

Margaret McShane Pendergast's notes on family history from Dundalk Ireland July 2006

For those of you who visited Dundalk awhile ago, you would be pleased to see that it is now a thriving and pretty town. They care about their history and are well located. The library is wonderful and there is currently an attempt to make more use of the town square.

Archivists at the local library (Isabella and Jim) were such a help. Isabella called her mother, Rose who explained that Kathleen McShane (someone's step-sister, perhaps Roses!) was a Lennon and now lives in Cork. She provided this information spontaneously by phone when I did not even have a pencil. Everyone was adding tidbits and then Isabella recommended Harry O'Sullivan, local historian to meet with us regarding his knowledge of the McShane's of Dundalk, Ireland. Mr. O'Sullivan was most delightful, arranged to meet with David and me at the end of the week and graciously offered knowledge and opinions as to the McShane history. He will be sending the article and map of what he believes is part of the original McShane property. His email is hosullivan@eircom.net. Mr. O'Sullivan wrote an manuscript that is in the House of Lord's in London. It described the private people and land owners between 1840 and 1845 (before the famine) who needed to be consulted about land abutting the river at the time there was a proposition to wharf the harbor area. A Peter McShane owned land on North Marsh road where a rampart once stood and is the southern boundary of the McShane land. Peter McShane's name is included in the article and there is a map of the property. The rampart is the southern boundary of the land the McShane's had. After our discussion Mr. O'Sullivan was concerned that he had an error in his article in the House of Lords which he might correct if we had the date of registration when Henry arrived the United States.

Interestingly, we heard that a Michael McShane just sold his house on Marsh road. The house is directly across from the cemetery adjacent to the town of Dowdallshill which we visited and is too recent to contain a grave of Henry McShane's parents. I have a picture of the house which the librarian said had a "massive garden." Michael McShane, who was married to Mary McGrath, had the land left to him and his sister Kathleen who now lives in Cork. We also went to the old graveyard on Castletown Road on the west side of Dundalk; tombstone markings were too difficult to read. I took a picture anyway because the stones are varied though marginally maintained. We did this before Henry O'Sullivan told us that the Archbishop of Armagh has released records (after Molly Fenger's visit to Ireland) from the Catholic church which are available through the county library. Unfortunately, we did not have time to research that and get a date of burial of Henry's parents. Mr. O'Sullivan thought Henry's father would have been buried in Castletown Cemetery or Seatown Cemetery.

We also walked to St Malachy Primary school on one of the main streets .

Mr. O Sullivan telephoned a McShane he knows quite well, Charlie McShane, who owns a successful electrics and lighting business in town. Mr. O'Sullivan called and I spoke to Charlie but did not meet him. Charlie joked and addressed me as "hello cousin." He states that there

have not been family reunions but once time he met several of his cousins and found them very witty. His e-mail is bcelectricsandlighting@oceanfree.net. Phone is 042 933 8140. I believe he lives on Race Course Road in Dundalk. Charlie said the McShanes live from Dundalk to Drogheda. Most references say it is a northern name - not necessarily North Ireland, but more in the north of Ireland. McShanes were Catholic. Mr. O'Sullivan does not think they are from the O'Neil Clan; he laughed and said a lot of Americans claim that because the O'Neil's beat the English and that makes it exciting and romantic. He thinks we are descendents of O'Hanlon's because it is an old name and in the general area. He said to check a family tree of O'Hanlon and see if there is a Shane among the names.

On the female side, Mr. O'Sullivan said there are Lennons all "over the place" in the area including nearby Lennonstown. The McShanes and Lennons were "living cheek by jowl." There are also "McCarthy's "south of here" (Dundalk). We did not see any McShane names on pubs or local stores in Dundalk (there was, however, a bar we were told was owned by a James Patrick McShane on the west coast called Biddy's Pub in Glencdumcill - but we are never sure if that is MacShane). One young man who said his mother was a Mchane on the wet coast said "there are lots of McShane's in TiLim. Someone said the west coast people were taller - the east coast people are not!

Mr. O'Sullivan had other opinions. He said there had been a foundry owned by the Sheketons located in the town square where Henry could have learned industrial skills. The cast iron foundry also bent sheathing and made machinery for the north of Ireland. They also made very large hammers, presses for making linen, and the first stationery steam engine in Ireland. In 1840 the railroad was laid and the Sheketon foundry did work for the railroad.

I am not quite sure if I am accurate in stating that Mr. O'Sullivan said the McShanes were tenants (for shipping in the harbor) of the Tippings who had an estate in northern Ireland.

Molly Fenger referred to her contacts with Sean Casey who was in public relations from the city. He has a book published "Dundalk in Old Photographs" which is in the library; it was copyrighted in 2002 by Gill and MacMillan.

Mr. O'Sullivan suggested that Noel Ross of 5 Oliver Plunkett Park Dundalk would also have information as he edited a book on Dundalk's history.