

# Letter from Garrett Keating

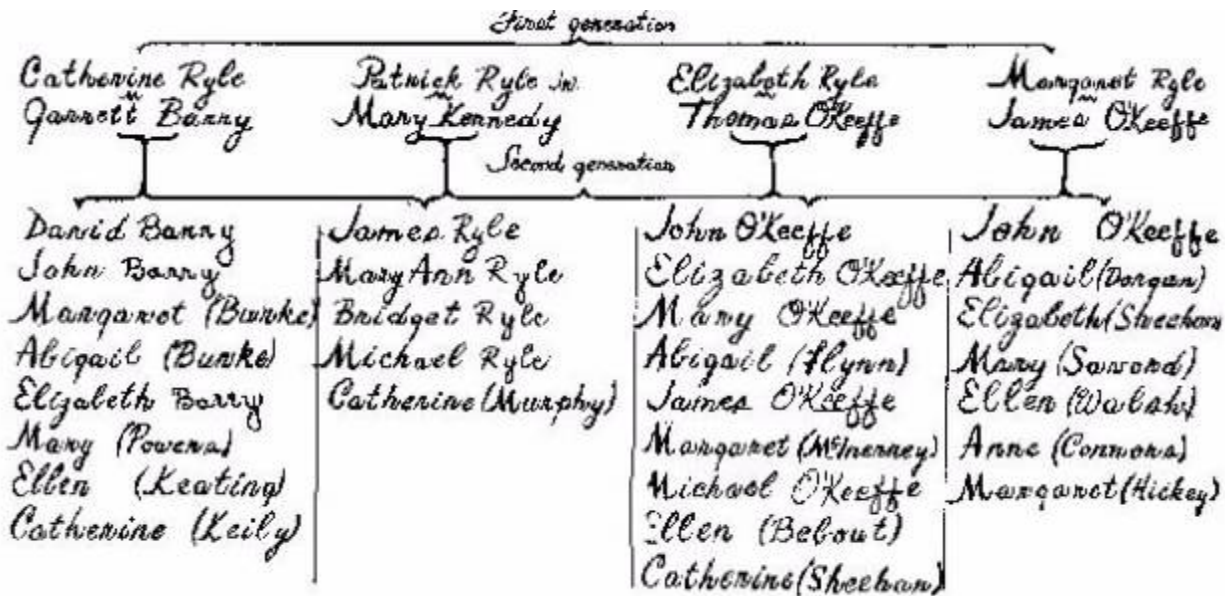
(This letter introduced a hand-written family tree constructed by Garrett Keating of Plainfield, NJ around 1970 based on trips he made to Ireland to research his ancestry.)

## INTRODUCTION\*

ca 1970

The following pages contain the names of all of the descendents of Patrick and Catherine Ryle and their three daughters, Elizabeth, Margaret and Catherine and their son, Patrick, dating from the late 1700's to the present date of 1970. The lists include well over 1,000 names of individuals in addition to the names of those equally important men and women who over the years have joined the various families by marriage and in the case of the males have provided the names by which many of the families are now known.

The idea of the "Family Tree" originated many years ago in conversation with Elizabeth O'Keeffe who resided on West 5th Street in Plainfield, NJ and who was very well known and affectionately regarded by many people. Before her death in 1960, Elizabeth and I had compiled a list of the basic names needed for the "Tree" which is shown in the blocked space on the back cover.



Around 1900, Elizabeth and her Aunt Mary O'Keefe had visited Ireland and she gave me the names of two of our relatives there, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas and Catherine McGrane of Killeagh in County Cork.

More about the McGranes and others later, but at this point I should like to say that during the several years it has taken to gather the information and names for our Family Tree, I have been many times asked the inevitable question, "What is this Family Tree business all about?" and when with caution and in some instances embarrassment, I explained that I was trying to compile a list of our Irish ancestors along with a list of the large number of their descendants, I was so often pleased by the interest and enthusiasm with which so many of our "cousins" responded that I decided to go ahead with the project.

