

Patrick Gavigan & Bridget Crowley
(1829-1889) (1841-1906)

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My paternal grandmother's name is Annie Marie Gavigan (1871-1945). She married my grandfather, Michael Francis Beirne (1872-1948). She had a heavy brogue so it was sometimes difficult to understand her. She gave her full name as Annie Mariah Gavigan Beirne. We suspect that the Mariah was just her way of pronouncing Marie. (See the Beirne & Gavigan story).

Her father's name was Patrick Gavigan (1829-1889) and her mother was Bridget Crowley (1841-1906). They lived in County Roscommon, Ireland. The name of the town was Curraghroe and their birthplace is listed as Doughil where they had four daughters:

- **Anne Marie** (1871-1945)
- **Ellen** (1875-1952)
- **Mary Ellen** (1876-)
- **Winifred** (1878-)

Patrick Gavigan
b. 1829, Ireland
d. 20 Aug 1889, Doughil; Roscommon; Ireland
& Bridget Crowley
b. 1841, Ireland
d. 9 Nov 1906, Doughil; Roscommon; Ireland
mdy. ca 1870, Ireland

Anne Marie Gavigan
b. 5 Oct 1871, Doughil (Strokestown), Roscommon; Ireland
d. 27 Apr 1945, B.Burke Memorial Hospital; Lawrence, Mass.
& Michael Francis Beirne
b. 29 Sep 1872, Ardmoyle, Kingsland, Frenchpark, Roscommon; Ireland
d. 26 Jan 1948, Tewkesbury State Hospital; Tewkesbury, MA
mdy. 23 Jun 1897, St. Mary's Church; Lawrence, Mass.



Ellen Gavigan
b. 18 Mar 1875, Doughill, Roscommon, Ireland
d. May 1952
& James Nerney
b. ca 1874, Ireland
d. 2 Mar 1937
mdy. ca 1906, Holy Rosary Church; Lawrence, Mass.

Mary Ellen Gavigan
b. 12 Oct 1876, Doughill, Roscommon, Ireland
& Martin Donlon
mdy. 1896

Winifred Gavigan
b. 17 Aug 1878, Doughill, Roscommon, Ireland
& Daniel Casey
mdy. 1903, Ireland

The Best Things Always Disappear

Crowley is spelled as O Cruadhlaoidh in Gaelic and derives from cruadh (hard) and laoch (hero). Gavigan has several variations. The Irish spelling is O'Gaibhtheachain. Gaibhtheach means anxious in Gaelic. The name also appears as O'Gaughan and was abbreviated to O Gachain. It was a sept of the Ui Fiachrach in north Connacht and Mayo. O Gaibhtheachain, shortened now to O Gachain, the name of a sept of the north Connacht Hy Fiachrach who possessed a territory situated around Crossmolina, Co. Mayo. The "*Annals*" mention them often as chiefs of Calry, barony of Tirawley. A branch of this sept is said to have migrated from their homeland in Moylurg, Co. Roscommon to become a leading west County Cork sept.

My grandmother Anne and her sister Ellen were very close when they lived near each other in Lawrence, MA just as my maternal grandmother Josephine Kelly Sammons was with her sister Agned Kelly Sweeney in Towanda, PA.

Ellen (1875-1952) emigrated from Ireland circa 1900 and worked for the Beirnes in their boarding house. Aunt Ellen had been betrothed to someone in Ireland through an arrangement made by her parents. She did not personally know him. However, she had already fallen in love with another man and did not want to marry her "arranged" mate. Her parents would not change their minds so she decided to run away.

In those days, the Irish obtained cash by raising pigs and selling them. Usually, these pigs resided in the Irish homes where they received great care, like pets. Periodically, they were sold for cash (the proceeds were known as the pig money) that was hoarded by the family for special occasions and needs. Often, this was the family's major source of cash in any given year.

Ellen ran away from home to avoid the marriage in 1901 (see below). To finance her escape and travels, she stole the "pig money" so she could flee to America. She told no one of her intentions other than Jimmy Nerney (1874-1937), her lover and future husband. She traveled South from Roscommon to Queenstown (a.k.a. Cobh) like most of the others who preceded her. Queenstown is a section of Cork, Ireland. She had the address for her sister Annie Gavigan Beirne and traveled from Ireland to Boston to Lawrence, MA without notifying anyone in advance. She appeared at Grandma Beirne's doorstep and knocked on the door to the surprise of her sister. Annie last saw her younger sister almost ten years earlier in 1892 prior to her own departure from the old homestead. Ellen would have been about 16 at that time. Ellen was now about 26. Annie answered the door but it was dark and she could not determine who was there so she was suspicious. Ellen exclaimed: "Annie, don't you know me?!"

