



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

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August–October 2022

## A Decade of Recognition for the Forum's Newsletter

We are delighted to announce that the Forum's Newsletter has placed first in the 2022 National Genealogical Society newsletter competition for small societies. It's the tenth time in ten years that the Newsletter has been honored, having won the contest six times and placed second the other four times.

The award was announced on May 25 by Judy Nimer Muhn, chair of the NGS Awards Committee, at the annual NGS family history conference. Forum member Sue Miller was on hand to accept the prize certificate on the Forum's behalf. The Forum also received a complimentary one-year membership in NGS and will be featured in *NGS Magazine*.

The NGS award "recognizes the hard work, long hours, and creativity that volunteer editors devote to their newsletters." As part of the competition, each society submits two consecutive issues of its newsletter from the current year. A panel of three judges then reviews both issues and evaluates them for :

- material interest, variety, and originality
- writing and editing quality
- readability and attractiveness
- overall publication makeup

Following are some of the comments we received this year from the judges: "Great research tips. The biographical articles (Murphy and Dillon) are nice additions that introduce the reader to the author's recent work and research that can then be applied to similar problems in their own family history. The Genealogy Primers...are very well written. Enjoyed the tips, articles, and writing. Excellent information for all the required topics."

Upon learning of the award, Editor Jim Regan commented that being recognized by the National Genealogical Society is a great honor. Jim also said receiving this award from one of the most highly respected genealogical societies in the nation is a testament to the dedication and effort the members of the Newsletter Committee—Joanne Dillon, Patricia Phelan, Joe Rhatigan, Kerri Tannenbaum, and Maureen Winski—put into each and every edition.

He also credited the members of the Forum who contributed interesting and informative articles, saying, "Without our members' continued support, none of this would be possible."

### September 17

#### Tips and Tricks for Using Ancestry

Forum favorite Toni McKeen will kick off our 2022-2023 season at the Bethpage Library with tips



and tricks for using Ancestry in family research. Toni will discuss how to research efficiently and successfully on this powerful site. She will share helpful tips for finding elusive relatives, state which parameters to use, and show you how to prevent looking at thousands of names

in search of the one person you are trying to find. Included will be often overlooked options, as well as features that have just been added to Ancestry.

### OCTOBER 22

#### Using DNA in Genealogy Research

Like census records and obituaries, your DNA can be a useful source of information in your genealogical



research. Professional genealogist Michelle Dowd Torosian will present the pros and cons of DNA testing and discuss how to use DNA test results to help solve family mysteries. Torosian is founder of Torosian Genealogy, LLC, and holds certificates from both the Genealogy Studies

Program at Boston University and the ProGen Study Groups. *Note: This meeting will be held on the fourth Saturday in October.*

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
IRISH FAMILY HISTORY FORUM, INC.

PO Box 67  
Plainview NY 11803-0067  
ifhf.org  
facebook.com/IrishFamilyHistoryForum

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the study of Irish genealogy and family history*

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Contributing Editors Joanne Dillon  
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Individual: \$25 Family: \$35

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Irish Family History Society

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### About Our Meetings

General meetings of the Forum are usually held on the third Saturday of the 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.

Our meetings are hybrid—that is, they are held in person at the Bethpage Library, with the lecture presented via Zoom for those who cannot attend.

#### Meeting Schedule\*

10 a.m. Meet and Greet, Ask the Experts, and Refreshments  
11 a.m. Guest speaker

\*Subject to change. See p. 1 for specific meeting details.

### CONTACT THE FORUM

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

**Membership:** [membership@ifhf.org](mailto:membership@ifhf.org)

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

**Programs:** [programs@ifhf.org](mailto:programs@ifhf.org)

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

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

## Our Research Collection at the Bethpage Library

Do you know the Forum has an Irish genealogy research collection at the Bethpage Public Library? It includes:

- *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors* (Grenham)
- *Bishop Loughlin's Dispensations: Diocese of Brooklyn, 1859-1866* (Silinonte)
- *Tombstones of the Irish Born* (Silinonte)
- *St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, Brooklyn, New York, Baptism and Marriage Registers, 1857-1900* (Reilly)
- *The Surnames of Ireland* (MacLysaght)
- *The Search for Missing Friends* (O'Keeffe)
- emigration lists
- a townland index
- books of headstone inscriptions
- books of baptism, marriage, and death records
- many other materials



The collection is housed in the reference office on the library's first floor. To access the collection, go to the reference desk and ask to view it. If you'd like to take books for use within the library, you'll be asked to leave your driver's license or other ID with the reference librarian.

The Bethpage Library, located at 47 Powell Ave., Bethpage, NY, is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturdays 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sundays (except July through Labor Day) from noon to 4 p.m.

