

FAMILY BRANCH NARRATIVE

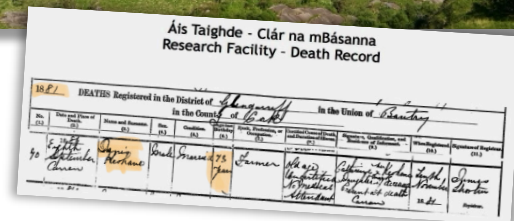
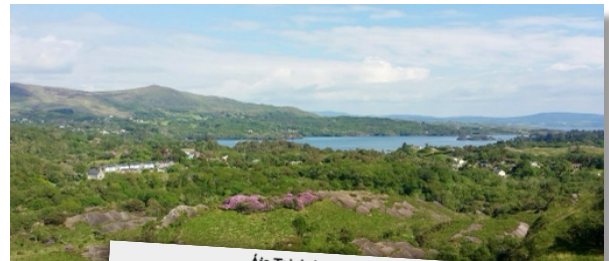
Denis Keohane and Catherine Sullivan

Great Great Grandparents

1808
1826

Well respected Keohane family genealogist and newly connected cousin Peter Keohane found our shared ancestor Denis Keohane's death record. The document states:

"Received death record confirmation from General Registry Office in August 2017. Daughter Catherine Keohane was present at his death / Denis Keohane, 73 yr old, married farmer. Old age, uncert., no med att. Rept 10 Nov 1881 Glengarriff/Bantry reg. 1881/90."

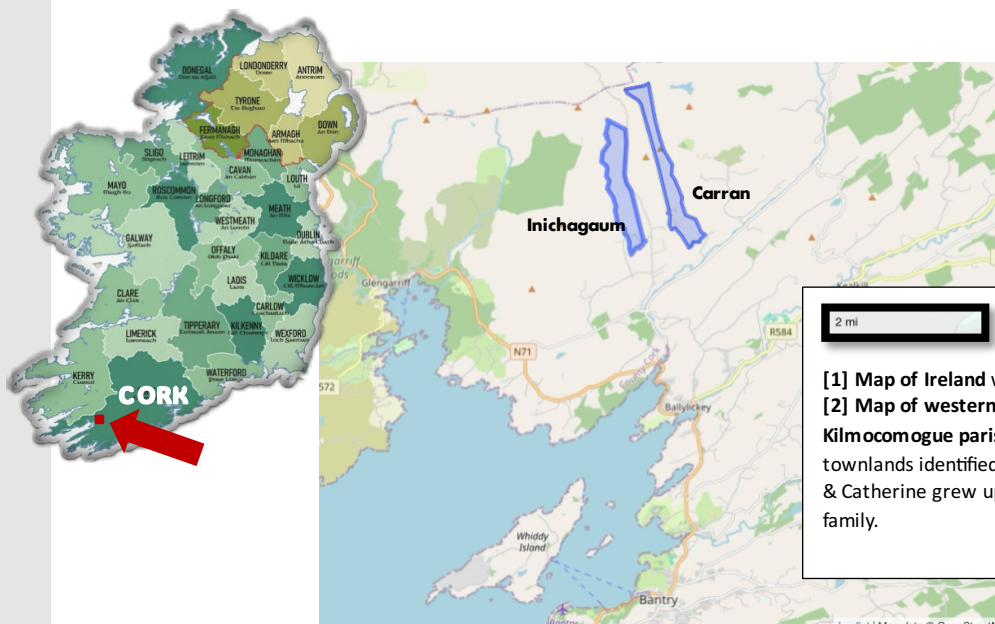


Based on this historical record, we have established that Denis was born around 1808.

Catherine's birth year can be similarly deduced from her own death record, which notes that she was 81 years old when she passed away in 1907, placing her birth year around 1826.

Records show that Denis lived his entire life in the Bantry-Glengarriff area. Specifically, Denis and his family identified themselves as being from Carran, Coomhola, Bantry, Co. Cork. By cross-referencing land evaluations with the names of the baptismal sponsors for Catherine's children, we can trace her lineage nearby. It is highly likely that her father was Denis Sullivan, a farmer in Inichagaum, a townland located just outside the town of Bantry.

Townlands



[1] Map of Ireland with all counties.
[2] Map of western County Cork,
Kilmocomogue parish with
townlands identified — where Denis
& Catherine grew up & raised their
family.

Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN



What is in a Name?

To understand their identity, one must understand the Irish "townland." A townland is the smallest traditional unit of land division in Ireland, used for centuries to map out rural areas. Before the mid-20th century, people in rural Ireland rarely identified themselves by a village or town name; they

used their townland. These divisions predate the Norman invasion of the 1170s and were originally sized based on the amount of land needed to support an extended family. Their boundaries usually follow natural landmarks like streams, mountain ridges, or ancient stone structures. Remarkably, these boundaries have remained entirely stable for hundreds of years.

