



Diaspora Stories

Ancestor's Name: William J Corcoran

Place of birth (if known): Innishannon

Your Name: Brenda O'Connor

Contact (optional): beoc1124@aol.com

Multiple horizontal dotted lines for writing the story.

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I agree to submit this story for publication by Skibbereen Heritage Centre.

Signed:

Date:

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William J. Corcoran

William and Julia Corcoran, my paternal great grandparents, were very old in the mid 1940's, when I was just a toddler. I don't really know whether I remember them or whether the pictures of us together and the stories told and retold have meshed with my memories until I can't separate one from the other. I think I recall that his mustache that tickled my cheek when he kissed me, but I can't be sure.

William J. Corcoran was born June 2, 1851 in Innishannon County Cork, Ireland - son of John Corcoran and Catharine Murphy Corcoran. He was probably named after his maternal grandfather, William Murphy as was the Irish tradition. His elder brother, Cornelius was named after his paternal grandfather. He was baptized June 5, 1851 in Saint Mary's Church, Innishannon. His godparents were James Cronin and Bess Murphy. I have no idea who James Cronin was, but presume that Bess Murphy was His mother's sister.

Any student of Irish history would immediately recognize that date as being at the tail end of famine time, and the place, West Cork, as one that was particularly hard hit by that disaster. So it was that in 1852 infant William, his brother Cornelius, and his parents, John and Catherine made the difficult voyage from Cobh, Co. Cork, Ireland to Boston, Massachusetts where they lived the remainder of their lives in Stoneham, a small town just a short distance from Boston.

A family story passed down by WJC III was that Gramps (WJC I) claimed there was no more beautiful sight than the Bridge at Innishannon. Of course he had no memory of this having left Ireland at age one. However, as any Irishman would, he eloquently described this scene to any and all listeners.

The 1860 US census lists William living with his parents in Stoneham, Massachusetts. His occupation (he was just 9 years old!) is listed as a "Currier". According to Wikipedia : "A **currier** is a specialist in the leather processing industry. After the tanning process, the currier[1] applies techniques of dressing, finishing and colouring to the tanned hide to make it strong, flexible and waterproof. William worked hard his whole life - even as a young boy. Most of his life he was a shoe laster or a currier. As a nonagenarian he manned a railroad crossing near his home, raising and lowering the gates so commuter trains could safely pass.

He regaled family and friends with many stories. His favorite was that he married the day before his 25th birthday. Had he waited another day, he claimed, he would have made a more mature decision. I'm surprised that Julia let him get away with that. But she was a great foil and got her revenge at their 70th wedding anniversary. William turned to her and said, "Julia, wouldn't you love to do this all over again?" "On a pig's ass I would!" was her reply.

He died in 1946 at the age of 94 and is buried in Saint Patrick's Cemetery in Stoneham, Massachusetts. Apparently as a young man, a doctor said that he wouldn't live long (I have no idea why). He buried that doctor and three subsequent ones according to his daughter, Catharine. He and Julia had two boys and three girls William, Leo, Catherine, Mary and Anne.

The following pictures are of William Corcoran as a young man, in middle age, with his family circa 1900 and in 1945 a year before he died.



Standing Anne & William II
On chairs Julia, William, Leo
On floor Catharine and Mary

