, he kept calling, "Mary, Mary," and my mother [Elizabeth Mullin Fogarty] and family thought he meant my sister May [Mary Josephine]. When May arrived, Alice went on to say that her father commented, "May, I'm so glad to see you...Put the chair right here at the head of my

See Family Stories p. 4

RESEARCH TIPS

by Patricia Phelan

FLAX GROWERS LIST

In Ireland in the 1700s and 1800s, flax was used in the production of oil and linen, and so thousands of farmers supported themselves by growing it. In 1796 the Irish Linen Board compiled a list of nearly 60,000 men and women who received awards of spinning wheels or looms for planting one to five acres of flax. At the free site Fáilte Romhat, you can search the Flax Growers List, which yields not only name, parish/barony, and county, but occasionally a family relationship, marital status, or occupation. Some examples follow:

- Honor Collins, Kinard, Kerry
 - Widow Mary Brady, Laragh, Cavan
 - Rev. Daniel Reilly, Munterconnaught, Cavan
 - Niece Murphy, Killeeshill, Tyrone
 - Isaiah Smith Jr., Bovevagh, Derry
- See failteromhat.com/post1796.php.

DON'T SETTLE FOR SECONDHAND

A church marriage record included this handwritten notation about the groom: "Baptized April 1, 1876, in St. Matthew's Church, Hastings, NY." However, St. Matthew's held no such record, and I eventually discovered the baptism took place in a different church in a different town on a different date. Don't take secondhand information, including transcriptions, as gospel truth; instead, look at the original record whenever possible.

PATIENT CASE FILES

The New York State Archives holds patient case files for a number of psychiatric institutions, including Kings County Asylum, King's Park State Hospital (Pilgrim Psychiatric), Willard State Hospital, Middletown State Homeopathic Hospital, and Utica State Hospital. Although these records are permanently restricted due to their sensitive nature, access is permitted under certain conditions upon application to, and approval by, the State Archives. See www.archives.nysed.gov/directories/index.shtml.

NEW YORK LAND RECORDS

Land and property records from the New York Land Office and county courthouses, 1630-1975, can be searched at FamilySearch. The records include land grants, patents, deeds, and mortgages. The collection includes all New York State counties except Franklin, Nassau, and Queens. See www.familysearch.org/searchcollection/2078654.

LOOKING FOR A BUSINESS?

The New York Public Library offers a helpful guide to researching a business by using city directories, business directories, newspapers, trade journals, government and business records, and more. See "How to Research a Family Business" at www.libguides.nypl.org/familybusinessresearch.

Family Stories, from p. 3

bed and I'm waiting for Aunt Mary from Ireland. She's coming over to see me... She is going to be awful tired, 'cause she comes over passing all the waves, and the waves of white, the white waves between here and Ireland, and she has hair just like the waves...she has wavy hair, just like the waves. She's got curly hair, and we have the chair here ready for her when she comes. And Mom be sure and have a cup of hot tea because she's going to be very tired."

Several weeks later the family received a letter from Mary Fogarty's sister-in-law Johanna Corbett Fogarty. As Alice told the story:

The first line was, "My dear Con—we write to tell you of the death of your sister Mary, which occurred on the night of April 4, 1918...and that on the night of her death, Mary said she expected [you] to be coming to her."

Alice ended the story, saying, "And that was the date Cornelius Fogarty died in Watervliet, awaiting

her to come over the ocean. Wasn't that a coincidence?"

Certainly, this is a lovely story, told many times by my aunt Alice. But after visiting Mary's grave in Ireland, we noted that the inscription recorded her death in 1919, not 1918 as we'd been told. So, we wondered if the story had been embellished over time with poetic license. We soon discovered the tombstone was wrong. The Thurles Civil District records the death of Mary Fogarty in Garrynamona, Co. Tipperary, on April 3, 1918.² Mary and her brother died within hours of each other. It is conceivable that Mary had just died when Con began calling for her on the evening of April 3, the night before he died.

Notes

¹ Mark Fogarty, unpublished, transcript of taped conversation between Catharine M. Fogarty and Alice Cornelia Fogarty, undated, circa 1970s.

² Civil Death Records, Tipperary, Thurles, Holy Cross District, 1918.