\*\*\*

The main portion of the Forum's collection of almost 500 books on researching Irish ancestors continues to be housed in our John Rowane Memorial Library at the LDS Family History Center, 160 Washington Ave., Plainview, NY. Members may view these books during the center's regular hours. Call 516-433-0122 for days and times the Family History Center is open.

## Membership Survey



How are we doing? The Forum wants to know.

Come the fall, we will be conducting an online membership survey, and we welcome the participation of all Forum members.

We will be soliciting your feedback on such topics as monthly meetings; the Forum website; the surname database; the discussion board; our membership sign-up and renewal process; our quarterly Newsletter; and our Facebook page, among others.

We also want to learn more about you. Are your research interests primarily in the U.S., in Ireland, or in other countries? What is your level of genealogical research experience? And we will welcome any additional thoughts or suggestions you might have.

The online survey will be sent to all members via email in the early fall. The survey will take just a few minutes of your time. But its results will help us gauge if we are meeting the needs of our members or if we need to reexamine or modify our services. We encourage you to give your honest opinions.

After we analyze the results, we will report the findings in a future Newsletter.

## Share Your Stories

The Forum's Newsletter always has been and always will be our members' newsletter, dedicated to promoting and encouraging the study of Irish genealogy and family history.

We call it our members' Newsletter because each edition allows members to share stories of the discoveries they've made about their Irish ancestors. In doing so, not only do they write interesting articles but they also provide their fellow members with insights into avenues of genealogical research they may find useful in their own research efforts. For instance, in this issue, Joanne Dillon reflects on the 1950 federal census and the life of her immigrant family, Joe Rhatigan tells us how Mormon records about ships' voyages helped him expand what he knew about his great-grandmother, and Patricia Phelan writes about ropemaking in 1800s Brooklyn, the occupation of one of her Irish immigrant ancestors.

Got a story to tell? Why not share it with *your* Newsletter? Please contact [newsletter@ifhf.org](mailto:newsletter@ifhf.org).

# RESEARCH TIPS

by Patricia Phelan

## NEW FROM ROOTSIRELAND

The subscription database [www.rootsireland.ie](http://www.rootsireland.ie) has recently added:

- 3,600 marriage and burial records for Co. Westmeath.
- Galway Emigrant Index, 1829-1866: a list of over 2,600 individuals who emigrated from Co. Galway to New South Wales and Queensland.
- Nearly 13,000 Co. Monaghan census substitutes, taken from Poor Lists. These mention people who received charity at various times, including during the Famine.

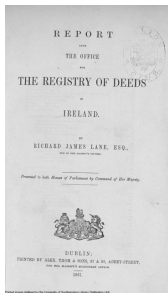
## FINDING GRANNY

A member located her Irish grandmother Jennie in U.S. records, including censuses and marriage and death records. But she was unable to find Jennie in Irish birth or baptismal records. When it was suggested that Jennie might be a nickname for “Jane,” the grandmother’s birth was soon found. If you have a brick wall that involves an ancestor’s first name, be sure to check to see whether the name has any variations.

## GOOD DEEDS

The Registry of Deeds in Dublin holds records of Irish wills, land transactions, and other deeds starting from 1709. While the registry was originally intended to enforce rules limiting the land transactions of Catholics, many Catholics and representatives of Catholic families appear in the registry. Many merchants and traders of modest means registered deeds to provide some form of security of tenure. In addition, Catholic occupiers are sometimes mentioned in the records.

The Registry of Deeds Index Project has indexed almost half a million records. See [www.irishdeedsindex.net](http://www.irishdeedsindex.net).



## POVERTY RELIEF

Irish Poverty Relief Loan records cover 1821 to 1874, with the majority dating from 1824 to 1846. Many of these records are loan applications, which give the name of the borrower and the names of two guarantors; these were often relatives or neighbors. Other details include occupation, health, family circumstances, and whether the borrower emigrated. Ten counties are included in this group of records: Clare, Cork, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim, Limerick, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, and Tipperary. See [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com).

## OUTRAGE REPORTS

On Findmypast, you can search thousands of “outrage reports” created by the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) from 1836 to 1840. These reports include descriptions of theft, assault, suicide, rescue of cattle, infanticide, arson, highway robbery, and more. Individuals appear in the records if they were a victim of a crime, if they perpetrated a crime, or if they belonged to the RIC and wrote the report or were named in it. See [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com).

