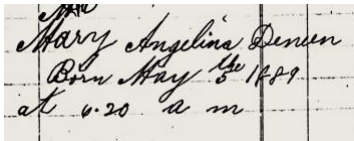


Branch 3 of 7

3. Mary A. Deneen

May 5, 1889—September 23, 1968

Great Grandaunt



At 6:20 a.m. on May 5, 1889, Julia and Patrick welcomed their third child, Mary Angelina Deneen. Like her siblings, she was born in Corning, New York, and was likely baptized at the family parish, St. Mary's.

It is very possible she was named after Julia's

eldest sister, Mary.

A girl's childhood in the 1890s typically revolved around domestic education, household chores, and strict Victorian social norms. Mary grew up helping her mother and older sister, Jo, with the housework and the care of her younger siblings. At St. Mary's, she received a basic education in reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and geography. Records from the 1940 census indicate that her highest level of formal education was completion of the eighth grade.

Mary began her impressive 50-year career at The Evening Leader, the local newspaper in Corning, around 1907. The 1910 census records her employment as a Press Feeder. The job was exactly as it sounds: Mary was responsible for physically placing individual sheets of paper into a printing press. This was a demanding role requiring long periods of standing and rapid, repetitive motion.

Mary had to be incredibly accurate and quick, feeding the paper while remaining mindful of the heavy, moving machinery. The role of a feeder was part of the industrial, manual labor side of newspaper production—a sphere in which women were rarely employed due to social customs, intense physical demands, and workplace discrimination.



Mary Deneen
Circa 1906



**Unidentified woman operating
a Linotype machine 1915**

By 1915, Mary had advanced to the position of Linotype operator. Operating a Linotype machine was a highly skilled profession, generally requiring three to four years of rigorous training to become proficient. The machine itself was a massive, complex piece of heavy machinery involving molten lead. Mary sat at the machine's keyboard to type out lines of text. Pressing a key released a brass mold, or matrix, for that specific character from a storage magazine at the top of the machine. As the matrices were released, they fell into an assembling unit. Tapered space bands were automatically inserted between words, expanding to ensure the line was perfectly justified to the required column width.

Once a line of matrices was complete, Mary activated a lever, and the machine took over the casting process. Molten lead alloy was automatically pumped into the assembled matrices, creating a solid block of type for that entire line, known as a "slug." After casting, the slug was ejected into a galley tray. The

Family Group: DENEEN | KEOHANE

matrices were then automatically lifted by an elevator mechanism and returned to their proper places in the magazine, ready for reuse.

This job was demanding and intense, taking place in the loud, industrial environment of the composing room. The work involved significant heat from the pot of molten lead, as well as dangerous lead fumes that required elaborate ventilation systems. While the field was heavily male-dominated, female Linotype operators were highly valued for their speed, precision, and skill.

During the span of Mary's career from 1907 to 1957, newspapers were the primary source of news, information, and entertainment for the public. In the 1920s, there were more newspapers in circulation than there were households, with many families subscribing to both morning and evening editions. Mary's work directly contributed to publishing major historical chapters, including World



War I, World War II, the Great Depression, and numerous presidential elections. Locally, The Leader provided detailed coverage of state-level political developments—such as the 1917 New York State woman's suffrage vote—as well as community life, significant local events, and the area's primary industry, the Corning Glass Works. Major regional disasters, like the 1912 rail disaster in Gibson, were printed alongside a glimpse into daily life, personal human-interest pieces, and news from surrounding communities like Addison and Bath. Toward the later part of her career, Mary transitioned from the manual and mechanical side of production to serve as a proofreader.



Mary Deneen
Circa 1918

Following the death of her parents, Mary remained in the family residence. She was subsequently recorded in census data as the head of the household, with her sister Anna residing alongside her. Because the 1940 and 1950 censuses list Anna without an occupation, it is highly probable that Mary provided the sole financial support for them both.



Deneen Sisters September 1960
L to R: Teresa, Kate, Mary, Fran

Family relationships are often complex and not easily understood by outsiders. What we know is that Mary maintained contact with her siblings beyond Anna, though she may not have written as frequently or as thoroughly as they hoped. For instance, in a 1953 letter to their sister Fran, John remarked that he had received a card from Mary but described it as *"short and snappy."* Similarly, Teresa mentioned to Catherine in October 1961, *"maybe she [Mary] will write herself one of these days."*



Mary A. Deneen
with her only niece Julia M. Kelly circa 1925

Family Group: DENEEN | KEOHANE



In 1961, Mary suffered a fall that required hospitalization. Shortly after, Kate received letters from three of her sisters—Mary, Teresa, and Anna. At that time, Mary was living alone at the family home in Corning, while Anna was in Buffalo at Roswell Park Memorial Hospital awaiting surgery. Their brother John had already passed away. Older sister Jo was residing at the St. Francis Asylum for the Aged in Buffalo; Kate lived in Batavia with her husband and daughter, Julia; Fran was in Texas; and the youngest sister, Teresa, was in Oswego.

In her letter to Kate on October 12, 1961, Mary explained that she was still in the hospital and shared the medical reasons why. She then shared general news about mutual acquaintances and closed

with: “Love to all and hope that Terry & Jim have a boy to make it even with Jack & Dorothy. Love, Mary.” Mary was referring to Kate’s sons and their growing families. Jack and Dorothy had four girls and a son (Colleen, Marie, twins Barbara and Mary, and John), while Jim and Terry had four daughters (Maureen, Katie, Meg, and Patty). In January 1962, her wish came true when Jim and Terry welcomed a son, Kevin.

Mary recovered from her fall and returned home. She passed away seven years later on September 23, 1968, following a seven-week stay at the Corning Hospital. She was the first of the six sisters to pass away. Her impressive 50-year career at The Leader spanned a transformative era in printing history, and her daily work provided a vital source of information for the residents of Corning. Frankly, she was a total badass.

Children: None.

Miss Deneen, 50-Year Leader Employee, Dies

Miss Mary A. Deneen, of 245 W. Second St., a retired 50-year employee of The Leader, died Saturday evening in Corning Hospital, where she had been a patient for seven weeks.

She was born in Corning to Patrick and Julia Koehane Deneen. **9.23.68**

A lifetime resident of Corning, she was graduated from Corning Free Academy. She worked as a linotype operator at The Leader for many years, later becoming a proofreader. She retired about 11 years ago.

Miss Deneen was a member of St. Mary's Church, its league of the Sacred Heart and Altar and Rosary Society.

Surviving are five sisters, Miss Anna Deneen of Corning, Miss Joann Deneen of Buffalo, Mrs. John T. Kelly of Batavia, Mrs. Jack Taylor of Dallas, Texas, and Mrs. Harry Walsh of Oswego; two nephews and a niece.

Friends may call at the A. W. Beilby and Son Funeral Home today from 2 to 4 and 7 until 9 p. m. The Rosary will also be recited this evening in the funeral home.

Following prayers Tuesday at 9:30 a. m. in the funeral home.

Love to all

