

# **The Conan Archival Project**

**The Genealogy Research Papers  
of  
Robert J. Conan, Jr., Ph.D.**



**Binder\_01-04  
Bob's Letters from Irish People (5 people)  
February 2018**

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- Letter from William Coonan, of Dangan Mill House, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny (1972), describes Coonan family history
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- Letter from Jeremiah Coonan, Gurtnagoona, Roscrea (1970).
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- Mass card & photo for Michael Coonan, Gurtillerybed, Roscrea, who died June 27, 1975, age 64.
- Letter from Michael Coonan, Gurtillerybed, Roscrea (1975), son of Michael Coonan.



## Sheraton-Islander Inn

SHERATON HOTELS AND MOTOR INNS. A WORLDWIDE SERVICE OF **ITT**

Newport, R.I. 02840

Telephone (401) 849-2600

Dear Mr. Conan -

May 26, 1972.

Our trip was great, and how much we enjoyed Ireland! There, of course, it was sight seeing plus the ancestor hunting makes really full days.

On Jerome (?) Cosnam who married widow Catherine (Kennedy) Feehan, dau of Daniel Kennedy, ~~who~~ had land in Merrimack Co. N.H., & sister to Helen Kennedy & Mrs Ben Gibson (notice no. 5 on enclosed list.) and on Jerome Cosnam's son, Daniel, who m. in Canada Cornelia McMahon of McMahon group originating in area of Ballyroan, co Limerick. —

On the McMahons I looked out - met some who are definitely connected but aren't even sure how they are connected to each other. I copied info & records of interest and hope before long that fog can be put together.  
On the Conans - nothing definite so









# Sheraton-Islander Inn

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you got those? Mr. C. Lavis (0502) Mrs. Bridget Coonan said her husband was Thomas<sup>a</sup> (John<sup>b</sup> Thomas<sup>c</sup>). Her husband's roots were in Mucklee, Ballyfoyle, Co. Kilkenny. There was a Daniel in her husband's family. No old records there.

Also, get on the phone Olive (Anna?) Coonan who works in Roscrea. She is dau. of Jeremiah (Mr. Templemor) whom you told me about. May write him later.

After brief chats I tried to outline them in possible matching lineages. I am planning to follow up & learn more about a couple of Coonan groups that interest me. In case they might be of interest to you ~~with~~ <sup>am</sup> including them on my enclosed list as No 7 & No 8.

All for now —

Happy hunting to you!

Dorian Congdon



1. Mr. William Coonan, Chesham, wants you to know that an old book has been found that he feels is of importance concerning Coonans way back. I told him I'd tell you. We may have it now on loan.
2. Mrs. John Coonan, 167 Stannaway Rd., Kimmage, Dublin 12 (tel no. 50 28 66) is widow of a John<sup>a</sup> Coonan (Edmund<sup>b</sup> Ed? John?<sup>c</sup>). She has a picture of a man & of another of a woman taken years ago by Acker Studio 279, Sixth Ave., N.Y. On back of woman's photo is stamped M. COON. Mrs. Coonan has left for Barbados but will return to Dublin June 17<sup>th</sup>.
3. Trinity College has an alumni directory (1593-1846) that includes:  
Conan, Jeremiah, 312. (Mr. Donovan) June 13, 1797, age 18; s. of John, negotiator; b. co. Kerry.  
Conan, John, 312. (Mr. Conan) May 29, 1809, aged 2. s. of John, Artificer b. co. Kerry. B.A. A.E.S.T. 1814.  
Conan, Michael F. P.E.N. (Mr. Shine), Oct. 15, 1821, aged 18; R.C. s. of James, mercator, b. Dublin. B.A. Vern. 1826.
4. Nat. Lib. Perhaps you have seen following which might be of interest:  
a. Memorabilia for the Dead. Ask for them at desk. Vol. 2 is missing but they said Trinity College has one.  
b. The library has many of the early Catholic registers on microfilm. They will show you a list of the years span for various parishes. I was told I couldn't see actual films without permission from parish priests, but somewhere else I heard that the Geneal. office can be helped there.  
c. 59<sup>th</sup> Report of Deputy Keeper of Pub. Recs. in Ireland (p. 54) shows Michl Coonan, Ballyrichard, on ~~the~~ list of those who took oath (at Clonmel) of loyalty to his majesty, Oct 1775. Also several Walshes shown.  
e. Catholic Directory for 1972 has helpful info on parishes dioceses & priests in them. (I forgot the one at bookstore). Shows a Rev John Coonan, Portlaoise, Queens Co., whom I did see. Please. but no helpful info. It also shows a Rev John Coonan, Maynooth, whom I did not contact.  
f. Index to the Irish Genealogical Society, no. 17, 1949 (this one) must



