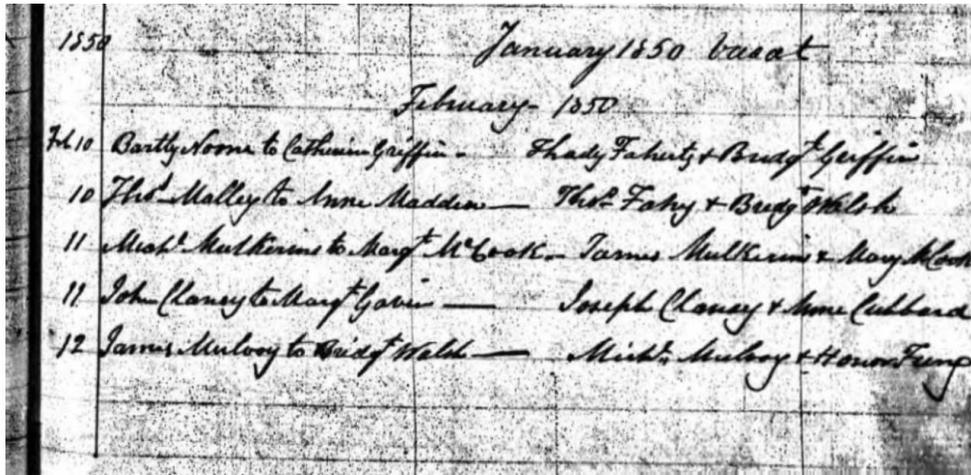


The story of Bartly Noone and Catherine Griffin

My great-great grandparents, Bartly Noone** and Catherine Griffin, were married in Moycullen on 10 February 1850 at Moycullen Church. I assume it was at the old church which was razed for the development of the current Church of the Immaculate Conception on the same site. Witnesses to the marriage were Thady Faherty and Bridget Griffin.

**When Bartly came to the States, he used Bartholomew Noonan as his name.



Marriage registry – Moycullen Church February 1850

I can only imagine what life must have been like at that devastating time of An Gorta Mor when hunger and deprivation spread across the land, especially in County Galway and the west of Ireland. Along with millions of others, these life-altering conditions compelled my GG Grandparents (as well as six other ancestors throughout Ireland) to emigrate to the United States, whether forced or by choice, I'm not sure. It had to be extremely harrowing to leave their families knowing they may never see them again.

Upon arriving in the United States, Bartly and Catherine settled in Washington, D.C. in the early 1850's. They lived in an Irish neighborhood in Northwest Washington just on the outskirts of the city, where a great majority of Irish immigrants lived and worked as laborers. A few more of my Irish ancestors, Daniel Shanahan and his wife Mary Regan, lived in NW Washington as well, although I'm not sure where they were from in Ireland. It was here that Bartly and Catherine started a family. Patrick, my great uncle, was born in 1854, and Michael, my great grandfather, was born in 1857. They were both baptized at St. Patrick's, an Irish Roman Catholic church in the area. Witnesses to my great grandfather Michael's baptism were: Martin Griffin and Bridget Griffin (*most likely, the same Bridget who witnessed the wedding*). It was here where Bartly and Catherine witnessed the construction of many of Washington's famous landmarks.



My GG Grandparents view of Washington Monument and U.S. Capitol

Shortly after the American Civil War began in 1861, Bartly left home to serve. This is where some confusion regarding Bartly begins. From pension records, it was believed by the family that Bartly enlisted in 1861 with Company D, 1st D.C. Infantry and served until his death in February of 1862. However, there is no official record of Bartly having served in that unit. Another pension document indicates that Bartly was employed as a civilian with the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps during that same time period. Whether either story is to be believed, truth will never be told as Bartly never returned home, and no death records have been found.

Catherine was now a single working mother tasked with raising a family of two young boys. Sometime in the 1870's, Catherine and the boys moved a few miles east to another Irish neighborhood of Washington, D.C. called Swampoodle, which was a poor Irish shanty-town in Northeast Washington near Capitol Hill. Washington was constructed on the Tiber River, and at the time, was mostly low-lying swampground full of mosquitoes and other pests, which in part, is how Swampoodle got its name. It was one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city, with most of the residents living in dilapidated brick buildings and shacks with dirt floors, outhouses, and no running water. The area was also the home to many street gangs who allegedly intimidated numerous police officers in the city from going into the area, yet Irish hospitality was still the course, with residents always welcoming those from the homeland. It was during the Great Famine that Swampoodle received its greatest number of Irish immigrants, many of whom were poor working-class laborers. Despite the animosity displayed toward the Irish by some, as evident from the now infamous "No Irish Need Apply" moniker, it was an industrious community. On a more positive note, it did have a ballpark named Swampoodle Grounds, built in the 1880's, where the first Washington Nationals baseball team played.



