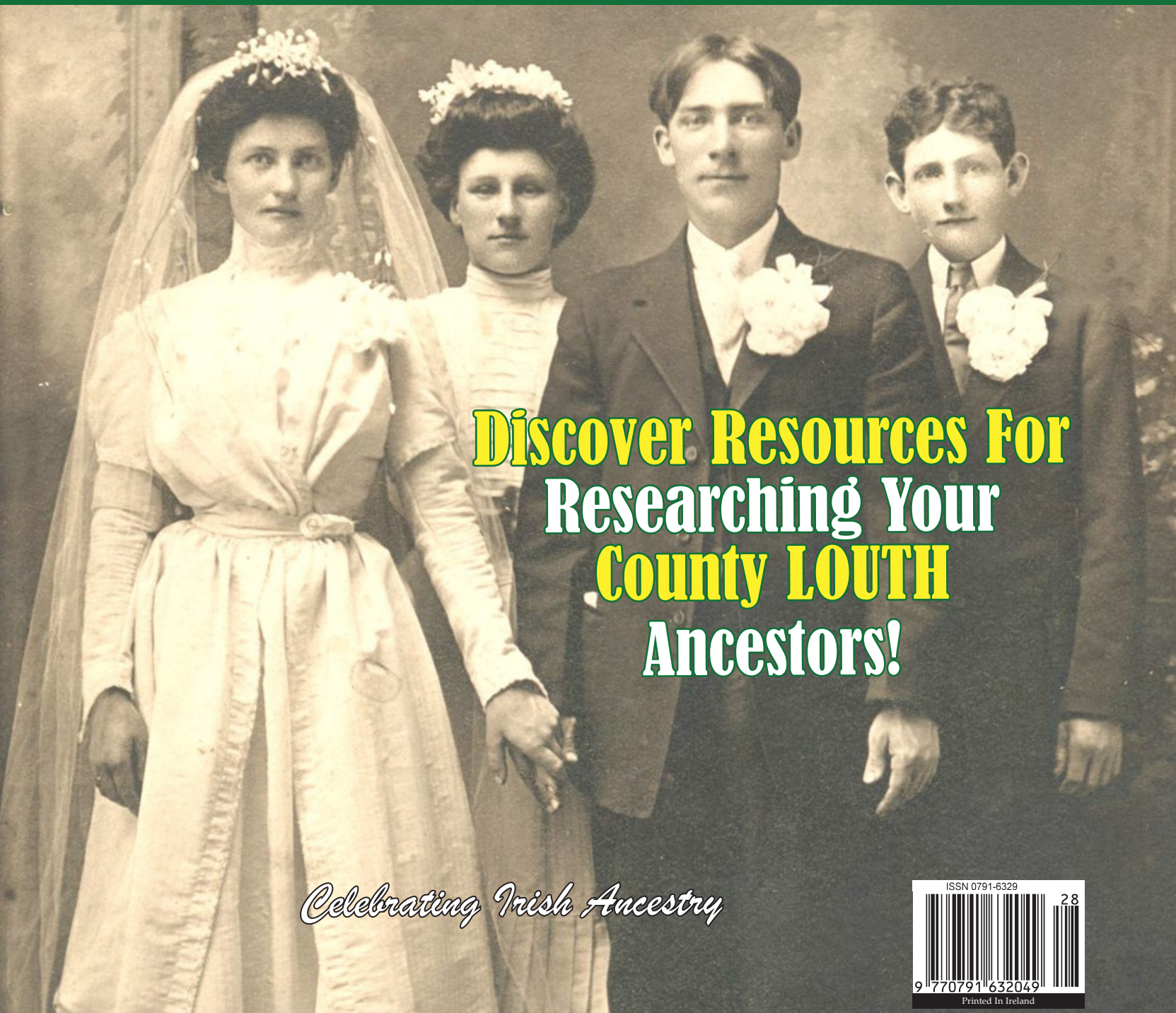


Irish Roots



**Discover Resources For
Researching Your
County LOUTH
Ancestors!**

Celebrating Irish Ancestry



**Using Autosomal DNA To Break Through The Brick Wall In Your Family History.
Finding Your Irish Nun Relatives In The Convent Archive Records.
Discover The History And Origins Of Many Surnames From County Louth.
More Valuable Genealogy Tips To Assist With Your Irish Ancestral Research.
Keep Up To Date With The Latest Irish Genealogical Record Releases.
News From The World Of Irish Genealogy And Lots Lots More!**

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A few words from the editor

Welcome to our winter issue.

