



The Newsletter of
Middlesex Genealogical Society

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Darien, Fairfield County, CT

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President's Message

Greetings from Summer 2022

I am looking forward to getting back together in person with our lectures in the fall. On both Oct 15 and Nov 12, we will gather in the Louise Berry Room at the Darien Library. Our presenters will be joining us from out of state via Zoom. If you are not able to join us in person at the library, we will have a Zoom path for you as well.

Genealogy access has grown in the last several years, meeting remotely with full participation. Repositories are putting more and more information online. Conferences have gone remote allowing you to watch content for many months or a full year. A few examples - [FamilySearch](#) Image database is growing daily with active uploads from all over the world. Using their Image search is the new gateway to finding more unindexed records for your family or their community. [CT State Library](#) - using your State Library card you can now access records from your home. More are coming online this fall. [American Ancestors](#) - Boston New England Historical and Genealogical Society (NEHGS) is also updating their website and your ability to access information for somewhere besides Boston. [RootsTech](#) - the conference arm from FamilySearch has access video presentations from the last 2 years of

RootsTech as well as other video recordings all available thru your FS login.

An in-person event returning to our area is the [New York State Family History Conference](#) (NYSFHC) being held in Albany Sept. 8 - 10. I will be attending. There is a parallel online version of the conference with a mix of live and prerecorded content during the month of September.

Your President,
Sara Zagrodzky

MGS Member Pages

The Middlesex Genealogical Society offers members a free page on its website to display information about their families. There is no set format. Your page can be as simple as a list of surnames you are researching or as comprehensive as you wish. Click [HERE](#) to get some ideas about what to add.

One of the advantages of Member Pages is that distant relatives may find you and provide you with new genealogical information. See [John Driscoll's article](#) about how a third cousin, googling her great-grandfather's name, found his Member Page.

Contact MGS webmaster Peter Biggins at:
pabiggin@optonline.net

From Tirkeeran to Kalamazoo

By Peter Biggins

I was born in 1939 in Kalamazoo, Michigan (long before Derek Jeter lived there). My father



Alfred was born in 1910 in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois. His father Leslie was born in 1877 on the Biggins farm, 35 miles southwest of Lincoln Park. Leslie's father Philip was born in 1841 in Lockport, Illinois.

Philip's father Patrick bought his farmland from the Illinois-Michigan Canal Commission in 1848. The Canal opened in 1848. The Chicago and Alton Railroad was built next to it in 1857. The farm was only a few miles away from the canal and the railroad. The Lincoln funeral train went by at 11 pm on Tuesday, May 2, 1865.

Sometime before 1833, Patrick and his wife Bridget immigrated from County Monaghan or Cavan, Ireland to Canada. Their second child was born in Upper Canada in 1833. Patrick and Bridget moved to Illinois from Upper Canada. Their third child was born in Illinois in 1838.

In 2007, a genealogist from the Clones area, Claire Beggan McConville, told me that the register for St. Brigid's Church in Kill, County Cavan, shows a Patrick Beggan born in Drumgill townland to Hugh and Ann Cusack Beggan in 1807. My Patrick Biggins was born in 1807, based on his age in the 1870 and 1880 US censuses, and his obituary in 1882.

Kill and Drumgill are part of the Clones area, which also includes parts of County Fermanagh and County Monaghan.

My Y chromosome DNA, handed down father to son like surnames, matches 11 testers with ancestors named Beggan, or variations thereof. Seven are known to be from the Clones area.

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MIDDLESEX GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY 2022 OFFICERS & BOARD MEMBERS

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Middlesex Genealogical Society was established for the purpose of helping those interested in genealogy to pursue the investigation of their family heritage and to provide guidance in research to that end. The society publishes a quarterly newsletter (ISSN 1936-3494) and co-sponsors, with Darien Library, at least four meetings with a program and speaker during the year. Annual membership dues vary from \$25 for 1 yr. or \$45 for 2 yrs. per individual and \$30 for 1 yr. or \$55 for 2 yrs. per couple or family. Original notices of genealogical interest and queries are welcomed for publication in the newsletter.

