

Murphys and Barrons of Cloonagh, Parish of Owenduff, Co. Wexford: Further Ancestors of President John F. Kennedy

By Richard Andrew Pierce

Patrick Kennedy (1823-1858), an immigrant from Dunganstown, parish of Whitechurch, Co. Wexford, great-grandfather of the president and founder of one of the major families in American political history, was featured in *NEXUS* 7(1990):102-4; his descendants are authoritatively covered in the *Register* 139(1985):21 1-24 (repr. in *The Irish in New England* [NEHGS, 1985], pp. 25-38). Patrick married Bridget Murphy at Holy Cross Cathedral in Boston 26 September 1849. There is no civil record for this marriage, and no ages or parents' names are given on the church register. Bridget's death record in Boston, 20 December 1888, gives her age as 67 (probably an exaggeration), born in Ireland, daughter of Richard and Mary (____) Murphy (*Mass. VRs* 393:427). Censuses (1855 through 1880) indicate a birthdate of ca. 1827. No American records indicate her exact place of birth, but family tradition claims Bridget also came from County Wexford, where Murphy, the most common Irish surname, is widespread.

Bridget's presumed sister, Margaret Murphy, who lived with the Kennedys, was born ca. 1832, married Patrick Cleary (another Wexford surname) in East Boston 20 September 1857 and died there 3 October 1880 (*Mass. VRs* 110:89,321:249). Her father is given as Richard on marriage and death records, and her mother as Mary on the death record. No other siblings of Bridget have been found in the Boston area; nor have census, city directory, or death data been found for her parents, who probably did not come to America.

Among the godparents of the children (born in the 1850s) of Patrick and Bridget (Murphy) Kennedy were Patrick Barron, Johanna Barron, Nicholas Aspill and Bridget Aspill. The 1850 census of Ward 12, Boston (p. 268, family #587) shows Patrick "Barns," 75, with Mary, 72; James, 34; Patrick, 30; and Joanna, 20, with Nicholas Aspell, 40, also in the household. Patrick, Jr. and Nicholas were employed as coopers (as was the immigrant Patrick Kennedy.) A Thomas Barron who lived in Boston from the 1840s to the 1890s has also been shown to be a son of Patrick and Mary. The senior Patrick Barron died in Boston 20 September 1852, aged 74 (*Mass. VRs* 68:59), and Mary Barron died in Boston 30 December 1856, aged 75 (*Mass. VRs* 104:76). No parents' names, nor Mary's maiden name, are given in Patrick or Mary's death records; death records of her children Johanna and Thomas give their mother's name as Mary Aspell. Patrick and Mary (Aspell) Barron were probably born about 1778 and 1780, respectively; their daughter Joanna may have been born closer to 1825 than 1830. Her death record in East Boston 23 June 1916 (*Mass. VRs, Boston*, 2:49) gives her age as "89?".

No connection was found in American or Irish records between Patrick Kennedy and the Barrons or Aspells, so some kinship between the latter and Bridget (Murphy) Kennedy seemed likely. Moreover the death record of Bridget's son Patrick Joseph Kennedy, in Boston (*VR* 1929:1:414), gave his mother's maiden name as Bridget *Barron*, not Murphy, a very suggestive error. It is highly probable that Patrick and Mary (Aspell) Barron were either the maternal grandparents of Bridget (Murphy) Kennedy or her aunt and uncle. If the former, Bridget's mother Mary (Barron) Murphy would have been born ca. 1800-5 and married Richard Murphy probably by 1825.

Naturalization records have been found for Patrick Barron, Jr. and James Barron, as well as for a third brother, Thomas Barron. Nicholas Aspell's naturalization, and post-1850 records of him, were all found under the surname Archibald (a derivative of Aspell, a name exclusive to Co. Wexford). James Barron, born 20 October 1809, arrived in Boston 14 July 1839; Thomas Barron, born 15 June 1813, arrived in Boston 7(?) November 1839; Patrick Barron, born 24 December 1820, arrived in Boston 3 December 1848; and Nicholas Archibald, born 24 December 1817, arrived in Boston 9 June 1834. All four were born in Co. Wexford, Ireland (U.S. Circuit Court 13:263; U.S. Circuit Court 4:561; U.S. District Court 18:173; U.S. District Court 123:186; all at Boston).

