

A Gathering of the Clans

by Emmett Corry, O.S.F.



Alonging to know more about Ireland and my ancestors became part of my life as a child. I learned my family's history, by eavesdropping on the long conversations my parents had with our many Irish relatives and friends who visited us in our home in Rockaway Beach. Fascinated by their memories of Ireland and of the many grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who still lived in the old country, I stored away the names of these distant relatives in my memory and tried to sort out their relationships to me.

When the old ones told their magic tales of the land: the pookas and little people, the fairy rings that no one would touch, the old ring forts into whose hidden passages cattle and sheep would sometimes stray — in my mind's eye I could see the hills, streams and farms of Galway and Clare. My imagination was fired. Never-seen places became visible. It was evident to me, even as a child, that my parents and relatives missed Ireland, parents, brothers, sisters and friends. It gave me a feeling for Ireland and all these dear relations I had never met.

Leaving Ireland was necessary for my parents and their friends. There was no way to make a living in Ireland. They preserved a strong bond to Ireland by their stories of home, their constant retelling of their early lives and those loved ones left behind "at home," as they always called Ireland. When they came to New York my parents' generation entered a world very different from the Ireland they remembered. It was filled with other Irish emigrants who soon found out the streets were not paved with gold.

Domestic service was the first job for most of the Irish girls who came to America from the farms. Irish men from rural backgrounds found hard manual labor or New York City jobs with the Fire, Police, Sanitation or the Transit Authority.

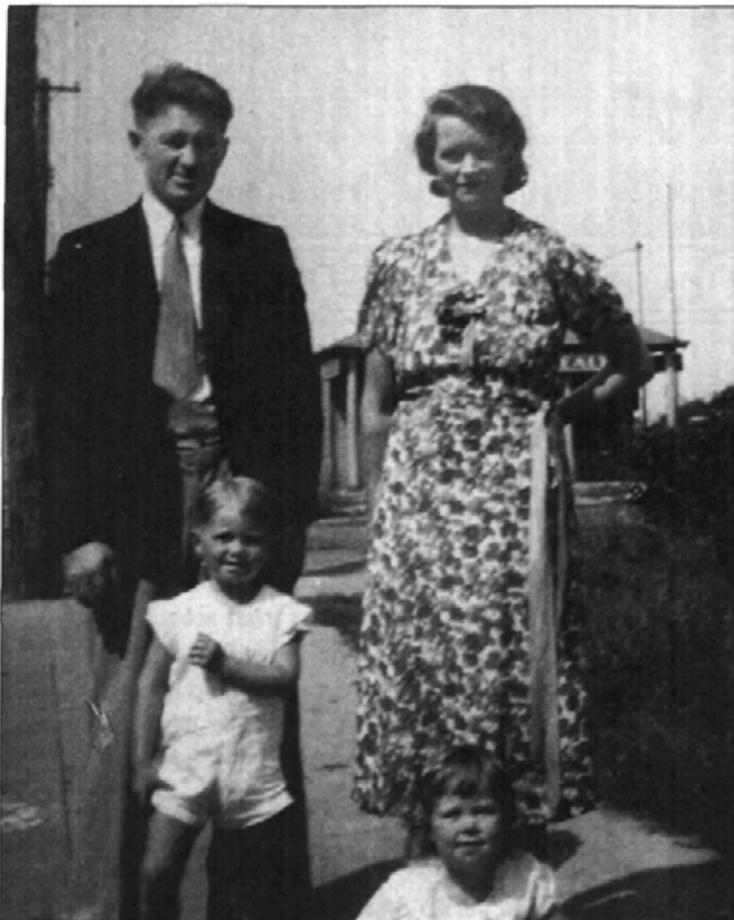
My father, Patrick J. (PJ) Corry was born in 1905 in Leitrim Cree in the parish of Kilmichael in County Clare.

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He came to New York in 1925 and worked all his life for the Baker and Williams Bonded Warehouse on LeRoy Street in the West Village. Until he married in 1934, he lived in a large boarding house in Clarkson Street, two blocks from this job. It was run by a Mrs. Mac, who seemed to favor Claremen at her table.

