

## **THE RYAN FAMILY IN IRELAND AND AMERICA (revised, 2005)**

by Thomas E. Buckley, S.J.

INTRODUCTION: This is one part of a much larger family history project that my brother Fletcher and I began working on over thirty years ago. We wanted to trace the Thomas Ryan family which came to the United States in the 1840s and 1850s from Holy Cross and Ballycahill parish in County Tipperary, Ireland. Many other family members as well as librarians and archivists have helped put this together but Catherine Ledgerwood and Carol Wolff deserve special mention. We very much welcome any help that anyone is able to provide.

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Thomas Gleason Ryan, was born in the parish of Ballycahill and Holy Cross in County Tipperary, Ireland on Dec. 28, 1828 and immigrated with other members of his family to the United States during or soon after the potato famine of the 1840s.<sup>1</sup>

In family tradition the Ryans came from Thurles in Tipperary. Yet over the years when various descendants visited there, they were unable to find any evidence of Thomas Ryan or other members of his family in its baptismal registers. When asked where they were from, however, Irish immigrants normally gave the name of the nearest market town as their place of origin, rather than the rural parish out in the countryside where they actually lived.

A gravestone in the cemetery on Maple Ridge in upstate New York where Tom Ryan settled provided the clue. Down the road from the Ryan farm, the Irish settlers built their church in 1859, naming it for St. Patrick. In the cemetery behind the church they buried Tom Ryan's mother, Margaret Gleason Ryan, mother-in-law, Mary McQuade Lawlee, and many other relatives and friends. One of these was his uncle who died in 1883. The uncle's gravestone reads: "Thomas McGrath, Native of Mealiffe, near Holy Cross, Co. Tipperary, Ireland."<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup> The date of birth is family tradition. The parish register in Ireland is not extant for this year.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas McGrath was the husband of Catherine Gleeson, the sister of Margaret Gleason Ryan. Maple Ridge Cemetery Records, surveyed by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Powlin, June 1965. The Mormon Library has another listing of the gravestones which is more complete than the Powlin version, but neither version is completely accurate as Fletcher Buckley found on his visit there. This cemetery is behind the site of St. Patrick's church. The building was sold and removed in 1941. There is a plaque on the original steps and the cemetery

century, Ireland had three types of parishes: the civil parish, which was the unit of governmental administration under British rule; the parish of the established Church of Ireland, which was coextensive with the civil parish; and the Roman Catholic parish in which the vast majority of inhabitants were baptized and worshipped. A few miles southwest of Thurles the Ryans lived within the Church of Ireland and civil parish of Mealiffe, and were members of the Catholic parish of Ballycahill and Holycross.<sup>3</sup>

This Catholic parish has two names, with the Ballycahill section located on the northwest side. Holy Cross was a Cistercian abbey which was founded about 1180 and became a shrine and pilgrimage site for all of Ireland. At the time of the Reformation, the abbey was suppressed, the church destroyed, and the monks driven out. According to the Protestant Report of 1731, Catholics in the parish used "a wretched cabin" for the celebration of mass. A few years later a new priest built an L-shaped chapel against one of the remaining walls of the abbey, and families in the area began to use the old abbey church as a burial ground. Today the abbey has been declared a National Monument, and the abbey church has been rebuilt and once again serves the local parish.<sup>4</sup>

The Catholic parish baptismal register begins in the middle of 1835, so it does not include the births of Thomas Ryan and his sisters Mary and Bridget. But the names and baptismal dates of younger brothers and sisters are listed there:

April 7, 1838, Ellen, of Thos Ryan and Margaret Gleason  
sponsors: Edmond Ryan and Ellen Gleason.

April 12, 1839, Patrick, of Thomas Ryan and Margaret Gleason  
sponsor: Bridget Allen.

March 11, 1842, Patt, of Tom Ryan and Margaret Gleason, Ballyoughter  
sponsors: Patt Gleason and Bridget Gleason.

May 3, 1845, James, of Thomas Ryan and Margaret Gleason, Mealiff  
sponsor: Bridget Brotharin (?)

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was in excellent shape when I visited in the fall of 1995, having been cleaned and repaired during the summer.

<sup>3</sup> The spelling of the parish name has slight variations in the documents. The territory covered by the Catholic parish was usually larger than that of the civil, Church of Ireland, parish.

<sup>4</sup> W.J. Hayes, *Holy Cross Abbey* (Dublin, n.d.).



|---- Ellen (1838-?)  
|  
|---- Mary (1840-1927)  
|  
|---- Patrick m Jane White -----five children  
| (1842-1928) (1847-1903)  
|  
|---- James (1845-?)  
|  
|---- Edmond (1848-?)

The parish register also locates the Ryan farm. The names of Ballyoughter, Mealiff (Moyaliff), and Clareen belong to townlands, the smallest portion of property division in Ireland. These three townlands are next to one another and located inside the civil parish of Moyaliff. Thomas Ryan was probably a tenant farmer with strips of land in each of these townlands. Two other important sources for Irish family history support the location of the Ryan home. First, Griffith's *Primary Valuation of Tenements* (1850) lists these townlands with Ryans and Gleasons living on them. Second, the tithe records located in the Public Record Office, Dublin, and drawn up in 1837 for Tipperary show the same. There is a Thomas Ryan with three acres in Ballyoughter as well as a Thomas Ryan listed in Moyaliffe that year.<sup>8</sup> Ryan is among the most common names in the region, then and now.

