

Hello Crays!

Well, get comfortable. This will be a rather long one. I've been busy lately.

First, I've had a couple of nice conversations with Jean and Jack Donoghue. Jean told me some interesting things. First, she told me that she remembered that her parents always said we were from County Clare.

Immediately, I went to my favorite book of Ireland, (PORTRAIT OF IRELAND, 2000) and looked up Clare. It said, "Ennis (County Clare) can trace its origins to the 13th century and to the O'Briens, Kings of Thumond, who were the area's feudal overlords in the Middle Ages." Also, regarding Banratty Castle (one of the main tourist attractions in Ireland), "Its most important residents were the O'Briens, Earls of Thumond, who lived here from around 1500 until the 1640's. It also mentions the Fitzgeralds," the main landowners in the Limerick area" and the village of Glin, "the seat of the Knights of Glin, a branch of the Fitzgeralds who have lived in the district for seven centuries." Hey!! There might be more than "pig-shit Irish" or "shanty Irish" in our family after all. We may all be royalty before I finish this search. Anyway, you can bet I'll have a bunch of the natives toasting my royal butt next summer in Ireland.

Oh, well! Enough revelry!

More on this later.

Jean also told me that Pop was born in Brady's Bend and grew up on a pig farm in Kittanning. We'll call that "hearsay", but hearsay that is handed down is usually pretty close to being accurate. Thanks to Jean for her input.

I've done a lot of research through the Mormons (Church of Latter Day Saints) Through all of my research, I've been able to maintain my monogamous status (quite a feat for such a weak willed person as I), but I've learned a lot.

However, there are a number of discrepancies that have arisen. First, I received Pop's death certificate. It was filled out by my Uncle Joe (remember, no one gets to fill out his own death certificate). According to Uncle Joe, Pop was born in Brady's Bend on Feb. 17, 1872. Joe listed Pop's father as John Cray and his mother as Bridget Fitzgerald.

I still haven't received Pop's wife's (Catherine O'Brien) death certificate, so we'll move on to the O'Brien - Fitzgeralds later.

Bingo! I got a hit on the 1880 Census. In Armstrong County (where Brady's Bend is) I found a John Cray, age 65, married to a Mary Cray, age 50. The children are: Catharine 17, Michael 15, Peter 14, Mary 12, John 9, Thomas (Pop) 6, and James 4. Imagine, our great grandfather was born in 1815. This has to be it. The names all fit. We even found a few we didn't know about before. But what about Mary, the wife, instead of Bridget. Was he married twice? The Mormons told me that the two names were interchangeable, like Kate and Kathleen.

The women at the Mormon Church said it was quite common, and if anyone would know about keeping wives' names straight, it would be they.

Keep in mind this could be Mary Fitzgerald, one of the infamous sisters whose children may have cast such a dark cloud over the

heretofore unblemished reputation of the Cray family.

The biggest discrepancy is that in the 1880 Census John reported that both his parents and Mary's parents were born in Pennsylvania. That could have been a lie if he was an illegal immigrant, although I have no reason to believe that it is. In the 1920 Census, Pop reported that both of his parents were from Ireland and only spoke "Irish." Its hard to believe that John and Mary lived here and raised 7 kids and only spoke Irish (Gaelic).

But why would Pop make up a whopper like that? Maybe it was the Easiest way to hamper anyone's efforts to look into his background. This is getting very interesting.

I went to the Allegheny Courthouse last week and suffered my first setback. I assumed I would find a plethora of Cray information there on Pop's siblings, but the findings were slim. The only marriage application I found was that of James, Pop's youngest brother. He married a girl named Susie Fitzsimmons from Blairsville. I also found one for Regina Cray, Patrick's daughter. Also, the information on these documents was Quite superficial - not as much detail as I found in Westmoreland County. One thing I did find out is that the Cray name is not a common one, at least not in Western PA.

Of all the tens of thousands of names that I have run across, I have not seen the name Cray once other than that of those whom we know to be our relatives.

My next step is the Catholic Church in Brady's Bend. I called and Talked to Frances, the only employee of this tiny old parish. She told me of an old cemetery up on a hill. She also told me that they have a file of old records there, but when I asked if I could come up and look through them, she told me that Father Anthony Ditto would not allow anyone to see them because they are confidential. I can't imagine what could possibly violate the confidentiality of a man who died over a hundred years ago.

Anyway, it appears that I may either have to charm Frances or to contribute to Fr. Ditto's coffers, but one way or another I intend to see those records.

I'll keep you posted. Wish me luck!

Love,
Bob