Charlotte Grace O'Brien: Irish Emigrant Advocate

by Maureen O'Rourke Murphy



Charlotte Grace O'Brien was born in Cahirmoyle, Co. Limerick, on November 23, 1845, the first year of the Great Irish Famine. The sixth child and second daughter of William Smith O'Brien and Lucy Gabbett O'Brien, she suffered from hearing loss beginning in early childhood. When Charlotte

was almost three, her father took part in the unsuccessful 1848 Rebellion, for which he was transported to Van Diemen's Land, or Tasmania. He was fully pardoned eight years later.

In 1850, William O'Brien wrote to his oldest daughter, Lucy, who was to be the mother of the writer and nationalist MP Stephen Gwynn: "In the present state of affairs, every one of my children have a right to learn to make themselves as useful and independent as possible." Charlotte was to fulfill his wishes.

She took care of O'Brien in his last illness, accompanying his body from Wales, where he died in 1864, home to Ireland. Then she moved back to the family home in Cahirmoyle to help raise her brother Edward's three children after the death of their mother. She lived with the family until the children went abroad to school and Edward remarried. Then Charlotte built a smaller house she called Ardanoir near Foynes on the Shannon River.

She began her public career as a woman of letters. Her novel *Light and Shade* (1878), a story of Ireland during Fenian times, was serialized in the *Irish Nation* and the *Boston Pilot*. She also published a volume of lyric poetry, which included sonnets about her parents and their courage while William Smith O'Brien was in exile. She wrote a sonnet called "The Assisted Emigrants" in her book *Lyrics* (1880) that included the lines, "Farewell, farewell! Dumb, exiled, and oppressed / Will ye look back to this one hour of rest."

After 1880, Charlotte began to demonstrate her nationalist sympathies, particularly about land reform and emigration. While she supported the Land League, which aimed to do away with landlordism and to help tenant farmers gain ownership of the land they lived on, she did not think it did enough for the agricultural laborer.

Her essay "Eighty Years" (1881) spoke to her deep sympathy for the anguish of emigrants and for their loss to Ireland. "[H]ow bitter and how terrible

was this going forth into a strange land among a people that knew them not!" she wrote.

Charlotte worked to improve conditions for Irish emigrants, especially women. Concerned that Irish landlords in Queenstown (now Cobh) were taking advantage of emigrants who had to spend a night or two in town before boarding their ships, in 1882 she founded the O'Brien Emigrant Boarding House in Queenstown. It was a brave enterprise for a single woman of modest means, who by now was completely deaf. But local merchants and proprietors of other boardinghouses boycotted her, and ultimately, she had to close her boardinghouse.

While in Queenstown, Charlotte visited the steerage quarters aboard the White Star liner RMS *Germanic* and found that single women had to share the same accommodations as husbands, wives, and children. She contacted the Board of Trade to ask

that the quarters be reconfigured so single women had some privacy. The changed configuration put single men in forward compartments, married couples and children midship, and single women aft. (This configuration would be an important factor in steerage survival rates aboard the RMS *Titanic*.)

Charlotte Grace O'Brien's most significant contribution to emigrant welfare was her proposal to create the Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary for the Protection of Irish Immigrant Girls. When the White Star Line offered her passage to New York on the RMS *Baltic* in April 1882, she planned to present her proposal to the New York archbishop.

When she approached him with the idea, he recommended she discuss it with Bishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota. In doing so, she found someone who shared her concern for emigrant welfare.

Bishop Ireland was an advocate for Irish immigrants and founder of the Irish Catholic Colonization Society. When the society met in Chicago in May 1883, it agreed to establish an information bureau for emigrants at New York City's Castle Garden immigration station and to provide funding for five years. Rev. John Riordan was appointed chaplain at Castle Garden, and he established the Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary on October 1, 1883. This facility would provide advice, accommodation, assistance with contacting family and friends, and help finding



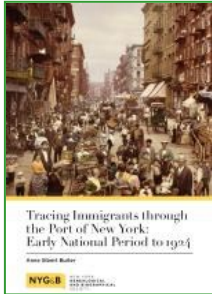
Charlotte Grace O'Brien

See O'Brien, p. 8

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

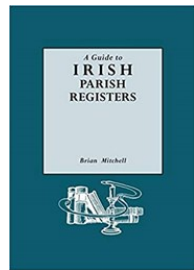
by Patricia Phelan

Tracing Immigrants through the Port of New York: Early National Period to 1924 (NYG&B, 2020) by Anne Sibert Buiter. From the late 1700s to 1924, New York City served as the gateway for millions of people



who immigrated to the U.S. Buiter's book outlines both the records and research strategies to employ in tracing immigrant ancestors who came through the Port of New York. These include passenger lists, customs records, naturalization records, and more. Tools and strategies to use when tracing various groups, including the Irish, are presented.