Ellen Gavigan arrived in Boston on November 6, 1901 after a voyage of approximately 10 days. She was 26. She had two pieces of luggage and listed her occupation as servant. She declared that she had \$20, could read write and that her final destination was Lawrence, Massachusetts to see her sister Annie Beirne on Methuen Street. One of her friends was named Byrne and Ellen stated that her last residence was Roscommon.¹ She traveled on the "SS. Ivernia". The ship's itinerary was

¹ Boston Immigration and ship registers, 1901. Ancestry.com.

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Liverpool, England to Queenstown (i.e. Cork), Ireland to Boston.

SS. Ivernia

The SS. Ivernia was a cargo and passenger vessel of the Cunard Steamship Company. Its main route was Liverpool-Queenstown-Boston and return. At the close of the 19th century Cunard began a program to rebuild its fleet which was to culminate in the production of the Lusitania and Mauretania. Orders were placed in 1898 to build two 14,000 ton ships: the Ivernia and Saxonia.

The ship was built by Swan & Hunter at Wallend-on-Tyne. She was a 14,048 gross ton ship, length 582ft x beam 64.9ft, straight stem, one funnel, four masts (rigged for sail), steel construction, twin-screw and a speed of 15 knots. There was passenger accommodation for 164-1st and 200-2nd class and 1,600-3rd class. She was launched on September 21, 1899 by the Countess of Ravensworth. When it was launched, it was the largest cargo vessel afloat. After a period of trials, it made its maiden voyage on April 14, 1900 from Liverpool to New York, instead of Boston as it was required to cover the service for regular vessels that were on hire (loan) to the British government as troop transports for the Boer War in South Africa. The Ivernia began the normal route (Liverpool to Queenstown to Boston) on June 12, 1900.

The Ivernia was involved in a serious incident in 1911. After leaving Boston for Queenstown on May 16, it encountered heavy fog on the approach to Queenstown harbor. Despite the regular fog-gun alarms, the Ivernia proceeded and struck the submerged Daunt's Rock. The collision tore a huge hole in the stern of the ship but it managed to reach the harbour. All passengers were disembarked but the ship was taking on too much water so it was decided to beach it. Temporary repairs were carried out at Queenstown and then it was moved to Liverpool for permanent repairs. The captain was reprimanded and fined. The Ivernia returned to service on October 17, 1911. It was shortly transferred to the Mediterranean service running the route from Trieste and Fiume to New York. This mainly catered to Italian and Hungarian emigrants.