My mother, who was born Bridget Cosgrove, was called Delia all her life. She was born in 1906 in Woodfield, in the Parish of Glenamaddy in County Galway. When she arrived in 1928, Delia went into service as a cook for the Kurtners, a Jewish family who had a home in the East sixties in Manhattan and one in the Adirondacks. Each September, Mom would share her happy memories of her years with this family when she would cook Rosh Hashonah treats for us which she had learned in the Kurtner's kosher kitchen. But more of this story later.

Over the last 30 years, when I have visited Ireland, I have found more uncles, aunts and cousins in Clare, Galway, Roscommon, Mayo, Kerry, Cork and Dublin than in America. My active involvement in researching my Corry and Cosgrove family histories began about ten years ago and has been further influenced by my work with the New York Irish History Roundtable.



My parents, Patrick J. and Bridget Corry with me and my sister Kathleen circa 1937, Rockaway Beach

The idea for a "Gathering of the Clans" began seven years ago at a family dinner during the Christmas of 1989. One of my brothers suggested that we should all get together for a cruise to the Caribbean. Being a poor sailor, I suggested that we all consider going to Ireland instead. A few months later, at another family gathering on St. Patrick's Day, it was proposed that we consider renting a castle in Ireland for the 40 or so of us who planned to travel to Ireland and organizing a dinner for our many relatives.

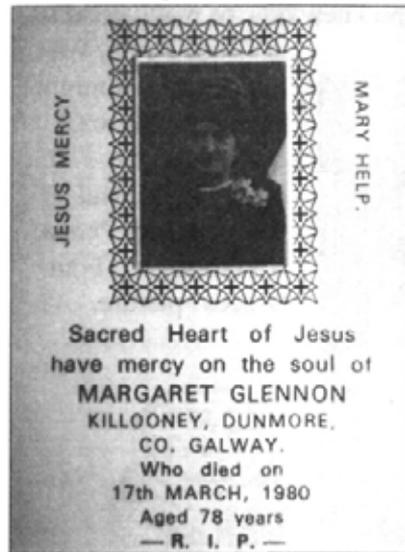
Inquiries about such castles, big enough to house us all, proved interesting. Costs ran much higher than we anticipated, from 5,000 to 8,000 Irish punts for a week's rental for a castle with staff. The major deterrent to renting one of these huge castles was the news that we would have to "ring for the servants" when we wanted anything from below stairs. The kitchen would be out-of-bounds. This was not how we lived - we wanted to make our own cups of tea. "Below stairs" was where we had been raised and we were not about to change our style to ring for servants!

Further investigation revealed that Ireland had many small, moderately-priced self-catering cottages. We settled on the Ostan ni Pairce, the Park Lodge Hotel and Cottages in Spiddal, Connemara. We were quite happy with our choice. The hotel, and the seven self-catering cottages on a gentle hill behind it, served our needs very well. Ostan ni Pairce is a 24-room, Irish Tourist Board-approved facility with small, but clean rooms and a very good Irish breakfast. Each of the seven self-catering cottages had three bedrooms, a kitchen, bathroom and large sitting room-dining room which could accommodate six guests.

Ostan ni Pairce was about five miles north of Galway City and close enough to the amusements of Salt Hill to entertain the many young people in our family during the week we stayed there. Best of all, the hotel had a large dining room, or function room as they are called in Ireland, which could house about 190 people for dinner and dancing. After consulting with all the family, I put a deposit on our reservation for three rooms in the hotel and six cottages when I was in Ireland in June of 1990.

In the Fall of 1990 we wrote to about 150 relatives in Ireland, Canada, Britain and America inviting them to reserve the date of July 5th, 1991 for a Family Celebration and "Gathering of the Clans" on the coast of Galway. In early May of 1991 we sent out formal invitations and received replies from about 165 guests. With the 35 immediate family who were the hosts, we had almost 200 of us attending a wonderful reception, dinner, and dancing in the Function Room of the Hotel. The Foyle family, who own and manage Ostan ni Pairce, catered an outstanding reception and dinner party for us. We found out later that the Foyles run a school to train young Irish chefs during the year so we had the benefit of their culinary expertise.