at Nat. Lib), Page 147 shows index of will abstracts in Genl. Office by Miss P. B. Eustace.

5. Public Records

- A. Catholic Qualification Rolls, abt 1794  
B. Tithe book (TAB 27N/2) for Parish of Donagh  
"Dunro" Barony of Lower Ormond  
#6. Derry (near Birr)  
James Coonan 18 acres  
John " 4 +  
#8. Denisallow (very near Birr)  
John Gibson 10  
Durby (?) Coonan 5  
Dennis Kennedy 25  
Ben Gibson 4  
plus others

6. On 8/21 Census for Barony of Ballybrit. Dundau, searched through the Townlands of the parish of Birr that were outside the town of Birr, + in addition to what Genl. Office had sent me (which you have) she found:

no 4. Tnld. Clongohill  
House #4 - John Caman (34) wif. Mary, daus. Eliz., Dan (?) + Jane + son, Thomas.  
House #23 - Mary (?) Coon (50) servant in house of John Palmer (27) miller + farmer

no. 9. Tnld. Crinkle New Barracks  
Wm. Caman (30), wif. + dau (8)

She also went through parishes of Ittagh + Killcoleman, but no luck.

7. I saw Miss Bella Coonan (no phone) res. on rd. bet. Lacka + Shinrone (Birr area). Ancestors from Lougha - Redwood area. Bella<sup>a</sup> (John<sup>b</sup>, Michael<sup>c</sup>, Patrick<sup>d</sup>?) had bro. Michael + uncles, Michael (unm.) + Denis (chn. Denis, Isabella, Michael + Mary). This last person Mary is Mrs. John Kerwin, res. Mr. Banagher. I talked to her briefly on phone + may write. Also, I plan to write to caretaker of Lougha Cem. on early Coonan burials + also for info concerning <sup>burial of</sup> Miss Elizabeth Kennedy (d. Dec 1971) who hopefully was a desc. of Denisallow Kennedys. (Tipp Co.)  
8. ~~Don't~~ I was told there had been Coonans around Annagh, Co. Tipp (Mr. Birr + Mr. Denisallow) + did track down names of 2 sisters Mary Ann + Brigid Moylan, whose mother was a Coonan. Their address is Austin Path, Carrigrohane, Roselea, Co. Tipp. I will



Set \$11.94 52  
Sept. 26, 1969

We will send as  
Char's Names as quiet  
As we can.

Finnahy.  
upperchurch.  
Thurles

Dear Mr Conon

Sorry for not writing  
sooner. We had two death in the family  
it delayed every thing Just for Relation  
on my side, I am writing this letter  
on behalf of my husband. I was very  
sorry I didn't meet you when you called  
while you were on holidays. With Gods  
help we will meet some time please god.

We were very worried to  
hear Michael Brother John as he and  
family are living in the north of Ireland  
They had a bit of trouble up there  
But it is quiet at the present. I am  
sure you heard all about it. It's really  
a religious fight. We never thought  
that could ever happen in Ireland

They were looking for a peace keeping  
force, from the U.S.A. It's turned down  
as far as we know.