A third, much older, source is particularly interesting, though chilling. In the middle of the seventeenth century, Oliver Cromwell, determined to crush the Irish once and for all, confiscated the property of all those who had not supported his Commonwealth, and created a new landlord class which would control the land for more than two centuries. "The Book of Distribution for the County of Tipperary," drawn up in 1654 and available in manuscript in the Thurles public library shows the distribution of property and its confiscation under Cromwell. It lists the Ryans of Moyaliff and neighboring civil parishes in that year. Among them were Connor and John Ryan of Lisnaselly and Daniel Ryan who had land in Ballyoughter. There were other Ryans nearby: Donogh, Owen, Philip, Teige, and Rory were their given names. All had their property seized, and they were reduced to the level of cottiers or tenants-at-will to a Protestant landlord class.

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<sup>8</sup> The original valuation sheets may be seen at Ely Place (Near Stephen's Green), Dublin. Tithe Applotment Books, County Tipperary, [Barony of Upper Kilnemonagh], Parish of Moyaliff, Public Record Office. These handwritten title records have been microfilmed and are available at the Mormon Library, Los Angeles.

This was their economic status -- tenants on land which had once belonged to them -- when the potato blight hit Ireland in 1845. This was the food on which the people lived. The fungus blacked and rotted the potatoes making them unfit to eat. As the blight spread across the land, it brought famine followed by an epidemic of typhus. The crop failed totally in 1846 and again in 1848; and within five years the country's population, listed as 8,175,124 in the census of 1841, dropped by at least two and a half million. Meanwhile the English landlords continued to export to England and elsewhere the beef and grains which might have fed the people. A British government devoted to the economic doctrines of *laissez-faire* let the Irish die.<sup>9</sup> No accurate count exists of the number who starved to death or left the country, but during these years the Ryans, Gleasons, McGraths, and Purcells of Moyaliff began to immigrate to America.

The family story is that Thomas Ryan came to the United States about 1847. If that is correct, then he left a year or so before his father's sudden death. In family lore, the senior Thomas Ryan was killed while "chasing hounds." Those who frequent the pub near Holycross parish church will tell you that the sport of following the dogs on foot is still popular in this part of Ireland, and those who participate are known as "beaglemen." In the middle of a pasture on the north side of Moyaliff townland is an ancient cemetery containing a tumbled down Norman chapel and many old tombstones. The senior Thomas Ryan may have been buried there. Another possibility is a much larger cemetery, which contains many Ryan tombstones, located near the glebe house on the edge of Ballyoughter townland.<sup>10</sup>

According to family tradition, Margaret Gleason Ryan opened a school after her husband's death. Irish sources say this was not uncommon at the time, because in this way a woman with basic education could support a family. But she did not remain in Ireland for more than a few years. Instead, as was true for many others in the circle of her family and neighbors, America beckoned. Some had already gone to the United States. We do not know the exact order or circumstances in which these people left their homes, but the linkage of names is sufficient to show that over several decades a number of Irish from Ballycahill and Holycross parish moved across the Atlantic and eventually formed a community in

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<sup>9</sup> The best study of the famine in Ireland is still Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland, 1845-1849* (New York, 1962).

<sup>10</sup> I checked these quickly as well as another cemetery near a Ballycahill church in 1983 and in 1990, but was unable to locate a Thomas Ryan buried in the 1840s; but a more careful search needs to be made. Both cemeteries are marked on the map.

the Tug Hill section known as Maple Ridge in the township of Martinsburg, New York.<sup>11</sup>

They did not move there immediately, however. After his arrival in America, the young Tom Ryan worked as a timekeeper on the Erie Canal in or near the growing city of Syracuse, in Onondaga County, New York. Like many other Irish, he may have entered the United States through Canada. His mother, three brothers, and two sisters as well as other family members emigrated also. We know that his brother Edmond (Edward) arrived in September 1853, and since he was then five years old, he undoubtedly traveled with his mother. Another brother and sister, Patrick and Bridget Ryan, both came in 1855.<sup>12</sup> In Onondaga County on October 10, 1856, Tom Ryan declared his intention to become a citizen. He completed the naturalization process two years later when he swore his allegiance on Oct. 30, 1858.

Three weeks earlier, James McGrath, who was already married to Tom's sister, Bridget, had also become a citizen.<sup>13</sup> One of the two witnesses for both men was Michael Gleason, who was probably related to Tom's mother and may have been an older brother. Born in Thurles in 1799, he had come to Syracuse about 1835 and worked as a salt inspector. The area was an important center for salt extraction and refinement. He declared his intention to become a citizen in 1838 and two years later swore his allegiance. Within Syracuse's Irish community, Michael Gleason was an important figure. In the 1840s and especially during the rise of the Know-Nothings in the early 1850s, their Catholic religion and foreign birth made the Irish a target of the nativist movement. On one occasion, someone

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<sup>11</sup> This judgment is based on a comparison of names found in the tithe records and the *Primary Valuation of Tenements* with those in St. Patrick's churchyard cemetery on Maple Ridge Road.

<sup>12</sup> Naturalization records of Edward Ryan, 9 September 1871, LCC. His birth date is given as June 28, 1848 which would be the day before his baptismal date in the Holy Cross Parish Records. The 1900 census asked for date of immigration. Patrick Ryan (Whitman county, Washington) and Bridget Ryan McGrath (Lewis county, New York) gave 1855.