## A PRIEST IN THE FAMILY?

Do you have an Irish priest or other religious in your family tree? If so, you might want to take a look at Clericus, a database devoted to Ireland’s clergy. The project is just starting up, but so far biographical records of 13,000 individuals associated with St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, are available. Some of them include photos. In the future, the clerical database, including photos from other Irish seminaries and religious orders, will be available, and there will be a digital map of Ireland’s clerical diaspora. See <https://clericus.ie/people>.—Cathy Negrycz

## RELATIONSHIPS

I often see the terms “stepsister” and “stepbrother” used incorrectly. Stepsiblings are not related, while half-siblings have one parent in common. For example, if your great-grandmother had a son and married a man who had a son, those boys would have been stepbrothers. But if your great-grandmother had a son, was widowed and remarried and then had a second son, the two boys would have been half-brothers.

## Need Research Help?

One of the benefits of Forum membership is our Ask the Experts program, which allows members to consult experienced genealogists at our



general meetings. However, you don’t have to come to a meeting to get genealogical advice. Instead, you can now email your research questions to us at [programs@ifhf.org](mailto:programs@ifhf.org). Please note we can only consider straightforward queries; if

your question is too complicated, our volunteers may not have the time to review it.



# It Was an Irish Neighborhood, Wasn't It?

by Joanne Dillon



I grew up in New York City, in the east Bronx, in a neighborhood once known as Stratton Park. You won't find Stratton Park on Google Maps. Its name has been almost completely lost to history as Google Maps and real estate brokers have folded it into the much larger, nearby housing development to the east known as Parkchester.

Before the 1950 U.S. federal census was released to the public on April 1, 2022, if you had asked me about Stratton Park, I would have replied with great certainty, "It was an Irish neighborhood." But a review of the census revealed that this was a misperception on my part. While Stratton Park had a fair share of Irish-born men and women, the census shows it was actually an ethnically mixed area, with residents also coming from Italy, Russia, Germany, Scotland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Puerto Rico, and England. There were also many native-born Americans.

So why had I retained this misperception for decades? Very simple. My parents, both of whom were born in Co. Kerry, socialized mostly with other Irish men and women. The Luceys, the O'Connors, several different Murphy families, the Delaneys, the McLoughlins, the Meades, the Walshes, the Nolans, the Sullivans, and the O'Sullivans, as well as others, made up my parents' social circle. Seeing those familiar names in the census brought back recollections of things I hadn't thought about in years.

As a youngster, I knew that the men in the neighborhood all worked, while most of the women stayed home. But I really didn't know what kind of jobs the men held. The census shows that Stratton Park was a solid working-class area. Many of the men, especially the Irish men, worked for the New York City transit system as motormen, bus drivers, night watchmen, and track repairmen. But there were also factory workers, custodians, store managers, and even a census enumerator. The women who were employed outside the home were usually single and worked as file clerks, billing clerks, secretaries, or waitresses.

While my review of the 1950 census revealed interesting demographic information about Stratton Park and showed the fallacy of my perceptions, scrolling through its pages evoked many memories of a wonderful group of neighbors. For example, Margaret and Jack Murphy, who lived up the street, had trained their parakeet "Kerry" to ask everyone who entered their apartment if they had been "drinking beer again," which always delighted me.

According to family lore, in the early 1950s John Lucey, who owned a medallion cab, drove my mother, then in the throes of labor, to St. Francis Hospital in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx so she could give birth to me. My mother was fond of telling this story, and for added drama always said the trip, during a mild snowstorm, took place during "a raging blizzard."



The Dillon Family in the early 1950s

Maurice and Mary Walsh, who both hailed from Co. Cork, lived in the apartment directly across the hall from ours; one Christmas Eve, Santa left a bicycle meant for me in their apartment. How could he have made such a mistake? They also had a cuckoo clock, which fascinated me when I was a toddler. Mickey O'Sullivan worked the late shift at his job and would return home each night about 11 p.m.; as he walked up the street, he would loudly whistle the tune of "Sean South of Garryowen."

These are happy memories. But others are tinged with sadness. One of the most vivid memories I have is of November 22, 1963. As I walked home from school that afternoon, my father and his friends were standing outside Carey's Bar & Grill, all of them crying unashamedly over the news of President John F. Kennedy's assassination in Dallas.

In the 1950 census, I also found Kay and Dennis Meade, close friends of my parents, with their children, including eight-year-old Danny. No one in that postwar year could have foreseen that nearly two decades later Danny would be the first of several young men from Stratton Park to die in another far-away war. Corp. Daniel Meade was killed near Hue, Vietnam, on February 8, 1968, during the Tet Offensive; he was 27 years old.