Surnames hold profound importance in Ireland, tying individuals deeply to local geography, family genealogy, and provincial heritage. In 19th-century Ireland, the extended family was absolutely vital to survival. Under the "stem family system," families relied on collective labor. Relatives lived in close proximity, shared scarce resources, and maintained tight kinship ties for physical and financial security. Because land was heavily controlled by wealthy landlords, families worked as a unit to keep their leasehold within the family name. Usually, the land passed to a single heir, while unmarried siblings provided farm labor or eventually chose to emigrate.

While the exact names of everyone in Denis' immediate family remain unconfirmed, we know he grew up surrounded by a massive network of relatives. Keohane was an incredibly common surname in West County Cork. To those outside the ancient Irish clan system, matching these names can be complicated by the fact that the Crowley and Keohane surnames are historically linked and were often used interchangeably. There was a dense concentration of Crowleys in the Bantay region. Local folklore tells us that the Keohanes are actually a branch of the Crowley clan. The story goes that they took a new name after getting lost in a heavy mist and missing the historic Battle of Kinsale in 1602. Fittingly, the Irish word *ceochán* translates directly to "fog" or "mist."

The very same deep ancestral roots were true for Catherine's family, the Sullivans (from the Gaelic *Ó Súilleabháin*, meaning "hawk-eyed"). Her ancestors belonged to the storied O'Sullivan Beare sept, a powerful historical clan whose presence dominated the Bantay Bay and Beara Peninsula region for centuries. As was typical for the era, Catherine grew up surrounded by many siblings: Ellen, Timothy, Julia, Denis, John, Daniel, Mary, and Margaret. In 19th-century Cork, living amidst a sea of Sullivans and Keohanes meant that your neighbors were almost always your cousins.

From the late 18th to the mid-20th century, Irish Catholic families also strictly followed a traditional naming convention: the first son was named after the paternal grandfather, the second son after the maternal grandfather, the first daughter after the maternal grandmother, and the second daughter after the paternal grandmother. Middle names were heavily utilized to honor grandparents and beloved relatives.

By applying these traditional rules to Denis' family, we can unlock clues about his parents. Because Denis named his first son Jeremiah, we can deduce that Denis' father was likely named Jeremiah. Furthermore, it was customary to name the second daughter after the father's mother; this suggests Denis' mother may have been named Margaret. By analyzing the names of

Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

Peace
be with
You

the baptismal sponsors (godparents) listed for Denis' children, we can also piece together his potential siblings. These records suggest Denis likely had at least three brothers: Cornelius, Jeremiah, and Patrick.

For Denis and Catherine, Catholicism was not merely a matter of personal devotion; it was the foundational bedrock of their entire existence. Raised in the rugged hills of West Cork, their identities, moral values, and community structures were completely rooted in the Church. The liturgical calendar dictated the rhythms of the farming year, Catholic doctrine provided comfort through relentless seasonal hardships, and a shared faith served as the silent language of survival that bound tenant families together.



Denis grew up during a massive era of transition for the Church. He was a young man when Catholic Emancipation was won by Daniel O'Connell in 1829, which finally lifted the harsh Penal Laws that had restricted Catholic life since the 1600s. Finding earlier documents remains a challenge because from the 1550s until the early 1800s, these restrictive laws made it incredibly dangerous for priests to keep formal records. Clergy faced severe legal penalties for practicing, which directly explains why Denis' official birth and baptismal records have not been found.

Because Catholic churches had been systematically destroyed during the Reformation, places of worship were incredibly rare during Denis and Kate's youth. For generations, Mass had to be said in total secrecy. While sympathetic farmers occasionally offered a barn or a home, services were most frequently held outdoors in deeply secluded areas. Parishioners used Carraig an Aifrinn (Mass Rocks)—natural, hidden stone altars out in nature. Sentries were posted on high ground to alert the congregation if British authorities approached. Denis and Kate grew up alongside immediate and extended family members who vividly remembered the danger of attending these secret outdoor Masses.

To capture the reality of Irish worship in this era, French writer Alexis de Tocqueville recorded a conversation in July 1835 while staying with a parish priest near Tuam, Co. Galway. His description highlights the raw, impoverished state of the emerging Catholic churches just after Emancipation:



Carraig an Aifrinn, were secluded, natural stone altars used for forbidden Catholic mass.

"The church was a small building roughly built in stone... the floor was of beaten earth; the altar was of wood... The chapel had a very few benches and no chair. When we came in, five or six peasants... seemed so deeply absorbed in religious meditation..."

The priest, reflecting on the recent transition from holding mass in a ditch with sentries, noted, *"God be praised that we are now able to come together in a place dedicated to the glory of our holy mysteries, and this church... was built from contributions freely given."*

Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

Bantry

Between 1820 and 1840, life in the area surrounding Bantry, County Cork, was defined by a stark, tragic contrast: the extreme poverty of the rural Irish population versus the opulent lifestyle of the local Anglo-Irish landlord class.

