

Branch 7 of 7

Genevieve Loretta Kelly—*Jennie*

1882-1957

Great Grandaunt

Genevieve Loretta “Jennie” Kelly was the youngest child of Sylvester and Jane Kelly and famously held the distinction of being the only girl raised alongside seven brothers. Her childhood unfolded at 112 Van Anden Street in Auburn, New York. Jennie attended St. Mary’s School, where her academic diligence frequently earned her a coveted spot on the Roll of Honor in the second and seventh grades, as proudly reported by the Auburn Bulletins. From an early age, she showcased a beautiful musical talent, singing in a local operetta at the St. Mary’s Great Fair and later lending her voice to the choir at St. Aloysius’s Church.

The foundational research on Jennie and her branch of the family tree was meticulously compiled by family historian and direct descendant, Dr. Valerie Burke DeLeon. In 1905, Jennie married Robert Emmet Burke. Shortly after their wedding, the young couple relocated to Lynn, Massachusetts, located in Suffolk County. Robert found steady employment in Lynn’s booming shoe industry; it is highly likely that his professional connections to the prominent shoe manufacturing companies back home in Auburn first introduced him to the region.

Robert was one of nine children born to John Burke and Alice Fawcett Burke. His parents were originally from Port Hope, Ontario, and had unsuccessfully attempted farming in Illinois and Iowa before Robert was born in 1880. By 1900, the Burke family had established roots in Rochester, New York, though a young Robert may have temporarily boarded with the Widow Hanley in Boston around that time while cutting leather as a shoe cutter.

Within a few years of their marriage, Robert and Jennie returned to Rochester, New York, to grow their family. They welcomed their eldest son, John, in 1907, followed just a year later by twin boys, Thomas and Robert. The 1910 census finds the family renting a home at 575 Jay Street in Rochester’s bustling 20th Ward within Monroe County. By this time, Robert had stepped out on his own, operating independently as a local shoe merchant. In 1917, their home was blessed with a baby girl, Genevieve, proudly named after her mother.

Around this period, a major career breakthrough prompted Robert and Jennie to relocate to Woodhaven, Queens, New York. By 1920, they were residing at 43 Leggett Avenue, and Robert had secured a prestigious position as a superintendent and manager for a major shoe manufacturing firm. Following New York’s adoption of the new Philadelphia numbering system, the grid of Queens underwent a massive renaming process; Leggett Avenue was transformed into 80th Street, and the Burke home was officially designated as 8600 80th Street.

By 1930, Robert had ascended to the esteemed pinnacle of his profession, serving as the master shoe designer for the renowned firm of J. & T. Cousins in New York. Also known in manufacturing circles as J. & P. Cousins, this prominent company was one of the premier luxury women’s shoe manufacturers in the United States. Operating out of a massive factory at 369 DeKalb Avenue in Brooklyn, the firm was celebrated nationwide for its exquisite craftsmanship, creating high-fashion dress shoes, custom leather boots, spectator pumps, and elegant afternoon footwear.



Family Branch: KELLY | MURPHY



Beniamino Gigli

Robert possessed a deep, lifelong passion for Italian opera, with Giacomo Puccini's *La Bohème* and Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata* ranking among his absolute favorites. One historic summer, his artistic world collided with his professional expertise when he had the remarkable opportunity to custom-design a pair of luxury shoes for the wife of Beniamino Gigli—widely regarded as one of the greatest operatic tenors of all time. Gigli's 1920 debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City had been a resounding triumph, and he remained the toast of the Met until 1932.

Impressed by the breathtaking beauty and craftsmanship of the shoes Robert had crafted, Gigli and his wife delightfully accepted an invitation to join Robert and Jennie for a traditional Sunday dinner at their 80th Street home in Woodhaven. Following a sumptuous home-cooked meal, the legendary tenor stood by the parlor windows and graciously serenaded the family. His enchanting music gracefully drifted out into the summer air, instantly captivating the hearts of the neighbors who gathered on the sidewalks outside to listen to the impromptu concert.