Nicholas Aspell/Archibald was apparently a widower by 1850; he had at least one daughter, Bridget (Archibald) Hickey (ca. 1840-1894) whose death record gives her mother as Ann Hanlon (*Mass. VRs* 447:398). The 1860 census of Boston Ward 7 (p. 223) shows the family of James Barron, aged 51, with several boarders in the household including

Nicholas Asbel, a cooper, aged 55. Nicholas himself died in Boston 17 March 1891 (*Mass. VRs* 420:88), aged 84, son of John and Bridget (Hanlon) Archibald. An Edward Barron who witnessed Thomas Barron's 1851 naturalization was also probably related. Edward's naturalization, at Boston 23 October 1840, gives his birthplace as Tintrine (Tintern), County of Wexford, Ireland 15 April 1797; he arrived at Boston 10 December 1824 (Municipal Court, Suffolk Co., 2182, vol. 28, 1840). In the 1844 Boston city directory Edward Barren (a ship-wright) and Thomas Barren (a cooper) both lived at Gold Street between D and E Streets. By the late 1840s Edward and Patrick Barron lived on Atkinson Street in South Boston. On 21 October 1853 Edward Barron, carpenter, [24] aged 52, married (as his second wife) Hannah Desmond at Boston (*VRs* 71:148). Edward Barron, Jr. was most likely a nephew of the senior Patrick Barron.

A search of the Tithe Applotment Books (the Irish householder survey of the 1820s) was made for Murphy, Barron and Aspell families for Tintern and nearby Co. Wexford parishes. A close match was found in the townland of Cloonagh, Parish of Owenduff, where Richard Murphy and Patrick Barren had adjoining holdings in 1833 of 16 and 17 acres (Tithe Applotment Book, Parish of Owenduff, p. 12). Also in Cloonagh were Thomas and Patrick Aspill. *Griffith's Valuation of Ireland*, taken in 1854, finds no Patrick Barron (consistent with emigration to Boston), but Richard Murphy still in Cloonagh with 16 acres, along with Patrick, Nicholas and Thomas Archbold. The Tithe Books also show a John Aspill in nearby Rathumney.

The parish of Owenduff, Barony of Shelburne, Co. Wexford is served by the Catholic parish of Ballycullane (Tintern) whose baptismal register dates from 1827. The Wexford County Library staff searched it for all Murphy, Barron and Aspell data through the 1850s and found the following:

18 May 1831, *baptism* of Edward Murphy (*parents*: Richard Murphy, Mary Barron; *sponsors*: James Dunn, Mary Scot; *townland*: not listed)

18 Nov. 1835 (b. 16 Nov.) *baptism* of Brigid Aspel (*parents*: Nicholas Aspel, Ann Hanlon; *sponsors*: D. Dunn, Brigid Hanlon; *townland*: Nash)

No baptisms were found for Bridget or Margaret Murphy, but it seems almost certain that the Edward Barron above was their brother and that the parents of Bridget (Murphy) Kennedy were Richard and Mary (Barron) Murphy of Cloonagh. This townland is only a few miles east of Dunganstown, Patrick Kennedy's birthplace and now the site of Kennedy Park. Further search in the registers (dating from 1778) of Cushinstown, one parish north, may reveal more Barron and Aspell data.

Brian J. Cantwell, *Memorials of the Dead*, vol. 7, covering southwest Wexford, does not transcribe tombstone inscriptions for Richard Murphy's or Patrick Barron's families, but the following in Owenduff parish are of interest:

"Erected by Thomas Aspel of Ramsgrange in memory of his father James Aspel who died 9 September 1858 aged 79, also his mother Bridget Aspel who died 10 February

1862 aged 78."

"Laurence Barron of Rathemney [listed under Nash townland] for his wife Bridget Barron alias Aspel who died 8 November 1835, aged 55."

There are other mid-1800s Barron inscriptions in Owenduff, and an ancient Archbold tombstone in Rathumney.

It may be difficult to connect Richard Murphy, with his common surname, to others in and around Owenduff. The name "Barron" is of great antiquity in this area and according to MacLysaght's *Irish Families* descends from a branch of the FitzGerald's whose head was known as the Palatine baron of Burnchurch in the fourteenth century. *Burke's Irish Family Records* includes the Barrons (Fitzgerald) of Burnchurch, but does not cover the Killesk branch, who were probably the president's ancestors. A list of knights' fees of 1307, found in Kevin Whelan, ed., *Wexford: History and Society* (1987), p. 99, shows the Barrons (FitzGerald's) holding lands in Killesk parish, next to Owenduff; Barrons (FitzGerald's) still held land there in 1640, as per the Civil Survey of Ireland. W.P.W. Phillimore [and Gertrude Thrift], *Indexes to Irish Wills*, vol. 1 (1909, repr. 1970), p. 64, includes the will (proved in 1630 in the diocese of Ferns) of a Pierce Barron of Tolleraght (Tellarought), just north of Owenduff and Killesk. The index to Ferns admin. bonds (unpublished, at the Public Record Office, Dublin) includes a Patrick Barron of Carnross in 1794. Much of the area,

including Owendulf parish, belonged to the Coldough family of Tintern; most of their estate records including a 1755-57 rent roll which could list earlier ancestors of the president - are still in private custody (*Analectica Hibernica* m. 20 [1958]; Colclough Papers, relating to lands in Co. Wexford from 1538; also National Library of Ireland report on private collections, m. 124).

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