Well Mr Conan we have  
decided to do that job of work for  
you as soon as we can. As I ~~have~~ had  
to giving up my job Michael is not to  
well with his back at the moment.  
and the money would be a welcome  
gift. I have got some paper and all  
for to do it. I will call to our  
parish Priest as soon as possible.

Hope you are well since  
your holiday also your father, and your  
etc. I am writing this on Sunday.  
it's a miserable wet day here we are  
often having some very nice weather  
so we don't complain. I will close  
now. We hope to hear from you soon  
again.

God Bless all.  
Anne Michael Conan



Dear Professor Conan,

Dangan Mill House,  
Thomastown,  
Co. Kilkenny,  
Ireland.  
9:11:70.

I feel quite ashamed at my long delay in replying to your very interesting letter relating to our family antecedents and history. I too am anxious to probe my family's background; but unfortunately I put the task on the long finger and only began making enquiries last Autumn.

Though I have not seen the record myself, I have it from a priest friend that the family originated in the South West coast of Co. Clare, as O. CUANAIN, which is Gaelic, and is pronounced Coonauin. Most of the families there now spell their name as "Counihan". In Co. Kildare too there are Counihans and Coonans. In the West of Ireland, where the Gaelic ways and traditions are purest one finds the name spelt Cunnane, which is nearest to the original form. In the 12th. century a Bishop Coonan presided over the See of Ely and Roscrea, Co. Tipperary. There are "Conans" in small numbers, mostly in the Northern part of the Country. Most typical family Christian names are: Tom. Edward. Michael. Patrick in the male; Brigid, Margaret, Maryanne, Minnie and Annie in the female members. I have met members from different parts of Ireland and all have predominantly black hair, longish noses and rather dark skin. The girls are usually very attractive and the men well formed and medium height. There is one tantalising paradox, and it is the strange fact that the families almost without exception live in isolation from each other and and, if related at all, are usually as remote as third cousins. One never comes across little villages with three or four families so named, as in the case with most of the Gaelic families. The possible explanation is that the females arrive in greater numbers than males, and that the latter are of a roving disposition: My own son and two daughters are indeed of the roving kind. The wandering Celt is a recognised phenomenon, and the Coonans are indeed Celts. An old member of the clan whom I met in Co. Waterford some years back gave the explanation that the family was cursed in the male line by an old priest on whom some one of the names had grievously outraged! I have never come across a Protestant Coonan, so I presume you are a Catholic, though your name, Robert is mostly a Protestant one here.

My father, Thomas (Tom) Coonan was born in the townland of Barnagrotty, near Toomevara, Co. Tipperary, in 1860, and died in Moneygall in 1905. He had two sisters, Ellen the elder, Margaret, the younger (My family is similar), who were born in Barnagrotty as well. He was a cattle trader, and was often called "Black Tom Coonan". His father, my grandfather, was known as Black Tom, and was also a cattle trader. I don't know where he was born, but I believe it was in the parish of Templederry, which is not very far to the North of Upperchurch, and is in Co. Tipperary. He died in Barnagrotty in 1890, and was then 65yrs.



