

Lost Irish Women of Eureka



Ellen Fern, image 78.0707, Photographic Montage, Pioneer Women of Ballarat. Ballarat Historical Society Collection, courtesy Sovereign Hill Museums Association; and Catherine Allen (née Shelley) courtesy of the Shelley Family.

The Lost Irish Women of Eureka project includes:

A research report completed by Way Back When Consulting Historians for the Ballarat & District Irish Association, 2024.

A poetic film interpretation of these stories by Erin McCuskey, Creative Director Yum Studio
(<https://yumcreative.yumstudio.com.au/projects/lost-irish-women>).

The film will be available in 2025, to register for updates please email info@ballaratirish.org.au

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Introduction

While it cannot be said that the Eureka rebellion was an entirely Irish affair, it was, especially in the last days, the Irish who provided the core of the resistance to what has been generally perceived as the unjust goldfields' system of administration.¹

The legend of Eureka lives large within Australian history and in many family histories.

Almost all Australians are migrants to this country. Somewhere along the generations, our ancestors made the long journey across the seas to start a new life here. Some by choice, others by force, some with family, and others alone. Some were welcomed and embraced, while others were shunned and excluded.

The proportion of 'Irishness' in Australia is higher here than any other country (apart from Ireland itself).² Irish people arrived here as convicts (almost 40 per cent of the female convict population were Irish) and as free immigrants, with many taking up offers of assisted immigration. Between 1830 and 1914, Irish people were the largest group from the United Kingdom to take up offers of assisted migration to Australia.³ By the time of federation in 1901, one quarter of Australia's non-indigenous population was Irish. Most of those were Catholic.⁴

These Catholic Irish immigrants brought with them a distinct cultural tradition and worldview that, according to Irish Australian historian Patrick O'Farrell, was not just different but deeply hostile to the values and traditions of English and Scottish-born colonial society.⁵ O'Farrell claims that:

The distinctive Australian identity was not born in the bush, nor at Anzac Cove: these were merely situations for its expression. No; it was born in Irishness protesting against the extremes of Englishness.⁶

Irish people on the goldfields had a huge impact on the communities that sprang up in places like Ballarat, just by sheer numbers alone. However, their reputation for flamboyance, colour, and laughter made them even more distinctive. As well as being the life of the party, the Irish community were politically active and played a huge role in protests on the goldfields.⁷ There is no better example of a protest against the 'extremes of Englishness' than the events of the Eureka rebellion.

The legacy of Irish immigration can be seen all around in the built heritage of Ballarat, from the numerous pubs and hotels, such as the Munster Arms in Bakery Hill, the impressive Trades Hall in Camp Street, and the many Catholic institutions, such as St Alipius Parish and St Patrick's Cathedral. But the legacy of the Irish in Ballarat goes far deeper than what remains on the surface. According to historian Jan Croggon, the Irish, more than any other cultural group on the goldfields, 'brought their emotional and cultural baggage' with them and played

¹ Dorothy Wickham, 'Great are the inconveniences: the Irish and the founding of the Catholic Church on the Ballarat goldfields' in Kerry Cardell and Cliff Cumming (eds), *A world turned upside down: cultural change on Australia's goldfields 1851-2001*, Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 2001, p. 22.

² Janice Croggon, 'Strangers in a strange land: Converging and accommodating Celtic identities in Ballarat 1851-1901', PhD thesis, 2002, p. 302.

³ Elizabeth Malcolm and Dianne Hall, *A New History of the Irish in Australia*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2018, p. 6.

⁴ Malcolm and Hall, *A New History of the Irish in Australia*, pp. 6-7.

⁵ Malcolm and Hall, *A New History of the Irish in Australia*, p. 4.

⁶ Malcolm and Hall, *A New History of the Irish in Australia*, p. 9.

⁷ James Reid, 'Irish', eGold, <https://www.egold.net.au/biogs/EG00091b.htm>, accessed 30 September 2024.

a significant role in recognising and defining the differences between Ballarat and the 'Mother Country'.⁸ They faced prejudice and stereotyping, and their 'Irishness' presented challenges. The belief that Irish men were lazy drunkards led to some employers adding 'no Irish need apply' to newspaper advertisements. The idea of an illiterate, poor and slovenly Irish woman was so ubiquitous that newspapers printed recognisable caricatures of an uneducated Irish domestic servant referred to as 'Bridget'.⁹

However, thanks to the work of historians, including (but not limited to) Laurel Johnson, Dorothy Wickham, Clare Gervasoni and Clare Wright, we know that women played important roles in the formation of the towns and societies that emerged from the turbulent goldrush years. Irish women were involved in all aspects of goldfields life. As well as raising children and managing their households, they were shopkeepers, business managers, teachers, performers, writers, and even gold seekers.

The fluidity of the goldfields also provided great opportunity to seek out a new life and many of these women embraced this with open arms. This collection of stories is a testament to the endurance, creativity and resourcefulness of just a handful of Irish women on the Ballarat goldfields. In reshaping their lives, these Irish women were also able to adapt their 'Irishness' to fit a new environment. To this day, there remains a strong sense of Irish heritage among many Ballarat residents who proudly celebrate St Patrick's Day or BrigidFest, embracing their unique Irish-Australian heritage. For many of us, understanding the role that Irish immigration played in our national story is also about understanding our own family history.



Margaret Shand, Eurekaedia.

There is significant evidence that women on the goldfields were politically active and involved in the events leading up to and including the Eureka rebellion. There are many Irish women who were directly involved. Margaret Shann/Shand is one of several women who claimed to have attended the monster meetings held at Bakery Hill in the lead-up to the attack.¹⁰ According to oral history that has been passed down through the generations, Anastasia Hayes, Anne Duke and Eliza Darcy were responsible for sewing the Eureka flag. Irish women were also inside the stockade on the morning of the attack. We have stories of women like Galway-born Mary Hynes, who at eight months pregnant escaped her tent in the stockade in

⁸ Croggon, 'Strangers in a strange land', p. 296.

⁹ Malcolm and Hall, *A New History of the Irish in Australia*, p. 165.

¹⁰ 'Margaret Shand', Eurekaedia, https://eurekaedia.org/Margaret_Shand, accessed 30 September 2024.

the early hours of the morning, with just her young toddler and the clothes on her back. Tipperary-born mother of four Anna Harrington was among the women mustered by Father Smyth who rushed to the stockade to assist and care for the wounded.¹¹ Two brave women named Bridget – Bridget Callinan from County Clare and Bridget Hynes from Monivea County – put themselves in the line of fire to protect loved ones. Bridget Callinan distracted the soldiers while her wounded brothers made their escape.¹² Bridget Hynes assisted her cousin Patrick in his desertion of the army and stopped her husband's participation in the fight by hiding his pike and pants. She was also among the group of women wailing over the wounded in a courageous effort to stop the soldiers bayonetting the injured miners.¹³

There are also women who, while not direct participants in the Eureka rebellion, were nonetheless shaped by those tumultuous years and were foundational in influencing the society that emerged. The dauntless Hayden sisters from Wicklow County arrived as bounty immigrants with little education. Twice widowed, once deserted, these intrepid women birthed and raised at least 21 children between them. They farmed, ran a successful business and died in old age as highly respected women with substantial land holdings.

This collection of stories has been brought together to highlight the contribution Irish women made to the Eureka story, and to build on the existing body of work that brings to the forefront women's voices and experiences. Produced through a combination of archival research and family histories, this collection illuminates what is in the official historical record, as well as what is not. There is great value in family history and in the stories we are told about our ancestors and forebears. The legacy they leave behind, whether corroborated through historical record or not, provides us with a connection to the past that directly or indirectly influences who we are in the present.

It is with much gratitude that we extend our thanks to those families who shared their 'Irish women' with us and allowed us to add their stories to what we hope is a growing collection of Irish Australian women's voices.

Go n-éirí an bóthar leat. May you succeed on the road.

¹¹ Laurel Johnson, *Women of Eureka*, Historic Montrose Cottage and Eureka Museum, Ballarat, 1995, p. 37.

¹² Johnson, *Women of Eureka*, p. 22.

¹³ Johnson, *Women of Eureka*, pp. 25-26.

Part One: Familiar Faces

The first part of this research groups together some of the more well-known women connected to the Eureka rebellion, with a focus on their Irish heritage. These stories have been explored in more detail in other work about women on the goldfields.



Zealous gold diggers, 1852, S T Gill. State Library Victoria.

Sewing a rebellion

The Eureka flag is one of the most identifiable symbols in Australian history – one that for many people signifies rebellion, freedom, democracy and power. It has been used (and abused) by many groups and individuals to promote various causes and agendas. As a symbol, it holds different meanings and influence for different people. The history how this flag came to be remains one of several contested Eureka legacies.

One of the most popular and widely accepted narratives is that the flag was sewn by women. Frederick Vern, one of the rebel leaders at Eureka, wrote in his farewell letter to Australia in 1855:

There was a time when I fought for freedom's cause, under a banner made and wrought by English ladies.¹⁴

Oral histories and meticulous research by descendants corroborate Vern's statement that the famed Eureka flag was sewn by four local women: Anne Duke, Anastasia Hayes, Eliza Howard, and Anastasia Withers. However, all except Anastasia Withers were Irish.

Anne Duke (née Gaynor) 1838–1914



Anne Duke, photograph from Joy Coleman, reproduced in Dorothy Wickham's *Women of the Diggings Ballarat 1854*, p. 158.

Anne Duke (née Gaynor) was born in County Meath, Ireland in 1838 to parents James and Bridget. As a young child, she travelled with her parents to Sydney in 1842 and then Melbourne in 1844. When gold was discovered, the Duke family established a store on the Bendigo diggings. Sixteen-year-old Anne married George Duke on 8 March 1854, and moved to Ballarat. She was eight and a half months pregnant on the morning that the battle at Eureka began. Family legend says that Anne and a woman named Mrs Parker:

¹⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 January 1855, p. 4.

... lay behind a pile of logs near their tent. The tent, their utensils and clothes were riddled with shot.¹⁵

Anne and George found each other after the battle and fled to Bendigo. Anne gave birth to their first son on the road a few days later.¹⁶ Anne and George had eleven more children together and settled into farming life in Woodend.¹⁷ Lesley Smith is the great-great-granddaughter of Anne Duke and her keen champion:

As a poor Irish immigrant, I cannot think this young girl could have dared to dream the huge family legacy she and George have left in Australia.¹⁸

Anastasia Hayes (née Butler)
1817–1892



Anastasia Hayes. Hayes family photographs, Public Record Office Victoria, 12790.

Anastasia Hayes (née Butler) was a survivor of the Great Hunger, born in 1817 in County Kilkenny, Ireland. Anastasia married Timothy Hayes around 1841. Seeking a new life on the goldfields, the Anastasia and Timothy along with their five children immigrated to Australia, arriving in Melbourne in October 1852. They set up a tent on the Eureka Diggings. As well as raising their children, Anastasia was asked to teach at the newly established St Alipius church school. Along with her role in sewing the Eureka flag, Anastasia is said to have been present at the amputation of the arm of Eureka leader Peter Lalor. Timothy Hayes abandoned his family after the treason trials, and Anastasia was left to raise their now six children alone. A pioneering woman of Ballarat, she died aged 74 in 1892.¹⁹

¹⁵ 'Annie Duke's story', Eureka Australia, <https://www.eurekaaustralia.org.au/margie-obrien.html>, accessed 30 September 2024.