At family gatherings there is often one member who will invariably reflect on the family tree. If you are reading Irish Roots magazine then the chances are that you are that family member. It is perhaps more important than ever now to encourage other family members, particularly the younger ones, to learn, collect and treasure their family history. In what appears to be an ever-increasing fast paced world of chaos and hurry, it is important to take time out – offline if you will, to spend it quietly with our ancestors and those that have paved a slower path before us, to peruse their lives and to honour them with some time out of our busy schedules.



When Steven Smyrl was sidetracked from his busy schedule into researching the history of his home, he could hardly believe the shocking facts that he discovered, Page 5. If your family had Irish catholic roots, it is quite possible that you had a nun relative somewhere in your family tree. Dr. Mary Hatfield discusses various religious orders and how and where to contact their archives, pages 6-7.

This issue we head to Co. Louth with James G. Ryan as he shares with us the local resources available for the county on pages 10-11. Seán Ó Murchadha rounds out the Co. Louth focus by bringing us some of the fascinating history and lore of many of the County's surnames, pages 22-23.

Bernard Hall shares some interesting family history tips he discovered as a result of his ancestral search, page 18, and the Irish Genealogical Research Society kindly offer us four more genealogical delights on page 19. Eliza Watson outlines her intriguing research for her Coffey ancestors from Wisconsin to Co. Westmeath, pages 24-25. Claire Santry offers another exciting update on recent Irish genealogical record releases and news, pages 20-21. Jennifer Harrison brings us some gold nuggets from Australia, pages 26-27 and Nicola Morris sets another reader straight on her path with more wholesome advice, page 28.

As 2023 hastens to its end, we would like to take some time out of our busy schedule to thank all of you, our lovely Irish Roots family of readers, subscribers, contributors, advertisers, distributors and all who help to keep the Irish Roots magazine show on the road. We are completely grateful to you all for your ongoing kindness, loyalty, and support. We look forward to welcoming 2024 and in the meantime would like to wish you all a peaceful, abundant and joyous Christmas and year ahead. May the blessings of the season be with you all. Beannachtaí na Nollag oraibh go léir.

Maureen



Sarah Daly and John Coffey's wedding, 1910, with witnesses Eliza Coffey and Ambrose Daly. See 'Tracing My Coffey Ancestors', pages 24 & 25.

Image courtesy of Eliza Watson.

Editor/Publisher

Maureen Phibbs
Irish Roots Media Ltd
Blackrock, Blessington,
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Ireland

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Catholic Convent Schools

Finding Irish Teachers And Students In The Convent Archives

By Dr. Mary Hatfield

Across the fields of education, healthcare, social services, and religious practise it is hard to overstate the importance and significance of Irish religious sisters. Since the eighteenth century, Irish religious orders have played a central role in the establishment of Catholic social services across the globe. If you attended a Catholic school anywhere in the world, odds are there was at least one Irish nun involved in its administration.

In North America, Irish nuns were pivotal to the establishment of schools, hospitals, and orphanages for Catholic emigrants. As missionaries they went to Africa, India, and Asia to establish schools and charities. If your family has Irish Catholic roots, it probably has a nun or priest somewhere in the family tree as well. The contributions of Irish nuns have left a lasting impact on Irish society and their archival collections can provide insight into the lives of their communities and schools.

My interest in Irish nuns stemmed from my interest in the history of Irish education. The Irish convent school was an important part of the Irish educational landscape and a key institution for women's empowerment. During the Penal Era when Catholic education and religious practise were prohibited by law, a small number of female congregations persisted, operating covertly. Founded in 1717, the Dominican community at Channel Row, Dublin, was the only female boarding school in Dublin to stay open during the penal era. It was primarily operated by women from Anglo-Norman gentry families and enrolled around 15 students a year.