<sup>13</sup> The naturalization records are in the Onondaga County Courthouse, Syracuse, New York. The date of James McGrath's declaration of intention is not listed, so he may have made that declaration in another county. Prior to 1860, these records list about 100 Ryans, as well as numerous Gleasons and McGraths. The clue to the location of these records was the 1865 New York state census which lists Mary McGrath, oldest child of James and Bridget Ryan McGrath, as born in Onondaga County. The New York state census of 1855 may list Tom Ryan in Onondaga County, but unfortunately it is not indexed and the county was heavily populated. Locating the parish records for the marriage of James and Bridget Ryan McGrath and the baptism of their oldest daughter would narrow the search substantially.

hung a figure of St. Patrick in effigy on a flag pole alongside the Erie Canal where many of them worked. A great uproar ensued, but Michael Gleason calmed his outraged compatriots and politely asked the local police to please remove the offensive object. They promised to do so, but did nothing. After waiting a while he again went to the police with the same result. Finally, he bought an axe and chopped down the pole himself.<sup>14</sup>

Patrick Gleason, who was probably the brother of Margaret Gleason Ryan as noted earlier, initiated the family's move up to the Tug Hill section of Martinsburg township. This section of Lewis County is dominated by two terrain features. The Black River runs through a valley to the east of the villages of Lowville and Constableville. To the west of a line drawn from the west side of Martinsburg township to Constableville, a plateau known as Tug Hill rises 700 to 900 feet above the Black River valley.<sup>15</sup> The region was owned by a land company which managed the property and land titles. After the Black River Canal was complete, the company offered strong inducements to settle the higher elevations.<sup>16</sup> Patrick Gleason had sailed from Liverpool to New York, arriving on April 10, 1847, and by 1852 he was living in Turin, a town in the south of Lewis county.<sup>17</sup>

By 1855 he and other Irish had begun to move up onto the densely wooded plateau, build their log homes and barns, and clear the land for farming and raising dairy cows. The 1855 state census shows Patrick Gleason in place on Maple Ridge with his wife Mary and young daughter; the following year he became a United States citizen. During the next five years numerous relatives and neighbors from Mayoliffe parish as well as other immigrants such as the Lawlees from Kerry

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<sup>14</sup> Theresa Bannan, *Pioneer Irish of Onondaga* (New York and London, 1911), pp. 15-109. Michael Gleason made his declaration of intention on September 25, 1838 and his allegiance on September 28, 1840 (Naturalization records, Onondaga County Courthouse). The name is spelled Gleason or Gleeson. The other witness for both Tom Ryan and James McGrath was Perry Fogarty.

<sup>15</sup> This area is part of what was known as Macomb's purchase, which embraced this whole section of New York state. As a part of that, the Boylestone Tract covered the Tug Hill area. Approached from the east side, it makes a sharp rise from Route 29 going up Keener Hill Road, with a graduate rise coming in from the south, Constableville to Highmarket. (Topography from Fletcher Buckley)

<sup>16</sup> *Lewis County Directory, 1872*, p. 79; no deeds of sale for this area can be found in the Lewis County Courthouse, so the land company must have managed these land titles.

<sup>17</sup> Declaration of Intent for Citizenship, 24 February 1852, LCC. A P. Gleeson. age 27, laborer, sailed on the "Juno" from Liverpool on June 3, 1847. Coming with him was J. McGrath, age 44 (*The Famine Immigrants*, 6: 567).

and the Dunns from West Meath settled around him. Among them were Tom and Catherine Gleason McGrath and Margaret Gleason Ryan and her family. Some newcomers like Tom Ryan and James McGrath arrived from Onondaga county around Syracuse; others may have worked on the Black River Canal project which was completed in 1855.<sup>18</sup>

The Irish were a clannish bunch and clustered close together along Maple Ridge and nearby roads. The settlement was within the township of Martinsburg, five miles from Martinsburg village, which also served as the county seat until its removal to Lowville in 1864. To get to Maple Ridge from the village, you took Cemetery Road west out past the village graveyard for a mile to West Road which runs along the base of Tug Hill. Then, for another mile Keener Hill Road rises sharply up five hundred or more feet above the floor of the valley to Graves Road which intersects on the left. A mile and a half down this road brings you to Maple Ridge Road which comes in on the right. St. Patrick's Church was 1.6 miles down this dirt road which rises and falls with the contours of the land. Further down Maple Ridge Road a quarter mile or so on the left, Tom Ryan established his farm.<sup>19</sup> In 1860 Thomas Ryan lived with his mother and younger brothers Patrick and Edmond on a farm valued at \$200. On the next farm lived his married sister Bridget with her husband James McGrath and their two children.<sup>20</sup>

Just the year before, the Ryans, McGraths, Gleasons and other Irish immigrants had built St. Patrick's Church a short distance down Maple Ridge Road from the Ryan farm. In typical booster fashion, the newly founded congregation with just thirty members had constructed a church capable of seating 400 people

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<sup>18</sup> New York Census, Lewis County, 1855; Naturalization papers of Patrick Gleason, 23 September 1856, LCC; the Syracuse City Directory shows a James McGrath and a Thomas Ryan as carpenters, McGrath living at 63 N. Salina and Ryan at Norton near N. Salina. The presence of other Ryans and McGraths in Onondaga county at this time makes it impossible to confirm a family connection.

<sup>19</sup> Highway Map of Lewis County; 1875 land ownership map, LCC.