Middlesex Genealogical Society
 P.O. Box 9
 Darien, Fairfield County, CT 06820

Website: mgsdarienct.org

Upcoming MGS Presentations

Presentations for Middlesex Genealogical Society are back at the Darien Library's Community Room. For now they will be hybrid events with the presenters on Zoom and participants either Zoom or in person.

Look for updates in this newsletter and via email announcements.

Send your email to:

newslettermgsdarien@gmail.com to be added to the list.

Next MGS Pre-Meeting Social: Saturday, October 15, 2022, 1:00 pm. Darien Library Community Room.

Saturday, October 15, 2022, 2:00 pm.
"Researching Irish Ancestors."

Presented by Claire Smith via Zoom viewed at home or at the Darien Library.



Irish research has a reputation for being challenging. You might have heard that many Irish records were burned, creating gaps in records that appear insurmountable. Don't give up before you get started! In this presentation, you'll learn techniques to overcome obstacles that will get you through your Irish re-

search challenges. You might even get some ideas for dealing with missing records and your research brick walls in other localities as well.

Claire is a professional genealogist with more than 20 years of experience in research, teaching, and lecturing. Her extensive research experience spans New England, Atlantic Canada, Ireland, England, and the West Indies, including both traditional and DNA research. A former

high-tech executive, Claire applies her technology skills to optimize her research, continually applying new tools and innovative methodologies to her genealogy research. Claire is currently Seminar Program Chair for the Massachusetts Genealogical Council. She is a graduate of the ProGen professional genealogy study group and holds certificates in "Genealogical Research" from Boston University and in "Genealogy and Family History" from the University of Washington. Claire is former President of the Bainbridge Island Genealogical Society. She lives in the Greater Boston Area.

Saturday, November 12, 2022, 2:00 pm.
"Overland Trails."

Presented by Amber Oldenburg via Zoom viewed at home or at the Darien Library.

Your ancestors went west for many reasons,



opportunity, land, and promise. Learn about the overland trails that many of them used to head west. And understand what they experienced along the way and how you can discover your pioneer ancestors in the records they left behind.

Amber Oldenburg is a genealogist, lecturer, and social media manager with a degree in Family History Research from Brigham Young University-Idaho. She currently serves as an online instructor in the Family History Research program at BYU-Idaho. She specializes in United States Midwest research and is currently working toward professional accreditation with the International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists in the Great Lakes region. When she is not working on family history, Amber can be found traveling the country with her family, exploring archives and cemeteries, or reading a historical monograph. Amber has a website at [One Branch at a Time](#).

How Did Your Ancestors Celebrate Halloween?

Compiled by John Driscoll

From earliest recorded history in Ireland, November 1st was considered a turning point in the calendar. Samhain (pronounced Sow-en), November 1st, marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark cold winter. This was a time of year that was often associated with death. Celts believed that on the night before the new year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred. On that night they celebrated Samhain, when it was believed that the ghosts of the dead returned to earth. Since not all ghosts were thought to be friendly, people made their homes as inhospitable as possible so the spirits would be less likely to enter them. All fires - candles, fireplace, etc. - were extinguished to make the house dark and uninviting. Gifts and treats were left out to pacify the evil and ensure next year's crops would be plentiful. This custom evolved into trick-or-treating. In addition to causing trouble and damaging crops, Celts thought that the presence of the otherworldly spirits made it easier for the Druids, or Celtic priests, to make predictions about the future. For a people entirely dependent on the volatile natural world, these prophecies were an important source of comfort and direction during the long dark winter. To commemorate the event, Druids built huge sacred bonfires, where the people gathered to burn

crops and sacrifice animals to the Celtic deities. During the celebration, the Celts wore costumes, typically consisting of animal heads and skins to fool evil spirits. They also attempted to tell each other's fortunes. When the celebration was over, they re-lit their hearth fires, which they had extinguished earlier that evening, from the sacred bonfire to help protect them during the coming winter.

In 835 AD, Pope Gregory III moved the celebration of All Saints Day to November 1st in a vain attempt to deter Celtic converts to Christianity from marking the pagan ritual of Sam-



Spooky Graveyard

hain. Rather than abandoning their ancient ways, they combined both old and new traditions. A new holiday was created called The Eve of the Feast of All Hallows or Halloween. According to the Church, a day started at sunset, which is why celebrations typically started on October 31, the

eve of the holiday. In 1000 A.D., the church would make November 2nd All Souls' Day, a day to honor the dead. It's widely believed today that the church was attempting to replace the Celtic festival of the dead with a related church-sanctioned holiday.

