

John McTear  
3626 E. Cottonwood La.  
Sandy, Utah 84092

July 22, 1991

Dear John,

On the north side of an old country church, built in 1779 and no longer in use, about a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile southeast of the town of Portglenone, in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, on the road to Ballymena is a gravestone with some of the letters weathered out and following inscribed:

ERECTED BY  
JOHN MCTEAR, CARMEGRIN  
IN LOVING MEMORY OF HIS FATHER  
THOMAS MCTEAR  
WHO DIED 23RD JANUARY 1886  
AGED 80 YEARS  
MOTHER MARY WHO DIED  
31ST MARCH 1880 AGED 83 YEARS  
MARGARET MCCANN  
DIED 5TH DECEMBER 1909 AGED 69 YEARS  
JOHN MCTEAR  
DIED 10TH OCTOBER 1910 AGED 77 YEARS  
ELIZABETH BIRT  
DIED 16TH JANUARY 1923 AGED 78 YEARS

On a tree-lined residential street about 30 miles away in Belfast Behind a 15' high chainlink fence topped with barbed wire and a beefy but aging guard in a brown wooden shack in the best Poconos' tradition is the PRONI (Public Record Office Northern Ireland) in a nondescript three story brick building and the will of John McTear, spirit merchant, Portlglenone. The first bequest is to his brother, Thomas, of Phila., and if dead, his nephews, Thomas Francis, John (your grandfather), and James; his second is to his nieces, Teresa and Catherine. In the will a sister, Catherine who predeceases him is mentioned.

The Thomas who died in 1886 was your grandfather's grandfather, a farmer from the townland of Carmegrin, in the parish (civil) of Portglenone (prior to 1825 the parish of Ahoghill), the Barony of Lower Toome, County Antrim, Ireland. From that churchyard, the Church of Aughnahoy, continue a short distance to the fork taking the right hand fork, the left goes on to Ballymena, up a gradual incline a couple of miles to a plateau overlooking the Bann Valley on your right and you should be in Carmegrin. A townland is only 400-500 acres. Ordnance Survey 36 which goes with Griffiths Valuation of 1862 (copy enclosed) would help to confirm that this desolated area was once Carmegrin. The Mormon History Center in Salt Lake probalby has a copy. If you ever get there and can get a copy I'll be happy to pay the cost.

The McTears do not appear on the 1826 Tithe Applotment for Carmegrin. However, they appear everywhere else. The problem is not too few McTears but too many. Without knowing Thomas's father name it is hard to even speculate. Evaluations are like property assessment and show only the owner and the tenant. The Censuses which were done approximately every 10 years contain more information.

The Treaty that ended the War of Irish Independence in 1922 did more harm to the Irish than the British Army had been able to by splitting the IRA into two opposing camps-those for and those against the treaty- who immediately turned upon each other with a pent fury and savagery they had never directed at their previous masters. Three Hundred years of shame and self hatred, zeal and high moral commitment exploded in a holy war waged by the pure of heart over a moot point-Northern Ireland was going to remain loyal protestant and part of the Empire no matter what happened in the South. Glorious and sad to behold the initial engagement of this brutal prayer took place over the disposition of a massive greco-roman building overlooking the polluted Liffey in Dublin. In a last minute act of vindicativeness the home team who had been using the structure as a regional HQ detonated their own powder magazine. It was missed timed and did little of the hoped for murder and maiming to the troops in the process of dislodging them. However, after several minutes the streets surrounding the building began to fill up with a snow storm of small pieces of paper as the debris returned to earth. The magazine had been directly beneath the offices of the PRO and the small flakes of paper was 500 years of records including among many other things the 1821, 1831, 1841 and the 1850 censuses. Fifteen generations of Irish Wills (originals) John McTear's among them lay in the streets of the ghettos surrounding the Inn of the Four Courts.

Penal Law forbade the Catholics from keeping Religious Records-Baptismal, Marriage and Death. The earliest records of that nature date from 1850+/- and you have to get past my favorite animal, priestus catholicorum, to use their records. I went thru the record at Aughnahoy primarily because the rector was away on a well deserved vacation.

The first entry for our family is the marriage of Elizabeth to Charles O'Neil, attended by her sister Margaret McCann in Feb 1880. It's strange but there is nothing prior not even the marriage of Margaret which you would have thought was after the 1862 Griffiths. The records go back to 1848 but the only thing I found besides the above was a second wedding for Elizabeth to Arthur Birt on Nov 21, 1888. I did not find even any burial information of her mother and father.