Family histories for the Corry and Cosgrove sides of our family were distributed to every one who attended our Family Celebration. The preparation of this history was done with the help of many people. On



my father's side, I was assisted by Michael Lillis, the husband of Carmel Corry, a first cousin who lived on the family farm in Leitrim Cree in Clare. As an Agricultural Advisor, whose office was in Kilkee, Michael was familiar with most of the families of West Clare. As the President of the Kiltrush Golf Course, he was also able to know many people who gave him specific information

about the Corry, Ryan and McNamara families going back into the last century. His use of many memorial cards in his history was especially helpful because they put faces and dates to the names of many ancestors.

As with any effort to complete the genealogic picture, there were some empty places and missing relatives. In one funny case, a Kevin Corry from Chicago, whom I had never known, wrote to me in the Fall of 1991, saying that he had seen the Family History that summer in Ireland and might I send him a copy, which I was happy to do. His grandfather, Joseph Corry, was listed in Michael Lillis' part of our history, as losing the Bayview Hotel in Kilkee after his wife Katherine's death, after which he returned to his family farm. The Bayview Hotel had been a dowry from Katherine's Roche family. However, Michael Lillis makes no mention of any children of this short and sad marriage.

Another version of Joseph Corry's life, compiled by Agnes Marrinan Tarpey, who came to our Family Gathering from San Francisco, is about her Corry and Marrinan parts of the family. She lists Joseph Corry as unmarried, but connected to the Bayview Hotel. In any case, no children are mentioned.

Contradicting these versions of his grandfather's life, Kevin Corry sent me a long family history which lists six children who were born of the marriage of Joseph Corry and Katherine Roche. They were Patrick, Ellen, Mike, Thomas who died young, Joseph and Kevin's father Frank. What seems to have happened is that these children were raised by a sister of Katherine who took them all to Chicago after their mother died in 1897.

Writers of family histories will need to save room for missing ancestors and cousins. As I wrote in the Preface of

the History: "The Cosgrove Corry Family History is a work in progress and needs your careful review. Where space indicates names or dates not known, the compiler would greatly appreciate the help of readers, especially our senior cousins, who might pass on our histories to their younger cousins, who then will carry on their good work." Kevin Corry's generous response to my request gave us almost sixty Corrys living in the Midwest we knew nothing about.

For mother's Cosgrove side of the family, I asked her nephew, William Cosgrove, to assist us in gathering details about his ancestors. As a *Garda*, I felt that he would be in a good position to gather information about his Galway roots from the families in Woodfield Glenamaddy. His research was very helpful, but we are still finding details not available a few years ago. Recent correspondence from Kathleen Connolly, who is a grandniece of my mother, has given us dates for births and baptisms from the Glenamaddy parish records for her Cosgrove ancestors. But more needs to be done: as an example, two of my mother's uncles are listed as gone to England, but their first names are not given, nor is anything known about them. Mother remembered that her father, Patrick Cosgrove, had to go to England when she was a child to bury one of his brothers. More needs to be done to fill in the gaps.

However, my many hours of eavesdropping on the family conversations of my childhood proved helpful. I was able to identify and visit many relatives related to mother who were mentioned all those long years ago. I hope someday to also find the records of the two Cosgrove brothers who went to England in the beginning of this century, perhaps in the baptismal records of the Glenamaddy parish.

Family photographs can be a wonderful source of information about ancestors. At our Family Celebration Dinner in 1991, photographs were shared that had not seen the light of day for years. One beautiful photograph of my mother and three of her sisters had been in our family album many years ago. But it was lost when my parents moved out of our home to a smaller apartment. When it was found in my Aunt Mary Connolly's home in Ireland, her granddaughter, Kathleen Connolly, mentioned above, sent me a laser copy, which I copied and sent to my brothers and sisters for Christmas three years ago. We nicknamed this beautiful photo the "Four Graces" and I took on the duty of finding out more about it. My sister Kay recently found the original photo in a family album and the picture accompanying this story is a print from this original small photograph.