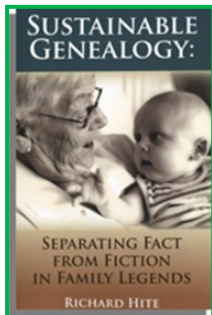
My parents' friends were a great group who looked out for one another. They went to Irish nights at St. Anthony's parish on Mansion St., sent their

*See Irish Neighborhood, p. 8*

# RECOMMENDED BOOKS

by Patricia Phelan and Joanne Dillon

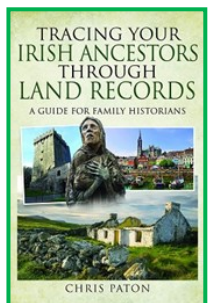
***Sustainable Genealogy: Separating Fact from Fiction in Family Legends*** (Genealogical Publishing, 2013) by Richard Hite. Over the years, people who've



learned I'm interested in genealogy have told me things like "My brother searched our family roots online and discovered we're descended from Henry VIII." I'm tempted to ask, "Have you seen the documents proving it?" Instead, I simply respond, "Really?" Perhaps the next time I hear such a naive statement I should present the person with a copy of Richard Hite's book.

According to the publisher, it "explains how to avoid the traps many family historians can fall into. Whether it's a proud family legend, a venerable publication, or the claims of an Internet family tree, the unsubstantiated genealogical source is like a house of sticks before the Big Bad Wolf—it won't stand up. As Mr. Hite demonstrates in this collection of case studies, many are the 'oral traditions that have fallen by the wayside under the lens of careful research in primary sources and, more recently, DNA testing.'"—PMP

***Tracing Your Irish Ancestors through Land Records: A Guide for Family Historians*** (Pen and Sword, 2021) by Chris Paton. It is often Irish land



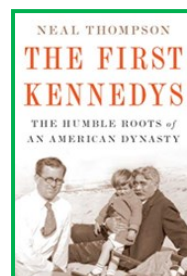
records that offer us proof that our ancestors existed. Sometimes they are the only proof, because vital records for the area where our forebears lived may not exist. In this guide, author Paton discusses how land records can help with our genealogy research and explores the history of Irish land ownership, the rights of estate owners, and the plight of the dispossessed. He also describes records that can help genealogy researchers uncover the stories of some of Ireland's lost generations.—PMP

***The Big Yank: Memoir of a Boy Growing Up Irish*** (Paddy Publications, 2016) by J. P. Sexton. This memoir covers Sexton's early life, starting with his family's move from New York in 1970 to the Inishowen Peninsula in his mother's native Donegal. Soon the 9-year-old Sexton and his family were living in dire poverty on a mountain in a converted double-decker bus with no running water or toilet facilities. To make things worse, Sexton's parents were abusive, treating him in a way no child should be treated, including forcing him to undertake manual labor fit for a grown man. Even though this well-written book is

sometimes painful to read, it also has a good deal of humor as the resilient Sexton endeavors to survive his upbringing and find his way in the world.—PMP

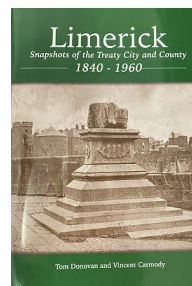
***The First Kennedys: The Humble Roots of an American Dynasty*** (Mariner, 2022) by Neal Thompson.

History buffs, genealogists, and family historians are all likely to find something to admire in journalist Neal Thompson's biography of Bridget Murphy and Patrick Kennedy, paternal great-grandparents of President John F. Kennedy. This largely unknown story begins in the late 1840s, when Bridget Murphy made the long journey from Co. Wexford to Boston. Thompson over-



comes the lack of historical family documents from that time through extensive research. Using online sources, newspapers, and other publications, as well as archival material from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, he paints a vivid picture of the life that awaited young Bridget. Instead of open arms welcoming her to the new world, she faced virulent anti-Irish, anti-immigrant sentiment. In her early 20s, she confronted the untimely deaths of both her young husband and an infant son. Left on her own, she proved to be resourceful and driven, as she struggled to raise her four remaining children. As Thompson states at the end of his book, "What's largely forgotten about the Kennedy saga is that it started with nothing. Just a poor, hardworking widowed grocer named Bridget and her four fatherless children in an East Boston tenement."—JD

***Limerick: Snapshots of the Treaty City and County 1840-1960*** (Poundlane, 2021) by Tom Donovan and Vincent Carmody. Historian Donovan, originally



from Glin, Co. Limerick, and Kerry native and author Carmody have collaborated on a history of Limerick's 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century merchants and traders. Long-forgotten merchant families from a simpler, bygone era are lovingly remembered. And the supporting documentation of photographs, billheads, and invoices gives a glimpse into the dynamic commercial life of the city, dominated at the time by family-owned businesses. The book also touches on Ireland's broader history, including the 1921 War of Independence and its impact on Limerick.—JD

Would you like to review a genealogy or Irish-themed book for us? Email [newsletter@ifhf.org](mailto:newsletter@ifhf.org).