¹⁶ 'Ann Duke', Eurekaedia, https://www.eurekaedia.org/Ann_Duke, accessed 30 September 2024.

¹⁷ Clare Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2013, p. 532.

¹⁸ Personal correspondence with Lesley Smith, September 2024.

¹⁹ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 532.



Katholische Kapelle an der Gravel Pit Linie zu Ballarat Jänner 1854/St Alipius Church Ballarat, January 1854, Eugene von Guérard. State Library Victoria.

Eliza Howard (née Darcy)
c. 1835–1920

Eliza Darcy was born in County Clare around 1835. At just nineteen years of age, she took an assisted passage on the *City of Manchester*, arriving in Victoria in July 1854.²⁰ After seeing out her three-month work contract, Eliza went to Ballarat, where other members of her extended family had also settled. According to family history, Eliza's soon-to-be husband Patrick Howard designed the Eureka flag and Eliza helped to sew it.²¹ Eliza and Patrick married in August 1855 at St Alipius and had twelve children together.



Eliza Howard (née Darcy), seated between Patrick Howard and Ella Hancock's mother, c. 1890s. Photograph from Ella Hancock and Adele Howard, reproduced in Clare Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 498.

²⁰ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, pp. 134-135.

²¹ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 440.

Words and music

Lola Montez and Clara Seekamp were two Irish women who knew the value of a good story. They each eloped at a young age against their parents' wishes, but both of their marriages ended early.

Maria Eliza Delores Rosanna Gilbert (aka Lola Montez) was born in Limerick between 1818 and 1821. She was raised by her teenage mother after her father, an officer in the British Army, died in India. She spent time in India, Scotland, London, Paris and Bath. When Lola was eighteen, her mother arranged for her to be married to a sixty-year-old man. Lola instantly rejected this idea, instead eloping and marrying a much younger man in Ireland, Lieutenant Thomas James. 'Runaway matches', Lola later wrote in her autobiography, 'like runaway horses, are almost sure to end in a smash-up'.²² James and Lola travelled to India together, where James had an affair with another woman. Lola returned to England, but James won his court case for a separation, citing Lola's adultery.²³

Clara Maria Lodge was born in Dublin in March 1819. Legend has it that when she turned seventeen, Clara's father held a ball in her honour, to which she wore a belt studded with seventeen sovereigns to match her seventeen-inch waist. After being presented to Queen Victoria, Clara defied her family and eloped with French artist Claude Du Val. The couple set sail for Victoria in 1847, where Claude soon died, leaving Clara a young widow.²⁴



Lola Montez, 1856. State Library Victoria, H2994.

²² Clare Wright, 'A lover and a fighter: the trouble with Lola Montez', *Overland*, no. 195, 2009, p. 21.

²³ Michael Cannon, 'Lola Montez (1821–1861)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/montez-lola-4226>, accessed 1 October 2024.

²⁴ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 60.

It is a romantic story and one that would have served Clara well in the goldrush world, but one that has almost no factual basis. In fact, Clara eloped with her dancing teacher, George William Du Val, in 1830. They had three children together, but after a run-in with the law, George was arrested. By the time Clara sailed to Victoria on board the *Macro Polo* in May 1853, she was with just two of her three children and without her husband.²⁵

Now alone, both Clara and Lola needed to support themselves (and in Clara's case, her two children as well). They therefore pursued one of the few pathways available to women in their situations at that time – they took to the stage.

Lola's story is well known. After training in Spain, she debuted in London as a dancer and then toured Europe, where she mixed in bohemian circles and high society, and famously became lovers with King Ludwig I. It was a time of revolutions across Europe and Lola believed she was fighting for the democratic ideal. She became Ludwig's mistress, confidant and political advisor. She fought against the Jesuit-controlled bureaucracy and saw herself as a warrior for the Bavarian people. In 1847, Ludwig bestowed upon her the title of Countess Maria von Landsfeld, and despite her radical efforts, she was seen by the Bavarian people as representing exactly the kind of aristocracy she was supposed to be fighting against. Riots and protests ensued and Ludwig eventually abdicated his throne, while Lola was exiled.

Clara Du Val, meanwhile, turned to acting and performed at Coleman's tent theatre in Red Hill on the Mornington Peninsula. According to an obituary, Clara conducted a theatrical company that was at one point 'being frequently heard in Melbourne ... by delighted audiences'.²⁶ Less than a year after she arrived in Victoria, Clara Du Val was going by the name Clara Seekamp, having taken up with the young editor of Ballarat's first newspaper Henry Seekamp. Clara claimed she was twenty years old when she arrived in Victoria, but she was in fact thirty-four. Henry was ten years her junior.²⁷ There is no record of a marriage between Clara and Henry, though they lived as husband and wife. Clara was an influential partner to Henry, with a clear involvement in the content published in *The Ballarat Times*.

Clearly on the side of the diggers, *The Ballarat Times* was shut down shortly after the Eureka rebellion. Henry was arrested on charges of sedition. Clara took over the running of the newspaper and continued to produce and print editions until Henry's release in 1855.²⁸ She was outspoken in her criticism of the government and the actions that followed the Eureka rebellion. On New Year's Day in 1855, Clara addressed Governor Hotham in *The Ballarat Times*:

Why did you disregard our memorials and entreaties, our prayers and our cries for justice and protection against your unjust stewards here, until the people, sickened by hope deferred and maddened by continued and increased acts of oppression, were driven to take up arms in self defence?²⁹

Lola did not arrive on the Ballarat goldfields until early 1856, just over a year after the events at Eureka. Despite the many similarities in circumstances between Lola and Clara, Henry Seekamp was not impressed by Lola's sensational performance on the Ballarat goldfields. After he printed a scathing review accusing her of immorality, Lola attacked him with a horse whip. She later successfully sued him for libel.

²⁵ 'Clara Seekamp', Eurekaedia, https://eurekaedia.org/Clara_Seekamp, accessed 26 September 2024; Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 60.

²⁶ *Leader (Melbourne)*, 1 February 1908, p. 35.

²⁷ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 242.

²⁸ 'Clara Seekamp', Eurekaedia, https://eurekaedia.org/Clara_Seekamp, accessed 26 September 2024.

²⁹ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 506.

Life for both women became less exciting after Eureka. Clara was reunited with the daughter she had left behind in Ireland and moved to Queensland. After Henry's untimely death in 1864, she returned to Melbourne. Outliving two of her three children, Clara died at the impressive age of 89. An obituary described her as being:

... of forcible character, high educational attainments and much determination. She numbered amongst many influential friends the late Dr. Brownless, was a brilliant conversationalist, and up to the end had a wonderful memory of all that led up to and accompanied the sensational times which centred in the Eureka Stockade event...³⁰

Clara's death certificate lists her occupation as 'housewife'.³¹

Lola left Australia in 1857 and returned to America. She was suffering the devastating effects of syphilis and, unable to perform, she instead began to write her autobiography and give lecturing tours. But by 1861, Lola's illness got the better of her and she died alone in New York around 42 years of age. She was buried in Brooklyn under the name Mrs Eliza Gilbert. According to a lengthy obituary published in the *New York Times*:

There are few readers of the newspaper literature of the day who are not familiar with the name of that eccentric, brilliant, impulsive woman, known as Lola Montez. As a *danseuse*, an actress, a politician, a courtesan, a lecturer, a devotee, she has occupied a large space of the public attention for many years, both in this country and in Europe. Her career, so strangely erratic, so wonderfully chequered, came to an end on Thursday last.³²

³⁰ *Leader (Melbourne)*, 1 February 1908, p. 35.

³¹ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 541.

³² *The New York Times*, 21 January 1861, p. 8.

Sláinte! Irish women publicans on the goldfields

Women dominated the alcohol trade on the Victorian goldfields, running sly-grog shanties, and working as barmaids and publicans. When official liquor licencing laws were introduced in 1854, women could apply as easily as men, provided they were of 'good fame and character'.³³

Catherine Bentley (née Sherwin) c. 1829–1906

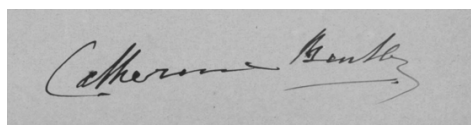
The Ballarat goldfields were home to several Irish women publicans. Arguably the most famous was Catherine Bentley. Catherine was born Catherine Sherwin in County Silgo, Ireland about 1829. She immigrated to Australia with her sister Mary in 1850. The Sherwin sisters were among the one percent of the Protestant population in Silago.³⁴

A petite woman with black hair, grey eyes and a dark complexion, Catherine caught the attention of former convict James Francis Bentley. He was thirteen years older than her, and family legend says the two married for love.³⁵

With their young son, Thomas, Catherine and James moved to Ballarat and built the Eureka Hotel, which opened in July 1854. The Eureka Hotel was one of the largest establishments on the goldfields at the time, and James and Catherine looked to be setting themselves and their family up for a prosperous future.³⁶ But it was not to be.

In October that year, miner James Scobie was killed outside the Eureka Hotel, and James Bentley was blamed. He was arrested but not convicted, which led to a riot. The hotel, which was home not only to the Bentley family but also seventeen other residents, including Catherine's sister Mary, was burnt to the ground on 17 October 1854.³⁷

At seven months pregnant, Catherine was arrested alongside her husband and two others, charged with the manslaughter of James Scobie. After a very public trial, Catherine was acquitted but her husband was convicted. Catherine's life took a downward spiral after this. Her repeated petitions to the government for compensation for the loss of her hotel and land fell on deaf ears. James was released from gaol in 1857, and he and Catherine had four more children – six in total – but tragically, two died in infancy. James committed suicide in 1873, and six years later Catherine married American Andrew Haines Mayo.³⁸ She died of apoplexy (a stroke) in 1906 at the age of 75.³⁹

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Catherine Bentley', written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Catherine's signature at the bottom of her statement in the inquest to James Bentley's death. VPRS 24/P0000, 1873/321, Public Record Office Victoria.

³³ Louise Blake, 'Women on the Woods Point goldfields: a case study in microhistory', *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, vol. 14, October 2014, p. 11.

³⁴ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 85.

³⁵ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, pp. 177-178.

³⁶ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 333.

³⁷ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 333; 'Eureka Hotel', Eurekaedia, https://www.eurekaedia.org/Eureka_Hotel, accessed 26 September 2024.

³⁸ 'Andrew Mayo', Eurekaedia, https://eurekaedia.org/Andrew_Mayo, accessed 1 October 2024.

³⁹ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, pp. 605-606.

Ellen Fern (née Herr)
c. 1846–1893



Ellen Fern, image 78.0707, Photographic Montage, Pioneer Women of Ballarat. Ballarat Historical Society Collection, courtesy Sovereign Hill Museums Association.