The local economy shifted away from the traditional pilchard fishery toward agricultural exports and, increasingly, a desperate reliance on the potato crop. The landscape around Bantry House was characterized by heavily subdivided plots—often less than five acres—where most tenant families lived in one-room cabins built of mud, stone, and sod.



Just a short distance away stood the seat of immense wealth. Richard White, the Second Earl of Bantry (1767–1851), and his wife Mary were instrumental in shaping Bantry House into the grand estate seen today. They developed Italian-style gardens, added a 14-bay block to the residence, and created a striking seven-terrace garden. Between 1820 and 1840, the Earl and Countess traveled extensively through Europe, purchasing vast amounts of art, furniture, and tapestries to furnish Bantry House, making it a place of great splendor at the exact time their tenants faced severe destitution.

Daily Life

For Denis, Kate, and their siblings, a typical day began with the expectation to work from dawn until dusk. Their first meal was simple, frequently consisting of potatoes, sometimes supplemented with milk or buttermilk. Because wood was scarce, a primary morning task



Picture depicting cutting turf late 19th century Ireland.

involved cutting, drying, and transporting turf (peat) from the local bog for fuel. Daily farm chores included tending to a few pigs or a small dairy cow, which were vital for paying rent or providing immediate food for the household.

The central, grueling labor of the year was maintaining "lazy beds"—raised ridges of earth used to cultivate potatoes. In the 1820s, this process was incredibly labor-intensive, relying entirely on spade labor rather than

horse-drawn ploughs. To fertilize the poor soil, Denis, his brothers, and his father gathered seaweed, sea sand, or lime from the West County Cork coast.

For young girls like Kate and her sisters, daily tasks also involved fetching water from nearby wells, feeding small livestock like hens, ducks, and geese, and tending the family's vital vegetable garden.

In the 1830s, doing the family laundry was a punishing, multi-day, hand-done process borne entirely by Kate, her mother, and her sisters. The chore began by collecting



Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN



Rush light

The 3 Rs

fresh rainwater or hauling heavy buckets from nearby brooks and streams. Heavily stained clothes were left to soak overnight. Because commercial soaps were non-existent for tenant families, they manufactured lye soap in large batches using animal fat mixed with the ash of burned bracken or potato plants. It was also standard practice to use urine as a bleaching agent for whites. To break the dirt free from dense fabrics, the women used a battledore—a heavy wooden paddle—to violently beat the clothing against stones. The garments were then boiled in large pots and spread across sunny bushes or wooden fences to dry, leaving the women with red, raw, and heavily calloused hands.



Survival was a seasonal gamble. During July and August—a period known as the "hungry months"—the previous year's potato stores had rotted, and the new crop was not yet ready for harvest. Days during these months were spent searching desperately for alternative food sources. When things were stable, the main, and sometimes only, substantial meal of the day was eaten in the evening, usually consisting of boiled potatoes with cabbage or fish. Evenings were spent inside the cabin, illuminated only by a turf fire or a rushlight (a dried rush dipped in animal tallow). Neighbors would frequently visit to share stories, folklore, songs, or a game of cards.

From data recorded in the 1901 Census of Ireland, we know that Kate was bilingual, speaking both Irish and English, though she never learned to read or write. She learned the Irish language naturally from her parents and community. In addition to being educated at home, it is possible that in her early childhood Kate attended a "hedge school." These were informal, illegal, and completely hidden schools established during the Penal Laws when Catholic children were legally forbidden from receiving an education. To avoid detection, classes were held secretly in barns, private homes, or outdoors behind dense hedgerows.



However, her youth also coincided with a major educational shift. In 1831, the National Board of Education established the National School system in Ireland. Many state-funded, standardized primary schools opened across rural Bantry throughout the mid-to-late 19th century. If Kate attended one of these newer National Schools, her education would have focused on basic functional literacy, arithmetic, and practical manual skills tailored for rural children of modest means.

*A proverb is like
a whisper from
our ancestors.*

Regardless of formal schooling, Kate's moral and cultural education came from a deeply rooted oral tradition. The Irish relied heavily on seanfhocail (pronounced shan-uk-ill, literally meaning "old words")—short, witty, and metaphorical proverbs used to pass down ancestral wisdom, humor, and life lessons.

Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

Rockites

A satirical illustration titled *Captain Rock's Banditti Swearing in a New Member*

This understanding of daily life is only a part of the lives of young Denis and Catherine. We also need to comprehend the underlying political tension in West County Cork, where they resided.