Grandsons Bob Burke Jr. and Thomas Burke later shared fond memories of this golden era in Woodhaven. They recalled their grandfather as the commanding manager of a massive shoe factory that spanned two full city blocks. His career was nearly cut short by an industrial catastrophe when a steam boiler violently exploded on the factory floor. Robert was grievously injured and came remarkably close to death, but through Jennie's dedicated care, he was successfully nursed back to full health. He harbored a lifelong dream of retiring by the age of 50, and through meticulous planning, he came incredibly close to achieving that ambitious goal.

By 1935, the Burkes had moved back up to Rochester, New York, to transition out of the fast-paced manufacturing world. Before the 1940 census was recorded, Robert officially retired, and he and Jennie packed up and relocated to St. Petersburg in Pinellas County, Florida, accompanied by their youngest daughter, Genevieve.

Since the late 1800s, St. Petersburg had reigned as a premier destination for wealthy seasonal tourists. Following the conclusion of World War II, civic planners explicitly designed the city's infrastructure to pioneer the modern concept of permanent, comfortable, middle-class retirement.

Jennie passed away on August 16, 1957, leaving behind a rich legacy of music, art, and family devotion. Robert survived his beloved wife by eight years, passing away on September 1, 1965.

BURKE—Genevieve L. Burke, 75, formerly of 394 Raines Park, died Friday, August 16, in St. Petersburg, Florida. She is survived by her husband, Robert E. Burke; three sons, J. Joseph and N. Thomas of Rochester, and Robert E. of St. Petersburg; one daughter, Mrs. Genevieve Whittington of St. Petersburg; one brother, Michael Kelly also of St. Petersburg; and six grandchildren. —Burial will be in St. Petersburg. Flowers gratefully declined.



The Next Generation: An overview of Branch 7... Descendants of Genevieve Loretta Kelly and Robert E. Burke

Family Branch: KELLY | MURPHY

1. John Joseph Burke—*Joseph*

1906-1986

1st cousin 2x removed

John was born on July 30, 1906, during his parents' initial stay in Lynn, Massachusetts. He was just an infant when the family returned home to Rochester, New York, and a teenager when they relocated to Queens.

In July 1939, John married Mary Katherine Rush, a fellow Rochester native. Their union arrived as a delightful shock to her family; the young couple spontaneously eloped to Florida and sent a surprise telegram announcing their marriage while her parents were eagerly awaiting the birth of a different grandchild. The romantic elopement caused quite a stir, making prominent news in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle newspaper. At the time of his marriage, Joseph was a highly respected civic leader, serving as the regional Director of the National Youth Administration for the Rochester area.

Children: John Joseph Burke Jr. (b. 1944), Son 2 (Name unlisted in source)

Sister's Wedding News Arrives While Brother Waits Birth of Child

Between Cupid and the stork it was a night to go down in bold letters in the old family Bible in the household of Mr. and Mrs. James P. Rush, 193 Cypress St., last night.

While Mr. and Mrs. Rush awaited news of the arrival of a grandchild in the home of a son, they were informed by telegram of the marriage of their daughter, Mary, to J. Joseph Burke, youthful director of the National Youth Administration in the Rochester Area.

Pretty, blond Miss Rush, who has been publicity agent for more than a year for the NYA in Burke's office, was married en route to Florida, but just where could not be learned last evening.

Father Rush in his excitement had mislaid a telegram from the honeymooning couple which gave the details. Mrs. Rush, at the home of her son, Richard J. Rush, Laurelton Road, where the new baby was expected, could not be reached.

Rush said the newlyweds had kept plans for their marriage a secret as they started out together yesterday by motor. They were expected to stop in Washington on their way to Florida, according to reports. They were to be away for about three weeks.