Ellen Herr (whose maiden name was recorded with various spellings) was born in Ireland around 1842.⁴⁰

Ellen was said to be one of the early arrivals to Ballarat, settling before the discovery of gold in the early 1850s. It is possible she arrived as a child with her family but given the challenges of tracing the different versions of her surname, it is challenging to identify her in historical shipping records.

In 1863 Ellen married Daniel Fern, a successful mining speculator. After trying his hand at mining, Daniel turned instead to mining companies, becoming involved in the Sebastopol Plateau, the Great Redan Extended Mine, and Glendinning's Freehold Gold Mining Company. He built a strong reputation within mining circles.⁴¹

Ellen spent the first two decades of her marriage birthing and raising children. Together she and Daniel had nine children, almost all born in Ballarat between 1863 and 1886: William Eugene, Daniel Robert, Mary Jane, John Joseph, Ambrose, Ellen, Victoria, Horatio and Ernest. Their son John died in 1872 at just five years old. The family spent some time living in Stawell, before returning to Ballarat.⁴²

⁴⁰ Various spellings include O'Hair/O'Heir/O'Herr/Kerr; Lucy Bracey and Fiona Poulton, *Courage and Resilience: The Pioneer Women of Ballarat Montage*, Sovereign Hill Museums Association, Ballarat, 2021, p. 19.

⁴¹ William Bramwell Withers, *The History of Ballarat: from the first pastoral settlement to the present time*, F.W. Niven & Co., Ballarat, 1887, p. 354; *The Bendigo Advertiser*, 13 April 1893, p. 2; *The Ballarat Star*, 20 November 1873, p. 4.

⁴² *The Argus*, 6 October 1893, p. 6.

In the 1870s Daniel changed careers and began working as a publican. The family ran Fern's Hotel on the corner of Sturt and Albert streets from 1881 to 1891.

The Fern family then took over the George Hotel – the second oldest hotel in Ballarat – around 1891.⁴³ Daniel and Ellen successfully ran the hotel together until Daniel's early death in April 1893, Ellen became sole proprietor of the hotel and inherited Daniel's estate, which was valued at £7,000 (the equivalent of more than a million dollars today).⁴⁴ But tragically, Ellen did not long outlive her husband. She died just a few months later in October that same year. A notice in the newspaper reported:

Mrs Fern, proprietress of the George Hotel, and widow of the late Mr Daniel Fern, died this evening after a lingering illness. The deceased lady, who was one of the first of her sex to arrive in Ballarat in the early fifties, was only 51 years of age, and the announcement of her death will be received with regret by her numerous friends in Ballarat, Stawell and Melbourne.⁴⁵

The couple's eldest daughter, Mary Jane Fern, carried on the management of the hotel. She was described as 'a young lady who succeeds in combining pleasing manners and business ability in a way which is most agreeable to all comers'.⁴⁶ Under Mary's stewardship, the George Hotel maintained its reputation as one of Ballarat's finest establishments.⁴⁷

Johanna Shelley (née Darcy) **1839–1920**

Original research supplied by Catherine O'Toole and Mary Darcy, compiled and edited by Way Back When.



Johanna Shelley. Courtesy Catherine O'Toole.

⁴³ *The Age*, 13 April 1893, p. 5.

⁴⁴ *Table Talk*, 19 May 1893, p. 20.

⁴⁵ *The Argus*, 6 October 1893, p. 6.

⁴⁶ W. B. Kimberly (ed.), *Ballarat and Vicinity: a condensed but comprehensive account*, F.W. Niven & Co, Ballarat, 1894, p. 101.

⁴⁷ Kimberly, *Ballarat and Vicinity*, p. 101.

Perhaps one of Ballarat's most well-known Irish women publicans was Johanna Shelley. Born in 1839 in Mullagh, County Clare, Ireland, Johanna was the fifth of seven children born to parents Michael and Bridget (née McGannon).

Johanna's two eldest siblings, Luke (23) and Margaret (20), took up an offer of assisted migration to Australia and travelled on the *Lady Kennaway*, arriving in Geelong in February 1850.⁴⁸ They worked for Donald McLean, Luke as an agricultural labourer at Barabool Hills and Margaret as a housekeeper at Waurin Ponds.⁴⁹

In 1852, Michael and Bridget Darcy and their five youngest children, John, Catherine, Johanna, James and Joseph, travelled together as a family on board the *Wanata*, arriving in Victoria in October 1852. The shipping record lists Michael as an agricultural labourer who was contracted by 'his son in Geelong'.⁵⁰ Johanna was 13 years old, and according to the shipping records only her older siblings John and Catherine were able to read and write.

The family settled in the Mt Duneed area, where Luke and Margaret were already employed. Sadly, neither Michael nor Bridget lived in their new home for long. Both died just a few years after they arrived.⁵¹

In 1863, 24-year-old Johanna married Jeremiah Shelley at Duneed Catholic Church.⁵² Jeremiah was the publican of the Munster Arms Hotel in Ballarat and Johanna joined her husband in running the hotel.⁵³ Johanna was pregnant with their eighth child, Catherine, when Jeremiah died in 1876, but she carried on and continued to successfully run and operate the Munster Arms Hotel on her own. Her application for renewal as the licensee of the hotel was always approved and the licensing court was generous in its praise of the way she ran the business. It was described as 'one of the four best houses in the district' during one inspection.⁵⁴

Cathy O'Toole is Johanna's great, granddaughter and describes this family matriarch as:

Johanna was a fierce Irish Catholic who welcomed all Irish customers and travellers in need, none were excluded from her premises. Her morals were strong, so her establishment had an excellent reputation, which in the early goldfields days was a rarity.⁵⁵

Tragically, Johanna outlived four of her eight children. James Thomas and Margaret Mary died within a few weeks of each other in 1897.⁵⁶ The huge turnout for Margaret's funeral, which included over 200 wreaths, demonstrates the immense respect shown to Johanna and the Shelley family by the local Ballarat community.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ 'Lady Kennaway', shipping records, VPRS 14, Book No.5A, Public Record Office Victoria, pp. 88, 96, 105.

⁴⁹ 'Lady Kennaway', shipping records, VPRS 14, Book No.5A, Public Record Office Victoria, pp. 96, 105.

⁵⁰ 'Wanata', shipping records, VPRS 14, Book No.7, Public Record Office Victoria, p. 4.

⁵¹ Ancestry family history.

⁵² Mary Darcy family history.

⁵³ *Ballarat Star*, 19 March 1920, p. 1.

⁵⁴ *Ballarat Star*, 19 March 1920, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Personal communication Cathy O'Toole, 21 November 2024.

⁵⁶ Ancestry family history.

⁵⁷ *Ballarat Star*, 16 October 1897, p. 4.

Johanna also took care of her granddaughter Mabel Kathleen Shelley for a period, while her daughter-in-law Lillias was unable to.⁵⁸ In 1903 the matter was brought before a judge, when Lillias requested custody of her child from Johanna.⁵⁹

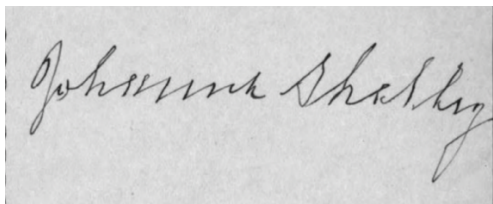


Johanna Shelley outside the Munsters Arms, Ballarat. Courtesy Cathy O'Toole.

Johanna lived into her early 80s and died at her residence, the Munster Arms Hotel, on 18 March 1920. Her standing within Ballarat society was obvious from the lengthy obituaries published after her death. Her funeral was a very large affair with many notable faces and a crowd of mourners. The newspapers reported that:

A guard of honor of the parishioners was formed through which the solemn procession passed from the church doors to the hearse. As the funeral proceeded on its way to the Ballarat Old Cemetery it was noticed that every hotel door was closed, as a mark of respect to the deceased, who was the oldest licensee in Ballarat.⁶⁰

Johanna bequeathed the sum of twenty pounds to her former domestic servant Bridget Hayes, and 100 shares in the Ballarat Woollen and Worsted Company to her granddaughter Catherine Guthrie. The rest of her assets and money (over £2,000) was divided into four equal shares among her four surviving children.⁶¹



Johanna Shelley's signature from her will, VPRS 7591/P0002, 170/349, Public Record Office Victoria.

⁵⁸ Ballarat Court of Petty Session record in May 1902, Lillias M Shelley was charged with a complaint by Charles Brodie questioning the ownership of certain articles of furniture and utensils to the value of £15. The charge was dismissed. Mabel was the daughter of Lillias and James Shelley. James died in 1897. Petty Session Records, 1854-1922, Ballarat, 2 May 1902, p. 223.

⁵⁹ *The Herald*, 2 October 1903, p. 3.

⁶⁰ *Ballarat Star*, 22 March 1920, p. 1.

⁶¹ Will and Probate records, Johanna Shelley, VPRS 7591/P0002, 170/349, Public Record Office Victoria.

Part Two: Family Stories

The following stories have been researched and generously shared by community members. They have been edited and collated by Way Back When Consulting Historians.



Unknown family in front of a house, c. 1870s. State Library Victoria.

Ellen Moore

Original research undertaken by Barb Kelly, compiled and edited by Way Back When.

My grandma Bridget's story was that Thaddeus was getting ready to go to Mass and washing outside his tent, a soldier just came up and shot him. I never quite believed that story and when I asked Grandma more questions about being Irish, she always said her father, Patrick, wanted his daughters to be Australians, and did not teach them to speak Irish.⁶²



Possible picture of Ellen and her mother Mary, c. 1850-1860. Photograph courtesy Barb Kelly.

Ellen Moore was born in County Clare around 1828. In 1852, Ellen's parents Michael and Mary (née Considine) left Ireland to seek a new life in Australia. They took Ellen's two younger brothers, Patrick and Thaddeus, with them, sailing on the *Sir Robert Sale*.⁶³

Ellen soon followed her family to Australia. On 3 November 1853 she set sail on the *Tudor*, one of 389 assisted migrants on board. On arrival in Melbourne in January 1854, she worked as a domestic servant for John Monaghan in Moonee Ponds, before joining her family in Geelong.⁶⁴ They owned a home and stables on the corner of John's Place and Little Malop Street.⁶⁵

⁶² Barb Kelly, 'Irish Women', <https://barbkellystories.com/finding-ellen-no-longer-invisible-irish-women-in-australia-suffragettes-and-farmers>, accessed 18 September 2024.

⁶³ Assisted passenger lists (1839-1871), Public Record Office Victoria. Thaddeus appears in this record as 'Timothy'.

⁶⁴ Assisted passenger lists (1839-1871), Public Record Office Victoria.

⁶⁵ Bellarine Rates Notices, John's Place, Geelong, Geelong History Resource Centre, referenced by Barb Kelly, 'Irish Women', <https://barbkellystories.com/finding-ellen-no-longer-invisible-irish-women-in-australia-suffragettes-and-farmers>, accessed 18 September 2024.