In the early 1820s, conversations around Cork firesides revolved heavily around family, politics, and a growing nationalist sentiment. The region was characterized by high tension. Local farmers fiercely resisted paying tithes—mandatory taxes collected to support the established Protestant Church of Ireland—and began organizing secret local agrarian societies.



Operating clandestinely at night, these groups were commanded by a mythical, pseudonymous leader known variously as Captain Right, Captain Steel, or Captain Rock. Denis was a young lad of thirteen when this wave of rural violence began, and he was undoubtedly aware of the protests and actions of these “Rockites.”

Though they remain somewhat enigmatic to historians, the Rockites constituted one of the most extensive and serious rural disturbances in Ireland prior to the Great Famine. Their targets included local magistrates, wealthy landowners, and the police. To assert their own "alternative" law, they employed intimidation, property destruction, and armed raids. They sent threatening letters and violently attacked anyone who paid the hated tithes or took over land from an evicted neighbor. Utilizing their intimate knowledge of the rural terrain, they easily ambushed authorities and escaped swiftly into the hills.

The British government responded with overwhelming force. Five military regiments were dispatched from Britain, with the Home Secretary admitting they were sent "for the purpose of putting down actual, & most formidable Danger in Ireland." The Insurrection Act was introduced across eight counties, enforcing a strict nighttime curfew and allowing for trials without a jury. This unrest also prompted the establishment of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) to manage rural peacekeeping.

In County Cork, where the movement was at its most formidable, open battles occurred between thousands of Rockites and the British military. Special judicial commissions appointed in February 1822 specifically to try Cork Rockites convicted thirty-six men of capital crimes. Local magistrates—including Lord Bantry himself—played central roles in suppressing the unrest. Given the small, tightly knit population of the Bantry area and deep familial connections, Denis almost certainly knew some, if not all, of those thirty-six men.



Impoverished farmers preparing to use boulders as weapons against the organized eviction party in the background.

Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

Night of the Big Wind

In 1839, when Denis was thirty-one years old and Catherine thirteen, a legendary disaster struck. The Oíche na Gaoithe Móire (the Night of the Big Wind) caused catastrophic damage across Ireland, with severe effects felt right in Bantry. The hurricane-force winds blew away thatched roofs, leveled stone homes, stripped forests bare, and destroyed ships anchored in Bantry Bay. The impact of this natural disaster left the community economically devastated—a terrible portent of the famine that lay just around the corner.



Interestingly, this historic storm left a unique legal legacy. Following the introduction of the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908, applicants were required to prove they were over seventy years old. Because official civil registration of births did not begin in Ireland until 1864, official records were rare. The government decreed that any elderly applicant who could vividly recall the terrifying events of the 1839 storm was deemed eligible for the pension.

By the early 1840s, Britain faced a severe economic depression that exacerbated the misery of the Irish poor. A major trade slump in 1839 led to rising unemployment, which was compounded by consecutive bad harvests. To make matters worse for the rapidly growing population, bread and grain prices were kept artificially high by the Corn Laws (1815–1846)—tariffs designed to protect domestic British grain markets by heavily taxing or banning imported food.

During this turbulent period, Denis was working hard to secure his own leasehold to ensure he could support a family. It was standard practice for Irish men of this era to wait until their late twenties or thirties to marry. However, the catastrophic events about to unfold across Ireland in the 1840s would delay Denis from taking a wife and starting his own family until he was well into his early forties.

An Gorta Mór 1845-1852

In 1845, a devastating potato blight crossed into England and Scotland before rapidly spreading to Ireland, completely ruining the year's harvest. The blight—caused by the airborne fungus *Phytophthora infestans*, which originated in Mexico—returned with even greater virulence in 1846. This triggered An Gorta Mór (The Great Hunger), an apocalyptic famine that lasted from 1845 to 1852. Because the rural population relied almost exclusively on the potato as their staple food, its total failure brought catastrophic economic, social, and demographic consequences, resulting in mass starvation across the nation.

While the exact, intimate details of what Denis or Catherine experienced during these grim years are lost to time, we know with certainty that Denis' own potato crops failed. They bore witness to unimaginable daily suffering. Despite the widespread starvation gripping the local population, vast quantities of Irish grain and livestock were systematically shipped out of Bantry Port under heavy British military guard to pay landlords' rents. This bitter reality highlighted the deeply political, man-made nature of the crisis.