Somebody must have left some of it on the counter when he <sup>was</sup> told to beat it, that the building had been just commandeered by IRA anti-traty forces because part of the 1850 census for part of Antrim survived. Part of the 1831 census exists for the area of east Londonderry also. In the Antrim part which doesn't include Portglenone or Ahoghill but all around them there are no McTears fitting the description. In the 1831 Londonderry there are a ton of them, in the townland of Glenone, which is on the Londonderry side of the Portglenone bridge, there are 7 or 8. The 1831 just has head of household names so it could be any or none of them. A 1766 Religious Census exist for Ahoghill. There are two James, a John and a Pat but they are dissenters.

There is a bequest in the will of John McTear dec'd 1910 for masses to be offered by the parish priest of Rasharkin, for his mother and father. Part of the 1850 that exists is for Rasharkin which is about 8 miles north of Portglenone (town) but there wasn't any matching McTears. The rector at the church there was too busy scratching his stomach to bring out his registry but he gave me the name of genealogist authorized (i.e. kicking back) whom I intend to write but you know how long that takes.

Minutes for the Cashel Manor Court which is the general area of Portglenone exist for 1769 to 1825. The first McTear entered is on April 14, 1777. His name is John and he was maybe the dissenter in 1766 census. There are additional reference all the way up to end for McTears, John and James. The tradition was to name the first son after his paternal grandfather so its possible that the Thomas who died in 1886 was the son of a John McTear.

I am enclosing some maps. A townland is the smallest civil subdivision and there are so many that no one has ever made a map of them. Portglenone is a town, 33 miles nw of Belfast, and with 20 or so townlands also a parish. Immediately to its east further from the Bann is the Parish of Ahoghill. The jurisdiction for the Townland of Carmegrim (many variation spellings) moved from the latter to the former around 1830.

In 1834 Ahoghill had 12027 presbyterians, 1932 catholics and 656 members of the established church to feel sorry for them. Ireland was only 8% presbyterian in that year. The eastern part of Londonderry adjoining this vicinity ~~was~~ the ratio was 2.5 to 1, while the parsih of Portglenone was 1.33 to 1. Ahoghill was probably the most presbyterian place in Ireland and maybe the entire world. Today the two communities can live in the same neighborhood with out interacting, with no human demensions to mollify their differences. The word distrust would be a euphemism. Distinguished members of each faith worked deliberately to encourage this isolation. The twin sisters of their efforts were separated education and endogamy. Moderate presbyterian, who have never been able to stand up their own hate-crazed trash, were also repeatedly rejected by the Heirarchy of the Catholic Church on the issue of non-denominational education.

The one true church went on to outdo itself in matrimony. In the 1850's, fifty years before their adoption by the universal church, a bitter insignificant prelate, named Cullen, pushed thru rules and regulations Draconian in intent which all but eliminated mixed marriages. Not sharing a covered dish at a PTA or a grandchild the two groups never have to allow knowing each other to spoil their hatred.

Although I do believe that only a stray priest will pass thru the needles eye, and him an assistant curate, the role of the church, without any intention of lessing their guilt is primarily negative and complicatory. When you cross the border from Monaghan to Armagh and you come face to face with a beat up white blockhouse and you can tell whether someone is pointing an automatic weapon or about to fire thru the gun port, you realize how dehumanizing military hatred is. You also begin to discern the outline of a not too bright mentality enjoying playing soldier. A seige mentality complete with homespun didactics.

Thomas McTear was born in 1803, the year of Robert Emmet's unsuccessful uprising; Mary his wife was born somewhere around 1798 the year of Wolf Tone's unsuccessful rising. The leadership for both was protestant, liberal, in Belfast even presbyterian, and at least supportive of Catholic Emancipation. Both were strongly influenced by the Revolution in France. He was 10 years old when the 1st orangemen's day celebration to erupt in sectarian violence did, start a yearly tradition and about 13 when Napoleon caught the last tide coming in on the rocks of Alba and large landowners breathed out for the first time in years. He knew the economic hardtimes resulting from the end of the french wars and the turbulent politics and, as a young man, the response elicited by the drive for catholic civil rights. His son John was born during a Flu Year.

He was 42 years when Thomas, our greatgrandfather was born, in 1848-9; his wife 48. His son John was 16, and his daughters, Margaret and Elizabeth, 10 and 3 respectively, and a daughter Catherine, who is in some convent yard somewhere and whose age is unknown. It was in the middle of the Great Famine, five years of consecutive potato crop failures, when Ireland discovered that its undesired membership in the British Union did not include aid or relief, and 2,225,000 (in the years from 1845 to 1851) irishmen either starved or migrated. Starving was slightly more popular than migrating. There were worst places than Antrim, but it still lost 30,000 during that period which would be the equivalent of Penna. losing 1,500,000 people. During the Famine those that left did so to find food; afterwards to perserve the family farm from needless and destructive oversubdivision. Thomas went in that second group.

