

Finding The McGrath - Fanning Papers

By

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The Journey of the McGrath-Fanning Papers

What happens to a family's history when the last member of that family finally dies off? If nothing has been written down then there is no one to tell the stories anymore and no one to listen. In many cases that is exactly the fate of an oral family history. Occasionally a member of the family has taken the time to write down the details of the family's story. For the ultimate survival of this story it's necessary to find a family historian in each generation to be the keeper of the family's story and to continuously add to the story. Even in this case the family historian can sometimes be the last living member of the family. What happens after this person's death is just a matter of good luck and sometimes a little planning, as the following example shows.

In New Orleans, in 1999, Marvin Minton purchased a large needlepoint of George Washington at an estate sale. The needlepoint was the work of local artist, Carcida Allen, who had made it at the time of the country's first centennial in 1876. The needlepoint had been left to Mary and Margaret McGrath at the time of Allen's death in 1919. The unmarried McGrath sisters were the daughters of Patrick H. McGrath and Helen Summers O'Connor. Upon Mary McGrath's death she left the needlepoint to Mary Daspit Grady, a friend and local artist (also a 1st cousin once removed). Grady died in 1997 and it was at her estate sale that Minton purchased the Washington needlepoint. Much to his surprise, along with the needlepoint he received a number of McGrath family papers. Fortunately Minton had an interest in genealogy and he transcribed much of the information found in the McGrath papers and posted it at Ancestry.com along with some additional research that he had done on the McGrath family. Through Minton's efforts the McGrath papers were saved. It was found that there was more information to be extracted from the original papers after Minton made them available. This allowed for the confirmation of the reconstruction of the McGrath family of Coolkill, which had been based on hunches and circumstantial evidence.

After five years of searching, Clare Tuohy, a fellow researcher, was able to track down Marvin Minton and contacted him. He graciously sent copies of the McGrath papers to this researcher and she shared them with me. Minton also explained how the papers had come into his possession as was related above. The original author of these papers is thought to have been Winifred McGrath, a nun with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in New Orleans. Winifred was the aunt of Mary and Margaret McGrath and probably left the papers with them for safe keeping. Winifred and Patrick were 2 of the many siblings of parents Patrick McGrath and Bridget Fanning of Grange, Holycross parish, Co. Tipperary, Ireland. The family had immigrated to New Orleans by ship in the summer of 1849 near the end of the Great Famine in Ireland.