My great grandfather, Michael Noonan (center) with two of his nephews



First Washington Nationals baseball team - played at Swampoodle Grounds from 1886-1889

WANTED IMMEDIATELY—A SERVANT to cook, wash and iron in a small family, a mile and a half from the city. A slave preferred. Would hire by the year and pay liberal wages for good service. No Irish need apply. Address "W 2," at this office. oc 17--lf

Evening Star, Washington, DC - 17 Oct 1855

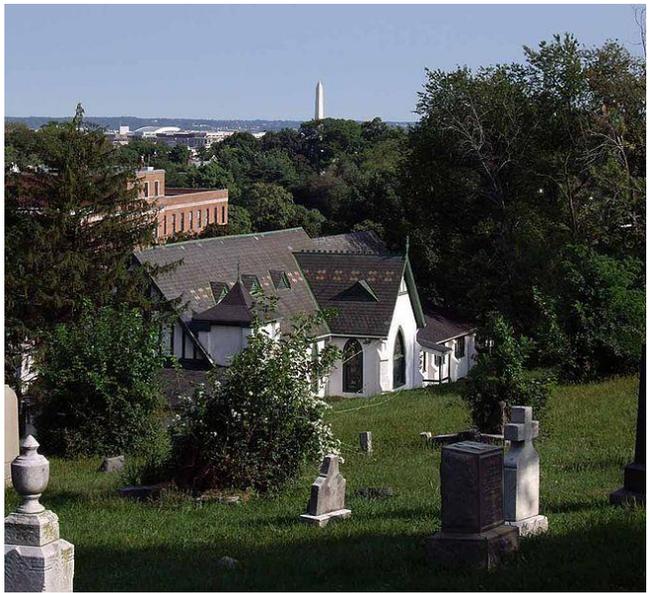
COOK WANTED.—A Woman wanted to Cook Wash, and Iron, at 27 H street. No Irish need apply.

Evening Star, Washington, DC - 29 Sep 1857

WANTED — An industrious WHITE GIRL, American or German, to nurse and do chamberwork. No Irish need apply. No. 180 4th st., between L street and N. Y. av. my 1-2t

Evening Star, Washington, DC - 02 May 1865

Throughout her life in the States, Catherine was fortunate to find gainful employment to support her family. She worked both as a domestic servant and also as a washwoman before her death on 01 March 1885 at the age of 52. She died from apoplexy (*stroke*) and is buried at Holy Rood Cemetery, near Georgetown University in Washington very near the same neighborhood where she began her journey in the States. Holy Rood is the oldest burial ground in the city where, in addition to many Irish, over 1000 free and enslaved Africans are also buried. In that same cemetery are buried a great many other Griffins, I'm sure many of whom might also be from the Galway/Moycullen area.



View of the Washington Monument from Holy Rood cemetery

Shortly after Catherine's death, my great uncle Patrick left home for the Army, stationed at one point at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, where he was witness to Geronimo's surrender during the Indian Wars. He went on to serve in the Philippine-American War (1899-1902) and retired from the US Army as a Sergeant in the Ordnance Department. He died 23 December 1937, and is buried at Los Angeles National Cemetery. My great grandfather Michael served as a civilian blacksmith during the Indian Wars, and later was employed as a blacksmith at the Washington Navy Yard. Michael died 06 September 1928 at the age of 70, and is buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Washington, where a great many of my family and other Irish of Washington are also buried. On a sidenote, one of the Lincoln assassination conspirators, Mary Surratt, is also buried at Mt. Olivet marked by a simple white headstone with only her name inscribed.



In 2017, some of my family and I were fortunate to make a trip to Ireland. During that time, we visited Moycullen, including the Church of the Immaculate Conception on the site where Bartly and Catherine were married. A very surreal feeling came over me as I knew I was walking in the very footsteps of my forebears, and felt as if I was being called home. I take special pride knowing that those very traits of perseverance and hard work that shone through in my ancestors as they forged their way in the New World have helped shape my character and have played a great role in the successes I have experienced in my life.

Tim Thomas *far left* at O'Connor's Bar Salthill during his 2017 visit to Ireland

If there are any other Griffins or Noonos (Noonan) out there who might be related or who have any further insights into the lives of my Moycullen ancestors, I would very much love to hear from you. In the meantime, I await my next visit to the homeland.

Tim Thomas, Ruckersville, Virginia, USA, 2020