Not long after the family were reunited, tragedy struck. Ellen's brother Thaddeus (Teddy) was at Eureka on 3 December 1854, when a British soldier shot him in the leg. A fellow Irishman, Michael Canny, later recalled:

When the fight began Teddy Moore, John Hines, my brother, and I were standing behind a dray turned up on its heels, with the shafts in the air. It was bright moonlight, and we saw the redcoats blazing away at us ... Teddy Moore and John Hines fell dead beside us.⁶⁶

An Italian miner, Raffaello Carboni, described bringing water to Teddy on the battlefield:

My neighbour and mate Teddy More [sic], stretched on the ground, both his thighs shot, asked me for a drop of water ... On my reaching the stockade with a pannikin of water for Teddy, I was amazed at the apathy showed by the diggers who now crowded from all directions around the dead and wounded. None would stir a finger.⁶⁷

Teddy's body was one of three taken to Geelong Eastern Cemetery for burial that night.⁶⁸ He is named on the Peter Lalor monument in Ballarat, which commemorates those who were killed during the Eureka rebellion.⁶⁹

According to Barb Kelly, her great-grandfather Patrick (Ellen and Teddy's brother), 'was in Ballarat but not at the stockade on this morning and I guess I owe my life to that decision'. Barb reflects:

I will never know whether Ellen was at Eureka or waiting with her mother and father in Geelong. I can't imagine the deep shock and grief they all felt as they buried the bodies of their loved ones. Neighbours and friends and numerous others involved in the funerals, sad songs on the fiddles, prayers, and keening.

While for some goldrush migrants, like Patrick, integrating into Australian society was a priority, it was important to others to maintain and celebrate their own cultures and traditions. One contemporary account of Ballarat during this period describes the Irish community gathering in the streets at night:

As the lanterns shone the mud and dirt could be forgotten, for then the sight was really beautiful ... Accordions, flutes and fiddles, all had their performers and Erin go Bragh was sung at first with tears and then laughter as the volatile Irish forgot their sorrows and danced to the tune.⁷⁰

Barb Kelly has traced the story of her aunt beyond the events at Eureka. Ellen worked as a dressmaker in Geelong and cared for her mother, who died of heart failure in 1861. From 1865, Ellen helped her brother Patrick with farmland he took up at South Purrumbete in Victoria's Western District, where they joined a small Irish community centred around Carpendeit. By 1875, Patrick and Ellen had decided to head north to Massey in the Mallee

⁶⁶ *The Argus*, 3 December 1904, p. 17.

⁶⁷ Raffaello Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, Melbourne University Press, Parkville, 1963, p. 102.

⁶⁸ 'Thaddeus Moore', Eurekaedia, https://eurekaedia.org/Thaddeus_Moore, accessed 18 September 2024.

⁶⁹ 'Eureka Stockade', Monument Australia, <https://monumentaustralia.org.au/themes/government/dissent/display/30204-eureka-stockade>, accessed 25 September 2024.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: a social history of the western district of Victoria, 1834-1890*, Melbourne University Press, 1967, p. 196.

region, where Ellen selected land under her own name.⁷¹ It was a challenging life, eking out a living in harsh conditions. Ellen wrote several letters to the Lands Council to explain why she was struggling to pay her rent.⁷² In 1877 for example, she wrote, 'The year '76 was harsh on me. I lost 12 cows and my horse which was a great loss to me by starvation. What little pleasure'. Then in July 1879:

I have the honor to inform you that I am not in a position to meet the rents due on my selection at present in consequence of the destruction the rabbits did to my crop last year.

I sowed sixty acres of wheat but did not get a return equal to the seed I had sown. If the rabbits had left me my grass to fatten the stock, I would have willingly sold them to pay the rent, but they did not leave me a blade of grass.⁷³

In 1883, Ellen transferred the lease to her brother and returned to Geelong. In 1891, Ellen was one of 30,000 people who signed the Women's Suffrage Petition, advocating for women's right to vote. Sadly, she did not live to see this eventuate, as she died at her home, 207 Little Malop Street, Geelong in 1892 at the age of 64. She was buried alongside her mother and brother in the Geelong Eastern Cemetery.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Barb Kelly, 'Irish Women', <https://barbkellystories.com/finding-ellen-no-longer-invisible-irish-women-in-australia-suffragettes-and-farmers>, accessed 18 September 2024; *The Ballarat Star*, 10 October 1911, p. 2.

⁷² Letters to the Land Council, VPRS 1202, Register of Applications, section 19 and 20 Land Act 1869, Application for Lease File Number 1140, Ellen Moore, 15 July 1875, Public Record Office Victoria.

⁷³ Quoted by Barb Kelly, 'Irish Women', <https://barbkellystories.com/finding-ellen-no-longer-invisible-irish-women-in-australia-suffragettes-and-farmers>, accessed 18 September 2024.

⁷⁴ Barb Kelly, 'Irish Women', <https://barbkellystories.com/finding-ellen-no-longer-invisible-irish-women-in-australia-suffragettes-and-farmers>, accessed 18 September 2024; 'Women's Suffrage Petition', Parliament of Victoria, <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/history-and-heritage/people-who-shaped-parliament/women-suffrage-search/?page=1&pageSize=10&term=ellen%20moore>, accessed 25 September 2024; *Geelong Advertiser*, 17 August 1892, p. 1; Geelong Cemeteries Trust, <https://gct.net.au>, accessed 25 September 2024.

Anna Dix (née McCuskey)

Original research undertaken by Claire Dunlop, edited and collated by Way Back When.

On 23 October 1852, 27-year-old Anna (or Ann) McCuskey from the town of Armagh in Northern Ireland set sail from Liverpool on the *Arabian*. The ship was carrying mostly domestic and farm workers who were seeking opportunities in Australia. Anna was sponsored by a woman in Bourke Street, who employed her for a period of three months from her arrival in Melbourne on 14 February 1853.⁷⁵

Later that year, on 17 September 1853, Anna married William Dix at Eureka. William came from the town of Docking in Norfolk, England, and was a miner living in Buninyong.⁷⁶ The wedding was officiated by Father Matthew Downing, who would the following year be one of the local citizens to attend a meeting at Bakery Hill and call for 'peaceful resistance to the harsh attitudes of the authorities'.⁷⁷

Anna and William settled in Ballarat and had three children together. Sturley John was born in 1856, Mary Ann (known as Minnie) in 1858, and Maria Louisa (known as Louisa) in 1860. By the time of Louisa's birth, which was recorded at Whim Holes (the area south of Ballarat now known as Enfield), William was working as an engine driver.⁷⁸ The *Star* newspaper reported that year that 'the lead at Whim Holes was running into shallow ground and getting poor but almost all those on the ground have paying claims'.⁷⁹

Sturley was working as a drover when he died of enteritis at the age of 20 on 12 November 1876. He was buried in the Ballarat Cemetery. By that time the Dix family were living in Lal Lal Street, Ballarat and William was working as a miner.⁸⁰

According to a descendant of the family, it is likely that Anna's brother also immigrated to Australia. John McCuskey initially lived in Brisbane with his wife Margaret née Kilpatrick. By 1859, John and Margaret had moved to the Victorian goldfields, settling in Happy Valley near Ballarat, where John worked as a miner for various mining companies. In 1880, William and Minnie Dix were witnesses at the marriage of John's eldest son, Peter McCuskey, to widow Susan O'Sullivan née O'Neill at St Patrick's Cathedral, Ballarat.⁸¹

On 30 September 1885, Anna's eldest daughter Minnie married a bootmaker from Skipton named Archibald McFadzean.⁸² Her younger daughter Louisa married salesman Richard John Nanscawen at St Patrick's, Ballarat on 7 May 1889. Between them, Minnie and Louisa had eight children – Anna's grandchildren.⁸³

⁷⁵ Register of Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom, 1850-1854, Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 14. Note that Anna's name is spelled Ann McCusky in this record.

⁷⁶ Birth certificate, 5796/1858; Marriage certificate 92/1853, Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

⁷⁷ 'Mathew Downing', Eurekaedia, https://eurekaedia.org/Mathew_Downing, accessed 4 September 2024.

⁷⁸ Birth certificates 5796/1858, 1389/1960, Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages; Enfield Community Plan, 2011, <https://www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/Enfield%20Community%20Plan%202011-12.pdf>, accessed 4 September 2024.

⁷⁹ *The Star*, 11 April 1860, p. 6.

⁸⁰ Death certificate 282/1876, Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages; *The Ballarat Courier*, 14 November 1876, p. 3.

⁸¹ This information has been provided by the family. DNA evidence indicates a link between a descendent of John McCuskey and a descendent of Minnie Dix.

⁸² Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages; *The Ballarat Star*, 6 October 1885, p. 2.

⁸³ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages. Louisa and Richard Nanscawen had three sons, William Richard (1890), Walter John (1892) and Francis Joseph (1896). Louisa was the long-time treasurer of

Anna's husband William continued to work in the mines, mostly as an engine driver. By 1889 he was working for the Woah Hawp Canton Company in Ballarat East, which was Chinese owned and operated.⁸⁴ On 19 April 1893, Anna was admitted to the Ararat asylum suffering from 'mania'. The asylum records describe her as a 66-year-old housewife of 'temperate' habits, who was admitted because she had been suicidal, dangerous and destructive for three years. On admission there were bruises on her hands and arms, and she was described as 'very talkative and incoherent'.⁸⁵ Over a year later, in May 1894, Anna was transferred to the Ballarat Asylum where she was diagnosed with dementia caused by old age.⁸⁶

By 1896, the McFadzean family were living with William Dix at 31 Lal Lal Street, Ballarat East, when, tragically, Minnie died suddenly of diphtheria at the age of 37. She left behind five children: Louisa Victoria, William, David, Irene Muriel and Frederick Linton McFadzean. Minnie's widow, Archibald, died by suicide later that year, leaving their children orphaned.⁸⁷ According to their descendants, Minnie and Archibald's eldest son, William, went to live with his father's sister, Mrs Madden. The other four children were sent to a Roman Catholic orphanage in Ballarat that was run by the Little Sisters of Nazareth.⁸⁸

Anna Dix née McCuskey died in the Ballarat Asylum on 18 February 1899, around the age of 72. William died at the Ballarat Benevolent Asylum on 6 March 1911. He was 83. They are buried with their son Sturley at the Ballarat Cemetery.⁸⁹

the South Ballarat Football Club and an active member of the St Patrick's Cathedral congregation. She lived to the age of 77. See *Advocate*, 4 May 1939, p. 26.

⁸⁴ *The Ballarat Star*, 2 December 1889, p. 4; 'Woah Hawp Canton Mine', Federation University, Australia, https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php?title=Woa_hawp_canton_mine, accessed 4 September 2024.

⁸⁵ Case Books of Female Patients, 1867-1912, VPRS 7401/P0001/000005, E, p. 29, Public Record Office Victoria.

⁸⁶ Case Books of Female Patients, 1877-1912, VPRS 7407/P0001/000001, Public Record Office Victoria.

⁸⁷ *The Ballarat Star*, 8 April 1896, p. 2, and 12 November 1896, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Information provided by E Lucas, granddaughter of David McFadzean, on 25 August 2008.

⁸⁹ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1899; Death certificate 2199/1911, Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages; Deceased Register, Ballarat Cemeteries.