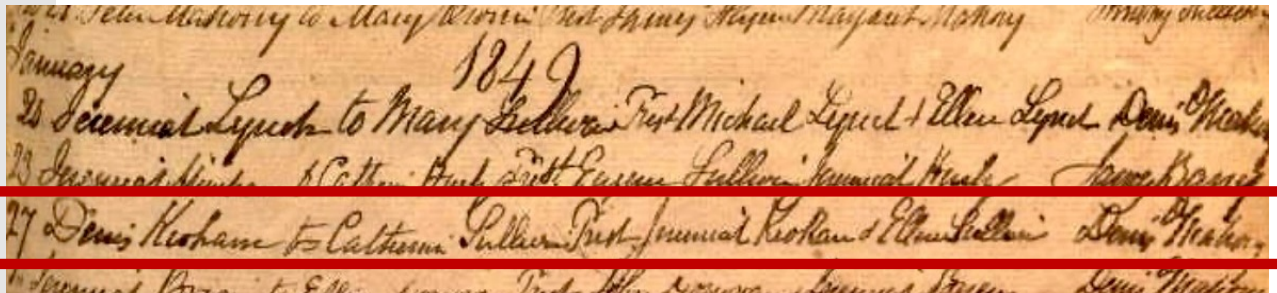


Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

1849
I Do

As immune systems collapsed from hunger, famine-related diseases like typhus, relapsing fever, and dysentery ran rampant through the Bantry-Glangarriff area. These illnesses caused soaring mortality rates and utterly destroyed entire family networks. The Great Famine permanently altered the social, cultural, and linguistic landscape of West County Cork, decimating the population through death and desperate mass emigration.

Yet, life somehow persisted in the depths of this national tragedy. On January 27, 1849, right in the midst of An Gorta Mór, a 41-year-old Denis married 23-year-old Catherine Sullivan. Against a backdrop of profound loss and survival, they took their vows and defiantly began the next generation of our family.



1849 27 Denis Keohane to Catherine Sullivan present Jeremiah Keohane Ellen Sullivan priest Denis Meagher
Diocese: Cork and Ross | Parish: Bantry | Year range: 1823-1857

National Library of Ireland; Irish Catholic Parish Registers Microfilm 04802 / 04

For farmers in the Bantry area, a wedding was a deeply communal, festive, and traditional milestone. Marriages were almost always held in the winter months when the grueling demands of the harvest had paused. The day featured formal Catholic church ceremonies followed by spirited celebrations filled with music, traditional dancing, food, and plenty of whiskey or poitín (Irish moonshine). Serving as their official, legal, and spiritual witnesses were Jeremiah Keohane (presumably Denis's brother) and Ellen Lynch (presumably Catherine's married sister). In an era of strict legal contracts, these sponsors were carefully chosen close family members.

While hosting a traditional, abundant wedding was incredibly difficult during the devastation of the late 1840s, a wedding provided a necessary, deeply welcomed distraction from the surrounding tragedy—a rare moment for the community to gather and hold onto hope.



The festivities likely featured the arrival of the "straw boys"—uninvited, masked gatecrashers who traveled in groups to wedding dances. They wore intricate suits and high, conical hats made of woven straw to totally conceal their identities. Rooted in ancient Celtic customs tied to fertility and a successful harvest, the straw boys were believed to bring immense good luck and health to newlyweds. Tradition dictated that the host must welcome them, feed them, and allow them

to dance with the bride. If ignored or turned away, the masked men might cause playful mischief, such as dismantling their straw costumes to deface the trees outside the home.

Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

Moo

1850s

Land

The year Denis and Kate married also marked a massive turning point in the history of Irish land ownership. The British Parliament passed the Encumbered Estates (Ireland) Act 1849. This law was specifically designed to facilitate the rapid, forced sale of heavily mortgaged Irish estates, many of which belonged to Anglo-Irish landlords who had gone bankrupt because their starving tenants could no longer pay rent during the Famine.

The Act established a special court to bypass traditional property entanglements and sell off land to speculative buyers to clear outstanding debts. In the immediate aftermath, the landscape of rural Ireland changed permanently. The number of small, heavily subdivided holdings under five acres drastically plummeted, dropping from 45% of all Irish farms in 1841 to just 15% a decade later. While this consolidation caused immense pain and further evictions for the poorest laborers, it ultimately allowed the remaining tenant farmers—including Denis and Kate—to gradually secure larger, more sustainable, and economically viable farms as they raised their new family.

By 1850, the Bantry region was profoundly and permanently changed. The local landscape was heavily scarred by the Famine, marked by abandoned stone ruins and a drastically reduced population. In a devastating demographic collapse, the population of the town of Bantry had plummeted to roughly 1,200 residents—down from over 4,000 just a decade earlier in 1841.

Following the Great Famine, Irish agriculture underwent a dramatic structural shift. Farmers rapidly transitioned away from tillage (growing crops) toward pastoral farming, causing livestock numbers—especially cattle and sheep—to skyrocket. Driven by an insatiable demand for dairy and meat exports to Britain, cattle became the dominant economic sector, with national herd numbers rising toward 5 million by the early 20th century. Denis and his growing sons successfully adapted to this economic shift, expanding their operations to include grazing cattle.