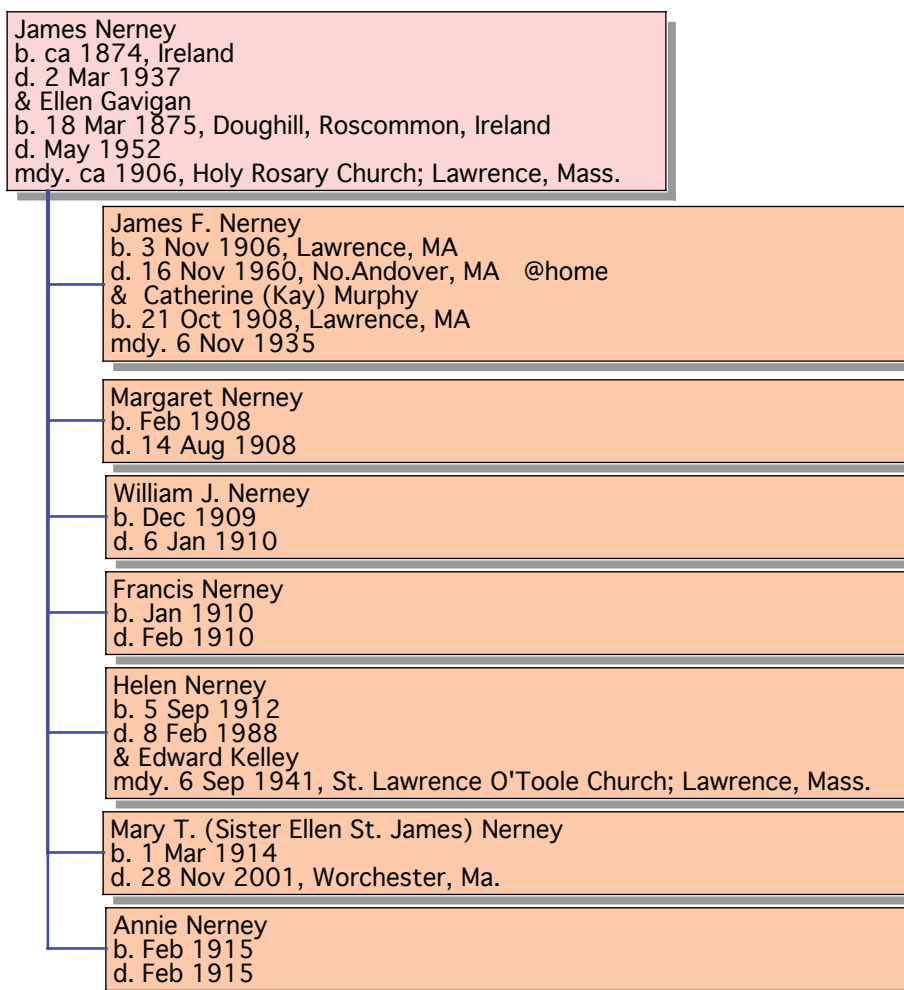
Following the outbreak of World War I on July 1914, the Ivernia was used by the British Government as a troop transport. It left Marseilles for Alexandria on December 28, 1916. At 10.12am on January 1, she was torpedoed by German submarine U47 about 58 miles southeast of Cape Matapan in Greece. Within one hour, the ship sank and its survivors were landed in Crete. 36 crewmembers and 84 troops were killed in the disaster.

The Best Things Always Disappear

For some time, Ellen worked for her sister in the Beirnes' boarding houses and is listed as a "domestic" in several tax and census records. She saved her money and sent it back to Ireland to the love of her life, Jimmy Nerney, who used it to pay for his passage from Ireland to the U.S. Jimmy immigrated to the U.S. and they were married in 1906 at Holy Rosary Church in Lawrence. Ellen and Jimmy had seven children who are all interred in the Nerney plot in Lawrence. They were my father's 1st cousins. Of these, four died as infants (Margaret, William, Francis, Annie):

- James F. (1906-1960)
 - Margaret (1908-1908)
 - William J. (1909-1910)
 - Francis (1910-1910)
 - Helen (1912-1988)
 - Mary T. (1914-2001)
 - Annie (1915-1915)