On September 6, 1875 Thomas writes a letter to Mary Black from his residence in Philadelphia on Samson St. His name appears in the city directory, a phone book without telephones, in 1875 so he probably was here at least in 1874. Mary Josephine Black lived at 69 Linden St.

in the Falls section of Belfast, a predominately catholic area very susceptible to violent rioting. This and the mentioning of a confessor in the letter make me think that Mary who had been raised an 'aginner' (i.e. dissenter) had converted prior to coming to America. Her parents, Samuel and Anna Williamson Black, most likely didn't understand.

Today, the catholic middle-class from Belfast usually vacations in Donegal, Irish-Free State, between July 12th and August 15th, the 'Marching Season'. July 12th commemorates the Battle of the Boyne and the victory of William of Orange, whose motto was "civil and religious freedom" and who was supported against James 11 by the Pope. August the 15th is Apprentice Day which celebrates the closing of the City of Londonderry's gates, in the knick of time by a few apprentices in the face of the same James 11 who if he hadn't been such a moron you'd have felt sorry for.

Drinking , marching, Orangemen (the Loyal Order of Orange-an Elks for Skinheads) beat up catholics and burn their homes down. When the catholics fight back things escalate and there is "sectarian violence". This happens all over Ireland North but the really impressive rioting is and has always been in Belfast in Mary Black's old neighborhood. Because they transcend all others in their class the riots of 1857, 1864 and 1872 should be noted. Usually they had to bring in the troops to pull the catholics off their oppressors. In 1874 it took 4000 british soldiers- a highland regiment and mounted dragoons.

On top of this there was a depression beginning in 1874. If I were Mary Black I know I'd have a hard time leaving. In 1856 46 Philadelphia policemen were fired for being "Know-Nothings" and John Coughlin who was born in 1879 could describe in detail Orangemen's Day (July 12th) Riots that took place in the city. I don't think she moved with the idea of getting away from sectarian disorders.

The will of Thomas McTear dec'd. 1886 is enclosed. It is a 'stem will' with the bulk of the estate going to the eldest son. It was common where the farmer had the money for the younger son to go into the priesthood, which explains why seminaries were such hotbeds of anger and rebellion in those days. According to my father, who was about eleven years old when his grandfather died and his ofttime's companion as the old gentlemen wandered the streets of Fishtown quoting from long passages from Homer in greek, he had attended Maynooth Seminary completed his 10 years of study and was awaiting money for passage to Louvain, France and his ordination when he met Mary Black. Talk about your parents not understanding, it probably caused his mother's death 6 years later. On November 28th 1875, nevertheless, they were married at St. Theresa's at 1337 Catharine St., Phila.

Mary arrived either on the 18th of October or after a rough sailing on the 25th of November in Philadelphia if she came on the Kenilworth. The passenger records are missing from the national archives for that winter. I haven't found the record of Thomas's entry either which I had hoped would support another old family story.

My father told me that Thomas came to this country with his cousin. A dispute broke out between them when he gave his name to immigration official as Harry McIntyre. Thomas never spoke to him again.

Conformity in spelling didn't become an issue until the middle of the last century in the British Isles. The same word could be spelt three different ways in the same paragraph and no one cared. Nothing was sacred; Thomas's name is spelled two different ways in his own will. Rules were unnecessary even insulting until it came time to mass produce reading for the lower orders. Before that it was phonetic and to the Irish ear McTear, M'Ateer, and McIntyre were the same 'mok un tear' which in gaelic was "Mac an tSaoir" and literally meant 'son of the carpenter'. "An" the genitive article picks up a 't' for reason that make total obscurity seem transparent and the word 'saoir' pronounced 'seer' loses its 's'.

For some reason Thomas disagreed. There is another name 'MacTire'. The literal meaning is 'son of the soil'; idiomatically it is 'Wolf'. Admittedly I am the Rube Goldberg of language but 'tire' is a feminine noun which instead of 'an' take 'na' and that may make it 'mok a tear'. Strangely Clan MacTire changed its name to the Caldonian Society about two years ago because it was tired of being confused with Clan MacIntyre. Either way if should choose the messianic son of the carpenter notion (overwhelmingly favored in our family as a symbolic confirmation) I will still consider us on speaking terms.

Mary and Thomas were supposed to have other children besides Thomas F. born June 30, 1880, John (your grandfather) born Feb 1884, Catherine born March 1887, James born Oct 1889, and Thresa born April 1893. They were supposed to have been in Ireland and named Mary and Joseph. Any religious overtones for you? It certainly would have made them more interesting- 2 children from a previous liason, two children out of wedlock. The 1900 Census says that Mary had 7 children of whom 5 at that time were living. In the 1880 Census Mary has 1 child, Joseph age 2, and was days away from having my grandfather. They lived at 2133 Kater St, (an author describing the life of Joseph Zebulon Foster, 1881 to 1961 said he grew up in a 'grimy alley house of Kater St'.) with two cousins, Martha Dickson, a 21 year old sales lady, and Mary Dickson, a 19 year old dressmaker. There was a boarder named Bridget Coyle, 52.