<sup>20</sup> Census of 1860, Martinsburg, Lewis County, New York. This shows on adjacent Farms:

Ryne, Thomas	28	Farmer	\$200	Ireland
Margaret	50			"
Patrick	18	farm laborer		"
Edmond	11			"
McGrath, James	30	Farmer	\$300	"
Bridget	24			"
Mary	4			New York
Thomas	1			"



at the cost of \$900.<sup>21</sup> It was a far cry from Ireland and, at least in some respects, a far better world. Here they could own their own land, educate their children, and worship as they pleased without government interference. The climate, however, was much harsher than that of Tipperary. Tug Hill belongs to the Snow Belt. Winter winds blowing across Lake Ontario pick up moisture and then dump up to 400 inches on Tug Hill, giving it the heaviest snow fall in the state. Ellen Ryan Fletcher remembered snow blocking the windows of her log home and drifts as high as eight feet. One of the first burials in the cemetery behind the church was Catherine Gleason McGrath who died on April 18, 1859 at age thirty-six. The next year her older sister Margaret Gleason Ryan died on December 18, 1860 and was buried in an adjacent grave. She was fifty years old. The two sisters share a common marker.<sup>22</sup>

The following spring Thomas Ryan married Mary Ann Lawlee on April 27, 1861. Father Fitzpatrick witnessed the wedding and recorded the marriage in St. Mary's Parish in Constableville which served St. Patrick's in the early years.<sup>23</sup> Tom Ryan was thirty-two and his bride was twenty-one. The Lawlee family had also recently immigrated to Maple Ridge. Mary Ann was one of at least six children of Thomas Lawlee and Mary McQuade Lawlee who lived in or near the town of Listowel in County Kerry. Thomas Lawlee worked in the stone quarries in Kerry and had died about 1845. His oldest daughter, Catherine Lawlee McEnirey, married and, according to family tradition, was still living in Limerick in the 1920s. But his widow and five of their children eventually found their way to the Maple Ridge community. Mary Ann arrived in the United States in 1855 and probably traveled with other close relatives since she was only fifteen years old. Initially she worked as a servant in someone's home.<sup>24</sup> Johanna Lawlee, another older sister, had recently married Edward Doody and they had a farm near Thomas Ryan's. Her mother, Mary Lawlee, lived with them. Close by lived a brother, Patrick Lawlee, with his wife, Anna Dunn Lawlee, who had immigrated to the United States from County

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<sup>21</sup> History of Lewis County.

<sup>22</sup> St. Patrick's cemetery records, as amended by on site visit, 1995.

<sup>23</sup> St. Mary's Parish Register, Constableville. This town is about 15 miles south of Maple Ridge. The witnesses were the bride's sister, Ellen Lawlee, and Pat Grace.

<sup>24</sup> In the Federal Census of 1900 (Spokane County, Washington), Mary Lawlee Ryan gave 1855 as the date of her immigration. The information on the Lawlee family came from the list of names drawn up by Ellen Ryan Fletcher in the 1940s and from Mae Lawlee, the granddaughter of Patrick Lawlee. John Curley, a great grandson of Patrick Lawlee, has attempted to trace down the Lawlee family in Ireland. Parish registers that should be searched for Lawlee names include Finuge, which is served by a church in Listowel, and Aghavallen, which is nearby.

West Meath in 1847, and their new baby, Mary. Both the Doody and the Dunn clans were well represented on Maple Ridge.<sup>25</sup>

CHART #2: THE LAWLEE FAMILY. We are certain of this spelling because it appears as Lawlee on the graves in St. Patrick's cemetery, in most of the early records, and on Mary Lawlee Ryan's pension application, April 9, 1892.<sup>26</sup>

Thomas Lawlee m Mary McQuade  
( ? - 1845) | (1800-1871)

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|  
|---- Catherine m ? McEnirey  
| [living in Ireland in 1920s]  
|  
|---- Johanna m Edward Doody ----- three children  
| (1833-91) (1819-82)  
|  
|---- John (never married)  
| (1834-1864)  
|  
|---- Patrick m Anna (Honora) Dunn - eleven children  
| (1836-94) (1835-1925)  
|  
|---- Mary Ann m Thomas Ryan ----- eight children  
| (1840-1910) (1828-92)  
|  
|---- Ellen m. James Grace ----- five children  
| (1845-1923) (1837-1912)

Thomas and Mary Ann Ryan's first child, Margaret (Maggie), was born on Feb. 18, 1862, and named for Tom's mother. Their next child was Mary Jane (Mame), born on April 20, 1864.<sup>27</sup> During the interval between the births of these two children, the community on Maple Ridge felt the impact of the Civil War. Hostilities had opened with the firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor in the

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<sup>25</sup> Federal Census of 1860, Martinsburg, Lewis County, New York.

<sup>26</sup> Pension Records of Thomas Ryan, National Archives. But the census taker in 1860 was careless with this one as he was with Ryan. He spelt Ryan as Ryne and Lawlee as Rowley or Rowlee. Kennedy was Kenada. These were all corrected in later censuses.

<sup>27</sup> Baptismal records, St. Mary's Church, Constableville. Margaret's sponsors were Patrick Conars and Ellen Lawlee; Mary Jane's sponsors were John Canaan and Mary Ryan.

middle of April, 1861. Then came Abraham Lincoln's call for troops to put down the insurrection, followed by the secession of the upper South. Tom Ryan and Mary Lawlee were married just two weeks after Fort Sumter fell to the Confederates. The first battle of Bull Run in July made it clear that the war would not be easy or short. A year later, on July 29, 1862, while the battles of the Seven Days raged around Richmond, Virginia, Tom's younger brother, Patrick, volunteered for a new regiment then being formed, the 5th New York.<sup>28</sup>

In September 1862 a list was drawn up of those who were eligible for military service in New York State. In Lewis County, the roster included Patrick and Thomas Ryan and James McGrath; the three men were described as farmers. John and Patrick Lawlee were also on the list, but both men claimed to be aliens rather than citizens of the United States and that status was later confirmed. Tom Ryan enlisted on Christmas Day, 1863, at Martinsburg and received a bounty of \$160. At the time his wife Mary was pregnant with their second child; he may have enlisted, however, to gain the bounty and avoid the draft. He served with his brother Patrick and James McGrath, in Company I, 3rd Battalion, 5th New York Heavy Artillery. In November, just a month before Tom Ryan joined the army, another younger brother, James Ryan, enlisted in the 14th New York at the age of eighteen. So three Ryan brothers and a brother-in-law had joined the Union army.