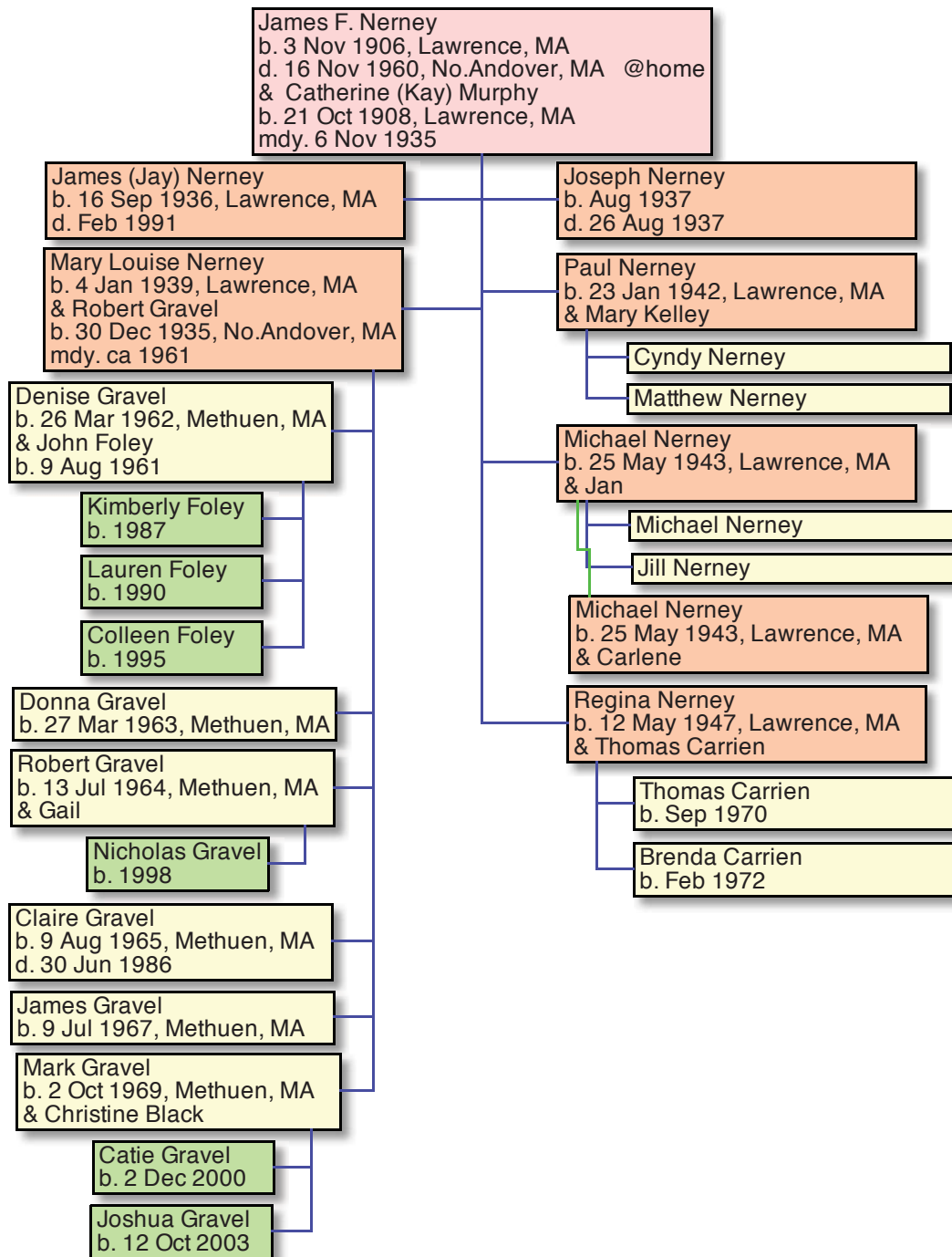
At the time that they purchased their cemetery lot at St. Mary's (4/5/1910), Ellen and Jimmy



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lived at #3 High Street in Lawrence. When he died, they lived at 12 Marston St. Her cemetery record indicates that she was 75 but other information indicates that she was 77. The 1920 census shows their address as High Street and includes: James 45 (head) & employed at Gas Co., Ellen 44, James 15, Helen 7, and Mary 5. Also buried in their cemetery lot is Mary Donlon, a daughter of Mary Gavigan Donlon and Ellen's niece.

James (1906-1960) married Catherine (Kay) Murphy (1908-) on November 6, 1935. Jim died of brain cancer. As of June 18, 2004, Kay is a resident in a nursing home in North Andover. Her