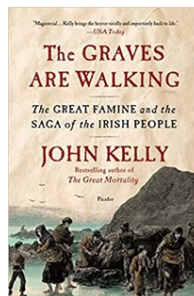
Guide to Irish Parish Registers (Genealogical Publishing, 2009) by Brian Mitchell. Are you trying to



determine which church records are available for a particular place in Ireland? In this book, you will find a listing of all of the existing Irish parish registers, the dates they begin, and where they can be found. Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, and Dissenter church records are included.

The Dublin Metropolitan Police Alphabetical Listing: A Complete Alphabetical List of Officers and Men, 1836–1925 (Four Courts Press, 2001) by Jim Herlihy. Looking for information about an Irish ancestor who worked for the Dublin Metropolitan Police? Trying to determine if an ancestor was a police officer in Dublin? This book may provide the assistance you need. It includes an entry for each of the more than 12,000 individuals who served in the DMP from 1836 to 1925. The name, DMP number, year of birth, and the civil parish where each person was born are provided.

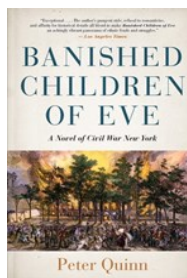
The Graves Are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People (Picador, 2013) by John Kelly. In the introduction to this comprehensive book



about the Irish Famine, Kelly writes, "By early 1847, 'sights that...poison life til life is done,' had become commonplace in Ireland. In the countryside, packs of feral dogs dug up the graves of the Famine dead. In the cities, shoeless pauper women, with dead infants in their arms, stood on street corners, begging...In the pestilential hospitals and workhouses, the

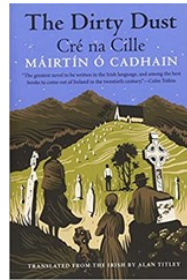
weekly death rate rose into the thousands; in the crowded port towns emigrants fought each other for space on the teeming docks." Kelly presents a detailed history of the Famine and examines the factors that contributed to it, including British politics, greed, illness, and intolerance.

Banished Children of Eve: A Novel of Civil War New York (1994; reissued by Fordham U. Press, 2021) by Peter Quinn. During the U.S. Civil War, Congress passed legislation allowing the government to draft men to fight. In Lower Manhattan, this unpopular law led to days of riots by the mostly white, working class who feared that free blacks would compete for their jobs and who resented that more prosperous men could pay for substitutes to serve on the battlefield.

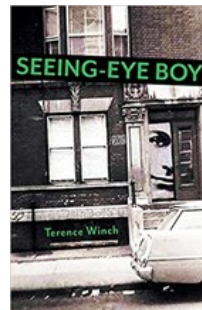


Peter Quinn's novel traces a cast of characters that includes General George McClellan, Archbishop John Hughes, Stephen Foster, and others in the days leading up to, and during, the Draft Riots. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* notes the book is "Vividly imagined, scrupulously researched, and almost disorienting in its authenticity. A historical classic."

The Dirty Dust (Yale U. Press, 2015) by Máirtín Ó Cadhain. In this uproarious, satiric novel set in Ireland, all of the characters have two things in common: they are all dead and they have all been buried in the local cemetery. Nevertheless, they can still gossip, complain, hold grudges, get angry, and speak ill of the dead as well as the living. Warning: *The Dirty Dust*'s colorful language is not for the fainthearted.



Seeing-Eye Boy (Four Windows, 2020) by Terence Winch. This young adult, coming-of-age novel is set against the backdrop of Irish immigrant life in the Bronx in the mid-1900s.



According to the publisher, it "offers an inside look at a lost universe where two cultures, Irish and American, blended together in the new world" and "shows immigrant adults interacting with their first-generation sons and daughters, while Irish and rock music co-exist uncomfortably as the Irish become Irish Americans."