Thomas Ryan was mustered in as a private in Watertown, New York on Feb. 18, 1864. His battalion was on duty at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia until that October and then served in the Shenandoah Valley as well as Harpers Ferry area until July of 1865.<sup>29</sup> The army records describe Tom Ryan as 5 feet 7 inches tall, with blue eyes, black hair and light complexion, and his age was thirty-six in 1863. While encamped on Maryland Heights overlooking Harpers Ferry, he contracted typhoid fever and dysentery which ultimately resulted in severe piles. His illness occurred in September 1864 and, after treatment in the military hospital, he was given a furlough on October 24 to return home. While her husband was off in the army, Mary Ann Ryan had been keeping the farm with two small children and her mother, Mary Lawlee, lived with her. According to a family story, she often fed men on their way to Canada to escape the military draft. One day she opened the door and there stood her husband, extremely pale and thin, with his thick black hair turned white. Thinking he had died and this was his ghost, she fainted.

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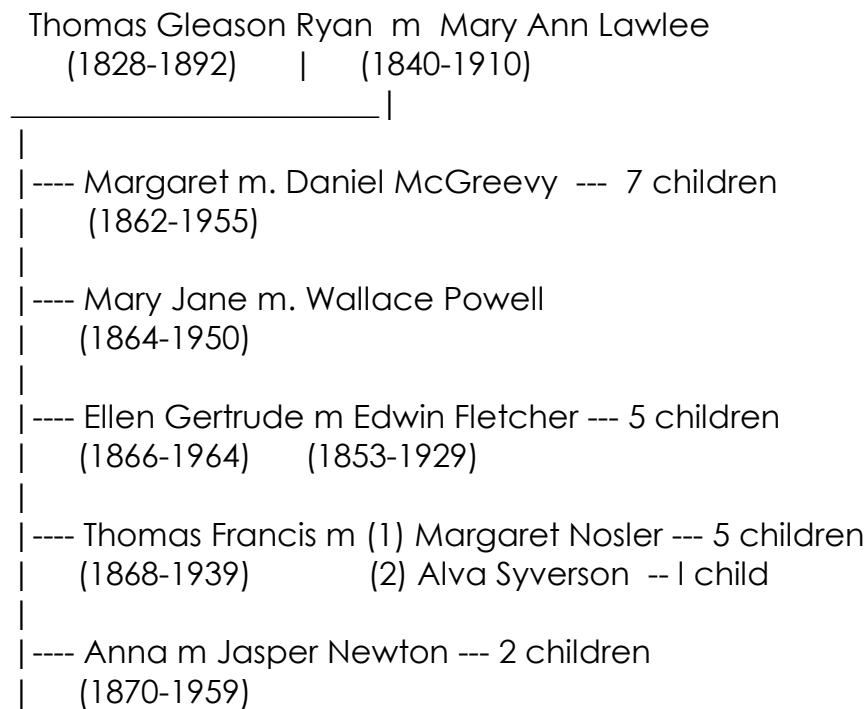
<sup>28</sup> Naturalization papers of Patrick Ryan, 2 February 1869, LCC. For his military records, see Co. I, 5, N.Y. Heavy Artillery, 2 July 1900, Invalid #Z1250897, Certificate #1114247 Wash[ington state], attorney J. D. Brooks, remarks @2500957.

<sup>29</sup> "Enrollment of Persons Liable to Military Draft," 19 September 1862, LCC; New York State Census, Lewis County, 1865; Military and Pension records of Thomas Ryan, Eastern Division, No. 548,141, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Tom recovered enough to rejoin the battalion by Dec. 7, 1864, but he was still unfit for duty at that time. Nevertheless, he remained with the army until his discharge on July 19, 1865, when he returned to Maple Ridge.<sup>30</sup>

Tom and Mary Ann Ryan's third child, Ellen Gertrude (Ella), was born on August 22, 1866 and baptized on October 14 with her Uncle Pat Ryan and Margaret Purcell as her sponsors. She was the last of the Ryan children to have her birth registered at St. Mary's in Constableville. The next five were registered at St. Peter's Church in Lowville which opened as a parish in December 1866 and took over the mission station at St. Patrick's. The rest of the Ryan children included Thomas Francis (Frank), born July 12, 1868, Joannah (Anna), born July 23, 1870, Patrick Joseph (Joe), born August 26, 1872, Bridget Alice (Alice), born June 4, 1875, and Frances Agnes (Fan), born January 4, 1878.<sup>31</sup>

CHART #3: CHILDREN OF THOMAS AND MARY ANN RYAN.



<sup>30</sup> Military and Pension Records of Thomas Ryan, National Archives.

<sup>31</sup> Baptismal Records, St. Mary's Church, Constableville, and St. Peter's Church, Lowville, New York. These show dates of birth and baptism, name of parents and sponsors. The sponsors were: for Frank, James and Mary McGrath; for Anna, John Dunn and Margaret Gleason; for Joe, Patrick and Mary Gleason; for Alice, Pat and Mary Ann Lawlee; for Fan, Thomas Purcell and wife. These were all neighbors on Maple Ridge and most, if not all, were relatives to some degree.