Now that the job is finished and our Family Tree is in full bloom I am happy to send you a copy with a hope that you and your family will enjoy checking over your early Irish forebears along with the many other relatives now included on the lists of which, you will observe, some are now entering into the 7th generation, and I trust that you will be proud and happy to be listed and associated with what has always been and still is one of the largest and best-known family groups in the Plainfield area.



Now let's cast our thoughts to Ireland. When I was there in 1960 I visited the hospitable McGranes in Killeagh and obtained from them all the local lore and other information about the original Ryles. With the McGranes I visited the two farms formerly owned by the Ryles. The first farm of about 98 acres was located in the Townland of Ballyquirk in the Barony of Imokilly about three miles from the village of Killeagh. See the authentic sketch of the early thatched roofed Ryle farmhouse on the last page as drawn by Mr. Robert Schreil from a photograph that I loaned him.

Here, the four Ryle children -- Elizabeth, Margaret, Catherine and Patrick Jr. were born and raised. I often heard my mother and my aunts and uncles lovingly talk about their Grandparents Ryle's farm and also their father's (Garrett Barry) farm at Ballymacoda some five miles from Killeagh. In later years the Ryle's first farm changed hands and is now occupied by a family by the name of Kelly. Later on the Ryles acquired another farm with considerable acreage located in Dangan, Townland of Knocknaskagh also in the Barony of Imokilly. It was at this latter farm Catherine McGrane relates, that the farmers from the surrounding area gathered each year for the annual fair and the selling and trading of cattle and often they (the farmers) fought there among themselves with blackthorn sticks called "faction fights." I have witnessed several of these annual fairs, including the selling and trading of cattle in different parts of Ireland, however I never saw any fighting and, as a matter of fact, all of the Fairs that I saw were

rather congenial affairs with members of the farmers families in attendance and everyone seemed to be having a grand time for themselves.

Perhaps this might be a good time to describe the little village of Killeagh which is really the original and central point of interest in our story. It is located on the ancient highway between Cork City and Youghal. Killeagh has always been a little village but it had also been a distinctive village particularly for the Catholics in the surrounding area. Let me quote from a little pamphlet I picked up in the National Library in Dublin ("Killeagh a Post-town in the Parish of Killeagh and the Barony of Imokilly in County Cork, Province of Munster, Ireland. A Nunnery was built here in the Seventh Century by "Saint Abban--a woman's name pronounced Ah-Bawn.") Typical of the situation prevailing in Ireland in 1650 when Oliver Cromwell and his devastating Puritan army passed through Killeagh on its way to winter quarters in Youghal he destroyed the monastery and its chapel and adjoining school and confiscated the property. *(One of my favorite Irish coffee recipes begins with "coffee as black as Cromwell's heart". -RJG)*

Now I feel I must relate some of my own experiences which at this point included a very interesting development. Fortified by my visits to the farms formerly owned by the Ryles and with names and locations like Killeagh, Imokilly, Knocknaskagh, Ballymacoda on the tip of my tongue I bravely headed for Dublin to visit the Irish Museums, the Land Registry offices, the National Library and the Heraldic offices where I hoped to find something more about where and how our ancestors -- the Ryles, Barrys and O'Keeffes lived and how they may have fared during the troublesome times of the late 1700's and early 1800's. I did learn many things in Dublin including the discouraging news that the Irish land records and property deeds and other land statutes were either non-existent or hopelessly entangled, due principally to the destructive conflict which had existed throughout the land for many years, and particularly in Dublin because of the destructive fires resulting from the bombardment during the brief Civil War of 1923 which had practically destroyed the great Four Courts Building and the Custom-House in which these land records had been stored. However, I was fortunate in finding two representatives in the Land Registry offices who seemed to take a special interest in my questions. They both were quite familiar with the area of Imokilly and the other nearby points in which I was interested and they suggested that we all have a look at an old map they had recently discovered. The map that they produced gave indications that it had been in use in 1820 and perhaps as early as 1800. It was more like a large sketch of the different areas involved and contained numerous marked off plots of acreage indicating one large plot in particular which was listed as owned by Anna Hall, an absentee landlord residing in England.