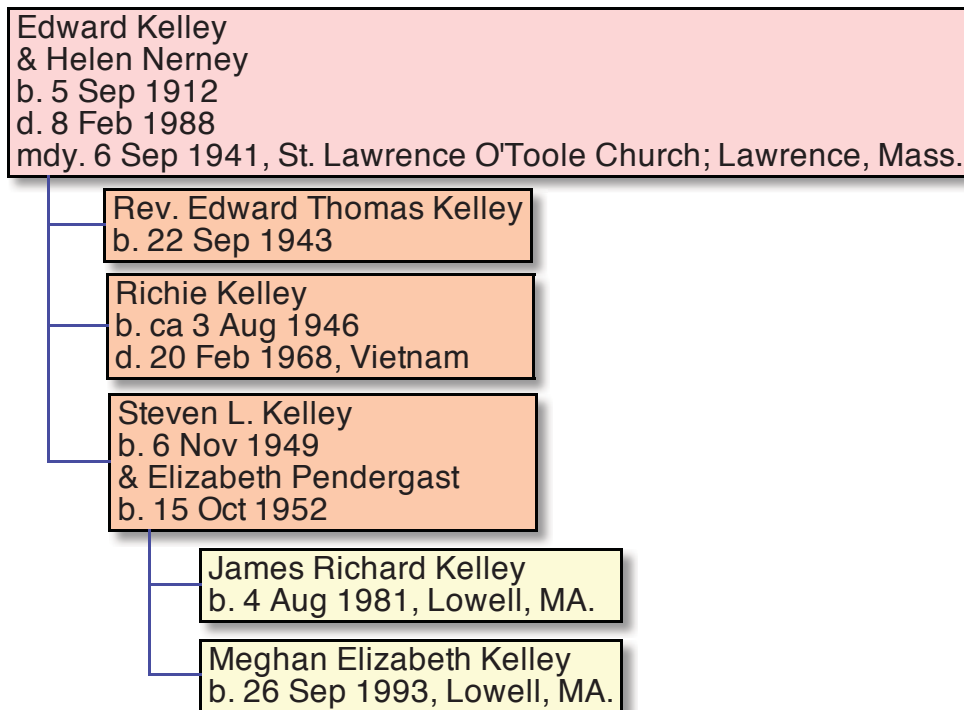


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daughter Mary Nerney Gravel indicated that she has been there for seven years and has Alzheimer disease. One of the nurses at the home is her daughter Regina. Jim and Kay had five children: James (Jay; 1936-1991), Mary Louise (1939-), Paul (1942-), Michael (1943-) and Regina (1947-). Mary married Bob Gravel and they had six children.

Helen (1912-1988) married Ed Kelley and they had three boys. Edward (1943-) was ordained a priest of the Boston Archdiocese in May 1968 and later removed from the ministry. Richie (1946-1968) was killed in action in Vietnam. Steve married Elizabeth (Liz) Pendergast and lives in Lowell, MA. When my cousin Anne O'Sullivan Coffey became incapacitated, I was contacted to become her guardian. Liz is a nurse and lived in the area and she vgratiously olunteered to be the legal guardian for Ann. (See also the Agnes Beirne O'Sulliavn chapter).

Ellen and Jim's third daughter Mary (1914-2001) became a nun in the Sisters of Notre Dame on August 9, 1931. Her religious name is Sister Ellen St. James. She entered the convent in 1931 and



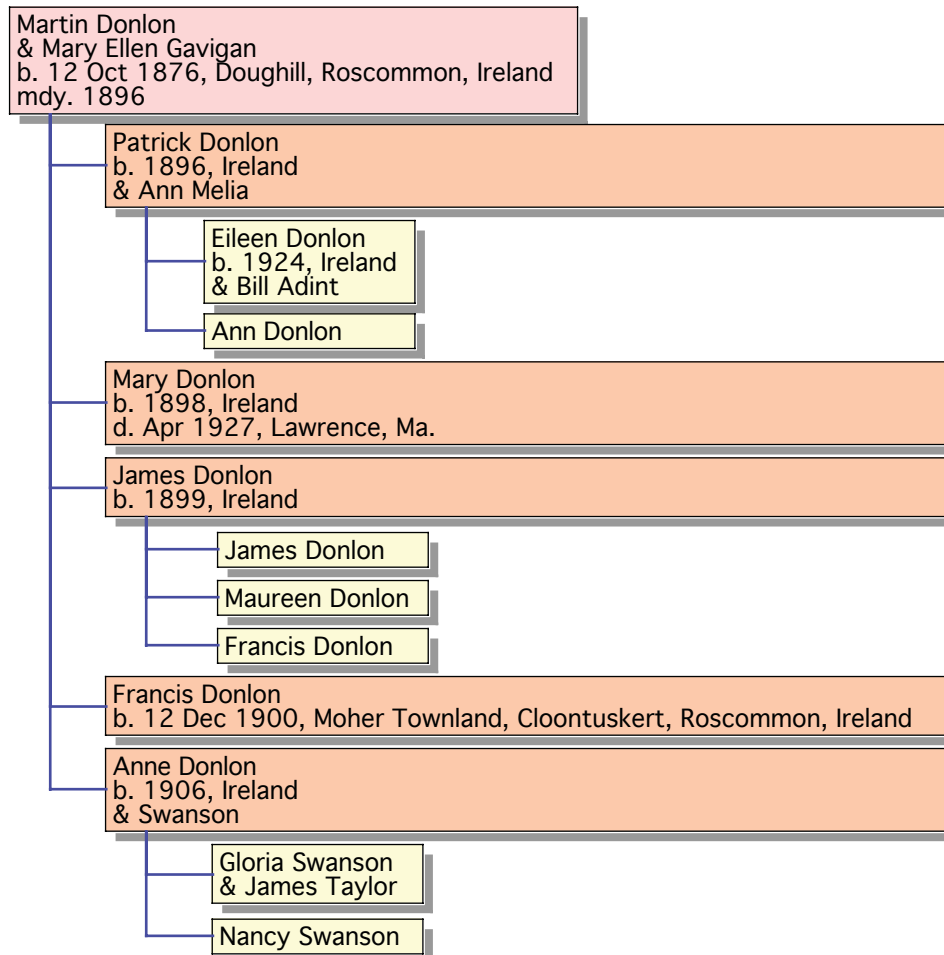
lived in Worcester, MA when she died. I kept in touch with her and she recalled her experiences with her Beirne relatives (Michael, Anne and their children) in Lawrence when she was a little girl. She was 15 years younger than my father who was her 1st cousin.