Irish Genealogy Primer: Naming and Baptism Traditions

by Jim Regan

Our Irish ancestors held their elders in great regard, and naming a child after a grandparent or an older sibling was a way of honoring them. The same held true in the choice of godparents. Over time, a system of naming children after grandparents, aunts, and uncles developed. Therefore, an understanding of the naming patterns and baptismal traditions can be helpful to researchers trying to identify the parent of an Irish ancestor.

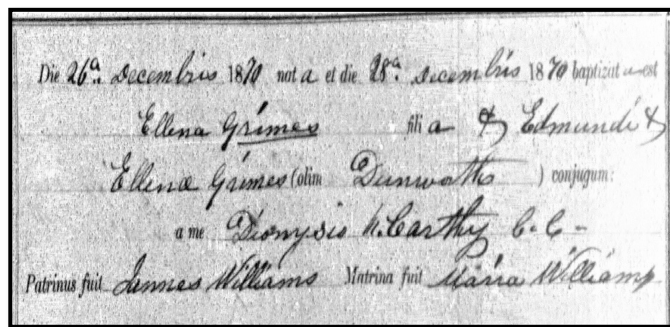
NAMING PATTERNS

The common naming pattern in Ireland for hundreds of years, and often observed by emigrants in America and other countries, is as follows:

- ♦ first son named after the father's father
- ♦ second son named after the mother's father
- ♦ third son named after the father
- ♦ fourth son named after the father's eldest brother
- ♦ first daughter named after the mother's mother
- ♦ second daughter named after the father's mother
- ♦ third daughter named after the mother
- ♦ fourth daughter named after the mother's eldest sister

Some of the exceptions one may find are:

- Some families chose a variant of this pattern, in which the first daughter was named after the paternal grandmother, and the second after the maternal grandmother.
- Middle names were not common. However, some families gave their child a middle name to honor a grandparent. For example, my cousin Teresa Marie O'Regan was given her middle name in honor of her grandmother Mary O'Brien.



Roman Catholic baptismal register 1870

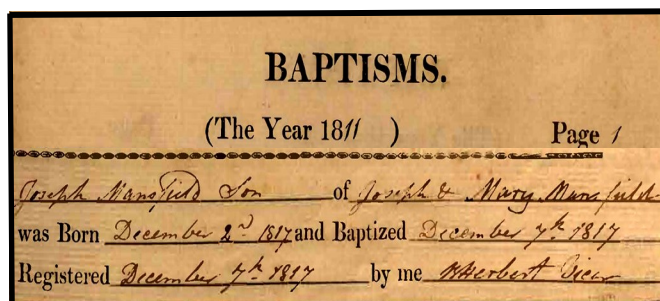
- If a newborn child was not expected to survive, the child may have been given another name, with the name of the grandparent or other relative reserved for a later, healthy child who was more likely to live.
- If a child named after a grandparent died, another

child of the same sex was often given the same name. This was the case of my cousin Ellen Agnes, who was named after her grandmother Ellen Barry and died a few months after her birth in 1902. In 1905, when her sister was born, she was also named Ellen Agnes.

BAPTISM TRADITIONS

Baptismal traditions can also be helpful in finding additional information about ancestors.

- Catholic baptisms took place shortly after birth, usually within three days. Sometimes the date of birth appearing on the baptismal record is more



Church of Ireland baptismal register 1817

- accurate than that on the civil record, as births were registered later on.¹ This was not the case in the Church of Ireland (CoI), however, as some families waited several months to baptize their infants.²
- An expectant mother often returned to the home of her parents to give birth, especially in the case of her first child. A baptismal record showing the name of a townland or parish other than the one where the parents were living might help you to identify where the mother was born. For example, Patrick Halpin, whose parents were living in Bosnetstown in Kilfinane, Co. Limerick, was born in Ballyroe Lower, the home of his paternal grandparents. This provided a clue about where to search for records of his mother and grandparents.
- The godparent was usually a sibling or a sibling-in-law of one of the child's parents. The eldest sibling was typically chosen first. In cases where the family was large and the supply of siblings had been exhausted, the godparent may have been a close friend or neighbor.
- The godparents of the first child often were the witnesses to the marriage of the parents. They were most likely close relatives, possibly siblings.
- To secure their child's future, parents sometimes chose an unmarried or childless landholding aunt or uncle to be a godparent. It was understood the god-

See Naming Patterns, p. 8

O'Brien, from p. 5

employment for some 100,000 emigrant women who arrived at the Port of New York.