The Story of the McGrath-Fanning Papers - Minton

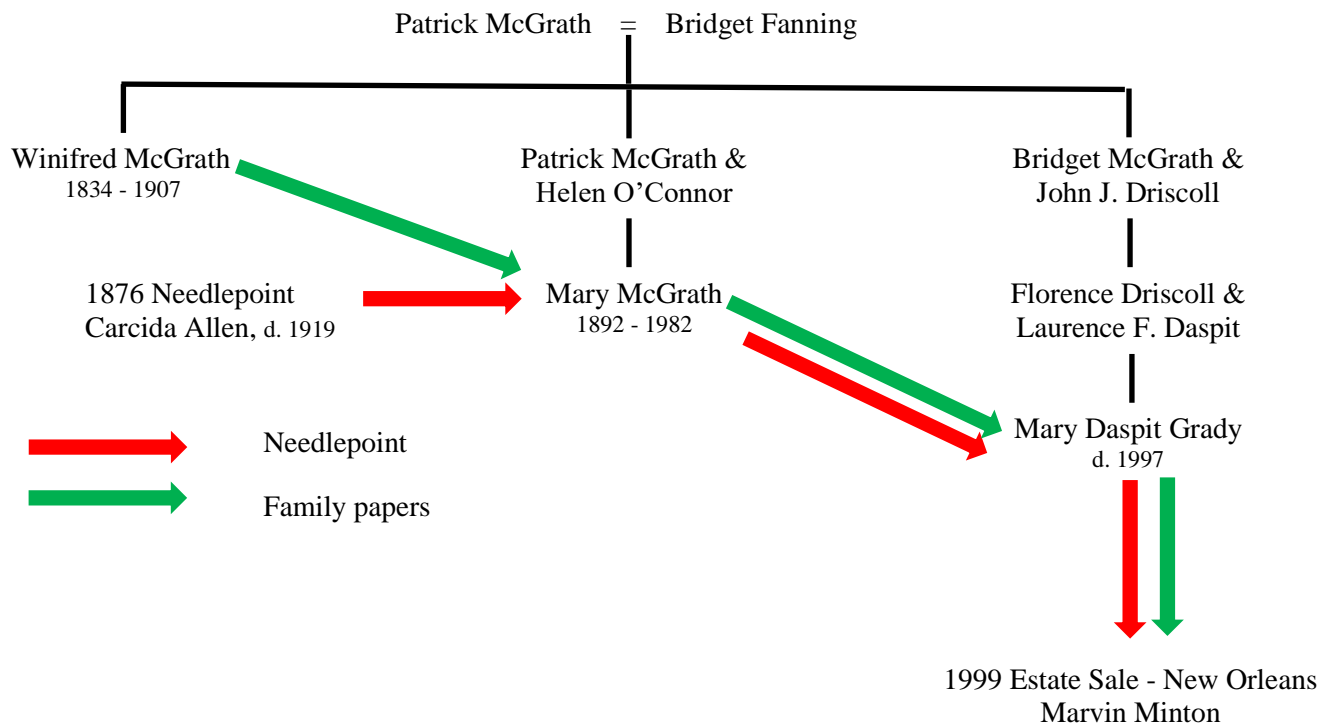
In 1999, I (Marvin Minton) purchased a large needlepoint of GEORGE WASHINGTON, that had been done in 1876 (1st centennial of American Independence) by a Carcida Allen of New Orleans.

When she (Carcida Allen) died in 1919, she left the needlepoint to her friends, Mary (13 May 1892-26 Aug 1982); Margaret (8 Dec 1896-2 Oct 1980) McGrath [They were daughters of Patrick H. McGrath (21 Jul 1847-unknown) and Helen Summers "Nellie" O'Connor.]

Mary and Margaret McGrath never married and upon Mary's death she left the needlepoint to her friend, Mary Daspit Grady, a local artist in New Orleans. It was at the auction of Mary Grady's disposal of properties after her death (died 9 Oct 1997) that I purchased the needlepoint.

When I purchased the needlepoint at auction, I was given quite a number of family papers. That is where I obtained a lot of the information that I show about their families in his paper.