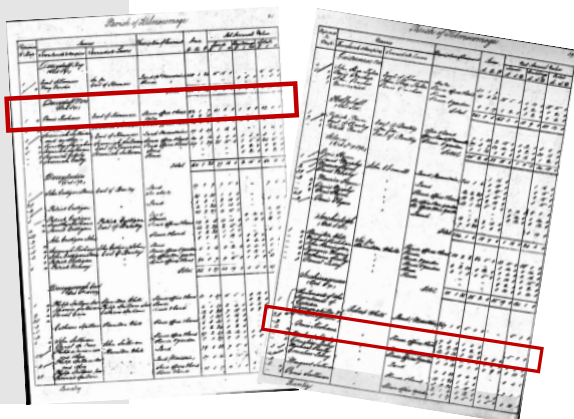


Our understanding of the family's post-Famine recovery is anchored by Griffith's Valuation. Completed across Ireland between 1847 and 1864 under the direction of Commissioner Richard Griffith, this massive survey served as the general valuation of all rateable property, detailing the names of occupiers and the precise economic value of their houses and land.

Each property was surveyed once, and the area Denis and Catherine lived, Kilmocomogue Parish (the civil parish encompassing West County Cork and the town of Bantry), was surveyed in the 1853 records. Denis Keohane is officially recorded twice:

Derryduff More, Bantry: Denis leased a massive plot of 955 acres from the Earl of Kenmare, with the total rateable value of his holdings assessed at £42.

Inchinagoum, Kilmocomogue: Denis leased 22 acres from Robert White, renting a house, farm offices (outbuildings), and land, with a total valuation of £5.



Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

Clann

1850-1870

Against this backdrop of agricultural expansion, Denis and Catherine built their clann (the Irish word for family). Over a twenty-year period spanning from 1850 to 1870, Catherine gave birth to eight children: Jeremiah — Born 1850, Mary — Born 1852, John — Born 1855, Margaret — Born 1857, Bridget — Born 1860, Julia — Born 1863, Catherine — Born 1865, and Ellen — Born 1870.

By the time their youngest children were born, Denis and Catherine had permanently settled in the townland of Carran, County Cork. Thanks to photographs graciously shared in October 2025 by our newly connected and cherished cousin, Lora Keohane Wimsatt, we can visualize the evolution of the family homestead. Lora noted that the original, older stone Keohane home (**right**) stood directly adjacent to the larger, "new" house built by later generations (**below**).

Home Sweet Home



Remarkably, this historic homestead still stands today, and Denis and Catherine's direct descendants continue to live on the family land.

**"Johnnie is well wife & family
He is building a new house"**

Kate Keohane Harrington to sister
Julia Keohane Deneen about
their brother John Keohane
October 1913

Fast Forward

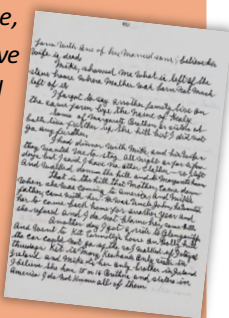
In 1953, Julia Keohane Deneen's son, John Walter Deneen, visited Ireland from the U.S. and documented his impressions in a letter to his sister, Frances Deneen Taylor.

"...Another day I had a man take me up to see Mike Keohane, Mary's Brother, he drove as far as he could and I walked the rest of the way. Mike and his wife live on the same farm where Mother was born in Coran. John Keohane, Florence Crowley's brother lives on the same Farm with one of his married sons, I believe his wife is dead. Mike, showed me what is left of the stone house where Mother was born not much left of it."



Photo taken about 1980 with descendants

Michael Carlo on the left and Bill Keohane (1931-2020) on the right



Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

**Tá brón
mór orm**
1870-1871

*Great sorrow
is upon me*

On October 11, 1870, Catherine and Denis welcomed their eighth and final child, a daughter named Ellen. Tragically, their joy was short-lived. Just nine months later, baby Ellen developed a severe cough and passed away on April 20, 1871.

The moment Ellen passed, Kate gently laid her daughter down and immediately walked across the room to open a window—a deeply rooted traditional act meant to allow the child's spirit to freely leave the home.

The family's profound grief was shaped by a unique blend of formal Catholic doctrine, ancient Gaelic folklore, and the harsh, practical realities of rural survival. Though the worst years of the Great Famine had ended, its dark shadow remained via high infant mortality rates driven by poverty, poor nutrition, and limited hygiene.

Baby Ellen was laid out in the home for a traditional wake, though the atmosphere was notably more quiet and somber than a ceremony for an adult. To mark the exact time of passing and ward off bad luck, any clock in the house was immediately stopped. Any mirrors were carefully covered with cloth or turned flat against the walls to ensure the child's pure spirit would not become trapped in the earthly realm.