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|---- Patrick Joseph (1872-1909)  
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|---- Alice Bridget m Clyde Vassar --- 7 children  
| (1875-1960)  
|  
|---- Frances Agnes m Fred Day --- 3 children  
| (1878-1935)

Mary Ann Ryan's mother, Mary Lawlee, lived with them until her death at the age of seventy in April 1871. She was buried in St. Patrick's Cemetery next to her son, John Lawlee, who had died in January 1864 at thirty.

Maple Ridge was a thriving community through these decades after the Civil War with its own store, sawmills, and cheese factory. A school house was located just a half mile or so down the road from the church, though Frank and possibly some of the other children later attended the Lowville Academy, a public high school in the county seat. The 1865 census shows most of the farms had 50 to 100 acres with an acre or so in potatoes, the rest in meadow and woods, and one to three cows with some sheep and swine. St. Patrick's was growing also. By 1873 the church had 312 members and was being served by priests from St. Peter's Church in Lowville which belonged to the newly formed diocese of Ogdensburg. Some of the clergy were not impressed with the largely immigrant population. One of them, John Talbot Smith, wrote a history of the diocese at the end of the century and described the Lowville congregation in decidedly uncomplimentary terms. In 1871 it possessed about eighty families, mostly of Irish background. In the village of Lowville, he wrote, "the faith had so declined among the people that not more than one half attended to religious duties. The remainder were [sic] a cold, sneering, calculating set of liberals whose evil influence and example troubles the parish until this date."<sup>32</sup>

His criticism, which is reminiscent of earlier internal church controversies over lay trustees, may indicate something of the problems a native-born, non-Irish clergyman faced as well as a fundamental lack of sympathy toward an immigrant population. Yet up on Maple Ridge, Smith pointed out, the mission at St. Patrick's was flourishing. The church had acquired a new altar and pews, and the congregation had doubled. Parish confirmation records show large classes through these years with the bishop making regular visits to both the Lowville church and the Maple Ridge mission. In September of 1884, for example, he

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<sup>32</sup> New York State Census, Martinsburg, 1865; a biographical sketch of Thomas Francis Ryan states that he studied at the Lowville Academy until 1886 when he moved to Pomeroy (*History of Seattle: Biographical* [1916], 3: 391). John Talbot Smith, *A History of the Diocese of Ogdensburg* (New York, [1898]), p. 310.

confirmed Frank and Joe Ryan up on Maple Ridge and Anna Ryan down in Lowville.<sup>33</sup>

Property values increased as the farmers continued to improve their land. By 1870 Thomas Ryan's real and personal property was worth \$1500, and in the state census five years later it was revalued at \$4000. He was evidently an industrious farmer, because his acreage and its worth increased steadily over the years. Detailed agricultural records in the state censuses demonstrate the extent of his labors. When he returned from the army in 1865, the farm included a total of 80 acres, with only 20 of those listed as improved. The land was valued at \$800 and the stock at \$150. He had 10 acres in pasture and another 10 acres in meadow, and he had sown one acre of oats in 1864 and again in 1865. Given that his property had only been worth \$200 in 1860, Tom Ryan had not done badly despite his absence during the war. Ten years later the farm had substantially increased in size and value. Now Tom owned 75 improved acres and 55 more in woods, 1 and 3/4 acres of potatoes, 9 cows, 3 calves, 2 horses and some swine. The family was still living in a log house, but no doubt there had been some additions to the building since 1860.<sup>34</sup>

The neighborhood teemed with relatives on both sides of the family. Next door was his sister, Bridget, with her husband Thomas McGrath, and seven children. James Ryan was living with the McGraths in 1865, though the census notes that he was still in the army. Thomas Ryan and James Fahy, whose farm was at the end of Maple Ridge Road, were his witnesses in April 1872 when he became a citizen. The year before, the youngest brother, Edmond (Edward), had completed the naturalization process with his brothers Tom and Patrick as his witnesses. Nothing more is known about James and Edmond Ryan, though the family tradition is that they settled in New York, perhaps New York City, and eventually married.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile Patrick Ryan had become a citizen in February 1869 using the special soldier's naturalization process with his two companions from Co. I, Tom Ryan and James McGrath, as his witnesses. By 1875 he lived on a farm directly across Maple Ridge Road from them with his growing family. Patrick had married Jane White in Copenhagen, New York in 1872 and by 1880 they had three

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 310-11; St. Peter's Parish Register, Lowville.

<sup>34</sup> New York State Census Records, 1865, 1875; U.S. Federal Census, Lewis County, Martinsburg Township, 1870.

<sup>35</sup> Naturalizations of James Ryan, 30 April 1872, and Edward Ryan, 9 September 1871, LCC. Neither of them have been found in any census after 1865, though their naturalization papers place them as living in Martinsburg.

children.<sup>36</sup> Other nearby family members included Mary Ryan, an unmarried sister, who was living with the McGraths in 1870. Down the road was Mary Ann's brother Patrick Lawlee with his wife and children, and her sisters Johanna Doody and Ellen Grace with their husbands and families.<sup>37</sup>

The 1880s brought multiple changes for the community on Maple Ridge. In the 1880 census the number of children up on Tug Hill has increased, but the older ones had left home to find employment in town. Maggie, Mame, and Ella Ryan, for example, were not living with their parents. Maggie was eighteen and a servant in the home of a Lowville grocer, while Mary Jane, sixteen years old, was a servant for Mrs. Mary Richardson in Martinsburg Village. Whole families had also begun to move away from Maple Ridge. Mary Ann Ryan's sister Ellen and her husband James Grace took their family and moved to Lowville where they had a grocery store on State Street. By 1900 James Grace was also a landlord, the oldest son, Thomas, was a lawyer, Margaret was a dress maker, James was a cabinet maker, and Florence, the youngest at eighteen, was in school. In the years after 1880 many other relatives would take that route, leaving farming to live and work in Lowville or other towns.