On his marriage certificate Thomas was a merchant. In the 1875 City Directory he was a salesman. In the 1880 Census he was a bookkeeper and in the 1886 directory also. In between he was a shoemaker during the lean times. Sometime between 1886 and 1889 they moved to 1416 N Second St., a wider street, a bigger house in a better neighborhood near a church. He was a person who sold trimmings. By 1900 he was a bookkeeper again and Mary was a notions dealer. The story was that she was the driving force and without her the family would have starved. Of course, my wife would say the same thing.

In 1910 the slightly disheveled man with the push broom mustache wandering around Fishtown muttering in greek received 1400 pounds sterling (br). His older brother had prospered. The bad news was it wasn't in farming but in the bar business. He had never married and much of the remaining half of his estate was left to the church. Perhaps, he was the one that should have been a priest. I haven't found out what happened to the famm.

Thomas and his remaining sister, Lizzie Birt, died within two months of each other in 1923. His estate was drollly insolvent. His wife died in 1925. By this time your grandfather and mine had married sisters named McKeown. Jim, Tease and Kate had chosen to follow their uncles lead and the life of christian singlehood. All in all they were nice people who lived long lives and were able to stay close to one and another through out them.

My father liked to surround himself with mystery and his reputation as a phantom. Uncle Jack showed up without warning for his own memorial services after his ship had been sunk in the N. Atlantic. For all their noisiness getting information out of any of the 2nd Street McTears is and was impossible. People who can deliver lethal amounts of information in a single phrase insult can suddenly become cryptic and syntactically bewildering if simple ambiguity doesn't work. I am personally resigned to never getting any usable information out of several of my children and I blame the McKeowns for it. It is not unrelated that my personal and business phones are both unlisted.

Maggie Smith McKeown was married to William J. McKeown for only 7 years. Of their five children four were alive at the 1900 Census. Kate was born in 1886; William in June 1887; your grandmother Margaret in Oct. 1888 and my grandmother Martha in 1890. Along with her mother, Katherine, born in November 1831 in Ireland, her brother Frank Smith born in March 1867, and her nephew John Coughlin born in August 1879, they lived at 407 Oxford. She was a saloonkeeper. Her establishment was at 1601 Germantown Ave., right around the corner and across from the Salvation Army Headquarters. Going back to 1885 and beyond the McKeown's disappear for twenty-five years. Until 1860 when they reappear in the census as John McKeown, 40 years old born in Ireland and a weaver, Martha, his wife, 34 years old and also born in Ireland, and William J. aged 2. Kate McKeown told my mother that William J. was raised in Paradise Pa. and that his mother's maiden name was Biggers. John Coughlin told me that John McKeown came to this country in 1844. They are hard to find any solid information on though.

William turns up in the official records when he dies at the age of 33 on 11/3/1893. He is buried at New Cathedral Cemetery along with his daughter, Catherine who died at age 57 and was buried 4/19/1944, his wife Margaret, who was 74 when she died in April 1935 while tying Uncle Jerry's shoe, his son William who was only 30 when he was buried 2/4/1918 having died of tuberculosis, his mother Martha McKeown who was 55 at her death and his father John who was 65 both of whom were interred on 1/8/1891 (maybe reinterred), and Francis, his son who was one and was buried within 6 months of his father.

It is interesting to note in passing that the same Portglenone is the corruption of Port Chluain Eoghan which is literally 'the bank of Owen's pasture'. Mc Keown is a mumbling of the name 'Mac Eoghan' meaning son of John. The Antrim McKeowns are in large part supposed to be descended from John Bisset a scotch-norman knight whose family fell afoul of the authorities over the small matter of a poisoning, of a high official in 13th century Scotland. Having agreed to take voluntary exile to the Crusade John went instead to an area not too far from Carmegrin and changed his name to McKeown. My wife has always criticized my desire to run away to Ireland or Canada as nearly paranoiac delusions of pursuit and they're just a genetic defect.

Maggie Smith McKeown was the third child of Thomas Smith, according to the 1870 census a laborer born in Ireland in 1826+/-, and Catherine Smith, born Katie Tumelty in Ireland in 1834+/- . She was born, as were all her siblings in Penna., in April 1860. Katie came to this country in 1850, she might have been single. Thomas died in the early 1870's. Their first child was Elizabeth who was born in 1853+/- and by 1870 was a weaver. James was born around 1856 and by 1870 he is a laborer. After Maggie was Francis born March 1867 and John born sometime in the spring of 1870. By 1880 Katie Smith is a widow living on 1406 Howard St with her three youngest children awaiting the arrival of William J. McKeown and cycle to begin once again.



P.S. if you turn up anything please send me a  
copy