The pagan festivals to honor the dead transformed by the 1500's to include costuming, also called "mumming" or "guising." This practice involved people of all ages going from house to house in disguise and reciting poetry, literature, Bible verses, or songs in exchange for food.

In Scotland, the practice also involved an element of "trickery." Those who were not welcomed at homes threatened retribution in the form of "mischief" if they were turned away.

Houses that donated food were to expect good fortune for their generous deed, while not donating may mean misfortune. The costumes that were worn were meant to imitate the spirits that were thought to roam the countryside at this time of year and the disguises were believed to be able to ward off unwanted spirits. The costumes evolved over time from merely painted faces to elaborate costumes of monsters and then costumes of anything the revelers liked.

It was not until mass Irish immigration during the great famine of the 1840's that Halloween became a major holiday in North America. Confined to the immigrant communities during the mid-19th century, it was gradually assimilated into mainstream society and by the first decade of the 20th century it was being celebrated coast to coast by people of all social, racial and religious backgrounds.

Irish immigrants who introduced Halloween to America chose to carve pumpkins, Jack-O-lanterns, instead of their traditional turnips, which echoed the legend of a cursed man who navigated his way with a light in a turnip.

In past generations, Halloween was integrated closely with mischief—namely, pranks. Throwing cabbages, tipping outhouses and letting cows loose were among the most popular she-

nanigans. Nowadays, well-known pranks include egging houses or hanging toilet paper from tree branches. In the late 1800s, there was a move in America to mold Halloween into a holiday more about community and neighborly get-togethers than about ghosts, pranks and witchcraft. At the turn of the century, Halloween parties for both children and adults became the most common way to celebrate the day. Parties focused on games, foods of the season and festive costumes.

As Halloween gained popularity stateside, unique methods of celebration began cropping up. Parties by the 1930s were standard fare in Halloween festivities and by the 1950s, Halloween parties were mostly focused on children.

If you were trick-or-treating in the 1940s or before, you would likely receive a popcorn ball, nuts, fruit, or money.

Manufactured candy didn't fully

take off in the United States until the 1970s.

The signature offerings for Halloween before candy were homemade soul cakes. They were tied closely to the Catholic roots of Halloween and were symbolically given in exchange for prayers. These days, soul cakes are few and far between, although they're still baked on Halloween in certain parts of Europe.



Irish Jack O' Lantern, Copyright Tony O'Neill <https://www.tonyoneill.org>

Tips

**Send your tips in to the
MGS newsletter!**

newslettermgsdarien@gmail.com

Different dates for immigration may be a result of "rounding" If someone came here in 1878 for instance and were asked the question in the 1920 Federal census, they may have said I've been here 30 years which the enumerator would record as 1880. The same may happen for other censuses. Better to look for the odd years like 32 rather than 25 or 30 years ago.

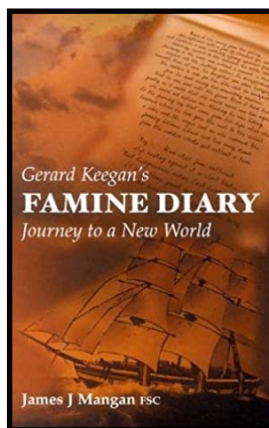
Watch out for dumb errors. - Just as in double-checking your data for genealogy, double-check when you make requests for documents. I sent for ancestor's birth certificate in NYC. It clearly said that if he died outside of NYC, the original death certificate must be sent in. I sent in a photocopy and it was returned 2 months later as unacceptable.