Some stalwarts hung on at Maple Ridge, however. After her husband, James McGrath, died in 1892, Bridget Ryan McGrath managed her farm of 150 acres, 16 cows, and 3 horses with the help of her sons Joseph and John. Then her daughter Margaret, who was still living at home with her mother, died in 1896 at age twenty-eight, and John died in 1900 when he was not quite thirty. Bridget had buried five of her eight children. She died of "chronic gastritis" on December 22, 1909 at the age of seventy and was buried with them and her husband in St. Patrick's Cemetery. When Patrick Lawlee died at Maple Ridge on January 25, 1894 at the age of fifty-eight, his widow, Anna Dunn Lawlee, continued to work her farm with the help of her son John who was eighteen at the time. They had 110 acres, 9 cows, and 2 horses. By 1900, when she was sixty-four, Anna had buried five of her eleven children; and she would live on for another quarter century before dying in 1925 at the age of ninety-one. By that time, the ethnic population on Maple Ridge had changed dramatically and it had become almost entirely a Polish community. The Irish had died or moved away.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Naturalization of Patrick Ryan, 24 June 1865, LCC; New York Census of 1875; U.S. Census, Lewis County, Martinsburg, 1880.

<sup>37</sup> These families can be located from the various census records of 1865, 1870, 1875, and 1880; and also from an 1875 land ownership map Xeroxed from the original at the Lewis County Courthouse.

The mortality rate in the Maple Ridge community is striking, particularly for men and women in their 20s and early 30s. Even a cursory inspection of the cemetery and local obituary records indicate that parents frequently had to bury adult children. The extent and cause of this has not been carefully studied, but this may have been a factor in the movement of families from Tug Hill down into the towns. What stands out in terms of the Ryan family is that none of the children of Tom and Mary Ann Ryan or Pat and Jane Ryan died in New York state; but that may have been another reason for their decision to send their children away from the farm as they grew older and then ultimately to leave the area entirely for the far West.

The 1880s were boom years as new territories opened up and railroads expanded their lines to bring in people looking for opportunity. The Northern Pacific was completed to Washington territory in 1883 and the population there grew by a whopping 375% during the decade to over 350,000 by 1890. Thomas and Patrick Ryan were part of that growth. Pat Ryan and his family went first, probably arriving in Washington territory in the spring of 1884.<sup>39</sup> His enthusiasm brought Tom out the following year, and Mary Ann and the younger children arrived in June of 1886 and settled in Pomeroy, the seat of Garfield County in the southeastern part of the territory. Washington gained statehood in 1889.

According to a family story, two of the older Ryan daughters worked for a time in Montgomery Ward's home in Chicago, Margaret as a cook and Ellen as a governess. Both girls joined their parents in Pomeroy on August 14, 1886.<sup>40</sup> Mary Jane, the second daughter, remained behind in Lowville and was married to Wallace Powell on November 29, 1886 with her brother Frank as best man. The day before the wedding, Wallace Powell had been baptized by the parish priest. The next week the newlyweds and Frank arrived in Pomeroy. Thus by 1887 the family was together again. The state census that year shows Tom and Mary Ryan living in Pomeroy with seven of their eight children, while nearby lived Patrick and Jane Ryan with their four children.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> U.S. Census, Lewis County, 1880, 1900, 1920. I was not able to find Ellen Ryan in the 1880 census. Also helpful in tracking down various families is the St. Patrick's Registers, the *Lewis County Directory, 1895* in the Lowville public library, and the manuscript obituary records at the Martinsburg town hall.

<sup>39</sup> Deed to Patrick Ryan, 8 May 1884, Auditor's Office, Spokane, Washington.

<sup>40</sup> Notes of Alice Ryan Vassar; *Washington Independent*, August 19, 1886.



Though many relatives remained in Lewis County, contacts remained close despite time and distance. Almost twenty five years later a postcard from one of Tom Ryan's daughters, Alice Ryan Vassar, written from Lowville while she and her husband, Clyde Vassar, were on their honeymoon reads: "Am leaving Lowville. Aunt Ellen [Grace], Aunt Mary [Ryan], Aunt Annie [Lawlee], Tom and Joe McGrath, the Grace Family, and Ed Doody, Mrs. Campbell and Harry were there. Going some for 20 hours."<sup>42</sup> The references are multiple but most of them are to family members. Ellen Lawlee Grace was her mother's sister. Mary Ryan was her father's sister, and Annie had married her mother's brother. There were a bundle of cousins. In addition to the Graces, Tom and Joe McGrath were sons of Bridget and James McGrath and Ed Doody was a son of Ed and Joanne Lawlee Doody. The Campbells were in the construction industry in Lowville. Harry Jr. was about forty-one at the time and his father had been a construction engineer in Lowville.<sup>43</sup> Apparently they were family friends. The old ties remained strong.