Family tradition said that the photo had been taken on a Sunday in summer about 1930 in the garden of the Plainfield, New Jersey estate of Sak Lavalla, the ambassador from Siam. Visions of elephants and Siamese castles filled our childish imaginations whenever we thought of where our Aunt Margaret had worked as a cook.

Research in the New York Public Library revealed that a Phiroz D. Saklatvala, the Honorary Consul General of Persia, not "Siam," had been the president of the Middle States Oil Corporation, and lived with his wife, Mae Brady Bradley, at 25 Fifth Avenue in New York City and Plainfield, New Jersey in the summers. The Saklatvala brothers, who owned many companies throughout the

world, were wealthy Parsees from India and Persia who shared in the legend that Parsees were the shrewdest business men in India.

Although my research did not

reveal who took the picture, it would seem that my mother and her sisters, Nora, Margaret and Ellen, had been carefully posed by a skillful photographer who knew how to make good use of natural light. We like to think it might have been Phiroz Saklatvala, the Honorary Consul General from Persia, who took our "Four Graces" picture.



The Four Graces

*Helen,
Margaret, Nora,
and Bridget Cosgrove*

Another source of family history can often be found in the unique recipes from the kitchens of our mothers and grandmothers. As mentioned above, each year as we grew up mother would surprise her husband and eight children with a dish we had not had before. The Jewish dishes mother would cook around Rosh Hashonah in the Fall are still remembered by the family — gefilte fish made from scratch, fresh beef brisket with gravy, latkes with sour cream, big lemon meringue pies, and her wonderful 4 "Ps" preserve made from peaches, pears, pineapple and plums, all ripe in the Fall.

When we would ask about these exotic Jewish dishes,

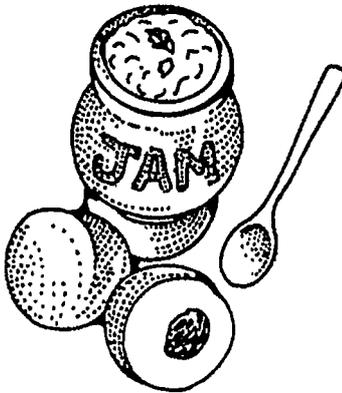
mother would tell us about her happy memories of when she was in service as a cook for the Kurtners. She remembered them with affection and recalled that Mrs. Kurtner, who tried to keep a kosher kitchen, would warn mother not to tell Mr. Kurtner too much about what went on in the kitchen. But it would seem, from our yearly treats, that Delia had learned enough about Jewish cooking to keep the Kurtner family happy and to surprise her own family many years later at Rosh Hashonah. Your author is pleased to share a sweet memory from our history with Mother's recipe for her "Four P's Preserve" on the following page.

4 P's Preserve

favorite recipe of Bridget Corry

Ingredients: 6 large peaches 6 pears 6 large plums 1 ripe pineapple
1/2 to 2/3 C. sugar for each C. fruit

Have on hand: wooden spoon large mouth funnel
pot for sterilizing jars old pot for melting wax
enamel pot for fruit 2 - 3 pkgs. sealing wax (paraffin)
10 - 12 sterilized pint preserving jars



Cut fruit into 1/2" chunks, measure, combine with sugar and let stand in the enamel pot a few hours to marry the sugar with the fruit. Bring to a boil over medium heat and let simmer over low heat for about 2 hours. Stir frequently with wooden spoon to prevent sticking. Test for jelling by placing a teaspoon of the mix on a cool plate. When it sticks to the plate and does not run off the tipped plate it is done. When done, pour into hot jars using funnel or spoon. Fill to within 1/2" from top. When jars are cool enough to touch, wipe the inside and top of the jar with a clean, dampened cloth. When jars are cool (about 1 hour) seal each jar with 1/2" of hot paraffin wax, tilting jar to completely seal preserve. Store in cool place.

Refrigerate after opening.