# Occupations of Our Irish Ancestors: Ropemaking

by Patricia Phelan



In the days of sailing ships, rope was an essential commodity. Ropemakers supplied the shipping industry with hawsers, which were large ropes used for towing, mooring, or securing a ship. They also provided nautical cables, used for anchoring, heavy lifting, transfers between ships, and towing, and they made ropes called sheets, which

controlled the movable corners of a sail.<sup>1</sup>

Ropewalks, the places where rope, or cordage, was manufactured, existed in Brooklyn ever since it was first settled.<sup>2</sup> By the 1820s, there were eight ropewalks in operation.<sup>3</sup> There, hundreds of employees turned out the miles of rope needed for ships that were under construction or being repaired.<sup>4</sup>

Ropewalks were sometimes as long as a quarter of a mile. Most of them were roofed to protect the workers from the elements; sometimes they were walled-in as well. Ropemakers spent the workday “walking backwards. Using their fingers, they began by spinning hemp yarn from a coil of combed fiber wrapped around their waists. In subsequent passes, they twisted multiple strands of yarn into rope, and then into various weights of sheet, cable and hawser.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1823, there were at least 39 ropemakers listed in the Brooklyn city directory, several of them with Irish surnames.<sup>6</sup> One of these was David Stewart, the first of my Irish ancestors to emigrate to the U.S. Born around 1792 in Co. Tyrone, probably in New-

**Stewart David, ropemaker Gold n. Sands**  
**Stewart James, boatman 123 Furman**  
**Stewart John, carpenter 3 Prospect**  
**Stewart John, ropemaker Jackson**

**David Stewart in 1823 Brooklyn directory**

townstewart, he arrived in Brooklyn as a small boy. He later married Elizabeth Seaman, a native of Long Island; the couple would have eight sons and a daughter.<sup>7</sup>

In 1821, the Brooklyn ropemakers formed the Ropemakers Benevolent Society for the aid of widows, orphans, and “distressed workers,” such as those who were injured or ill and unable to work. In an original book of the society’s rules and regulations held by the Brooklyn Historical Society, David Stewart’s signature is included in a list of the members.<sup>8</sup>

In 1825, the Ropemakers Benevolent Society took part in the huge celebration that marked the completion of the Erie Canal, which united the northern and western Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean.

“A flotilla of canal boats” traveled from Buffalo, eventually arriving in New York Harbor, where it led a gathering of ships festooned for the great occasion.<sup>9</sup> “The ‘wedding of the waters’ took place amid great ceremony at Sandy Hook as Gov. DeWitt Clinton poured a cask of Lake Erie water into the ocean.”<sup>10</sup> This was followed by a parade through lower Manhattan, which was “viewed by the largest crowd to gather in North America to that time.”<sup>11</sup>

In the line of march was the Ropemakers Benevolent Society, which had “a Stage, drawn by four horses.”<sup>12</sup> On the stage the rope-making process was demonstrated by a number of men working on two ropes and a cable. “Under a Canopy, on which were inscribed the words *We Honour Old Age*, were seated...the two oldest men of the trade.”<sup>13</sup> On the lower part of the Stage was a sign that said:

*Our hemp is good, our cordage neat,  
We will supply the American fleet.*<sup>14</sup>

And a banner on the stage included the society’s motto: *Although we go Backwards, still we Advance.*<sup>15</sup>

A total of 132 ropemakers marched in the parade. Each man wore, “neatly arranged round the body, a piece of the best Manilla hemp well dressed, and a badge of the order on the left breast.”<sup>16</sup> While I have no proof David Stewart was among the participants, it seems unlikely he would have missed this great celebration.

In 1844, David Stewart was elected president of the Ropemakers Benevolent Society. He served in

**Ropemakers Benevolent Society.**  
At a meeting of the Ropemakers Benevolent Society of the city of Brooklyn, held in P. Mackay's Seventh Ward Hotel, December 9, 1844, the following gentlemen were elected officers for 1845:  
President—DAVID STEWARD.  
Vice President—HIRAM WILSON.  
Treasurer—JOHN DENYSE.  
Secretary—ARCHIBALD WALLACE  
On motion, Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be and are hereby tendered to the late officers of the Society, for the able and efficient manner in which they discharged the duties of their respective offices.  
Resolved, That the same be published in the New York Sun and Brooklyn Eagle.  
Extract from the minutes.  
ja7 3t\* WILLIAM BATH, Secretary.

**Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Jan. 9, 1845**

that position for a year, overseeing the organization and the distribution of funds to those in need.<sup>17</sup>

David Stewart died of “debility” on June 17, 1852, when he was about sixty.<sup>18</sup> He had been employed in the ropemaking trade his entire life.