Knowing she had accomplished her goal of establishing a safe haven for female Irish emigrants in New York, O'Brien returned to Ireland in 1883. There she continued to advocate for Irish emigrants.



Charlotte Grace O'Brien's grave in Knockpatrick Cemetery, Shanagolden

Charlotte Grace O'Brien died at her home in Ardanoir, Co. Limerick, on June 3, 1909, and was buried at Knockpatrick Cemetery in Shanagolden. The inscription around the sides of her grave reads:

*Charlotte Grace O'Brien
Daughter of William Smith O'Brien
Born November 1845
Died June 1909
May God have mercy on her
and all closest souls.*

Note

For further information about the Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary and its digital record collection, see its website www.archives.irishmissionatwatsonhouse.org. Also see the Newsletter Archives section of our website www.ifhf.org, for the following article: Maureen O'Rourke Murphy, "Take Care of the Immigrant Girls," May-July 2017, pp. 1 and 9.

Naming Patterns, from p. 7

child would eventually inherit the land.

- If a male sponsor has a different surname than either of the parents, he may be the mother's brother-in-law.
- The Catholic church required that a child be named after a saint. But at home and in other records, the child was often known by a nickname. My great-aunt Catherine Fitzgibbon had four daughters known as Mamie, Creina, Mona, and Ciss. On their baptismal records they were named Mary Ellen, Nora Patricia, Bridget Teresa, and Margaret Mary.
- Catholic priests traditionally recorded in Latin the first names of all parties to a baptism. So, a boy called Owen might be named "Eugenius" in the register.³
- During Penal times, to protect their interests and those of their children, some landowning Catholics converted to the Church of Ireland, only reverting to Catholicism in the late 18th century when the Penal Laws were repealed. So, do not assume a Catholic family's child was baptized in a Catholic church. If you can't find a child in the Catholic baptismal records, look at the Church of Ireland records.⁴

There are a number of online resources, such as irishgenealogy.ie and rootsireland.ie, available for researching baptismal records for most denominations. Some contain indexes or images only, while others have both an index and a link to the image of the record. The Irish Church Records section of the Forum's Irish Genealogy Research Guide has a full listing of online records; see the Members Resources area at www.ifhf.org.

While these naming patterns and baptismal traditions were widely observed throughout Ireland, naming a child and choosing the godparents were personal decisions. Therefore, while naming patterns and baptismal

traditions are helpful tools in family research, they were not law and some families may not have named their children or sponsor on the basis of these customs.

Notes

¹ Since medieval times, Roman Catholic tradition and teaching held that babies who died without baptism would not be able to enter heaven, but rather their souls went to limbo, a place between heaven and hell. This concept, while never part of official Church doctrine, has been the subject of theological debate for centuries. It was not until 2007 that Pope Benedict XVI officially declared, in a document called *The Hope of Salvation of Infants Who Die without Being Baptized*, that limbo was never part of Church doctrine and abolished it from Roman Catholic teaching.

² The information contained in baptismal registers differs depending on the religious denomination. For instance, Catholic registers give the name and location of the parish, date of baptism, and child's name, as well as the father's name, mother's first and maiden name, and the names of the two sponsors. The Church of Ireland registers contain the name and location of the parish, date of birth and baptism, the child's name, the father's name, and only the first name of the mother.

³ For a translation of a Latin name into English see: www.from-ireland.net/.../latin-names-in-english.

⁴ While Church of Ireland records generally date much further back than Roman Catholic records, their availability is limited. In 1876 the government considered these records state records, requiring parishes to send them to the Public Record Office (PRO) in Dublin for safekeeping. The law was amended in 1878, allowing parishes that demonstrated they had suitable safe storage facilities, to retain their records. This 1876 requirement proved disastrous because a 1922 fire at the PRO destroyed the records of nearly a 1,000 parishes who had submitted their records. Fortunately, some parishes made copies and 637 parishes retained the records.

From Knock to Old St. Patrick's

by Patricia Phelan



On the evening of August 21, 1879, fifteen people in Co. Mayo claimed to have seen an apparition of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and St. John the Evangelist on the gable wall of the church in the village of Knock. A few months later, a Commission of Enquiry interrogated these eyewitnesses, or visionaries, including the youngest, John Curry, who was only 5. "The child says he saw the images—beautiful images—the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph," the commission reported. Today the site of this event, known as Knock Shrine, serves as a place of pilgrimage for people all over the world.

