

THREE IRISH SISTERS by Member Mary Stack

The Murphy sisters (Bridget, Mary, Sarah) each have descendants who are members of the Irish Heritage Society. The motherless girls, along with a young brother, sailed for America around 1848 to join their father and elder brother. Here are their stories.

Bridget Murphy Blair 1836-1924 Descendant: Patty Kelley

The crossing was hard and Bridget later recalled "Our own people were not good to us on the boat coming here. We were often hungry". Bridget, age 11, was in charge of her younger sisters and little brother. The little brother became ill, died, and was buried at sea. Upon arriving in New York, Bridget lived with a doctor's family and was trained as a midwife. Around 1853 the Murphy family came to the Bentown IL (Benjaminville) area. Bridget found work in a kitchen on the David Davis farm. There she met and married Moses Blair, an Ulster of Scottish descent. They had 14 children. As to childbirth when Bridget first felt labor pains, she would wash clothes on the washboard. When she couldn't stand it any longer, she went to bed. She would have the baby and cook for the men the next day. Bridget was a mid-wife too and loved to beat the doctors out of the delivery. The doctor didn't get the fee if Bridget had the baby delivered and the cord tied before the doctor arrived. When daughter Anna's husband died in 1879 in Nebraska Bridget wrote her "come back and stay with us. We have 'tatees' and apples in the cellar for all".

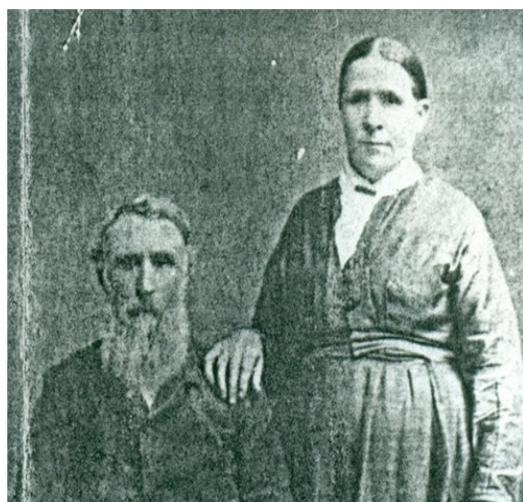
MARY MURPHY EVANS 1836-1911 Descendant: in-law LaVerne Evans

Mary immigrated with her sisters at age 10. She was sent to work for a Connecticut family. Around 1853 with her father, elder brother and sisters, she arrived in Bentown, IL area. She married John Evans, an Irish immigrant. John was a liberal giver to the cause that Church represents. He was a thrifty farmer and good neighbor. Family stories tell that John Evans was descended from royalty. His grandfather ran away from home and married an Irish girl and was disowned. Mary and John farmed in Padua IL. John and Mary's farmland was just south of the Bentown IL Quaker cemetery. They had 7 children.

SARAH MURPHY CLEARY 1841-1917 Descendant: Mary Stack

Immigrated at age 6 with her older sisters. Sarah lived with her father and elder brother in Connecticut for three years before coming to the Bentown IL area. Sarah married Michael Cleary, an Irish immigrant working on a farm near Bentown IL. Sarah and Michael eventually farmed in the El Paso/Gridley IL area along with Michael's four brothers. According to his obituary, Michael was a wise farmer and by his thrift and application to his world had secured a substantial fortune. Bishop Sheen's grandfather purchased farmland from Michael. This enabled Michael and Sarah to build a new home which is still standing today. Michael and Sarah had 5 sons and 7 daughters. They helped each son to purchase farmland and engage in farming. When Michael died, he left each daughter a substantial sum which was unusual in those days.

Bridget Murphy Blair



John and Mary Murphy Evans

Michael and Sarah Murphy Cleary