*See Ropemaking, p. 8*

## 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 Saturday, November 19. The following positions will be voted upon:

- Executive Vice President: Assistant to the President. Assumes presidency in absence of the President. Two-year term.
- Vice President, Programs: Identifies programs, topics, and speakers for membership meetings. Two-year term.
- Corresponding Secretary: Prepares correspondence on behalf of the Forum. Two-year term.
- Treasurer: Prepares and maintains the Forum's financial records. Two-year term.
- Directors, two: Assists in managing the affairs of the Forum and, as assigned, acts as Chairperson of necessary committees. Three-year term.

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](mailto:volunteer@ifhf.org).

The family historian must master the art of storytelling. What, after all, is truth without anecdote, history without events, explanation without narration—or yet life itself without a story? Stories are not just the wells from which we drink most deeply but at the same time the golden threads that hold and bind.

—Joseph A. Amato, *Jacob's Well: A Case for Rethinking Family History*

### *Irish Neighborhood, from p. 5*

children to Irish dance lessons at the Stratton Park Social Club, and on warm summer evenings gossiped in accents from Cos. Kerry, Cork, Donegal, Galway, and Wicklow on the stoops of their apartment buildings. Their friendships with my family lasted many years. Like many places in the city in the late 1960s and early 1970s, drugs and crime began to infiltrate the neighborhood, and Stratton Park began to change. Some of my parents' friends moved away, and the connections became more tenuous.

Sadly, all these figures from my childhood have now passed away. And while the census records may paint a different picture, in my memory Stratton Park will always remain an Irish neighborhood.

### *Ropemaking, from p. 7*

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Henry R. Stiles, "Ropes, Cordage and Twine," *The Civil, Political, Professional, and Ecclesiastical History and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn, N.Y. from 1683 to 1884* (New York: W. W. Munsell, 1884), vol. II, p. 716.

<sup>2</sup> "The Romance of Cordage," Brooklyn Public Library, [www.bklynlibrary.org/blog/2008/12/09/romance-cordage](http://www.bklynlibrary.org/blog/2008/12/09/romance-cordage), accessed May 7, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> David Ment, "Early Urban Brooklyn, 1800-1834," *The Shaping of a City: A Brief History of Brooklyn*, p. 28. <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/history/burrows/NYC/Documents>, accessed Apr. 12, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> New York City Streets: Ropewalks, [www.oldstreets.com/index.asp?title=Ropewalks](http://www.oldstreets.com/index.asp?title=Ropewalks).

<sup>5</sup> Gabriel Furman, *Antiquities of Long Island* (NY: J. W. Bouton, 1875), p. 393.

<sup>6</sup> *Spooner's Brooklyn Directory, for the year 1823*. Published by Alden Spooner, at the Office of the Long-Island Star, Brooklyn, NY, June 2, 1823.

<sup>7</sup> David S. Stewart in "Seventy-Year Readers of the Eagle," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Brooklyn, NY, Oct. 26, 1911, p. 68.

<sup>8</sup> *Rules and Regulations of the Rope Makers Benevolent Society of Brooklyn, instituted 26 Sepr. 1821*. BHS

1973.221. Viewed at Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn, NY, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> "Ten Traces of the Erie Canal in New York City: The Elaborate Opening Celebration in NYC," <https://untappedcities.com/2016/07/26/10-traces-of-the-erie-canal-in-nyc/3/>, accessed Apr. 19, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> "Ten Traces," *ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> "Ten Traces," *ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Cadwallader D. Colden, *Memoir Prepared at the Request of the Common Council of the City of New York and Presented to the Mayor of the City, at the Celebration of the Completion of the New York Canals*, 1825.

[www.eriecanal.org/texts/Colden/Colden.html](http://www.eriecanal.org/texts/Colden/Colden.html), accessed Apr. 19, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Colden, *ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> Colden, *ibid*.

<sup>15</sup> Colden, *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> Colden, *ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Ropemakers Benevolent Society announcement, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Jan. 9, 1845, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Jun. 18, 1852, p. 3, col. 2; burial record for David Stewart, Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY, Jun. 20, 1852.

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# NELLIE'S VOYAGE TO AMERICA

by Joe Rhatigan

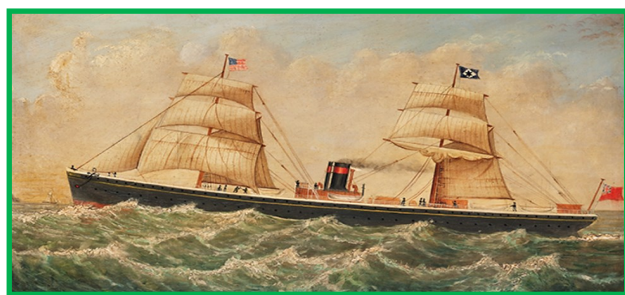


Ellen “Nellie” (*née* Dee) Dowd was my great-grandmother. She was so special to our family that I wrote an article about her for the Forum Newsletter in April 2018.<sup>1</sup> Now I have one more story to tell about Nellie, who at the age of 17 immigrated to America.