The Path of the McGrath-Fanning papers



Letter from Ireland - Author Unknown

Drombane 7th Mar. 1865
County Tipperary, Ireland

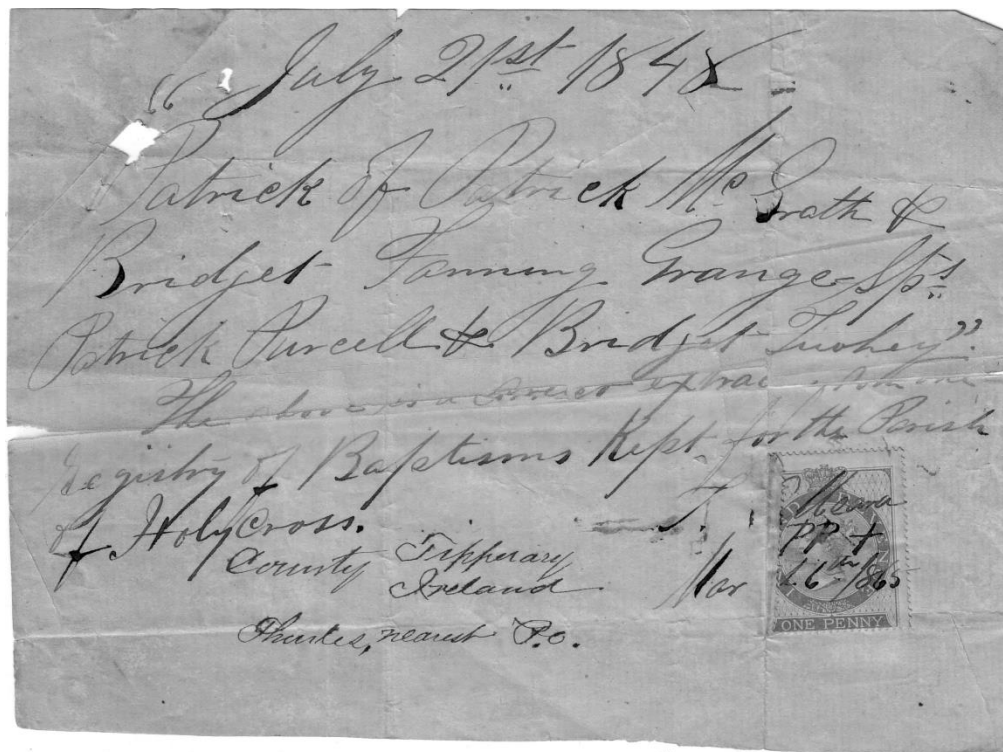
Dear Winifred,

I received your letter of the 5th ultimo and was I need not say glad to hear from you all and gladder still to hear of you all being in good health. This unfortunate and I may say damnable war has caused many a father and mother sister & brother to lament & deplore its grievous effects and by you all I suppose at present these effects are strongly felt.

We got the age of Patrick which we send you but not exactly as we got it. According to the Parish registry he was born on the 21st July 1847 but we have copied and made it 1848. For your life keep secret. Myself with your uncles and aunts would wish to have him come home if possible until such time as there would be no danger of him. Philip went and we know no more of him. We were all glad to hear that Philip is still alive not withstanding his numerous campaigns and we hope in God he will survive them all.

Your Aunt Nelly departed this life for, I hope a better on the 29th July last. Your Aunt Catherine is in good health and Bridget is still with her. Your uncle Daniel is himself and family in good health. He has 5 sons and 3 daughters. All whom you enquired for are in good health and were very glad to hear from you. We hope you will write immediately after receiving this in order to let us know the effects of the Draft.

[No signature]



Patrick McGrath's Baptism Information

“July 21st 1848

Patrick of Patrick McGrath &

Bridget Fanning Grange – Sps.

Patrick Purcell & Bridget Tuohey.

The above is a correct extract from the
Registry of Baptisms kept for the Parish
Of Holycross.
County Tipperary Ireland
Thurles, nearest P.O.”

A one penny stamp was attached in the lower right hand corner

The stamp was over signed:

“J. O Meara

PP +

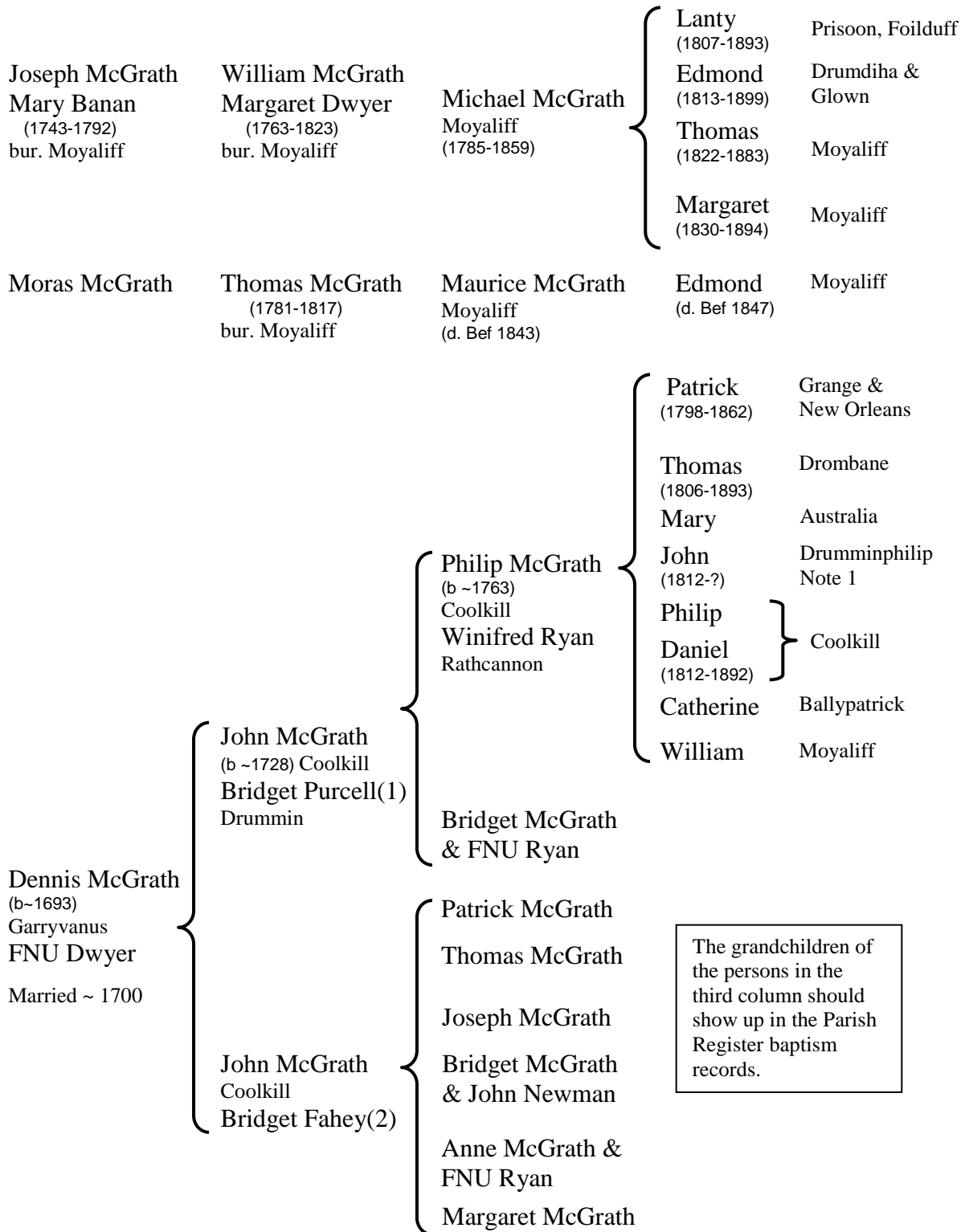
March 6th 1865”

Among the McGrath-Fanning papers was a letter from an unknown author from Drombane, Ireland addressed to Winifred McGrath and dated March 7, 1865. In addition to the usual well wishes and the asking about relatives and friends there was included a baptism record for Winifred's younger brother Patrick. The Civil War had been dragging on for four years and the North was now bringing the battles deep into the heart of the Confederacy.

Winifred's 17 year old brother would have been eligible for the draft into the Army upon his 18th birthday in July. The author of the letter had obtained a copy of Patrick's baptismal record from J. O'Meara, the parish priest at Holycross. Patrick's baptismal date had been changed by the letter author from 1847 to 1848 in an effort to help the young man avoid the draft. The author also instructed Winifred: “For your life keep secret.”

On May 1, 1862 Union forces completed the unopposed capture of New Orleans. The city was under Union administration until the end of the war and through more than a decade of Reconstruction. The draft that Patrick was facing was that into the Union Army. This forged baptismal record was a valiant exercise of cooperation across the ocean but it proved unnecessary as the hostilities ended the following month with Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox Court House.

