



Diaspora Stories

Ancestor's Name: Margaret Donohue (Casson)
Place of birth (if known): Arvagh, Co. Cavan, Ireland
Your Name: Patrick Nagel
Contact (optional): nagelations@gmail.com

In 1904 at the age of 17, Margaret Donohue left her home in Arvagh, Co. Cavan, Ireland, to emigrate to the United States. Disembarking from Queenstown, Ireland, she sailed upon the steamship Carpathia bound for New York, then on around Cape Horn to San Francisco. Her passage was paid by her Aunt Kate McManus, a Catholic nun. Margaret listed her occupation as "servant." She was in possession of \$5 to see her through the voyage. She was employed by a family soon after her arrival in San Francisco as a nanny and servant. During the 1906 earthquake she saved the family's baby from certain death, whisking the baby from the bassinet moments before a large mirror crashed into it! By 1910 Margaret married Henry Casson, a merchant seaman and later stevedore in the S.F. docks. They had 7 children, the fifth, Madlyn, was my mother. Devoutly Catholic, Margaret was blessed with a devoted family. After her husband died in 1948 (4 yrs. before I was born) her children & grandchildren gathered at her house every Sunday after church for their Sunday meal. When Margaret, "Ma" died in 1965, there was a somber 3 day wake. After her interment, I witnessed the biggest party I'd ever seen! I thought of the wake and party as I stood at the mass grave outside Skibbereen. My grandmother never returned to Ireland.

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

Signed: Patrick Nagel
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SKIBBEREEN HERITAGE CENTRE
Old Gas Works Building,
Upper Bridge Street, Skibbereen,
West Cork, Ireland, P81WK06
T: (353) 28 40900
E: info@skibbheritage.com
W: www.skibbheritage.com