Mrs. Hall was obviously one of the English landlords who had acquired the land under the English Plantation Laws which provided for the disposition of the confiscated Irish farmlands to tenants brought in from England and Scotland. To our delight we noted that plots of the land had been marked off in acreage to different people viz. 21 acres to Thomas O'Keefe and John O'Keefe, Honora O'Keefe, and Patrick Ryle, jointly. Twenty-five acres to Patrick, Garrett, John and David Barry and 10 acres to a Thomas Walsh, not otherwise identified. Other plots of various size were marked off other than the Anna Hall property to the Ryles, Barrys,

O'Keefes and some other names I could not identify. The Land Office officials gave as their opinion that the marked-off portions of the land had been leased in violation of the existing Penal Laws but nevertheless an undercover practice often followed in remote areas whereby the land owner leased out portions of his or her land to certain neighbors and was reimbursed by the sale of portions of the crops raised on the land. This practice also enabled those who had leased the land to obtain food and in some instances shelter for themselves and their families. The land officials also expressed the opinion that in later years, specifically after 1829 when Daniel O'Connell and his constitutional associates were able to influence the English Parliament to adopt the Catholic Emancipation Act which relieved the Irish of some of the tyrannical burdens placed upon them by all powerful English Government, that some parts of Anna Hall's vast land holdings as well as land held by other English and Scotch owners might have been acquired by the Ryle, Barry and O'Keefe families for farm sites of their own. Unfortunately there was no possible way through which our two Land Office friends could locate any of these properties because of the state of the land records, really the absence of such records, as previously explained had been destroyed by fire.

It is known that during the years prior to 1850, the Ryle, O'Keefe and Barry families were closely associated in their work and other activities and also that they as well as other Catholic families in the Killeagh area were on friendly terms with their Protestant neighbors i.e. the Scotch and English families that had been implanted on the confiscated land in the vast Killeagh area under the English laws. The following incident related to me by Nicholas and Catherine McGrane would seem to be a good example of this. The property of the ancient monastery in Killeagh destroyed by Oliver Cromwell had included a large cemetery in which deceased nuns and members of other Catholic families also had been buried. In later years the Protestant congregation in the area erected a church of their own on the property which is still standing and in use by them. At the same time they extended to their Catholic neighbors the privilege of continuing to bury deceased members of their families in the old cemetery. Members of the Ryle family are buried there and Nicholas McGrane showed me a grave on which the headstone read "Erected by James Riley in memory of my daughter Abban Riley who departed this life October 10, 1848." This James Riley, the McGranes informed me was known to have been a brother of our original Patrick Ryle. This difference in spelling of the brothers' names i.e. Ryle and Riley bears on the explanation made to me by officials in the Heraldic Offices in Dublin and also the authorities at the National Library that the names of Ryle and Riley were corruptions of the original Irish name of O'Reilly, thus the use of the O'Reilly coat of arm for the Ryle family on the front cover of the "Tree."

We also know that during these years prior to 1850, the Ryle, O'Keefe and Barry families had acquired homesteads of their own but unfortunately we have not been able to determine their location, but I think we may logically assume that around 1839 from one of these homes, Thomas O'Keefe came courting Elizabeth Ryle, the eldest daughter of the Ryles and that they were married in the little Killeagh Church and the first of their nine children, Margaret, was baptized in the Killeagh Church on September 20, 1840. James O'Keefe shortly followed his brother to the Ryle homestead to claim the second daughter Margaret as his bride.