65 years,

I could find no trace of his birth, either in the Central Registry, The Custom House, Dublin, nor in the Toomevara parish records. In the latter case I discovered the Book which might have given those details was destroyed by fire about 1900. I do know that when he lived in Barnagrotty there were a number of other men of the name who might be his brothers or his first cousins. Barnagrotty then was referred to as Coonans' town. That so many men survived the Famine of 1847, and remained living on in the place, hale and hearty, suggests to me that they must have had no little wealth with which to buy the meal, which alone could save them from starvation. From the National Register of Deaths I picked out three four Coonans who could have been my grandfather's brothers and/or first cousins viz: Edward, died Mar 1894; Michael, died the same year; Cornelius died June, 1894, and another Edward in Sept, 1894. Why, one asks, did all four die in 1894? Perhaps cholera. The Templederry parish record may contain some useful information, and if, at 71 years, my luck holds out I may go down there next Summer DV. As well as co-operating with you I should like to collate the information for my son Liam, who is a Federal Attorney in the Criminal side, and at present prosecuting the Mafia in <sup>the</sup> stronghold. He is an ex US Marine Sergeant with two other degrees as well. He got his appointment as F.A. following a distinguished course at Seaton Hall Law School. He lives at 1235, Cambridge Avenue, Plainfields, N.J., and I am am sure he would like to meet you. My two girls are here in Ireland having travelled in the US and Europe, to get languages and secretarial experience. I am a retired Police Superintendent, and very much in demand as an organiser, secretary and what have you.

I shall be most grateful to have as much information relevant to my forebears as you can give me. In return I shall delve into records myself and discuss the result with you whenever you come back to Ireland. I am amazed at the volume of data which you have accumulated about concerning your ancestors. May I ask whether you traced any Coonans around the Upperchurch area who might be able to give me a lead too?

With every good wish for your success, I remain

Yours sincerely,

*Bill Coonan.*  
William Coonan.



Dangan Mill House,  
Thomastown,  
Co. Kilkenny.  
12:6:72.

Dear Bob,

I regret the delayed answer to your letter of April 6th. which did not reach me until last Monday. It had arrived here when I was in the US. on a long holiday, and was redirected by my wife to the NJ. address, but it only arrived there ten days ago and was immediately returned to me with other family correspondence.

Since we last corresponded I have been stricken by a series of illnesses, but now feel much improved DG. I did make some enquiries in Tipp. and Kilkenny centres about our ancestors with the following results: There were no Coonans baptised in Templederry or Drombane parishes since records were opened; I could not find my grandfather's birth recorded in Toomevara as the 1800 - 1825 <sup>record</sup> was destroyed by fire years ago: I now incline to the belief that the Clan originated around Roscrea. In the library (County) Thurles there is a copy of a local history, "Roscrea Town and Parish" by Dermot F. Gleeson, a Nenaghman, which was published in 1947. The book is out of print. The Author says inter alia: "Roscrea has never been without a Coonan: A great many of the parish priests who held office in the surrounding parishes were Coonans. One has a tombstone erected to his memory in Shanross Abbey (ruin) outside the town. The first Prior of the monastery there was an O'Cuanain and during his term, circa 900, the "BOOK of Dimma" was written. The book is now in the library of Trinity College. He had the Celtic/Romanesque carving done over the old doorway, and it is believed to be the only specimen now to be found in this island. When the monasteries were being plundered the Dimma book was taken away for safety, and about 1839 some boys who were birdnesting in the Devil's Bit mountain, just <sup>North</sup> ~~West~~ of Moneygall found the book in a cave. The fact that a family of Coonans lived, and still live, on the slope of the Mountain at Gortagarry, <sup>not far away</sup> has significance in this context. The comhdagh, or in English, cover, bears the inscription "... Donal O'Cuanain, Lord Senior of Munster Had me Repaired this Last Time", i.e. (around 1100). Eachtus O'Cuanain, a monk in the Sean Ross Abbey around 900, was involved in the writing of a book of "Exhortations and Rules for the Penitential Life" It was written during Ireland's "Green Age", and is now in the Royal Library in Brussels! Isac O'Cuanain was the first and only Bishop of Roscrea. When he died the area was absorbed into the present Diocese of Killaloe, around 1150 or so. Quote: "the family name is inseparably associated with the Church in Roscrea."