We have long heard of the terrible crossings immigrants endured on “coffin ships,” sailing in steerage and such, but often the actual story of the trip is lost in time. Nellie didn’t leave her personal recollections, but with the help of the Mormons we’ll be able to look at the story of her journey across the Atlantic.

Nellie was born in 1857 in the notorious Whitechapel district of London’s East End. Her Irish parents, Catherine and Timothy Dee, had come to London from Co. Cork in the 1840s, probably to escape the terrible hunger raging in Ireland.

On June 24, 1874, after the death of her mother,



**SS Nevada, sister ship of the Idaho**

James Douglas, in the Mariners’ Museum, Newport News, VA

the teenaged Nellie sailed from Liverpool, following her older sister, Mary, to America. It appears that Nellie boarded the SS *Idaho* alone.

## THE SHIP

The *Idaho*, one of the Guion Line’s new steamships, had a single screw propeller and could sail at 11 knots. It had two masts and one funnel. Note that the sails remained, to be used if the engine failed. Guion ships of the 1870s were built to hold 1,000 steerage passengers and only 72 first-class passengers, as they were mainly intended for transporting immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Each steerage passenger was assigned a separate berth, and single women were placed in rooms by themselves. The food was good, served three times a day.<sup>3</sup>

Through the advances in shipbuilding and government regulations, immigration had become quicker, safer, and easier to accomplish. The days of the coffin ships were long gone.

## THE MORMONS

The Guion Line ships regularly carried Mormons from Scandinavia through Liverpool to New York. In the early days of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS)—or Mormon church—the members, called saints, were directed by Joseph Smith to leave their homes and move to the church’s central place of prayer in Utah. Between 1840 and 1890, about 90,000 Mormons sailed to the new world. Recordkeeping was and is an important tenet of the Mormon religion, and many of the Mormon passengers kept diaries and journals of their trip.<sup>4</sup>

Brigham Young University created a helpful website called *Saints by Sea* at <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu>. They have used the immigration records of the LDS and presented a collection of most of the immigration voyages that includes the dates, ship names, the saints who traveled, and the hundreds of firsthand records penned by the travelers. Lucky for me, the *Idaho* was on the list.<sup>5</sup>

## THE VOYAGE

On the afternoon of June 24, 1874, a total of 806 Mormons and about 300 emigrants, mostly from Britain and Ireland, sailed on the SS *Idaho*. The non-Mormons, including my great-grandmother Nellie, were situated in the forepart of the ship’s steerage, and the remaining berths were taken by the Mormons. The Mormon contingent was well organized, with elders and missionaries maintaining order. They held regular prayer and daily meetings.

Reviewing the *Saints by Sea* site, I found four accounts of Nellie’s voyage submitted by the passengers. Two of them told of the favorable weather all the way except for one stormy day, as follows:

“When we reached what was called Devil’s Pass, we encountered a storm.... in this storm the boat drifted over into Devil’s Pass and about two in the afternoon the sailors began to holler ‘down deck, down deck’ meaning for everyone to go down to the lower deck. It was terrible and water was coming in through the portholes and everything was slipping and sliding all over the deck.”—Emma Palmer Manfull.

“A remarkable calm was observed among the Saints on that occasion, while the opposite was the case with the other passengers, who were badly frightened. Captain Forsyth...said that he went down to the people in the forepart to allay their fears, as they were crying aloud, ‘Lost, we are lost!’ But after he had assured them that there was no danger, because there were too many Mormons aboard for the ship to be harmed, order and quiet was restored. A

*See Nellie’s Voyage, p. 11*

# Genealogy Primer: Resolving Conflicting Evidence

by Kerri Tannenbaum



The Genealogical Proof Standard consists of five elements that help genealogical researchers determine whether or not their conclusions are proven. The five elements are:

1. Reasonably exhaustive research has been conducted.
2. Each statement of fact has a complete and accurate

source citation.

3. The evidence is reliable and has been skillfully correlated and interpreted.
4. Contradictory evidence has been resolved.
5. The conclusion has been soundly reasoned and coherently written.<sup>1</sup>

Here we will focus on the fourth element: resolving conflicting evidence. This step helps you determine which evidence is correct so that you can draw a credible conclusion. If you cannot resolve contradictory evidence, you cannot draw a conclusion.

You are bound to come across conflicts quite often in your research. For example, one census record may indicate that a grandfather was born in New York, while another states he was born in Massachusetts. A marriage record may indicate a grandmother's name was Mary Murphy, whereas a death record names her as Mary Ann O'Sullivan. Which one is correct? Can you explain why the evidence differs? The job of any genealogist—whether a professional or a hobbyist—is to examine such conflicts, determine and explain why the conflicts exist, and provide more credence to one piece of evidence over another.

