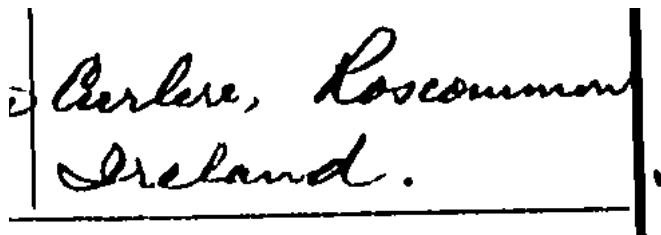


Cox Sisters?

In 1868 Catherine Cox married Samuel Stuart in Bright, Victoria, Australia. Sadly, Samuel died soon after, leaving Catherine a young widow with a daughter named Elizabeth. Catherine married again in 1871 to James Grant Hay.

Both marriage records give Catherine's parents as James Cox, a farmer, and Catherine Grey/Gray. Catherine herself is recorded as being born in County Roscommon, Ireland. Her first marriage certificate records her birthplace as 'Roscommon, Co. Roscommon' while her second marriage certificate gives an alternate town in the county for her birthplace see below. I have yet to determine the name that has been written.

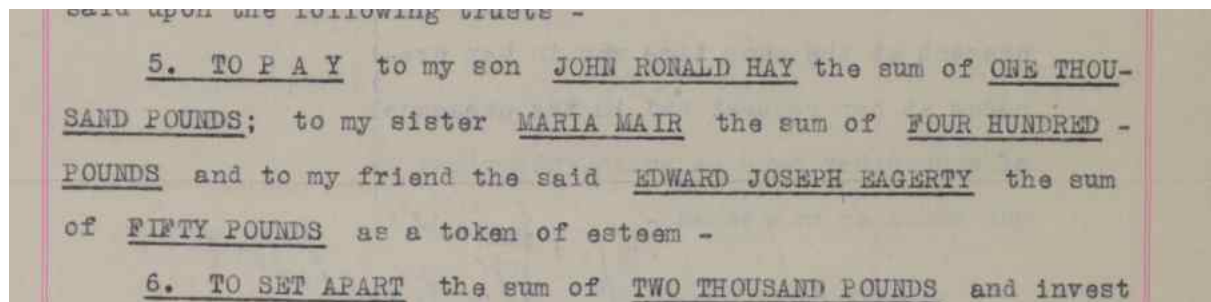


Berlere, Roscommon
Ireland.

I am aware that some researchers have Catherine's father as a William Cox which I presume is based on her 1931 death record which gives her parents as William Cox, a grazier and Catherine. I believe the account which she will have given at her two marriages is more reliable than the account given by someone else following her death.

I'm also aware that some Hay family histories record Catherine as the 'daughter of Irish distillery founder, Charles Cox' (see www.hayfoundation.org.au/about). I've not been able to identify who this person is or the name of the distillery they founded. It may be worth noting there was a brewer (and member of Parliament) named Sir Charles Cox (1660-1729) but he was English not Irish and died 100 years before Catherine was born.

Catherine died in 1931 aged 83. Her will included the following bequests –



5. TO P A Y to my son JOHN RONALD HAY the sum of ONE THOUSAND POUNDS; to my sister MARIA MAIR the sum of FOUR HUNDRED POUNDS and to my friend the said EDWARD JOSEPH EAGERTY the sum of FIFTY POUNDS as a token of esteem -

6. TO SET APART the sum of TWO THOUSAND POUNDS and invest

This is the only reference I have found to a sister, or indeed any siblings of Catherine. Maria Mair is not mentioned anywhere else in the will, and I have therefore presumed that Maria resided in Australia at the time the will was written (1924). If Maria had not been living in Australia, I think it would be reasonable to

expect that a reference to the country that she did reside in would accompany her name, for example, '...to my sister Maria Mair *of Ireland* the sum of etc....'.

I have only been able to identify one Maria Mair née Cox in Australia at this time. That person is Maria Agnes Cox born around 1865 and the wife of William McCulloch Mair of Barmerra, South Australia. Maria seems to have been known as 'Minnie'.

I've not been able to find a lot of records for Minnie. There are records of all her five children, three sons and two daughters. One daughter died in infancy while the other four children all survived into adulthood.

Minnie died in 1938 and the transcript of her death record provides the bulk of the information that I have on her. I have not seen the original record and the transcript was provided by Genealogy SA. The name is recorded as Maria Agnes Mair. She died on the 22nd of July 1938 at the age of 73 which gives her a birth year of approximately 1865. She is described as the widow of William McCulloch Mair, a fruit grower of Barmerra, South Australia. Her birthplace has been transcribed as 'Drumsuary', Leitrim, Ireland and states that she had been first resident Australia 57 years before, which gives an estimated arrival in the country of circa 1881 when she was around 16 years of age.

To the best of my knowledge there is no village or town named Drumsuary. Without seeing the original written entry, it is difficult to determine precisely which town was recorded. Towns in Co. Leitrim which could possibly be the town recorded here include Drumshanbo, Drumsna and Drumcong.

According to her death certificate Minnie was 28 years old when she married which gives her an approximate year of marriage of 1893 which aligns with the birth of their first child, William who was born on 7 November of that year.

This information helps to narrow down the search for records of other key events however despite this I've not been able to find a record of Millie's arrival in Australia or of her marriage to William Mair. Confirmation of Minnie's maiden name comes from the birth records of her children where she is variously given as 'Maria Cox' (1893, William), 'Minnie Agnes Cox' (1896, Dorothy), 'Minnie Cox' (1897, Stewart), 'Minnie Cox' (1899, Catherine) and 'Minnie Cox' (1901, Cecil)

Was Minnie the sister of Mrs Catherine Hay?

No details of Minnie's parents were anywhere recorded (that I can find). There is little doubt that they had the same surname but only Catherine's records provide any names for her parents. There appears to be nothing in the Millie's records that could help us in determining whether they have the same parents.

Catherine has a birth date which is found on a number of family trees recorded on the Ancestry.com website. I'm not sure where this comes from and I have not seen any documents where her birthdate is recorded. The date is 11 October 1848 and is consistent with the three ages recorded throughout her life; she was recorded as 20 years of age when she married Samuel Stuart in Jan 1868, 22 years of age when

she married James Grant Hay 3 years later, and 83 years of age when she died in November 1931.

Assuming the available evidence on age is correct then these two Cox girls were born 17 years apart. One might expect their ages to be closer and it does raise a question as to whether the two girls had the same mother. However, one woman having children 17 years apart is not at all unheard-of if perhaps unusual for that time. What wasn't unusual was a man losing his first wife and marrying a younger second wife and having numerous children over a quiet extended period of time. In any event there is nothing here that critically undermines the notion that Mrs J G Hay and Mrs W M Mair were sisters.

Whilst I can find no record of either woman's journey to Australia I think it is beyond doubt that the two did not travel together. Catherine was clearly in Australia in 1868 when she married Stuart. Her death record reports that she had lived in Victoria for 66 years which suggests that she arrived around 1865 at the age of 17. Millie on the other hand was being born around that time and her death record gives her an arrival in Australia of circa 1886 at the age of 16.

What do people think? I would be very grateful for any advice on how to take this forward.

Many thanks go to the numerous fellow researchers who share their findings on the web. You have helped enormously with the above, though of course any errors are mine and if you do find any please let me know.

Glenn Palmer
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London
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