I visited a family of Coonan's at Muckalee, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, who would appear to have originated in Roscrea, where a large colony at Collough, continued up to about 50 years ago. A Tom. Coonan and family still live in the locality. In Shinrone, in Terryglass, in the Birr area, all within some ten miles of Roscrea there are a good many families. In ~~the~~ Blakefield, Gortagarry, a few miles directly South of Moneygall there are one or two old ladies living, who have a good knowledge of their own family history, I am told. There is a woman in Bournna, which is near Templemore, whose maiden name was Coonan. She and her son, a priest, have an interest in their family origin, and I shall get her name and address before your arrival here. I haven't come across the name Jeremiah in any of the families. Years ago, when I was in Colloney, Co. Sligo, on a special police duty assignment, I met a man named Coonan there, but couldn't find a connection between us.

with regard to your itinerary in August, I suggest that you return from Sligo via Mullingar, Athlone, Tullamore and Portlaois. At that point you will be on the main road for Wenagh, but you will also be within 30 miles or so of Thomastown. If you come and spend a night with me we can talk things over in greater detail, and I will accompany you in my own car to ~~Wenagh~~ Roscrea, and perhaps we could visit a few families in that area before my return home. At all events I will meet you, either in Roscrea or Wenagh, as you suggest. If I might make a suggestion it would be that you make your base in Roscrea instead of Wenagh, and there are one or two good hotels there. Another suggestion is that you go carefully into the Roscrea Rural District records in the General Reg. Office, the Custom House, Dublin, and you are likely to be rewarded. The Roscrea Parish Record should yield valuable information. A month ago or thereabouts a lady who gave her name as Mrs Congdon and her address as Calafornia rang me for information about her Coonan ancestors. She was in the Birr area, and in Carlow. She promised to ring me <sup>later</sup> but failed to do so. was she one of your family?

Thank you for all the useful information you have given me, and I am looking forward to meeting you in August DV.

Sincerely yours,

*Bill Coonan.*



Information from Bill Connon  
from S. of Moneygall - now Thomastown

A. He had copied the following Roason records in Dublin at the Custom House!

THOMAS	Coonan	d.	31/1/1890	Barnegatty, age 70	cattle dealer	(Deaths)
ANNE	"		27/3/1890	age 65		
BRIDGET	"		Mar. 1893			
CATHERINE	"		Dec. 1893			
EVA	"		Mar. 1894			
MICHAEL	"		Mar. 1894			
CORNELIUS	"		June 1894			
EDWARD	"		Sept. 1894			

B. From his 'notebook' - possibly the not indicated (a number of pages used for notes with other things!)

1. Mary Leamy Clencannon, wife of Michael Coonan, whose Grandfather was John Coonan and is buried in Anna meastle (S. of Moneygall). He came from Barnagilly to Knockanroger after having spent some time in Australia. John had a large number of sisters who went to England - one, Kate, came back and married James Nalen and had 2 daughters.
2. William Coonan, late of Clonmahan, his daughter Mary married a blacksmith by the name of Benigan of Clonakenny. Son was ordained 12/6/71 - another son is Pat Coonan.
3. Mike Coonan of Behaglass, Rosara had 4 boys + 3 girls: one boy Jeremiah of Behaglass had 3 boys and 5 girls, and one of these sons was also Jeremiah of Contragosa, Rosara, has 2 sons and 2 girls.
4. Thomas Coonan d. about 1900 in Castlecome, Co. Kilkenny. His sons, all dec., were John d. 1906 Muckalee, Castlecome, and d. 1938 age 74; Tom, Martin d. Muckalee d. Ballycallan, Edmund d. Muckalee, Dan d. in England, and sisters Mary Anna, Kathleen, both were in England, Lena Dawn of Ballycallan, (+ Bridget?) all b. Muckalee.
5. Presumably of same family - Martin? Coonan d. 8/5/1860 age 78 yrs. muckalee bur.  
Mary Coonan d. 25/4/1858 age 24. muckalee bur.
6. Above Thomas (#4)? was Grandfather of Bill Coonan - Thomas b. about 1815? at Toomevara



Gurtnagoona  
Roscrea

16/12/70

Dear Friend

In a very much belated reply to letter - re History of Coonan family. I have been making enquiries in many places and I could not make much headway. My brother Michael is the only one that knows anything about the family.