When you encounter a conflict, there are several approaches you can take to resolve it.

**Assemble all the evidence that relates to the conflict.** Let's say you have one piece of evidence that states your great-grandfather was born in Ireland in 1870. However, three other records indicate his birth year was 1877.

**Determine if there is a lack of corroborating evidence.** If one side of the conflict is supported by only one evidence item while the other side has multiple supporting evidence items, it may suggest that the unsupported information was merely an error.<sup>2</sup>

**Examine the quality of evidence.** You could argue that the overwhelming amount of evidence supports the 1877 birth year. This would be the time to analyze the evidence for the credibility of the informant, ascertain if the sources of evidence were independent of one another, and examine the time lapse from the actual event to its recording. Determine if the records are original or derivative; the latter has a

greater chance of errors.

Consider the scenario in which your great-grandfather's 1870 birth year was found in his World War I draft registration card, but 1877 was listed on his New York civil death certificate, his gravestone, and in a newspaper obituary. The informant for the death record was likely the same informant for the gravestone and the obituary. So, you must decide if the death record or the draft registration card is more likely to be accurate.

Think about another scenario in which the 1870 birth year was listed on a World War I draft registration card, and the 1877 birth year was listed on a naturalization record, several censuses, and a death record. Does this change the credibility of which birth year was correct? It's likely the subject was the informant for both the draft card and the naturalization record. Why might he have provided different dates?

**Apply your reasoning to justify certain evidence over other evidence.** What was the motivation of the individual providing the information? How was the information gathered? Was it provided by someone other than your great-grandfather? If yes, would that person have had firsthand knowledge of the birth year? If the informant for the death certificate was a child of the deceased, it's likely the child was aware of the father's birth year. But what if the informant was a daughter-in-law, who didn't know the exact birth year? By thinking through these points and considering what may have transpired at the time the record was created, you will begin to develop a rationale as to which record may be more accurate.

Keep in mind, if you have only two pieces of conflicting evidence related to a specific fact, such as a parent's name, birthdate, or birthplace, it will likely warrant additional research in order to find corroborating evidence to support one of them. Then you will go through the steps noted above.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Board of Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Nashville: Turner Publishing, 2019), 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas W. Jones, *Mastering Genealogical Proof* (Arlington: National Genealogical Society, 2013), 74-75.

## Further Reading

*Evidence Explained*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. (especially Chapter 1) by Elizabeth Shown Mills.

*Mastering Genealogical Proof* (especially Chapter 6) by Thomas W. Jones.

*Genealogy Standards*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. by the Board of Certification of Genealogists.

BCG "Ten-Minute Methodology" Series, BCG Learning Center, BCGcertification.org.

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### *Nellie's Voyage, from p. 9*

Catholic priest, who was present, took exception to this statement, but the captain said that he had now for 18 years conveyed the 'Mormons' safely across the Atlantic, and he had never heard of the loss of any ship carrying 'Mormons.'—P. C. Carstenson

Mr. Carstenson also noted, "Our passage to New York was a pleasant and healthy one—no trouble of any kind, no sickness, no death. It was made in eleven and half days."<sup>4</sup>

While the Mormons were numerous and kept to themselves, it appears they established an order and a calmness on the ship. I did review additional voyages of the *Idaho* on the LDS site, and while storms and seasickness often prevailed, the notes were very positive. It appears that Great-Grandma Nellie, a good Catholic, did just fine.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Finding Nellie Dee," *Newsletter of the Irish Family History Forum*, vol. 28, no. 2, May-July 2018, pp.7-8.

<sup>2</sup> "Idaho 1869" ([www.tynebuiltships.co.uk](http://www.tynebuiltships.co.uk)):

SS *Idaho* specifications and brief history

<sup>3</sup> "Journey in Steerage from Northern Europe—1871" ([www.gjenvick.com](http://www.gjenvick.com)): Comparison of immigrant steamships written in 1871.

<sup>4</sup> "Seagoing Saints" ([www.churchofjesuschrist.org](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org)) by Fred E. Wood. A history of the immigration of the Mormon saints.

<sup>5</sup> Accounts of immigrant voyages assembled by Brigham Young U., <https://saintsbysea.lib.byu.edu>.

## Thank You!

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### **MARCH 2–4, 2023**

*RootsTech 2023.* This global family history conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, will offer both a virtual and in-person experience. The conference will feature keynote speakers, classes, innovative technologies, and a host of genealogical opportunities for all. The virtual event is free. Registration for Salt Lake will open in September. See [www.familysearch.org/rootstech/home](http://www.familysearch.org/rootstech/home) to explore the wide range of programs that will be available.

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