In Washington Pat Ryan and his family lived on a farm, while Tom Ryan bought a home in Pomeroy and practiced law. He also served the community as a justice of the peace and judge for Garfield County. He won his first election on March 17, 1888 and the *Washington Independent*, the Pomeroy newspaper, evidently had supported him, for it reported that on the next day "all the flags in the city were floating to the breeze." In August of 1889 he was chosen to serve as a Justice of the Peace in a special election and then made a city justice the following month. On the last occasion, the *Independent* commented, "now he hardly needs his cane except to defend himself from his friends." In December 1889 the paper reported that "Judge Ryan has moved to Pataha Street."<sup>44</sup> Being a Justice of the Peace brought new responsibilities, among them the civil marriage of couples. Tom Ryan refused to perform his first marriage until he had consulted with the local Catholic priest who assured him that separation of church and state carried different responsibilities. Ellen Ryan Fletcher remembered couples coming to the door and being called downstairs to witness their weddings.

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<sup>41</sup> "This week the son and daughter of Mr. Ryan arrived at his place from New York. The latter is just married to her husband, Mr. Powell." *Washington Independent*, Dec. 9, 1886. St. Patrick's Birth and Marriage Registers, Lowville; Garfield County Census, 1887.

<sup>42</sup> Postcard dated Feb. 28, 1911 in Ryan Family Papers.

<sup>43</sup> Census of 1900, Lewis County, Lowville.

<sup>44</sup> *Washington Independent*, March 22, 1888; August 1, September ?, December 12, 1889.

Tom and Pat Ryan and their families, Dan McGreevy who would later marry Margaret Ryan, and Wallace and Mary Anne Ryan Powell were all actively involved in forming the first Catholic parish in Pomeroy. Holy Rosary was started in the early 1880s and by 1888 the Catholic community had established a parochial school and convent. Until a rectory was built the next year, the pastor, Father John Rohlinger, lived in the church building and took his meals with the Ryan family.<sup>45</sup>

Thomas Ryan was not yet sixty-four when he died of a heart attack on the afternoon of January 13, 1892. This may have been a second or third attack, since, according to the local newspaper, he had been "nigh unto death" for the last two weeks in December before appeared to recover.<sup>46</sup> After his death, his name was placed among the veterans of the Civil War on the base of a statute on the lawn in front of the Garfield County Courthouse. He was originally buried in the Catholic cemetery in Pomeroy, but after Mary Ann Ryan moved to Spokane in 1893 to be near her older children, Tom Ryan's body was eventually placed in the Catholic section of Fairmont Cemetery there.

In 1900 Mary Ann Ryan was renting a home on 4th Avenue in Spokane near Deaconess Home, an Episcopalian hospital. She lived with her two youngest children, Alice and Frances. Her two sons, Frank and Joe, had opened first a fruit stand and then a store in Spokane. They expanded into the Ryan-Newton Company when Jasper Newton married their sister Anna and bought into the business. Later it became the Pacific Fruit Express with branches in Seattle, Salt Lake City, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and other cities in the West. Fred Day who married their sister Francis in 1900 became the manager in Salt Lake City and later in Los Angeles where Wallace and Mary Jane Powell also lived. In her later years, Tom Ryan's unmarried sister, Mary Ryan, moved from Lowville to Los Angeles and lived with the Powells there. She died on May 31, 1927 and was buried from St. Ignatius Church in the Highland Park area of Los Angeles.<sup>47</sup>

Mary Ann Lawlee Ryan lived in Spokane for many years, and died while visiting her daughter, Ellen Fletcher, in Boise, Idaho on November 20, 1910. She was buried beside her husband and her son, Joseph, who had died in 1909.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Patty McKeirnan, "Church Celebrates Centennial," *East Washingtonian* [Pomeroy], June 15, 1978.

<sup>46</sup> *Washington Independent*, Dec. 31, 1891, Jan. 7, 1892.

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Census, Spokane County, Washington, 1900. Obituary for Mary M. Ryan, May 31, 1927, shows her last address as 5688 Baltimore Street, Los Angeles. Funeral Parlor was Creese's Highland Park.

Patrick Ryan farmed for many years across the Union Flat River before retiring to Pullman where he died at the age of eight-five on Feb. 10, 1928. He was buried next to his wife Jane at the Catholic cemetery in Colton, Washington. Both Ryan brothers and their wives left numerous descendants scattered throughout the United States.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Fairmont Cemetery, Spokane [between East Vernon 22 and St. Ignatius 21]. Joe suffered so severely from arthritis that toward the later part of his life, he was unable to walk and had to crawl upstairs on his hands and knees. According to family stories he died from heart trouble brought on by the strong medicine he took for pain.

<sup>49</sup> The Census of 1900 lists the family by name, birth month & year, age, place, & occupation.

Patrick	Mar. 1844	56 years	b. Ireland	Farmer
Jane	Apr. 1848	52	b. New York	
William T.	Dec 1874	25	" "	farm laborer
Edward M.	Aug 1878	21	" "	" "
Jennie C.	Aug 1882	17	" "	at school
Paul M.	Oct 1888	11	b. Wash.	" "

This census also showed that Pat and Jane Ryan had been married 29 years, had five children (all of them living), and owned the farm with a mortgage. Pat Ryan had emigrated in 1855. According to Eleanor Fletcher Buckley, they lived near the Fletcher family. The oldest daughter, Nellie, had entered a convent of Dominican sisters in Seattle with the religious name of Sister Dominica, O.P.

LIST OF CHARTS AND MAPS

The Ryans of Tipperary

The Lawlee Family

The Ryans of Maple Ridge

The Ryan Family

Backpiece

Ireland

Frontpiece

Southern Tipperary

Following page

Parish of Holycross and Ballycahill

New York State

Tug Hill Area

Maple Ridge Contour Map

Maple Ridge Area

Maple Ridge Land Owners, 1872

Eastern Washington