

JAMES YOUNG DIASPORA STORY

Submitted by Anna Thormahlen Jenkins of Shoreline, Washington, USA. Who visited the Skibbereen Heritage Center on August 12, 2019 and met with Margaret Hurley at 11:00am to do research on the family of her great-grandfather, James Young.

In a collection of letters and writings that have been passed down to me from my paternal grandmother, Margaret Young Thormahlen, there are two that stand out. **The first is the early life story in Skibbereen of Margaret's father, James Young, and his ancestors. James Young dictated these words to his youngest daughter, California Young Koenig, in 1951; he died in 1952:**

"I was born on Upper Bridge Street, Skibbereen, Ireland. My grandfather, Richard Baker, a shoemaker, owned the land. The old man was a wonderful man. He had cows which he and his wife milked. Most of the people were too poor to pay for the milk or shoes. He was six months in arrears in his payments (taxes, I presume) and the land was seized. Then he came to Philadelphia to some relations who were publishers. He died there of a broken heart.

He had three daughters – Jane, Susan and Margaret, who was my mother. Sam was the only son. He was three when his father came to America. Jane and Margaret married two brothers – Tom - my father, and Jim Young. Jane and Jim's son, James Young, in Wigan, England, is my double cousin. My grandmother came to live with our family. Sam was like one of our family. He was very bright and not wishing to follow a trade, he went to Trinity College, Dublin, and became a teacher in the Douglas School, Douglas, Cork. Sam had a big family. They were all bright. One became an Episcopal minister.

My father's mother was a Morgan. She used to ride with the hounds. The Morgans came to Ireland from England and Scotland in Cromwell's time. They got a grant of land from the English crown for service they had rendered. My father was born on that grant of land about four miles out of Skibbereen. It was about 160 acres.

I was born on the land that had belonged to my grandmother. There was a thatched home. My father built a stone house with a slate roof when I was a young man and it still stands there on Bridge Street. He built two other houses alongside and the cooper shop was at 52 Bridge St., two blocks away. The gas works was built on my grandmother's land.

I went to a Protestant school run by the Episcopal Church. We had to pay a small amount. I left school at 14 at my father's request to go into the cooper shop. An apprenticeship took 7 years. There was no pay. Just before I left, he gave me a shilling a week. I left when I was 21.

There was no water in the houses. We had to go to the public pump two blocks away. In summer the well often went dry for hours, so my father would get up about four in the morning to get water ahead of the others. He would make a pot of tea and arouse Tom, Sam and me. After tea, bread and butter we'd go off to work and come home for breakfast about nine.

About 100 years ago a famine occurred and people died like rats. My grandfather, Richard Baker, and a neighbor, Malachi Hurley, would go to the hospital every morning and take the dead in a dump cart to the cemetery for burial. There were no caskets. The bodies were put into a pit and clay shoveled over them.

There was a weaver, Tom Gearing, who was supposed to be dead. When he was dumped into the pit, it revived him. He begged the driver not to bury him, but Mr. Ricketeen lifted his shovel and broke both of his legs and told him he was supposed to be dead. When the driver left, Gearing got out of the pit and knocked at the caretaker's door. He and his son Tim said, "You are supposed to be dead. It must be your ghost." Gearing finally persuaded them to open the door. Next day he was returned to the hospital. He recovered and lived 40 or 50 years more. He wrote poetry and was known as "The Irish Poet." He went around lecturing."

The second account was written by James Young's daughter, Margaret Young Thormahlen, and tells of James' life after leaving Skibbereen:

"He signed up on the ship 'INDUS.' He joined the British Navy in 1885 at Davenport, Plymouth, England. Was then signed to the "Opal" then to the "Caliope" (sail ships). He may have been about 17 years of age at that time. *[Note: This is inconsistent with James' autobiographical story. He said he left the cooperage at age 21 when his apprenticeship was completed. The apprenticeship took 7 years and was begun when he left school at 14]*

He was ship's cooper having learnt the trade from his father. Became a petty officer.

He had a good memory and learned many rhymes and recitations. In later years he entertained groups at camp and at home and by reciting at schools. He dearly loved children. We would watch for him each evening when he came walking up the hill on his way home from work. We ran to meet him and to help carry his empty lunch pail. Mama had given him an extra sandwich each day so we were eager to open the pail and divide the treat as we walk home.

Going back to his navy days. He was ship-wrecked in the Tasman Sea along with another buddy. Rescued from the lifeboat and taken to a small town in New Zealand, the 'Bluff.' Our father was nursed back to good health by a family, 'Parkinson,' I think was their name.

At a dance one day in Invercargill he met a young lady, fell in love and married her. Margaret and Norman were born. Annie Hyndman was the bridesmaid at the wedding. (So I understand.) Sarah Jane (his wife) died with childbirth. He later married Anne Hyndman. Anne had a ticket for a ship travel to San Francisco, sent to her from her sister, Liz. The family sold out in New Zealand to his brother Samuel Young. And then they sailed on the 'Elingemite' as far up the coast to Auckland. Then transferred to the 'Moana' and on to San Francisco. Two years later the 'Elingemite' sank on a trip from Australia.

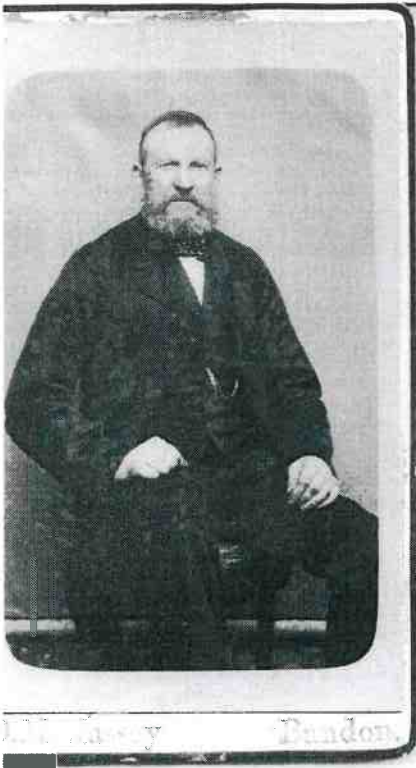
As we passed through the Golden Gate in 1990 papa said, "Get up Annie, we are in San Francisco." She had been sea-sick the whole 21 days on the trip. When she saw the beautiful San Francisco orange poppies and blue lupines on the sand dunes she said, "Oh Jim, never let us leave San Francisco" and they never did. In 1950 they had their golden wedding anniversary. Five children were born to them (that lived); Veda, Kenneth, Myra, Howard and California. Their descendants live largely in the western United States. My family's branch settled in the Seattle, Washington area when my father, Margaret Young Thormahlen's son, Ernest James Thormahlen, was discharged from the US Navy at the end of WWII at the Bremerton Naval Base in Washington State. I welcome ancestry discussions with anyone wishing to contact me!

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