When Catholic Emancipation in 1831 removed the last vestiges of religious persecution, the Irish bishops encouraged the development of more female religious communities to aid in the delivery of Catholic social services. During the second half of the nineteenth century Irish teaching sisters transformed the availability and quality of education available to Catholics. In general, their primary level schools were free to attend and utilised by children living within

walking distance of the school. Higher level education, including instruction in foreign languages and the classics, were typically offered for fee-paying students at a secondary-level. Communities often operated multiple schools in the same site, using the fee-paying school to off-set the cost of a free school.

Nineteenth Century Religious Landscape

The nineteenth century witnessed a real flowering of Catholic religious orders. According to Tony Fahey and Caitriona Clear, in 1801 there were 120 nuns in Ireland, by 1851 there were 1,500, and by 1901 there were around 8,000. This was accompanied by a growing diversity of orders and establishments. In 1800 there were 12 convents and 4 orders of female religious orders in Ireland, by 1900 there were 368 convents and 35 different orders. Each religious order has its own unique history.

Some of the key Irish orders involved in education were the Christian Brothers (1802), the Sisters of Charity (1815), the Sisters of Mercy (1831), and the Irish Vincentian Fathers (1832). Other religious orders were imported from Europe; the Dominicans (1644) the Ursulines (1771), the Sacred Heart (1842); the Faithful Companions of Jesus (1844); St. Louis (1859); St. Joseph of Cluny (1860); La Sainte Union des Sacre Coeurs (1862) made foundations throughout Ireland. Some orders were contemplative, meaning they were entirely cloistered, the nuns having limited interactions with the outside world; others adopted educational missions or specialised in healthcare and nursing.



Religious Orders And Their Archives

Each order has its own history and unique charism. For example, the Presentation Sisters were founded by Cork native Nano Nagle in 1775 and dedicated themselves to educating and uplifting the poor. In contrast the Sisters of Charity founded by Mary Aikenhead in Dublin, were involved in establishing hospitals for the poor, including St. Vincent's Hospital.

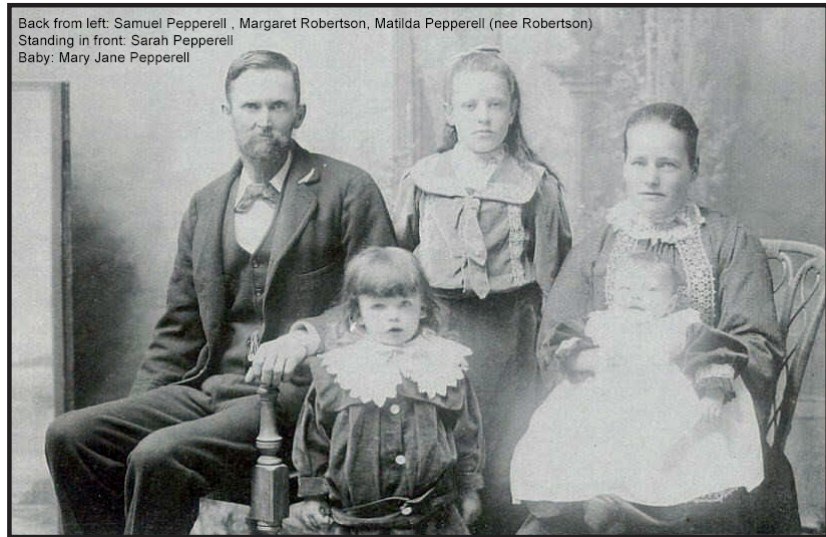
If you can trace one of your relatives to a convent, either as a pupil or as a member of the community, it may be possible to find more detailed information about the community and your family member in the community archives. Census records can be useful in identifying the schools within a given parish, and occasionally will indicate where a student attended school. Once you know the order associated with your family member you can locate archival materials from the community. If the convent is still active they may maintain their own records on site; though it is more common for records to be deposited into a centralized archive for the order.