The McGrath Families



Note 1 - John McGrath was not found in the list of names on Ancestries 6.

From: *Reaching Across the Penal Times*

The children of the persons in the fourth column are of ages that would allow them to appear in the parish registers. Patrick McGrath (1798-1862) was the father of Winifred McGrath who was the original author of the McGrath-Fanning papers. Patrick was thought to be Philip McGrath's oldest child in Scenario II. If Patrick's birth had occurred when Philip was 35 and we apply the same assumption going back in time we have the following: Philip (b. ~1763), John (b. ~ 1728) and Dennis (b. ~ 1693). This provides an approximate time frame in which to pursue the possibility of further unification. This estimated generation spacing placed Dennis McGrath's birth at approximately 1693. In the McGrath-Fanning papers there were references to Dennis' marriage in "about the year 1701," "in about 1700, and "early in 1700s." However, Dennis might have been born 10-20 years earlier than the 1693 estimate without having an impact on the conclusions of this present research.

Possible Future Unification

In 1997 the Nenagh Heritage Center had sent me a list of McGraths found in the cemeteries of Upperchurch, Moyaliff and Templebeg. The Joseph and William McGrath names shown in the table above were among those names and they were buried in Moyaliff. At that time I had tentatively associated them with my ggg-grandfather Michael McGrath of Moyaliff, knowing full well that all I had in support of my assumptions were a reasonable generational separation and geographical proximity.

After much more research into the parish registers the case for Joseph and William being Michael's ancestors grew stronger. When the McGrath-Fanning papers arrived, a sizeable portion of the available McGraths in the Holycross and Upperchurch area were shown to be descended from Dennis McGrath and his son John McGrath. Now there were no remaining competitors who could claim Joseph and William McGrath for their family. This further supported the previous circumstantial case for them being Michael McGrath's ancestors.

The Maurice McGrath family line was traced out using the Griffith's Valuation, Parish Registers and the Cancelled Books. His proposed ancestors were also found in the Moyaliff Cemetery inscriptions provided by the Nenagh Heritage Center. Only Maurice's son Edmond has been discovered so far, although it's almost certain that Edmond had other siblings.

The Philip McGrath and Winifred Ryan family construction was made possible by the survival of the family genealogy recorded by Philip's granddaughter Winifred McGrath. Marvin Minton was instrumental in saving these records which he received with a purchase he made at an estate sale in New Orleans. A pleasant surprise was that McGrath-Fanning papers contained a list of Philip McGrath's siblings and also gave their father (John McGrath) and grandfather's (Dennis McGrath) names and their associated townland names.

The promise of a further unification of these McGrath lines in the future is at present based on geographic proximity and a common surname. It might be possible that Joseph, Moras and Dennis McGrath are related. Since Dennis was born in about 1693 and William and Moras were probably born around 1740-1750 it is not impossible that Dennis might be their father. Confirmation of this observation will have to await the next surprise discovery. Perhaps I need to start checking out estate sales.

Appendix

Email From Marvin Minton

Jan 12 2017

Dear Ms. Tuohy:

Thank you for your email concerning ancestries. First, let me tell you how I became interested in these families. They are of no kin to me. In 1999, I purchased a large needlepoint of GEORGE WASHINGTON, that had been done in 1876 (1st centennial of American Independence) by a Carcida Allen of New Orleans. When she died in 1919, she left the needlepoint to her friends, Mary (13 May 1892-26 Aug 1982); Margaret (8 Dec 1896-2 Oct 1980) McGrath, daughters of Patrick H. McGrath (21 Jul 1847-unknown); wife, Helen Summers "Nellie" O'Connor. Mary and Margaret never married. Mary McGrath then left the needlepoint to her friend, Mary Daspit Grady, a local artist in New Orleans. It was at the auction of Mary Grady's disposal of properties after her death (died 9 Oct 1997) that I purchased the needlepoint. When I purchased the needlepoint at auction, I was given quite a number of family papers. That is where I obtained a lot of the information that I show about their families.