The Hayden Sisters

Original research supplied by Suzanne Dooley, with input from Joan Matthews, John Byrne, Brian Lynch, Bernadette Gilman, Peter Flynn and Michele Williams. Compiled and edited by Way Back When.

In the early 1850s, three young Irish sisters took up the adventurous and risky offer of assisted passage to Australia. Bridget, Winefrid and Eliza Hayden (Heydon/Haydon), were the fifth, sixth and seventh children out of eight in their family. Growing up in the Parish of Rathdrum and Arklow in County Wicklow, the Haydens were a Catholic family in a largely Protestant area. Wicklow County was one of the areas hardest hit during the 1798 Rebellion against the British Crown. With huge numbers killed, widescale destruction of property and many of the rebels transported to the penal colonies of New South Wales, it was an event that no doubt had a lasting impact on the Hayden family.⁹⁰ Just half a century later, these three sisters would find themselves halfway across the world and living through another rebellion against British governance.

The Hayden sisters gave their ages in the shipping records as 22, 19 and 18, however baptismal records show they were in fact older, being 26, 24 and 22 years of age at the time they left home.⁹¹ It was not uncommon for immigrants to lower their ages in order to meet the desired requirements for assisted migration.

While the optimistic sales pitches about life in Australia made by immigration agents would have sounded tempting, there is no doubt the sisters would have also left Ireland with some sense of sadness knowing it was unlikely they would ever return to their homeland or see the rest of their family again.

It was the youngest of the three sisters, Eliza (Elizabeth), who made the first move, gaining passage on board the *Confiance*, which departed from Liverpool in December 1852. Eliza, a domestic servant, was one of 415 immigrants on board. She was engaged to fulfill a work contract in Geelong for three months once she arrived. Eliza was offered £24 per annum, a significantly higher salary than her two sisters.⁹²

The circumstances that lead to Eliza travelling without her sisters remain a mystery. However, shipping records show that Eliza travelled on the same ship as Catherine and Mary Byrne, who were also from County Wicklow. A Mary Byrne (very likely the same) was later the witness at Eliza's wedding in Geelong, suggesting that the three women were known to each other.⁹³ According to an unpublished history of the Flynn family, they were cousins, and the Byrnes also eventually came to live in the Haddon area in Victoria.⁹⁴

Less than a month after Eliza left Ireland via Liverpool, her sisters Bridget and Winefrid followed.

Eldest sister Bridget and middle sister Winefrid sailed together onboard the *British Queen*, which left Liverpool in January 1853 and arrived in Melbourne five months later. They were

⁹⁰ 'Irish Rebellion',

https://heritage.wicklowheritage.org/topics/1798_in_county_wicklow/the_1798_rebellion_in_county_wicklow, accessed 2 October 2024.

⁹¹ Baptism records, part of Suzanne Dooley family history, show Bridget Hayden baptised 2 December 1826, Winefred Hayden baptised 17 November 1828, and Elizabeth Hayden baptised 30 April 1832. As children were baptised very close to birth at this time due to higher infant mortality rates, we are making an informed assumption that this is close to their actual birth dates.

⁹² 'Confiance', shipping records, Public Record Office Victoria, p. 94.

⁹³ 'Confiance', shipping records, Public Record Office Victoria, p. 94; Marriage Certificate Eliza Hayden, Suzanne Dooley family history.

⁹⁴ 'Flynn Family of Haddon', 1983, unpublished, p.4 via Suzanne Dooley family history notes.

two of 308 passengers on board. Travelling as assisted migrants, Bridget and Winefrid were committed to working as soon as they landed. Bridget had a three-month contract as a domestic servant in Flinders Lane, Melbourne, while Winefrid had secured a one-month contract as a domestic servant in Collins Street. According to family history, Winefrid contracted rheumatic fever while on board the ship.⁹⁵

Eliza arrived in Geelong on 7 April 1853, slightly ahead of her older sisters. However, her ship was quarantined due to a severe outbreak of whooping cough. When the health inspector boarded, he discovered 40 cases of whooping cough and 26 cases of sea scurvy. In addition, 27 passengers had died, the majority as a result of whooping cough and dysentery on the journey across. The ship was quarantined for five days before passengers were allowed to disembark.⁹⁶ Eliza was among the lucky passengers to survive what was no doubt a very unpleasant and life-threatening journey.

Some descendants of the Hayden family were told that the three sisters were illiterate. Winefrid's granddaughter Rose Byrne Stevenson grew up believing that her grandmother, whom she met, could not read or write. Rose's daughter, Joan Matthews, remembers her mother telling her that 'Grandma Feely and her sisters could not read or write when they came to the Ballarat goldfields'.⁹⁷ Perhaps the pervasive stereotype of the illiterate Irish influenced this belief. But the shipping records indicate that at the time of the sisters' journey to Australia, it was only Bridget who was not able to read or write. Both Winefrid and Eliza were listed as being able to read, but not write.⁹⁸ As a witness to her sister Winefrid's second wedding in 1862, Bridget left her mark of an 'X' in place of signing her name. Evidence suggests that both Winefrid and Eliza later learned to write.

In the presence } *Thomas Bourke*
 of us } *Bridget Feely*
 — } *mark*

Extract from marriage certificate of Winefrid and James Feely, 1862.

Within 12 months, all three sisters were in Geelong and all were married at St Mary's Catholic Church. The Catholic population of Geelong was around 1,000 people in 1842, bolstered by the influx of Irish immigrants. With the discovery of gold, it had quadrupled by 1852. St Mary's had a strong Irish Catholic congregation and there appears to have also been links during this time between the parishioners of this congregation and the growing new parish of St Alipius in Ballarat.

Bridget was the first of the sisters to marry, on 16 February 1854. She married 28-year-old Thomas Bourke (Burke). Bridget is listed on the marriage certificate as being 21 years old – a year younger than when she left Ireland! Her real age was closer to 27. Eliza married Laurence Flynn in January 1855 and Winefrid married Thomas Cunningham the following month.⁹⁹ Eldest sister Bridget was not a witness to her sisters' marriages, but she had her first child in mid-January 1855, which could explain her absence.

⁹⁵ Joan Matthews family history.

⁹⁶ *The Argus*, 12 April 1853, p. 4.

⁹⁷ Bernadette Gilman, granddaughter of Eliza Byrne (Rose's eldest sister) believed that Winefrid, learnt to read and write under the tutelage of her first husband, Thomas Cunningham.

⁹⁸ 'The British Queen', shipping records, Public Record Office Victoria, p. 122

⁹⁹ Suzanne Dooley family history; Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

There was a strong connection between Geelong and Ballarat during this time, as they were joined by one of the key roads to the Ballarat goldfields. The growing agitation on the goldfields between the miners and the government, which led to the Eureka rebellion, would have been well known among the Geelong population. Alicia Dunne, fiancé to rebel leader and fellow Irishman Peter Lalor, was teaching at a Catholic school in Geelong at this time and in regular correspondence with Peter about the events on the goldfields.¹⁰⁰ Alicia's uncle, Father Patrick Dunne, was the first priest to celebrate Mass on the Ballarat goldfields. Father Patrick Dunne also officiated the marriage between Bridget and Thomas.¹⁰¹ Alicia and Peter were later married at St Mary's Church, Geelong in 1855.¹⁰²

All three Hayden sisters and their families moved from Geelong to the goldfields in, near and around Ballarat, baptising their children at St Alipius. Some of their children later married at St Patrick's, Ballarat.

The 1853 Bendigo Goldfields Petition, which called for a reduction in the monthly license fees and land reform for diggers (and was ultimately rejected, adding fuel to the fires of discontent), was signed by over 5,000 men across the Central Victorian Goldfields, including Ballarat. There are signatures from Thomas Burke and Thomas Cunningham – possibly the same men who later married Bridget and Winefrid.¹⁰³

Judging by the birth records of Bridget and Thomas's children, the Burke family followed the discovery of gold around Victoria. After their first child was born in Geelong, their second, Mary Josephine, was born in 1858 on the White Hill diggings near Maryborough.¹⁰⁴ Gold was discovered in Lamplough near Avoca in 1859, where Bridget and Thomas's third child Winifred was born in 1860. By 1862, the family had returned to the Ballarat district. Their fourth child Christina was born in Black Hill, Scarsdale in 1864, followed by Thomas a year later in Haddon, and Edward in Smythesdale in 1868.¹⁰⁵

All three Hayden sisters and their families eventually lived on the outskirts of Ballarat in the Haddon, Smythes Creek, Smythesdale area, and parish maps show that all three families, including the sisters, owned land in Haddon.¹⁰⁶

Bridget's husband Thomas Burke died in 1874 around 52 years of age, leaving behind Bridget and their children (3 were under 10 years old at the time).¹⁰⁷ Thomas was buried in the Smythesdale Cemetery.¹⁰⁸ Bridget outlived her husband by a considerable margin. Supported by her grown children – especially oldest daughter Mary Josephine – and her sisters, who lived in the area, Bridget remained a widow for the next 37 years.¹⁰⁹ In 1901, she successfully applied via the local lands board for 12 acres of land in Section 18 of the Parish of Haddon.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁰ 'Alicia Dunne', Eurekaedia, http://www.eurekaedia.org/Alicia_Dunne, accessed 2 October 2024.

¹⁰¹ Marriage Certificate, Bridget Heydon and Thomas Burke, Suzanne Dooley family history.

¹⁰² 'Alicia Dunne', Eurekaedia, http://www.eurekaedia.org/Alicia_Dunne, accessed 2 October 2024.

¹⁰³ 'The 1853 Bendigo Goldfields Petition', https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20040417194659/http://www.statelibrary.vic.gov.au/slv/exhibitions/goldfields/petition/p_intro.htm, accessed 2 October 2024.

¹⁰⁴ Birth Certificate Mary Josephine, courtesy Suzanne Dooley.

¹⁰⁵ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages; Suzanne Dooley family history.

¹⁰⁶ Parish of Haddon, County of Grenville map, 1979, State Library Victoria.

¹⁰⁷ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹⁰⁸ 'Thomas Burke', www.findagrave.com, accessed 2 October 2024.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Josephine married Patrick Bowles and family history supplied by Michele Williams suggests Mary was a support to her widowed mother.

¹¹⁰ *The Ballarat Star*, 22 February 1901, p. 1.

Bridget died at around 85 years of age in 1911.¹¹¹ She was buried alongside her husband in the Smythesdale Cemetery.¹¹²

Winefrid and Thomas Cunningham had a daughter, Eliza, in 1856, who was baptised at St Alipius in Ballarat. Young Eliza's godparents were her aunt and uncle Eliza and Laurence Flynn. In 1858 Winefrid and Thomas had a son, Patrick, who was baptised the following year, also at St Alipius Church.¹¹³ According to family stories, Patrick was deaf, as family members remembered learning sign language to communicate with him.¹¹⁴

Tragically, Thomas died in 1861, leaving Winefrid widowed with two young children.¹¹⁵ In her husband's honour, Winefrid later erected an impressive tombstone on his gravesite in the Smythesdale Cemetery.