You ask about my grandfather's brothers - he had only one that we know about and he died young following accident in work. His name was John. They are supposed to have come from Cullohill close to Laois Border.

I was speaking to the Parish Priest of Bournea, and he said if you write to him and let



him have as much Particulars  
as you can he will look up all  
the Record for you his address  
is - Rev. John Kennedy P. P.

Bournea. Roscrea, Co. Tipp.

I was speaking to a widow  
woman, Mrs. Coonan, Limerick  
St. Roscrea, Her husband was  
a tailor in Roscrea, and he came  
from Thurles, she was to look  
up his Relations there, and  
let me know of them. I can get  
her to write you.

I am very sorry for all  
the delay, please accept my sincere  
apologies, I will continue to  
seek all the information I can.

Hope to see you in Ireland very  
soon, and I travel with you to as  
many places, you might like  
to spend some days at our Place



I can put you up for a Holiday  
I wish you and your Father  
and families a very Happy  
Christmas and Successful New  
Year

I remain

Yours faithfully

Jeremiah Conan



*To Wish You a Happy Easter*





Especially happy  
wishes

And many warm  
thoughts too

Are in this Easter  
greeting

Because it's just  
for you!

Best wishes to you and family

From Conans of  
Gurtnagoona  
Roscrea



Gurtnagoona,  
Roscrea,  
21/3/72

Dear Friend,

I have spent some time going over the latest list of Coonan's - Dromard and Ballinacrad, and I was speaking with my brother Mr. and there are two John's that might fit in to my great Grand Fathers time. He is in contact with some old people in that area and is to write you all he can find out.

I was speaking to Dr. Kennedy of Bournea, and he was to go through all his records for you.

Thanking that this for you and all your Family in the best of health.

I remain

Your Friend

Jeremiah Coonan



13<sup>th</sup> Dec

Gurteberg

Roscrea

Dear Robert

I enclose here Details of the Conran Family from Parish. I have met a grandson of Michael Conran's and Catherine Spillane's. Who told that the said Michael Conran came from my part of the country

I Hope your Father and yourself are keeping well

I also enclose Photo of my Daughters Wedding From left Joseph Son, Mary Daughter, Michael Son, my wife Ann, Groom Michael Muldowney, Bride Theresa, my self, Philomena Daughter, Patrick Son, Ann Daughter



When you come to Ireland again  
let me know. And ~~will~~ you wish  
I will ~~give~~ give at Day with you and  
show you any place I know that  
any Conan's ~~lived~~ lived.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas  
And Bright new year

Yours sincerely  
Michael Conan







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TEMPLEMORE . . . Co. TIPPERARY



**"We have loved him in life, let us  
not forget him in death"  
—St. Ambrose.**

**JESUS MERCY**



**MARY HELP**

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
Michael Coonan**

**Gurtderrybeg Roscrea.**

**Who died on the  
27th JUNE 1975**

**Aged 64 Years**

**R. I. P.**

**"All I ask of you, is that you will  
remember me at Mass and  
Holy Communion"**



Gurtderrybeg,  
Rascree,

Co. Tipperary.

29<sup>th</sup> December, 1975.

Dear Mr. Lennon,

Many thanks for your Christmas card and greetings received to-day. Well 'Cousin Bob' I am sorry to say that my father (Michael) passed to his eternal reward last June. He had a peaceful death. He was sick for only three weeks with no excessive suffering. Peace to his soul.

To add further sorrow to us for 1975 Daddy's sister Bridget (Mrs Lennon) who was sick for some years died in October. R.I.P. I don't know if you ever met



her as she was in hospital for 3 or  
4 years.

I hope you and yours are in  
good form. I wish you a very happy  
New Year.

yours sincerely,

Michael Boonan (Gnr)