John Curry was born to Martin Curry, a farmer, and Mary Ann Byrne in the townland of Lecarrow in Ballyhaunis District and was baptized in Knock on 18 January 1874. However, his civil birth record says he was born on April 1—ten weeks after his baptism! When his father registered the birth, he altered the date, probably to avoid a late fee.

Curry's father died when he was six, and his mother remarried a few years later. In April 1897, at the age of 23, Curry emigrated to the U.S.

In *John Curry (1874-1943): The Youngest Visionary of the Apparition at Knock*, the author described Curry's last years living on East 70th St. in Manhattan at the Sacred Heart Home for the indigent elderly, run by the Little Sisters of the Poor.¹ He mentioned Curry had worked for a time at the City Hospital on Welfare Island. But the author—the vision-

ary's grand-nephew, also named John Curry—had not been able to "establish much about John's life in America, most probably in New York" between 1910 and 1932. I found it surprising that this part of Curry's life could not be accounted for, so always up for a genealogy challenge, I decided to do a bit of sleuthing and try to fill in the gaps in Curry's story.

When Curry was in his sixties, he testified in Manhattan before a second Commission of Enquiry into the Knock apparition, stating that he had "a great memory." Yet he also said, "I do not remember when I came [to the U.S.] the first time, but I came the second time in April 1910." It turned out that Curry's memory was a bit foggy. He didn't arrive in New York in 1910 at all; instead, he sailed here on

the RMS *Mauretania* a year later, arriving on March 31, 1911. According to the passenger manifest, Curry was single, worked as a "railway man," was born in Knock, had last been in the U.S. in 1906, and was headed, not to New York, as his biographer suspected, but to Chicago. From there he would eventually travel to a friend in Union Grove, Wisconsin.

During World War I, all men in the U.S. aged 18 to 45 were required to register for the draft, so I suspected I would find Curry in these records. Sure enough, he had registered in Wisconsin in September 1918, giving his full name as John Joseph Curry. He gave his birthdate as February 2, which conflicts with his birth registration. He said he was 44, lived on Reed St. in Milwaukee, and was working as a track laborer—someone who laid, repaired, and maintained railroad tracks—for the Chicago and North Western Rail Road (C&NW).

Because Curry worked for the C&NW, which operated thousands of miles of track, I wondered if personnel records would still exist for him. Using Google, I found the archivist of the C&NW Historical Society. Unfortunately, he stated

that the society wouldn't hold any information about Curry because as a track laborer, he wasn't actually an employee. He was what we today call a day laborer, paid by the day.

Next, I searched for Curry in the 1920 federal census, where I discovered him living in Granville Township in Milwaukee Co., Wisconsin. Still working on the railroad, he resided in a railway camp, where he likely slept and ate in a train of old railway cars that comprised such a camp.

The 1920 census indicated Curry had applied for American citizenship but had not yet been naturalized. I then

looked for him in naturalization records. I found that in early 1920 in the Eastern District Court of Wisconsin, John Curry filed his declaration of intent to become a citizen. The declaration gave his emigration date as 1911, when he sailed on the *Mauretania* from Liverpool.

Eight years later, in 1928, Curry was living in Manhattan on East 77th St. when he filed a new declaration of intent. This was necessary because his first declaration had expired. The second document said he'd arrived in the U.S. in 1910, which was incorrect. In both declarations Curry gave his birthdate as February 2. And in both, he neglected to mention that he had first come to the U.S. in 1897.

See From Knock, p. 10



Knock visionary John Curry

Source: Knock Shrine

Deaths in Ireland in the 1800s

In a review of a couple of hundred Irish death records from the 1800s, a variety of causes of death were found. Sadly, a number of them were the result of household and other accidents. Young children were “scalded,” suffered “decline from a burn,” and were “killed by the fall of a gate.” Adults lost their lives to unspecified farm accidents. Infants lived only a few months because they were “delicate from birth.” Other causes of death, some of them described in archaic terms, follow.