The following year, in August 1862, Winefrid married another Smythes Creek resident, bachelor James Feely, who was working as a storekeeper. On their marriage certificate Winefrid is described as a widow and dairy keeper.¹¹⁶

Winefrid and James had one child together, Winifred Feely (great-grandmother of Suzanne Dooley) who was born in Black Hill in 1863.¹¹⁷ According to family history, James abandoned Winefrid in May 1863 when he found out she was pregnant.¹¹⁸ Another story relates that James left Winefrid when he found that she would not relinquish her two older children.¹¹⁹ Whatever happened, being abandoned by her new husband would have caused a great deal of worry and shame for Winefrid. Her daughter Winifred's birth was registered by her uncle Laurence Flynn – not by her father, as was usual at that time.¹²⁰ It seems that James Feely remained absent from their lives, as when Winifred later married, written consent was given not by her father, but by her mother Winefrid Hayden Cunningham Feely.¹²¹

Winefrid lived for many years in Smythesdale, alongside her sisters and their families. Her final years were spent in Springmount with her daughter Eliza Clarke. According to family history, resourceful Winefrid ran the Smythes Creek store, located near the Smythesdale goldfields. She reverted to the name of her first husband, Cunningham, however Eliza Byrne Bailey (a granddaughter) and her children fondly called her Granny Hayden, and this name was passed on in their family.¹²² A newspaper article describes Winefrid as working until 'ill-health compelled her to give up business and retire'.¹²³

Winefrid outlived her sisters, surviving into her early 90s. An obituary published in the Catholic newspaper *The Advocate* described her as 'one of the pioneer residents of the Ballarat district':

¹¹¹ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹¹² 'Bridget Burke', www.findagrave.com, accessed 2 October 2024.

¹¹³ Suzanne Dooley family history.

¹¹⁴ Suzanne Dooley family history.

¹¹⁵ Death certificate for Thomas Cunningham cites 'phthisis' as cause of death.

¹¹⁶ Suzanne Dooley family history; Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹¹⁷ Black Hill, Scarsdale. Winifred's birth was registered in the Smythesdale Register. It is possible that Winefrid was living there with her sister Bridget when she gave birth.

¹¹⁸ Bernadette Gilman family history, email to Suzanne Dooley, 2024.

¹¹⁹ James Byrne family history.

¹²⁰ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹²¹ Suzanne Dooley family history.

¹²² Suzanne Dooley, family history from John Byrne; Bernadette Gilman, email to Suzanne Dooley, 2024.

¹²³ *The Advocate*, 20 December 1919, p. 20.

The late Mrs Feeley [sic] was a devout Catholic, and her kind and gentle disposition made her beloved by all who knew her.¹²⁴



Left: Winefrid Hayden Cunningham Feely (age 84) with daughter Winifred Feely Byrne (age 49), 1913. Suzanne Dooley. Right: Eliza Hayden. Photo courtesy Bernadette Gilman via Ancestry.com.

Eliza Flynn (née Hayden) birthed at least 13 children: Julia (1856), Bridget (1858), Laurence (1859), James (1860), John Thomas (1862), Laurence Eugene (1864), Elizabeth (1866), Edmund (1868), Richard (1870), Michael (1872), Julia Ann (1873), John (1879), and David Thomas (1880).¹²⁵ Three children died young: Laurence at just one day old, Julia around 16 years of age from typhoid fever, and Thomas (John Thomas) at 18 years of age.¹²⁶

Eliza and her husband Laurence first settled in Geelong, before moving to the Ballarat district by bullock dray around 1855/1856 with the intention of taking up land in the Haddon area.¹²⁷ Laurence became a councillor of the Shire of Grenville, while entrepreneurial Eliza farmed and sold farm produce. The Reform Hotel in Haddon was associated with the family from the 1890s, when it was known as Flynn's Reform Hotel.¹²⁸ Eliza's sons Laurence, Michael, John and James, were all hoteliers for a period of time. Eliza sold her farm produce including eggs, bacon, cream, butter and some attempts at cheese. According to one family history 'she was known to walk up to four or five miles to the nearest store carrying such products or wheeling them in a barrow'.¹²⁹ A petite woman, Eliza was fondly known as 'Little Mother'.¹³⁰

Laurence Flynn died in 1897 in his early 70s. According to a newspaper obituary:

¹²⁴ *The Advocate*, 20 December 1919, p. 20.

¹²⁵ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹²⁶ Find a Grave, www.findagrave.com, accessed 18 October 2024; Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹²⁷ 'Flynn Family of Haddon', 1983, unpublished, p. 4, Suzanne Dooley family history notes.

¹²⁸ *Ballarat Star*, 10 September 1888, p. 4; 'Flynn Family History', 1983, <https://whatwillbe.blog/2020/03/29/mary-ann-meagher-hidden-history>, accessed 2 October 2024.

¹²⁹ 'Flynn Family of Haddon', 1983, unpublished, p. 6, Suzanne Dooley family history notes.

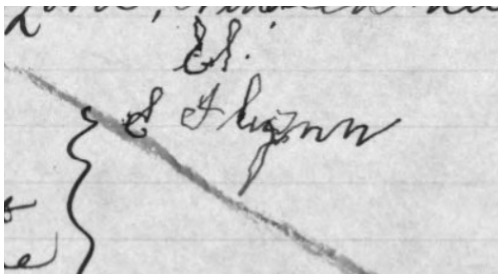
¹³⁰ 'Flynn Family of Haddon', 1983, unpublished, p. 12, Suzanne Dooley family history notes.

Deceased was formerly a councillor of the Shire of Grenville and was highly respected by all who knew him. A widow and grown-up family are left to mourn their loss.¹³¹



The Reform Hotel, c. 1895, featuring Elizabeth Flynn, daughter-in-law of Eliza Hayden Flynn (licensee), and her six small children. 'Flynn Family of Haddon', 1983, Suzanne Dooley.

Eliza continued to care for her family and manage her extensive landholdings for the next two decades. Archival records show that all three sisters managed land. By the time she died in 1916, Eliza Flynn owned land and real estate in Haddon totalling over 400 acres and valued at over £1,700. This included a six-room homestead including a barn, kitchen, dairy, cowshed, stables, and a buggy shed.¹³²



Signature of Eliza Flynn from her probate record, VPRS 28/P0003, 147/649, Public Record Office Victoria.

After arriving in Australia single, poor and with minimal education, the Hayden sisters made a substantial contribution to the Ballarat community, with hundreds of descendants that still call Ballarat home today. Suzanne Dooley believes that her great-great-grandmother Winefrid Hayden Cunningham Feely worked hard all her life to create a better life for her children. Looking at the records that the Hayden sisters left behind, there is no doubt that these three strong Irish women dedicated their lives to supporting each other, their families, and their community.

¹³¹ *Grenville Standard*, 15 May 1897, p. 3.

¹³² Elizabeth Flynn: Grant of probate, VPRS 28/P0003, 147/649, Public Record Office Victoria.

Mary and Ellen Purcell

Original research undertaken by Robert Hayward, Vicki Hayward and Margaret Baensch, with some additional research, editing and collation by Way Back When.



Mary Ann Hayward (née Purcell), c. 1865. Photograph courtesy Hayward family.

Mary Ann and Ellen Maria Purcell were Irish sisters who journeyed to Australia as children to join their parents, who had immigrated almost ten years earlier. Between them, Mary Ann and Ellen outlived three husbands, birthed at least 24 children, and buried two. Mary was in Ballarat at the time of the Eureka rebellion in 1854 and so, too, was Ellen's husband.

Much of Mary's life has been uncovered through the research of her ancestor Robert Hayward with the support of Vicki Hayward and Margaret Baensch, a descendant on the Whitla side. Some details of Ellen's life can be gleaned from her memories of the early days on the Central Victorian goldfields, which were published in *The Argus* in the 1920s.

Ellen Maria and Mary Ann were born to farmers Patrick and Maria Purcell in Johnswell, County Killkenny in 1835 and 1837 respectively.

In 1840, inspired perhaps by the opportunity to create a better life for their growing family, Patrick and Maria took up the offer of assisted immigration to Australia. Shipping records show that Patrick and Maria were assisted by immigration agent John Marshall. Marshall was prolific in providing assisted passage to Australia, helping tens of thousands of people immigrate to the British colonies between 1837 and 1842.¹³³

¹³³ Liz Rushen, 'John Marshall and the Peopling of Australia', *The Great Circle*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2020, p. 13.

Agents like Marshall recruited immigrants to help populate places like Sydney and what was then known as the Port Phillip District (Victoria). Under the bounty scheme of assisted immigration, agents who brought skilled immigrants 'of a suitable age and occupation' to Australia would in return be paid a sum of money by the colonial government. However, there was a limit on the number of children that could accompany their parents on the journey.¹³⁴ This is perhaps why, when it came time to leave Ireland, Patrick and Maria were forced to make the heartbreaking decision to leave behind their daughters, five-year-old Ellen and three-year-old Mary Ann. According to shipping records, Patrick and Maria had a bounty of £19 each and their young son John £10. Their youngest child, Robert, who was a baby at the time, was not included in John Marshall's list, but was also a passenger on the ship.¹³⁵

In 1848, almost a decade later, Mary Ann and Ellen were finally reunited with their parents and brothers. They travelled to Australia on the ship *Sir Edward Parry*, accompanied by their uncle Nicholas Purcell (age 22) and presumably cousins Elizabeth (14), Martin (12), and Bridget (10). On board the ship were over 200 Irish children who were travelling to be reunited with their parents. Well known philanthropist and social reformer Caroline Chisholm helped to organise their passage.¹³⁶

On arrival in Australia, Mary Ann and Ellen set to work helping their parents and growing family in Geelong. Ellen later remembered frequent interactions her father had with the local Indigenous people, 'who were eager to barter skins and birds for odds and ends of merchandise'.¹³⁷ In 1852, both sisters were married. Ellen married William Axtill (or Actill) in February, and Mary married Samuel Lee Hayward in September.

Ellen and William went off in search of gold, and perhaps Mary and Sam did, too. By the time their first child arrived in 1854, Mary and Sam were living in Smythesdale. Their son Samuel born in March 1854 was christened at St Alipius Church on 6 March 1854 – a Catholic church and school established by the growing Irish Catholic community in Ballarat.¹³⁸ Mary's uncle Nicolas Purcell and Bridget O'Donnell were young Samuel's sponsors.¹³⁹ According to the *Ballarat Star*, Mary and her husband 'were in the year 1854 residing in Eureka and witnessed the riot'.¹⁴⁰ Ellen's recollections also put her husband William in the thick of the conflict:

...his only weapon in the fight was a horse pistol, with which, to quote a song of those days, "He went to fight John Bull".¹⁴¹

Life on the goldfields was filled with challenges, especially for women, but it seems the Purcell sisters met them head on. By the time of the Eureka rebellion, Ellen and Mary were married women at just 19 and 17 years old. Mary had an eight-month-old son. But for those willing to work hard and think smart, the goldfields offered a variety of opportunities. 'Dear me, those were the days when a smart woman could make money', recalled Ellen, 'In one year, I made £200 by making shirts for the diggers':

¹³⁴ Anthony Watson, 'The children of the *Sir Edward Parry*', *Descent*, vol. 34, no. 1, March 2004, p. 2.