Types of Convent Records

Every religious community was required to keep certain records during its existence. A convent annal, sometimes referred to as a "convent chronicle" or simply an



Donna Rutherford Successfully Used Autosomal DNA To Break Through A Brick Wall In Her Family Tree



Back from left: Samuel Pepperell , Margaret Robertson, Matilda Pepperell (nee Robertson)
Standing in front: Sarah Pepperell
Baby: Mary Jane Pepperell

Recently I've used Autosomal DNA to break through a brick-wall in my family tree. The mystery revolves around the identity of the father of my great-great-grandmother Margaret Robertson, born 1882 in New Plymouth, Taranaki, New Zealand. Margaret's birth certificate lists Matilda Robertson as her mother, but the space for her father's name merely states "illegitimate. Matilda Robertson, Margaret's mother, was the daughter of Thomas Robertson and Matilda Crann.

The method employed to unravel Margaret's parentage can be applied to address illegitimate births and other brick walls within family trees, particularly those within approximately 5-6 generations. Autosomal DNA is inherited equally from each parent and is the DNA randomly shuffled up from each generation of ancestors. Autosomal DNA tests are the most useful for finding cousins from all branches of your tree, with the centimorgan (cM) amount being the indicator of how close your relationship is. At each generation a child receives 50% of their parents DNA but after several generations the DNA is so diluted that you will not share DNA with all your 3rd cousins and more distant.

Margaret Robertson's mother, Matilda Robertson, married Samuel Pepperell when Margaret was two years old. Over the years family assumed Margaret was Samuel's daughter born outside of wedlock, but Margaret never used the name Pepperell and even on her marriage certificate there is a cross through the box for her father's name. In 2015 I did my first AncestryDNA test and initially had 32 4th cousins and closer, not enough close matches that would be required to solve this brick-wall. In 2023 I have 634 4th cousins and closer and have since tested many other family members. In the case of Margaret Robertson this is my mother's side of the family and both her and her brother have done a DNA test. My sister has also tested but our

results are redundant given that our maternal DNA comes direct from our mother. When a parent isn't available for testing, having a sibling DNA test can be beneficial. While you and your sibling will share all the same matches up to the 2nd cousin level, differences in your genetic inheritance mean that beyond that point, you will likely have some distinct 3rd cousin matches and even more differences in matches at the 4th cousin and more distant levels. The DNA from a sibling's test can provide valuable additional matches to solve family mysteries.

To solve the parentage of my great grandmother, Margaret Robertson, I used the DNA matches from my mother and uncle, I found it useful to put all their matches into a spreadsheet so that I had one list of the matches that would help solve this puzzle. I prefer to validate all identified branches before tackling the unknown ones. This approach assists in pinpointing matches that specifically align with the unresolved branches. Whilst solving matches that are expected to fit into known branches, further mysteries could be uncovered. Having several mysteries can be complicated as it can be a slow process identifying which matches can solve which mystery.

Genetic genealogy requires a method of researching to make the most of the DNA tests. The best method for genetic genealogy is clustering your DNA matches and then building out their

trees to find the common ancestor of each cluster of matches. In theory the common ancestor of a cluster is your common ancestor, leaving you to work out where they might fit in your tree. If your tree is known and there are no mysteries to solve then a group of shared matches is likely to fit nicely into your known tree, leaving you to only ensure the amount of DNA shared (cM) supports the relationship(s) you have found. You can perform clustering using a spreadsheet, a physical notepad, or directly on the testing site itself. For instance, platforms like Ancestry and My Heritage provide coloured dots, allowing you to form groups based on shared matches. Subsequently, assign the corresponding coloured dot to each match within the established group.

To solve the puzzle of Margaret Robertson's father I first assigned matches to all the known maternal branches on my tree, and this unexpectedly uncovered a branch where I had an NPE. An NPE, which stands for 'Not Parent Expected' or 'Non-Paternity Event,' and is now more often referred to as 'Misattributed Parentage,' encompasses situations where the individual named on the birth certificate is not the biological parent. Regardless of the terminology used, it generally indicates that the listed father is not the biological father. Before proceeding to solve Margaret Robertson's parentage I solved the NPE, whereby my great-great-grandfather on a different branch