Mary Gavigan (1876-) stayed in Ireland and married Martin Donlon circa 1896. They had five children (Patrick, James, Mary, Francis and Anne). Mary died of tuberculosis and then Martin

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remarried (spouse unknown). My Aunt Agnes said that all of Mary's children had eyesight and/or alcohol issues throughout their lives. Below is what I learned of that family:

Patrick (1896-) married Ann Melia and they had two children (Eileen and Ann). They lived in Pomfret/Putnam, CT and Patrick died of heart problems. Eileen was born September 8, 1923 and



had some eye problems and may have gone blind. She married Bill Adint and lived in Pomfret, CT where he was with the Connecticut State Police. We believe that she and Bill had three children (Bill, Bob and Joanne). Joanne was a nun in St. Paul who apparently left the convent. Eileen was the same age as my cousin Ann O'Sullivan Coffey.

James (1899-) lived in West Hartford, Connecticut and died of heart problems. He and his wife had 3 children: James, Maureen and Francis who attended the university of Notre Dame.

Mary (1898-1927) died in April 1927 and is buried in Lawrence, MA.

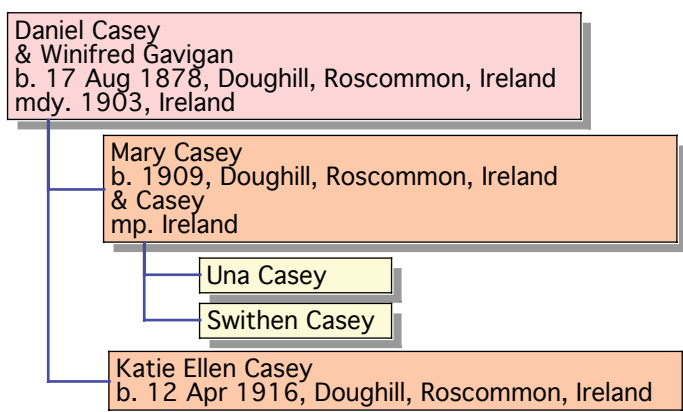
Francis (1900-) has no information.

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Ann (1906-) married Hjalmar Swanson and they lived in West Hartford, CT. It is thought that she had eye problems. They had two daughters (Gloria and Nancy). Gloria, who was a UConn graduate, married Jimmy Taylor and they had two boys and lived in New Jersey. Nancy lived in Horseheads, NY and went to the School of Fashion Design.

Winifred (1878-) Gavigan was the fourth daughter and the youngest. She stayed in Ireland at the old homestead in Doughil and married Dan Casey. They had two daughters (Mary and Katie Ellen). Mary came to the U.S. and then returned to Ireland where she married a man named Casey in Ireland. They had three kids, Una, Swithen (named for St. Swithen) and an unknown child.

My understanding is that Winifred received the old homestead when her mother, Bridgette Crowley Gavigan, died in 1906 at age 65. Her father had predeceased his wife in 1889 when he was 60.



However, the Irish Valuation Office notebooks show changes in the land occupancy of the Gavigan & Crowley homestead as follows: 1903: Daniel Casey replaced Bridget Gavigan; 1935: Daniel Casey was replaced by Michael Murray; 1959: Michael Murray replaced by Patrick Murray.

Therefore, the homestead was granted to Winifred and then to her husband in 1903. In either case, this created family difficulties. Apparently, this was upsetting to Grandma Anne Gavigan Beirne as she expected to receive something because she was the oldest.

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Ann O'Sullivan Coffey's funeral
May 2, 2006

L-R:

Paul Nerney Mary Nerney Gravel Bob Gravel

Steven Kelley Liz Kelley Ken Beirne

Note: Paul, Mary, Steve & Ken are 2nd cousins (Gavigan)