¹³⁵ Register of Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom, VPRS 14/P0000, book no. 2, p. 94, Public Record Office Victoria.

¹³⁶ Shipping record says 'children brought out by Government to join their parents'. Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 14/P0000, Book No. 2/3, p. 196; Judith Iltis, 'Caroline Chisholm (1808-1877)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/chisholm-caroline-1894>, accessed 2 September 2024.

¹³⁷ *The Argus*, 4 September 1925, p. 1.

¹³⁸ St Alipius archives via St Patricks Cathedral archives correspondence, 21 May 2001, Hayward family.

¹³⁹ Dorothy Wickham, *Women of the Diggings Ballarat 1854*, p. 184.

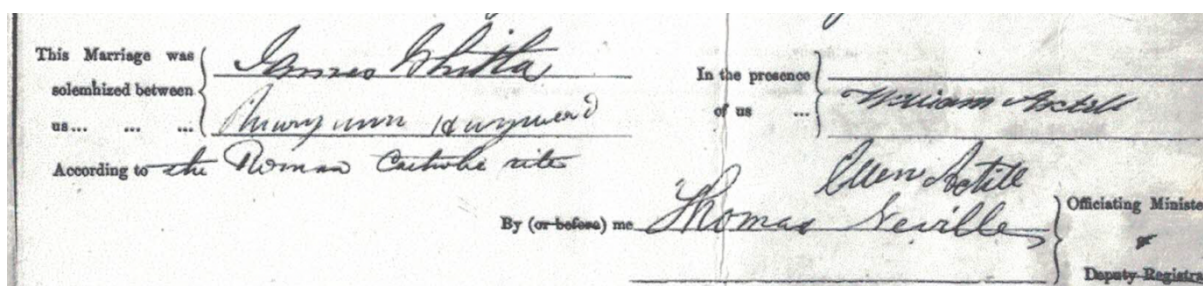
¹⁴⁰ *Ballarat Star*, 23 August 1922, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ *The Argus*, 4 September 1925, p. 1. 'John Bull' is used to refer to a typical English person or the English in general.

We women had plenty of hard work in those days, but we had compensations, for no one seemed to get ill, and it was just as well, for there were no hospitals ... No man in the diggings ever washed his clothes ... he just wore them until they were 'impossible', and then threw them away. We women used to go a couple of miles ... for a day's washing, and we took with us the copper, clothes-pegs, lines, and some Epsom salts, then we would find an old shaft with water in it and we would pull up the water with a billy or bucket tied to a clothes line ... One thing we had to look for, and that was bullfrogs: for unless they were present we knew the water would be brackish and no good for washing.¹⁴²

Mary and Sam went on to have five children together: three sons and two daughters. Tragically, their eldest daughter Maryanne died in infancy. She was buried in the Learmonth General Cemetery on 2 July 1860.¹⁴³ Tragedy struck again in 1865 when Sam died at just 39 years of age. At the age of 28, Mary was suddenly a widow with four young children.

Life was much harder for widowed and single women, with few options available to them without the support of a male family member. It is no surprise that when given the opportunity, Mary quickly married again. This time she married a fellow Irish immigrant and miner, James Whitla. They were wed at St Alipius in Ballarat on 13 November 1865. William and Ellen were witnesses to this marriage. Mary and James set up a home in Carngham near Snake Valley and spent the next 37 years together. Mary had another 8 children with James. Her youngest child, Sarah, was born in 1882 when Mary herself was 45 years old.¹⁴⁴



Extract from marriage register between James Whitla and Mary Ann Hayward showing signatures of both James and Mary Ann as well as witnesses William and Ellen Axtill. Courtesy Hayward family.

Ellen and William had 11 children together and lived in Cowies, near Geelong.

Both sisters lived long lives and were well respected at the time of their deaths. Mary died first, at 85 years old. A local newspaper described her as 'one of the oldest and most respected residents of the district', who witnessed the Eureka riots, and had 12 children, 56 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren. Mary was buried in Carngham Cemetery.¹⁴⁵

Ellen frequently appeared in the newspapers in her later years, under various headlines that marvelled at her health and her memory as she aged. After her death in 1931 at the age of 97, she was described as 'one of Melbourne's oldest colonists'. Like her sister, Ellen left a huge family, including over 90 descendants. She was buried in Beaufort Cemetery.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² *The Argus*, 4 September 1925, p. 1.

¹⁴³ Lake Learmonth General Cemetery records, Hayward family.

¹⁴⁴ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages; St Patrick's Cathedral marriage register, record c/1080, Hayward family.

¹⁴⁵ *The Ballarat Star*, 23 August 1922, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ *The Advocate*, 14 May 1931, p. 35.



Ellen Axtill (née Purcell) and Mary Ann Hayward Whitla (née Purcell), c. 1920. Photographs courtesy Hayward family.

Mary Agnes Curtin: A child at Eureka

Original research undertaken by Laurel Hynes, with some additional research, editing and collation by Way Back When.

... such was the terror and hurry with which my family fled,
that they left behind them even their every-day dress.
Patrick Curtin, 26 December 1855¹⁴⁷

Mary Agnes Curtin was born at Eureka on the Ballarat goldfields in the spring of 1853 to Mary Elizabeth Hynes and Patrick Malone Curtin, who were both Irish immigrants. Mary Hynes was born in Galway.¹⁴⁸ At 22, she immigrated to Australia on board the *Beulah*, arriving in Hobart in 1851.¹⁴⁹ It seems likely she would have come to Australia as an assisted migrant, like so many young Irish people did at that time. Perhaps it was the lure of the goldfields or a connection to friends or family, but by 1852, Mary was in Victoria.

On 6 November 1852, Mary married Irish-born Patrick Malone Curtin at St Mary's Church, Geelong. Patrick had come to Australia from County Clare in 1841.¹⁵⁰ Mary and Patrick may have met through a connection with the St Mary's parish community, which was largely made up of Irish immigrants.

By January 1853, the Curtins were living and working in Ballarat, operating a store. It was there, in Eureka, that their first child Mary Agnes was born. Living and working in Eureka at that time, there is no doubt that they would have been well aware of the tensions between the miners and the government. It also seems highly likely that they were parishioners at St Alipius Church, alongside so many in the Irish community.

In October 1854, Johannes Gregorius, servant to Father Patrick Smyth at St Alipius, was falsely arrested for not having a miners' license. Representatives from the Ballarat Catholic community, including Patrick Curtin, wrote to the Colonial Secretary about the injustice and insult that was shown to their priest and his servant through this action:

The Catholics of Ballarat are a large and influential body, comprising inhabitants of every recognised country under heaven, and especially of that land, whose children are proverbially devoted to their faith, and sensitive even to jealousy of the respect due to their pastors. Now, their impression is that a marked insult has been offered to their Pastor in the person of his servant, as uncalled for as it persisted in.¹⁵¹

Tensions on the goldfields increased and when the stockade was erected, Mary and Patrick's home and store was inside it.¹⁵² Despite Patrick's later protests that he was not involved in the events that followed, there is evidence to suggest that Patrick and Mary were active participants and on the side of the diggers protesting against the injustices on the goldfields. Patrick and Mary were friends with Peter Lalor, and Patrick was godfather to the Shanahan children. Timothy and Bridget Shanahan also had a store inside the stockade, and the diggers

¹⁴⁷ Patrick Curtin statement to the Commission of Enquiry, 26 December 1855, supplied by Laurel Hynes.

¹⁴⁸ Confusingly also sometimes spelled Curtin.

¹⁴⁹ Lauren Hynes family history; Shipping record *Beulah*, Tasmanian Libraries and Archives, CB7/12/1/1, p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ 'Patrick Malone Curtin (1829-1883)', p. 137, scan provided by Lauren Hynes.

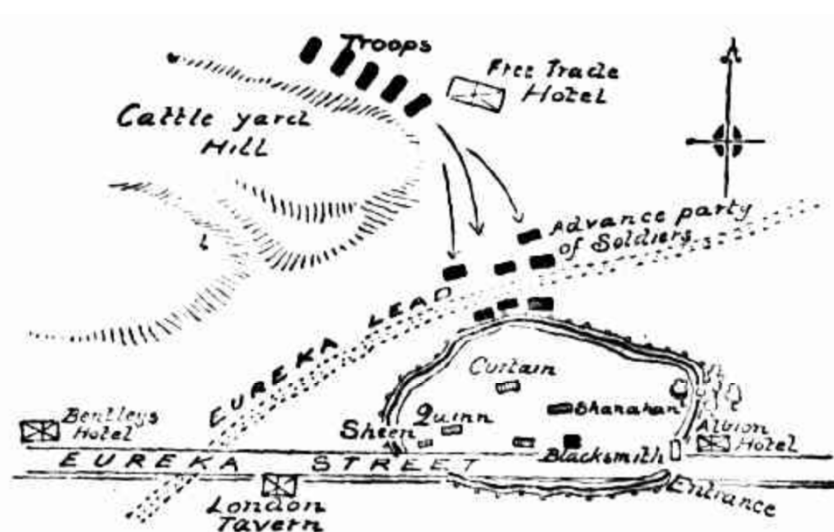
¹⁵¹ VPRS 1189, Unit 92 File J54/13.201 K 11.998, Public Record Office Victoria, quoted in 'Johannes Gregorius', EurekaPedia, http://www.eurekapedia.org/Johannes_Gregorius, accessed 12 September 2024.

¹⁵² Some sources say inside the stockade while a petition to the government for compensation from Patrick describes the stockade as being 'close to my store'.

held meetings there. It is not unreasonable to think that Patrick and Mary Curtin's store also provided an opportune place to meet.¹⁵³

As shots rang out across the dawn sky that fateful morning on 3 December 1854, Mary Curtin, who was eight months pregnant with her second child, rushed out of bed with young Mary Agnes in tow.¹⁵⁴ Patrick was not with them at the time, being on picket duty. Mary and Patrick's home and store were destroyed in the attack that followed, but luckily the family escaped, albeit in their nightgowns.

In her work *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, historian Clare Wright includes Mary's flight on the morning of the 3 December alongside accounts of other women and children caught up in the attack. Another Irish woman, Rebecca Noonan, was also a storekeeper with a shop just outside the stockade. Emerging from their burning tent, Rebecca, her husband Michael and their five children were stopped by police. Michael was arrested and Rebecca, who was four months pregnant, was 'brutally assaulted by the foot police and her life threatened'.¹⁵⁵



POSITION OF THE STOCKADE.

The Stockade is marked by the irregular circle. Bentley's hotel stood at the corner of Eureka and Otway streets. The Free-trade Hotel was near the site now occupied by the gate-house on the Buninyong line. The soldiers, making a long detour, approached the Stockade by the gully behind Cattle-yard

Map showing the 'Curtain' shop and home inside the Eureka Stockade. *The Argus*, 3 December 1904, p. 17.

Patrick Curtin eventually caught up with his family and spent the next two years petitioning the government for compensation for the loss of his livelihood.