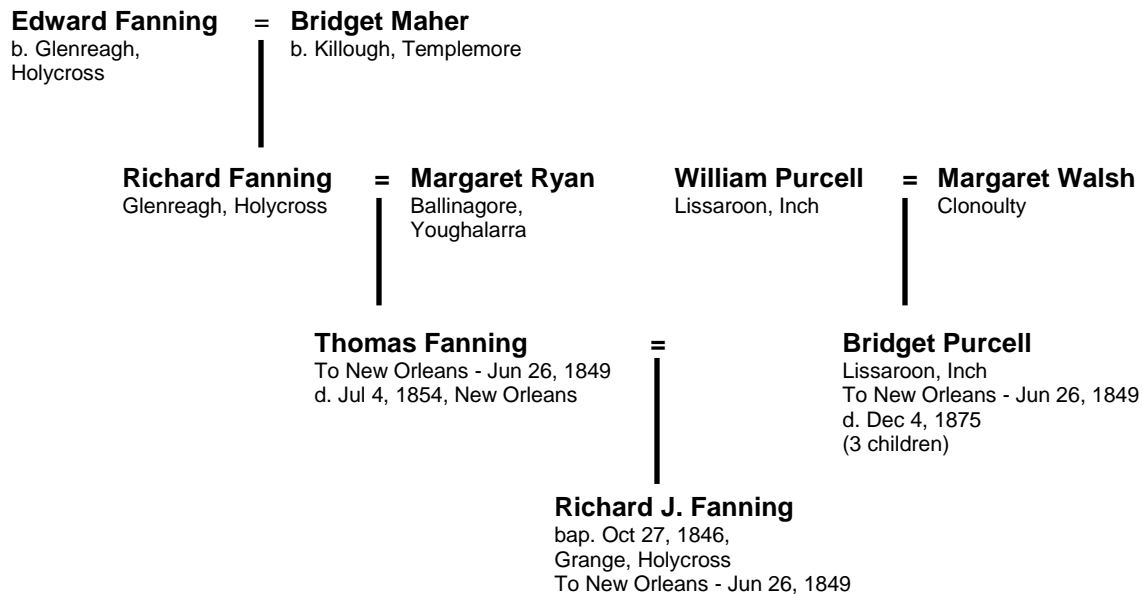
I did further research through Ancestry.com and came up with much more information. Much of the information I found was through church and local records in New Orleans. As you can see in my postings on these families, I had a lot of names, but not many dates, etc. Evidently these names lists were done by the McGrath sisters. I do have some old letters from kin in Ireland to those in New Orleans. Also have the certificate of Patrick H. McGrath's citizenship papers.

How are you kin to the McGraths, Fannings & Purcells? While this family interests me, I respectively don't necessarily want to continue with further research; having said that, I would like to know a little more on the families. Do you have your family tree listed somewhere on Rootsweb or Ancestry or some other web site, where I could view your records? I no longer am doing research on Ancestry.com and I have let my subscription expire.

If you will please contact me at my email address: mintonm040@gmail.com and give me your email address, I will happily email you some copies of some of the papers if you are interested. I rarely check Ancestry.com email. Thank you.....and a Happy New Year to you yours.

Marvin A. Minton

Richard J. Fanning's Ancestors



Richard J. Fanning was born in Ireland and came to New Orleans with his parents in 1849. The Fanning family was on the same ship as Patrick McGrath and his family. Richard's father, Thomas, and Patrick's wife, Bridget Fanning, were siblings. Richard Fanning and Patrick McGrath's daughter Winifred were first cousins. Richard Fanning was the author of one of the McGrath-Fanning papers: "Ancestry R. J. Fanning" (2 pages).