**Do you have a tip to share with
your members? Send it to:**
newslettermgsdarien@gmail.com
**and have it printed in the MGS
newsletter.**

Member Recommended Book

Gerard Keegan's Famine Diary Journey to a New World

By James J. Mangan FSC



Gerald Keegan was one of the emigrants who

left famine conditions in County Sligo, Ireland and made the long voyage across the Atlantic. He experienced firsthand the shocking conditions on Grosse Ile, conditions so shocking that the Canadian government of the day tried every way possible to keep the public from finding out

about it. The diary he kept was first published in Huntington, Quebec in 1895, but was censored by the government for being too frank an exposure of the injustices that were at the root of the emigration movement. Writer James Mangan has taken Gerald Keegan's Famine diary and edited it to make it more intelligible to readers who might not be familiar with the historical background of the mass emigration movement from Ireland in 1847. For this book, he also changed the language idiom into a more modern type of expression, and introduced a number of characters in order to fill out the historical background of the emigration movement. In doing this, every precaution was made to maintain the charming simplicity and frankness of the original author, Gerald Keegan. Today, we know about the cruelty of the Irish landlords, but life aboard the coffin ships is hardly documented and the ultimate fate of the emigrants is rarely adverted to. Keegan's diary shows us the face of the famine dead.

Tirkeeran to Kalamazoo continued from pg. 2

There were 98 households with name Beggan, or variations thereof, in the Griffith's Valuation property survey of 1848-64. The monastery of Clones was established here in the 6th century by St. Tighernach.

Clones was part of Airghíalla, which covered much of Ulster. Airghíalla is particularly associated with The Three Collas.

The Y-DNA shared by testers with Biggins/Beggan ancestors is very roughly dated at 800

AD. Going back another 200 years to around 600 AD, the Biggins/Beggan testers share Y-DNA with other testers, including some with ancestors named McDonald. Some of the

McDonald testers have professional genealogies that go back to an ancient ancestry that includes The Three Collas, specifically Colla Uais.

The modern-day McDonald genealogy goes back to Bryan MacDonald who was born about 1645 in County Wicklow, Ireland. He was a Lieutenant in Colonel Francis Toole's regiment in the cause of King James II of England. He emigrated to America in 1689, with his wife and five children and settled in Mill Creek Hundred, New Castle County in the colony of Delaware. He bought 693 acres of land from William Penn in 1689 bordered by Red Clay Creek and Hyde Run. He died in 1707.

I am not related to this McDonald, except as a very distant cousin, but I share the McDonald Y

-DNA mutation that occurred around 600 AD. I share his ancestors who lived before 600 AD:

Colla Uais,
his son Erc,
his son Carthend,
his son Muredach,
his son Amalgad,
his son Aed Guaire,
his son Colman Muccaid.

We have some details about the lives of Colla Uais and his grandson Carthend.



Carthend lived in the 5th century on the River Faughan. The river is in what is now County Derry. The area is known as Tirkeeran, which comes from the Irish Tír Mhic Caoirthinn, which means

land of Carthend. Saint Patrick founded seven churches in Tirkeeran. Across the River Foyle, on the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal, you can see the Grianan of Aileach, a ringfort that served as the royal seat of the Aileach, overlords of Carthend and his descendants. The ringfort is 15 miles from the River Faughan. The wall is about 15 feet thick and 16 feet high. Inside are three terraces, which are linked by steps, and two long passages within it. Originally, there would have been buildings inside the ringfort. Just outside it are the remains of a well and a burial mound.

Colla Uais was one of three brothers who lived in Ulster in the 4th century. Donald Schlegel, an expert on Irish history and McDonald genealogy, was the first to suggest that The

Three Collas are Romanized celts from England because their names were structured like Roman names. See "The Origin of The Three Collas and the Fall of Emain," *Clogher Record*, Volume XVI, No. 2, 1998, pp. 159-181. Clogher is 22 miles north of Clones.

Schlegel thought Colchester, on the east coast of England, might have been where they came from because of the "Col" in Colchester. Patrick McMahon, a geneticist from Ireland and his brother Eugene McMahon, an historian from Canada, agree with Schlegel that the Collas are Romanized celts from England, but think it was more likely Chester on the west coast of England because it is closer to Ireland.

For more on The Three Collas, see: [Y-DNA of The Three Collas](#).

If you have done Y-DNA testing at Family Tree DNA, consider joining the [MGS project at FTDNA](#):

LEAVE THEM SMILING



**2022
OCTOBER 15,
NEXT MEETING**

**Middlesex Genealogical Society
P.O. Box 9
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