- *alcoholic poisoning*: consuming large quantities of alcohol in a short time.
- *anasarca*: edema of the whole body.
- *caught a cold*
- *contused hip joint*: bruised tissue around the hip; a serious contusion can cause internal bleeding and result in shock
- *decay of nature, senile decay, natural decay*: old age.
- *exhaustion from difficult labor*
- *general dropsy*: swelling of soft tissues due to

excess water; edema.

- *hectic fever*: fever associated with tuberculosis.
- *ileus*: obstruction of the ileum or other part of the intestine.
- *intussusception*: bowel obstruction.
- *parturition*: childbirth.
- *phrenitis*: inflammation of the brain, encephalitis.
- *pyrosis*: heartburn.
- *scrofula*: a disease characterized by glandular swellings; likely a type of tuberculosis.
- *softening of brain*: cerebral softening due to impairment of the blood supply.
- *traumatic tetanus*: condition resulting from the infection of a wound.
- *variola confluent*: smallpox with lesions that have run together.

In your research, have you found unusual causes of death or old-fashioned medical terminology? Why not tell us about it? Email newsletter@ifhf.org.

From Knock, from p. 9

When John Curry died in 1943, the death certificate noted he had lived in New York City for 21 years—since about 1922. Nevertheless, a search for him in the 1925 New York State census did not yield any findings. And the 1930 federal census did not show Curry living in New York or in any other state. But Curry was definitely in Manhattan by 1931. When the city directory was published that year, it included a listing for John Curry, “hospital helper,” at 265 First Ave.

The register of the Sacred Heart Home for the indigent indicates Curry was admitted as a resident in November



John Curry's tombstone in Old St. Patrick's, NYC

1932. Not long before, he apparently fell on hard times and went to live in the Municipal Lodging House on E. 25th St. The first facility for the homeless built in Manhattan, the Lodging House provided food and shelter to over 900 men, women, and children.

Despite John Curry's importance to the events at Knock, by the time he died in 1943 he was pretty much forgotten. He was buried in a communal grave in Resurrection Cemetery in Farmingdale, New York, where a small metal marker bore his name.

Decades later, Timothy Cardinal Dolan traveled to Knock, where he learned of Curry's fate. Dolan decided to have Curry reinterred at the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral in Manhattan. On May 13, 2017, a requiem Mass was offered at Old St. Patrick's for John Curry and his reburial took place.

The granite tombstone at the head of his grave recognizes him as “Witness to the Apparition at Knock.”

Note

¹ John Curry (author), *John Curry (1874-1943): The Youngest Visionary of the Apparition at Knock* (Knock Publications, 2009).

Adapted from “Shedding Light on Knock Visionary's Life in the U.S.” by Patricia Phelan, Irish Echo (May 8, 2017). Copyright ©2021 by Glanvil Enterprises, Ltd.

If you haven't made the leap from family historian to family writer, I encourage stepping off and taking a risk and try your hand at writing your family history; it can be just as rewarding as the research.

— Lynn Palermo, the Armchair Genealogist

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NYSFHC @ Home 2021. New York State Family History Conference. Virtual. Unlimited viewing of on-demand sessions through October 18. Live sessions September 25-26 and on-demand after that. See www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org.

MARCH 3–5, 2022

RootsTech. This year, the conference will be entirely virtual and free to all attendees. Noted for an extensive program on topics for the beginner to the advanced genealogist. In addition genealogical vendors from all over the world will showcase their products throughout the virtual conference. Full details of the conference will be posted on their website. See www.rootstech.org.

MAY 25–28, 2022

Our American Mosaic. National Genealogical Society Family History Conference, Sacramento, CA. More than 150 lectures by the nation's premier genealogical speakers. See their website at www.conference.ngsgenealogy.org.

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Irish War of Independence

December 6 will mark the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which ended the Irish War of Independence and led to the establishment of the Irish Free State.

For the next edition of our Newsletter (Nov. 2021–Jan. 2022), we are looking for members to share stories of their ancestor's experiences during the war of independence. These can include stories about ancestors who fought in the war or whose lives were affected by it.

We will be starting work on the next edition in August, so if you have a story, you feel would be of interest to our members, please email us by August 31 at newsletter@ifhf.org. As always, if necessary, members of the Newsletter committee are more than willing to guide you through the writing process, to work with you on any editing needed, and to offer suggestions that will help strengthen your story.

Ceád Míle Fáilte ***To Our New Members!***

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