The bridegroom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Burke, 394 Raines Pk. Robert E. Burke, his brother, is deputy county clerk.

2. Norman Thomas Burke—*Thomas*

1908-1979

1st cousin 2x removed

Norman—who went strictly by his middle name, Thomas—was born alongside his twin brother, Robert, on October 15, 1907, in Rochester, New York. By 1930, twenty-two-year-old Thomas was living in the busy family household in Woodhaven, Queens, carving out a career as a clerk on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

On February 12, 1933, Thomas married Brooklyn native Margaret Katherine Meudt. The newlyweds settled in Queens, initially sharing a home with Margaret's mother while welcoming their young son, Robert. Thomas built a successful, long-term career in public relations for the New York Stock Exchange.

By 1950, he relocated his family back to Rochester, and in their golden years, they ultimately settled in Bethesda, Maryland, to be close to their son. Their only child, Bob—born July 26, 1934—was proudly named to honor two of the most influential figures in Thomas's life: his father and his beloved twin brother.

Children: Robert E. "Bob" Burke (1934–2024)

Burke, N. Thomas

On Wednesday, Jan. 3, 1979 at Bethesda Md., formerly of Rochester, N.Y. Beloved husband of the late Margaret K. Burke; devoted father of Dr. Robert E. Burke of Bethesda, Md. and loving grandfather of 4; brother of Robert E. Burke of Port Richey, Fla., Genevieve B. Spurrier of Franklin, N.C. and the late J. Joseph Burke of Rochester, N.Y.

Services and interment private. The family suggests the expressions of sympathy be made to the American Heart Assoc.

3. Robert E Burke

1908-199

Robert was born on October 15, 1907, in Rochester, New York, arriving alongside his twin brother, Norman Thomas. Proudly named in honor of his father, Robert possessed a sharp, analytical mind and built a lifelong career as a professional accountant, dedicating many years of service to the State of New York.

BURKE, ROBERT E., 86, of Largo, died Thursday (May 26, 1994) at Sunset Point Nursing Center, Clearwater. He was born in Lynn, Mass., and came here in 1954 from Rochester, N.Y. He was an accountant and worked for the state of New York. He was a member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Largo, and Knights of Columbus, Rochester. Survivors include three sons, Brian K., Largo, Michael T., Oldsmar, and Dr. Robert E., Atlanta; a daughter, Patricia M. Allen, Jacksonville; a sister, Genevieve Spurrier, St. Petersburg; eight grandchildren; and a great-grandchild. Moss-Feaster Funeral Homes, Serenity Gardens Chapel, Largo.

He married Mary "Marie" Keating, and together they raised a beautiful family of four children. Over the course of their long marriage, they split their time between Rochester and the warm coastlines of Clearwater and St. Petersburg, Florida. Marie passed away in 1981, and Robert followed her thirteen years later, passing away in 1994.

Children: Dr. Robert E. Burke II (b. 1942), Michael T. Burke (b. 1944), Brian K. Burke (b. 1946), Patricia M. Burke Allen (b. 1949)

A Note of Gratitude: I am profoundly thankful that Cousin Kevin Kelley shared the comprehensive research paper compiled by Dr. Valerie Burke DeLeon. Her work was meticulously cited and served as an invaluable guide in reconstructing this vibrant chapter of our shared ancestors' lives. Valerie herself proudly descends from this branch of the family.



4. Genevieve Mary Burke

1907-2000

1st cousin 2x removed

Genevieve was born in Rochester, New York, in 1917, the youngest daughter of the family. She grew up in Queens and later accompanied her parents in their retirement move to St. Petersburg, Florida.

Genevieve was married to and later divorced Charles Whittington. Years later, she found love again and married Edward Spurrier in 1966.

She was a highly independent woman who built a long career as an executive secretary within the Florida banking industry. Genevieve passed away on April 3, 2000. While she left behind two beloved stepdaughters from her marriage to Edward, she had no biological children of her own.