*St. John the Baptist  
Parish Church at Killeagh*

We also have reliable information that Garrett Barry, accompanied by his brother John in his migration to Boston around 1840, but Garrett dutifully returned to Ireland shortly afterwards to "the girl he left behind him" because on February 18, 1841, he married Catherine the third and youngest of the Ryle sisters in the little Killeagh Church. It is assumed that shortly afterwards the Ryles' son Patrick married Mary Kennedy and, of course, in the little Killeagh Church. But beyond this time it was no longer to be a little church because

early in 1853 Monsignor Maurice Power then the pastor of the little church returned from a short trip to America where he had raised sufficient funds to enable him to dismantle the church which had been a long ranch type building with a hard clay floor and a thatched roof and replace with the really beautiful stone Church, now St. John the Baptist and which now serves the increased Catholic population in the area. An authentic sketch of the present church, as drawn by Robert Schreil from a photograph, appears on the back cover.

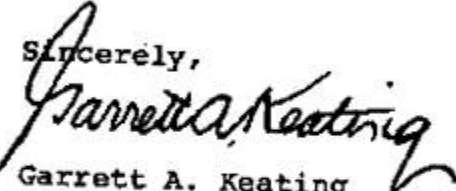
The present pastor of the church is the learned Father Padraic deBarra a delightful gentleman who proudly signed his ancient Norman name to a copy of the marriage certificate of my Grandparents Garrett Barry and Catherine Ryle that he presented to me. We have no definite information as to when the O'Keeffe and Barry families migrated to the United States but it was sometime between 1850 and 1870 and each of these families and their children came together and not singly. The O'Keeffes and their several branches held forth around West 5th, West 6th and Division Streets in Plainfield and the Barry groups in North Plainfield along upper Watchung and Manning Avenues. The Dorgan branch of the O'Keeffe Clan occupies the big homestead on Maple Avenue in South Plainfield which was dismantled a few years ago to make way for Edison National Bank. There was always a close and friendly relationship retained among our several family groups which also included the *Gea (sp? RJG)* family in South Plainfield to whom some way they were related. As most of us know there are many of our forebears and their children and other of our relatives interred in St. Mary's Cemetery in Plainfield where they lie close by each other awaiting Resurrection Day. May we all hope and pray that we all may meet together with them in Paradise in God's good time.

In closing I wish to express my appreciation to the many people who have helped me compile the names for the "Tree" particularly Mary O'Keeffe, Elizabeth and Alice Courain, Mary and Catherine Monahan, Ann Elizabeth McInerney-Frederickson, Mrs. Charles E. Thomas, Mrs. James Burke, Frances Sheehan, Mrs. Russell P. Barnum, Mrs. John Schroppe, William Hamilton, Owen Sheehan, Bernard and Madeline Dorgan, Mrs. John Arms, Mrs. John Cooper, Mrs. Ann Curran Galos, and of course Nicholas and Catherine McGrane and last but not least to Robert Schreil for his patience, experience and artful ability in preparing the individual sheets for the printer and also Leo V. Keating for his advice and cooperation. And for myself, I trust you will forgive me for any omissions or incorrect spelling of names, I did have some ideas about trying to define the different degrees of kinship on the lists but I'm sure you will realize as I finally did what an impossible task this would have been. However I did find a rather broad definition



in Webster's Dictionary which indicated under the word Cousin that all kinfolk descending from the same ancestors are really cousins of one or more degrees of kindred.

So at least all of us on the "Tree" are cousins of each other. But I like an Irish modification of this that I heard i.e., that any one's cousins whose forbears came from County Cork in Ireland are really "Kissing Kousins." So you all can take it from there. And again for myself in closing, I send all of my cousins of whatever degree of Kindred personal regards and very best wishes for your good health and happiness.

Sincerely,  
  
Garrett A. Keating

*\*Original by Garrett A. Keating ca 1970. This copy Edited by R. J. Gough, May, 1999 and the illustrations moved from the back page into the body of the text.*