

# Churchtown Heritage Notes

10<sup>th</sup> September 2018

by Gerry Murphy



## The Winter / Winters Family

This week I want to share with readers a sample of the correspondence that arrives at the Churchtown web site run by Churchtown Heritage Society since 1997. Hardly a week goes by but we do not have correspondence relating to Churchtown families and history. Our churchtown.net web site when launched in 1997 was one of the first community web sites in Ireland. Back in 1997 web sites and email were in their infancy and the smart phone was a long way from its invention.

Last week we received an interesting email from Paul Lynch from the US who had picked up on our recent *Vale Star* article on George St. Paul wrote: "I read with great interest the article published by Gerry Murphy on August 25, 2018, about the numbering of George Street as Humphrey Winter is my great great grandfather. In fact, my wife and I visited Churchtown just two weeks ago on August 16th. I took several pictures of George Street now knowing exactly which building would have housed the Winters' home. Looks like I missed the new information by only a few hours! I am wondering if in your research of the numbering of George Street you uncovered any information about the Winter family. They came to New York as a family in 1853 right after Griffiths was completed. (They were known as Winters in New York). I theorise that he may have been some sort of merchant as the family was able to come to America as a unit and they were able to settle in a "middle class" neighborhood in New York. His son, James Humphrey Winters, was a liquor merchant and was able to open a saloon in New York by the 1870s. We also had the good fortune of stopping by Shandrum Graveyard where there are several Winter's family graves."

We did some research and my colleague Denis Hickey updated Paul as follows: "I believe the family originated in Liscarroll (a joint canonical parish with Churchtown). As sometimes happened in the mid-1800's there was a family split on religious grounds. Charlie, Ellie and Bob were Catholic and the remainder (we believe) Church of Ireland. The trio moved to Ahaburn which is a neighbouring townland to Clashgannif. At some time the family took in a travelling picture-seller, Tom Birney. Tom was a shell-shocked WW1 veteran and not that well educated. Charlie succeeded in obtaining a Pension for him through the War Office – including substantial arrears. Prior to Tom's arrival, the Winter farm was a 'safe house' for Republicans during the War of Independence. Tom Birney is buried in Bruhenny Graveyard in Churchtown Village. Following Charlie's death, Ellie and Bob moved into the village to the second of the two dwelling-house on the Burton Rd (the local curate was their neighbour). You can be very proud of your connection to such an exemplary family."

In later communications during the week Paul went on to explain to us that: “The Winters of New York City were devoutly Catholic. It was the defining feature of the family. In fact, James Michael Winters (1876-1959) became a priest of the Archdiocese of New York and founded Holy Rosary Parish in the Bronx in 1925. There were several other religious in the family. Every time my father spoke of his mother, Mae Winters Lynch (1883-1965), and his "good aunt" Anna Winters Kiernan (1885-1944) who was bedridden, he emphasised their faith and how important it was to them. The family legend says when James Humphrey Winters who was born in Churchtown in 1836 died in 1906 that the ferry to the cemetery in the Borough of Queens was filled to capacity for several trips with mourners.”

As a child, Paul went on to tell us he met the daughters of John Winters who was born in Churchtown in 1840. “I would like to say it was willingly, but my father "forced" me to visit them when they were patients in a nursing home near the end of their lives. During the visits, my sister and I were indoctrinated into the teaching of the corporal works of mercy by my father who shared his "Winter's faith" to his last breath in 2000”.

Later in the week Paddy Joe O'Mahony told me that both Charlie and Bob were very skilled wood turners who did many carvings over the years using glass to shape their works of art. Even better Paddy Joe still has a gun carved by the late Charlie out of sally wood which is now shown in public for the first time with this article. Charlie's sister Ellie was a daily visitor to the O'Mahony home at Burton where the family lived in the Lodge until 1955. Paddy Joe's mother Mary (Murphy from Millsteet) was a cook in Burton and his father Maurice was a baker in Flannery's and O'Brien's.



It was lovely to hear from Paul and to remind ourselves of the very well respected Winter / Winters family from Churchtown and to find an artifact actually carved by the late Charlie Winter still exists.

### **Gardiner Family**

We also had communications from researcher who was working on the history of the Gardiner family and my colleague Noel Linehan was able to offer help and a contact for the researcher. The Gardiner's lands was where the Curtin family now farm at Egmont. Many will remember Albert Gardiner who was a cousin of the family who lived at Egmont. Albert lived in Granard before moving to County Clare some years ago. Rosario Buckley tells me that the Gardiner and Winter families are actually related through marriage.

## **Brazil**

Last week Churchtown Heritage attended an amazing lecture in the Library in Mallow about a very little known group of 3,000 people who left North Cork for (what they thought) would be a better life in Brazil in 1827. The lecture was delivered by Chris Burdon who is writing a book on this amazing odyssey. Charles Mortell of Mallow Field Club chaired the proceedings. The trip to Brazil ended in disaster for all concerned and within a few years almost all had left Brazil with 600 actually returning to North Cork. We await Chris Burdon's book with interest.

## **Summer School**

Over last weekend Churchtown Heritage Society attended the JFK Summer School in New Ross which is now in its sixth year. The Summer School co-director is Dr Brian Murphy (whose father Eddie is from Egmont). Readers will recall that Brian spoke at our recent heritage event in Booney's on Douglas Hyde. At the event we had the pleasure of meeting up with President Michael D Higgins on Saturday evening where we discussed his family connection to the Canty family in Liscarroll and how the Canty and the Donovan / Murphy families are connected through marriage.



### **Picture 1 Caption**

Paddy Joe O'Mahony with the replica gun carved in sally wood by the late Charlie Winter.

### **Picture 2 Caption**

Dr Brian Murphy and Gerry Murphy speaking with President Michael D Higgins on Saturday 8th September 2018 at the JFK Summer School. (Picture credit: Joseph Wallace).

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