Laurel Hynes, a living descendant of the Curtins, has been researching the family history:

That summer (1854/55) must have been miserable for pregnant Mary Elizabeth with an active toddler. She had Patrick John in February 1855, and we have no idea how they all survived that year. She was only 23 years old.

¹⁵³ 'Timothy Shanahan', Eurekaedia, https://eurekaedia.org/Timothy_Shanahan, accessed 12 September 2024; Laurel Hynes family history.

¹⁵⁴ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 475.

¹⁵⁵ Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, p. 476.

There is some confusion around Patrick's involvement with the Eureka rebellion, not helped by the fact that there were two men with the name Patrick Curtin (or Curtain) in Ballarat at the time. One was captain of the pikemen, according to Raffaello Carboni's eye-witness account published a year after the events, as well as various newspaper accounts.¹⁵⁶ Some secondary accounts have suggested that Patrick Malone Curtin, husband of Mary Elizabeth, was in fact the captain of the pikemen and an active insurgent involved in the Eureka rebellion.¹⁵⁷

What is certain is that Patrick Malone Curtin's life and livelihood was ruined by the events of Sunday 3 December 1854. In the letters he sent seeking compensation for the loss of his home and store, Patrick wrote:

I beg to state I have been a storekeeper on the Eureka, and that I have regularly paid the license for permission to keep a store. In the unhappy disturbances of December last, the stockade was thrown up by diggers close to my store (a circumstance which I could not possibly prevent), and was burned to the ground on the morning of the 3rd. I was in the act of removing my family to a distance at the time, when, on returning, I found my store burned to the ground. Your Excellency will please observe that, in the fright and hurry with which myself and family left our store, we left all our property, to the dress we wore, behind us, little expecting the military would destroy the store with its contents. We are in consequence ruined, as all our industrial savings for years of hard labour were consumed.¹⁵⁸

While Patrick spent the next two years petitioning for compensation for his lost store and income, the family began operating the North Grenville Hotel on Creswick Road, Ballarat. In 1856, Patrick was finally granted compensation in the form of £1,000, which he used to help pay for the hotel. Patrick was licensee of the North Grenville Hotel from 1855 to 1861.¹⁵⁹

In 1864, Mary Elizabeth Curtin was one of many signatories on a petition from the women of Ballarat and Ballarat East to the women of England against the transportation of convicts. Mary's address is listed on the petition as Mills Street, across the road from the North Grenville Hotel.¹⁶⁰ During the time that the family operated the hotel, Mary and Patrick had three more children: Thomas William (December 1856), Eliza Rose (June 1859), and Honora (August 1861).

At some point around this time the family moved to Smeaton. Mary and Patrick's family was then completed with the arrival of three more children: Rose Ann (1863), Anne Matilda (1866) and Terrance James (1868). Patrick's brother and family also joined them in Smeaton and the Curtins became active citizens in the area.¹⁶¹

When the Smeaton National School was established in 1861, the land for the school was secured by the school's trustees, including Patrick Curtin.¹⁶² His daughter Mary Agnes and her brothers Patrick John and Thomas William could well have been among the thirty scholars

¹⁵⁶ Raffaello Carboni writes: 'Patrick Curtain, an old digger, well known among us; at the time a storekeeper; husband and father of a beloved family ... Tall, robust, some forty years old ... Curtain was captain, and subsequently lieutenant of the pikemen division'.

¹⁵⁷ Dorothy Wickham, *Women of the Diggings Ballarat 1854*, 2009, p. 149.

¹⁵⁸ Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1855-6, Claims for Compensation, Ballarat; 'Patrick Curtain', EurekaMedia, http://www.eurekamedia.org/Patrick_Curtain, accessed 12 September 2024.

¹⁵⁹ 'Ballarat and District Industrial Heritage Project' https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php?title=North_Grenville_Hotel, accessed 12 September 2024.

¹⁶⁰ 'Address with signatories from the Women of Ballarat and Ballarat East to the Women of England 1864', scan of publication supplied by Laurel Hynes.

¹⁶¹ Laurel Hynes family history.

¹⁶² *The Star*, 11 September 1861, p. 1.

who attended a temporary school that was established at the Three Castles Hotel in Smeaton for nine months until the new school was built.¹⁶³

In 1865, Patrick Curtin declared bankruptcy and moved to a farm in Euroa.¹⁶⁴ Mary's widowed mother Mary Jennings Hynes emigrated to Australia to join her daughter and extended family.¹⁶⁵ In 1883, Patrick Curtin died from 'organic disease' at just 52 years of age.¹⁶⁶ Mary also lost her mother just two years later in 1885. Then in 1890, her son Thomas William died unexpectedly at just 31 years of age. Tragedy struck again in 1901, when another son, Patrick John, suffered a heart attack and died at just 45 years of age.¹⁶⁷ Shortly after this, Mary moved to Longwarry to live with her daughter Eliza Rose. She remained here for a few more years, before she too died in 1908 at around 73 years old.¹⁶⁸

Mary Agnes, a child of Eureka, married Irishman Michael Hynes in Strathbogie at Merry Vale on 19 July 1883. Mary and Michael Hynes had seven children together and both lived long lives. They returned to Ballarat and lived in South Street, where they became well-known members of the community.

Michael Hynes died in 1928. He was described as one of Ballarat's 'best known and most highly respected old pioneers', who helped to build up the mining fields at Ballarat and Allandale.¹⁶⁹ After her husband's death, Mary Agnes went to live with one of her sons in Williamstown, where she died two years later in 1930 at the age of 74. She was buried in the family grave in the Ballarat New Cemetery.¹⁷⁰ There was no mention of her having survived the Eureka rebellion.

¹⁶³ *The Star*, 11 September 1861, p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ Laurel Hynes family history.

¹⁶⁵ Laurel Hynes family history.

¹⁶⁶ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹⁶⁷ Patrick John Curtin inquest file, 1901/1004, VPRS 24/P0, Public Record Office Victoria.

¹⁶⁸ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹⁶⁹ *The Advocate*, 25 October 1928, p. 37.

¹⁷⁰ *Williamstown Chronicle*, 14 June 1930, p. 2.

Catherine O'Brien (née Linnane) and Bridget Anne Lavery (née O'Brien)

Original research undertaken by Margaret Lavery, with some additional research, editing and collation by Way Back When.



This photo shows Bridget Lavery, a serene, strong woman looking out confidently on the world. Courtesy of Margaret Lavery.

Bridget O'Brien was a child of Eureka. According to family history, Bridget was born because her father chose 'discretion over valour' at the battle of Eureka. Margaret Lavery, Bridget Lavery's great-granddaughter recalls:

Growing up pre-TV and social media, story was an important part of life. In our families we were told of an ancestor being present at Eureka. That thread was constant, the details surrounding it varied according to the imagination of the storyteller and versatility of the listener.

Bridget O'Brien was the first daughter born to Catherine O'Brien (née Linnane, Lennane, Lenan or Lenehan) and Daniel O'Brien. It seems likely that Catherine Linnane was one of the many young Irish women who took up the attractive offer of assisted immigration to Australia, in search of a new life of opportunity. Shipping records show a Catherine Linnane from County Clare arriving via the *Garland* in Melbourne on 31 July 1852. The ship, which departed Liverpool in April that year, carried 364 government-assisted immigrants.¹⁷¹ The shipping manifest shows that Catherine Linnane was 20 years old, single and illiterate. She had a three-month working contract as a domestic servant with a Mr Murphy in Kilmore.¹⁷²

In early 1853, Catherine Linnane married Daniel O'Brien at St Mary's Church in Geelong. Daniel was also from County Clare. By March 1853, Catherine and Daniel had settled in

¹⁷¹ *The Argus*, 2 August 1852, p. 4.

¹⁷² Register of Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom, VPRS14, book 8, pp. 139-140, Public Record Office Victoria.

Ballarat, where they were witnesses to the earliest recorded marriage at St Alipius Church. On 22 March 1853, Margaret Guthrie and Daniel Cannon, both of Eureka, were married by Father Matthew Downing in a temporary tent church in Brown Hill.¹⁷³ Interestingly, a Margaret Guthrie from County Clare travelled to Australia on the same ship as Catherine Linnane, and both young women were assigned to work as domestic servants for Mr Murphy at Kilmore for the same three-month period.¹⁷⁴ If they were not already friends, then the journey across the world together and three months working alongside each other would surely have cemented the bonds of friendship.

Daniel O'Brien, like so many at that time, took up the challenge to find his fortune and was working as a miner. The majority of the large Irish community on the Ballarat goldfields was Catholic, and thus connected in with St Alipius Parish. Father Patrick Smyth was parish priest from 1854 to 1856 and heavily invested in the lives of his parishioners. He also took an active role in the Eureka conflict. According to family history, Father Smyth was close with the O'Brien family and even performed a wedding ceremony at Catherine and Daniel's home in Brown Hill.¹⁷⁵

Through their connection to St Alipius and the wider Irish community on the Ballarat goldfields, Catherine and Daniel would have been well aware of the tensions and issues that led to the conflict at Eureka on the morning of 3 December 1854. Margaret Lavery recalls the stories she heard about her great-great-grandfather Daniel:

I grew up with the story that when the fighting got ugly, our ancestor said he was going back to get water for the troops. A brother's version was water for the horses. A cousin heard that our ancestor said 'I'm too young to die! I'm out of here.'

It was perhaps the fact that his young wife was around four months pregnant with their first child that swayed Daniel to avoid the conflict. Bridget Anne O'Brien was born around April 1855, a child of Eureka in every sense.¹⁷⁶ Her two sisters Mary and Margaret followed soon after, both born in Ballarat in 1857 and 1858 respectively.¹⁷⁷

Bridget married Henry Lavery in 1875, the same year her father Daniel died.¹⁷⁸ Bridget and Henry worked a farm in Waubra and raised a new generation of children: Bernard, Henry, John, William and Elizabeth Lavery. Bridget's mother Catherine O'Brien died in 1887 at the age of 57, and was buried alongside her husband in the Old Ballarat Cemetery.¹⁷⁹

Henry Lavery died in 1933, leaving Bridget and their children an estate worth around £5,000.¹⁸⁰ Bridget died in 1936 at the age of 80.¹⁸¹ Both Henry and Bridget are buried in the Waubra Cemetery.¹⁸²

¹⁷³ Dorothy Wickham, *From Humble Beginnings: St Alipius, Ballarat's first church, the early history*, BHS Publishing, Ballarat, 2020, p. 17.

¹⁷⁴ Register of Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom, VPRS14, book 8, pp. 139-140, Public Record Office Victoria.

¹⁷⁵ Margaret Lavery family history.

¹⁷⁶ 'Bridget Ann O'Brien', Geni, <https://www.geni.com/people/Bridget-O-Brien/6000000177013645939>, accessed 1 October 2024.

¹⁷⁷ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹⁷⁸ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹⁷⁹ Lavery family history.

¹⁸⁰ *The Age*, 14 October 1933, p. 14.

¹⁸¹ Victorian Births, Deaths and Marriages.

¹⁸² Lavery family history.

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