*Eternal rest
grant unto
them, O Lord,
and let
perpetual light
shine upon
them.
May the souls
of all the
faithful
departed,
through the
mercy of God,
rest in peace.*

Female relatives gathered to perform the caoineadh (keening)—a rhythmic, haunting, and communal wailing over the body. Keening was a vital part of the traditional Irish wake, serving as a raw emotional release for the community and an honorable final farewell to ensure the deceased was properly remembered. Though this ancient custom was beginning to decline in the late 19th century, it persisted stubbornly in the isolated valleys of West Cork well into the 1900s.

From the moment of her passing until her final burial, Ellen's body was never left unattended, an essential protective practice known as "watching the dead."

When the time came, six male family members stepped forward as pallbearers, carrying the small coffin out of the house, down the rural roads to the local church, and into the parish graveyard.

The demanding rhythm of farm life did not halt for mourning. With seven other children in the house ranging from five to twenty years old, and nearly a thousand acres of land to manage, Kate and Denis had to keep moving forward. Because infant loss was a tragic, frequent reality for 19th-century tenant families, grief became a shared, communal burden. Neighbors did not wait for a formal invitation; they simply arrived at the Carran homestead to shake hands, take over daily farm chores, and offer the time-honored Irish condolence: *"I'm sorry for your trouble."* This tradition of immediate, unspoken neighborly cooperation allowed the Keohane family to endure, carrying their sorrow together as they looked toward the future.

34

Superintendent Registrar's District Bantry Page 02215141

BIRTHS Registered in the District of Glasgow Registrar's District Glasgow

In the County of Cork In the Union of Bantry

No.	Name of Child	Sex	Date of Birth	Place of Birth	Age of Mother	Signature of Registrar
102	Ellen Keohane	F	11th Oct 1870	Carran	28	James Keohane

07285844

DEATHS Registered in the District of Glasgow Registrar's District Glasgow

In the County of Cork In the Union of Bantry

No.	Name of Deceased	Sex	Date of Death	Place of Death	Age at Death	Signature of Registrar
102	Ellen Keohane	F	20th April 1871	Carran	9m	James Keohane

Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

U.S.A.

As the mid-19th century progressed, the Keohane household adapted to a modern reality of Irish life: emigration. Two of Denis and Kate's daughters ultimately crossed the Atlantic to build new lives in America.

Their second child, Mary, married John Sullivan in County Cork in 1867. Three years later, in 1870, the young couple immigrated to the United States, eventually settling in Canton, New York. Eleven years later, in 1881, their sixth child, Julia, followed a similar path. She emigrated to New York, marrying Patrick Deneen in 1883 in the town of Corning, where they permanently settled.

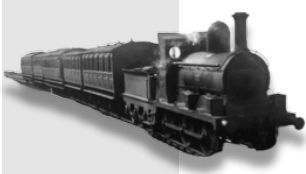
For the Keohane family, this move represented a structured, deeply reliance-based process known as "chain migration." Those who left first worked tirelessly to save money, sending a portion of their wages back home to pay for the passage of younger siblings or relatives. This created a transnational family unit; the economic survival and standard of living for those remaining on the farm in Carran became directly linked to the financial success of those working in the factories and cities of the United States. While Denis and Catherine saw only two of their immediate children leave, it was the subsequent generation of their grandchildren who would choose to emigrate in much greater numbers.

1879-
1882

The late 1870s brought renewed anxiety to rural Ireland. Following consecutively poor harvests in 1878 and 1879, tenant farmers faced severe distress and an inability to pay their rents, triggering widespread fears of a second Great Famine. As the Landed Estates Courts stepped in to sell off bankrupt, collapsing estates, families across West Cork faced the imminent threat of eviction.

In response, the Irish National Land League became heavily active in the Bantry region. The League managed alternative local courts, organized mass political meetings, and spearheaded aggressive protests against landlords and evictions. This "Land War" brought heightened conflict to West Cork throughout the 1880s. In June 1881, the British government arrested a prominent local leader named Henry O'Mahony, sparking three days of intense civil disturbance in the area that required military intervention to suppress.

Between 1882 and 1883, West Cork faced numerous "land war prosecutions" as the British state attempted to crack down on agrarian radicalism. Simultaneously, the revolutionary Fenian movement (the Irish Republican Brotherhood) operated clandestinely in the background, campaigning for an independent Irish republic and keeping the spirit of rebellion alive in the public consciousness. Ultimately, this agrarian warfare proved successful, shifting Irish land ownership away from the landlord-tenant system and laying the groundwork for subsequent legislative reforms that allowed Irish farmers to finally own their own land.



Amidst this political turmoil, Bantry experienced an era of rapid modernization. New roads pushed into the rugged terrain of West Cork, but the most significant transformation occurred with the arrival of the railway line in 1881. The railroad revived commercial activity and provided a massive boost to local tourism. Following the opening of a grand new station house in 1892, West Cork flourished, establishing itself as a premier, scenic honeymoon and leisure destination within the United Kingdom.

Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

1881
Sept 8

Slán go
fóill
*Rest in
Peace*



On September 8, 1881, at the age of seventy-three, Denis Keohane departed this world. He was survived by his wife, Catherine, then fifty-five years old, and their seven surviving children: Jeremiah (31), John (27), Margaret (24), Bridget (21), and Catherine (16) who remained nearby, alongside Mary (29) and Julia (18) who were watching from far away in America.

Áis Taighde - Clár na mBásanna
Research Facility - Death Record

1881 DEATHS Registered in the District of <i>Bantry</i>				In the Union of <i>Bantry</i>			
No.	Name and Surname of Deceased	Sex	Age	Residence	Place of Birth	Religion	Signature of Registrar
50	<i>Denis Keohane</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>Bantry</i>	<i>Ireland</i>	<i>Roman Catholic</i>	<i>James Keohane</i>

Denis's long life spanned an extraordinary, challenging, and defining period in the history of his nation. Born in 1808, just as the long shadows of the Penal Laws were finally beginning to lift, he lived through the absolute devastation of the Great Famine and the opening salvos of the Land War. Like so many of his contemporaries in West Cork, he met the hardships of those dark decades with

remarkable resilience and an unwavering Catholic faith. In accordance with profound Irish tradition, he undoubtedly held close the belief that the deep sufferings of this earthly world are answered by the beautiful promise of eternal rest in the next.

Widow
of a
Farmer

As the 19th century drew to a close and Bantry rapidly modernized, Catherine stepped fully into her role as the revered matriarch of the Keohane family. As the years advanced, she gradually stepped back from the strenuous physical labor of the farm, transitioning into a quieter life. She resided at the Carran homestead with her second son, John, and his expanding family.

Though two of her daughters were across the Atlantic, Kate was surrounded locally by five of her children, a growing circle of grandchildren, and a massive network of siblings, nieces, nephews, and cousins. As matriarch, she bore the vital responsibility of passing down traditional domestic life skills—such as cooking, spinning, and sewing—alongside the oral history, Irish language, and Catholic faith of her ancestors. She stood as the literal backbone of the family, offering quiet strength, wisdom, and continuity to the next generation.

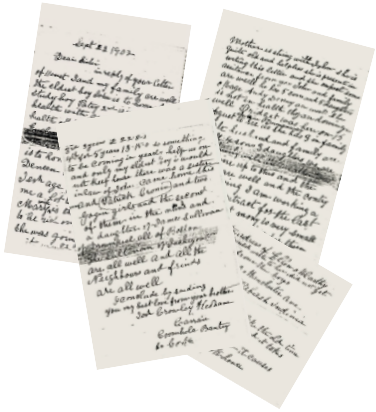
Far across the ocean, her daughter Julia carefully preserved the letters she received from home. While Julia's own letters back to



Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

Ireland have been lost, the replies from her siblings offer an intimate look into the family’s expanding lives and confirm that Julia regularly shared updates about her American family.

In a poignant letter sent to Julia by her oldest brother, Jeremiah, on September 22, 1902, he provided news of his own family before giving an update on their aging mother: *"Mother is staying with John. She is quite old and helpless. She is present in writing this letter and she expect some assistance from you."*



1907
April 20

	1907				
495	Funeral	Kate	81	Widow	probably
	April	Keohane	years	of a	12 months ill.
	Carran			farmer	No Medical
					Attention

Five years later, Catherine Sullivan Keohane—affectionately known to her loved ones as Kate—passed

away at the age of eighty-one. She had bravely battled an illness for twelve months, and took her final breath with her devoted granddaughter, Mary Keohane, by her side.

Born in 1826, well before the arrival of the Great Hunger, Kate spent her youth on the rugged hillsides of West Cork. She bore witness to the darkest, most traumatic years of the 1840s, surviving them with an unwavering spirit and a faith that refused to be broken. As the heart and soul of the Keohane home, Kate nurtured her children and stood as a steadfast pillar for her community. She left her descendants with the enduring lesson that the land will always provide sustenance if it is treated with respect, and that a family’s true strength lies in its absolute unity during challenging times.

Together, the lives of Denis Keohane and Catherine Sullivan represent the ultimate story of Irish survival. Born into an era of secrecy and suppression, they weathered the apocalyptic years of the Great Famine, raised a large family against the backdrop of national tragedy, and successfully adapted to the massive agricultural and political upheavals of the late 19th century. Through secret Masses, agrarian rebellions, and the painful necessity of parting with children bound for America, they maintained their faith, their dignity, and their connection to the land.

Though Denis and Kate have long since passed into memory, the foundation they poured at the Carran homestead remains unshakeable. They did not just endure history; they built a legacy of resilience, love, and family unity that crossed oceans and survived generations—a legacy that still beats in the hearts of their direct descendants living on that very same West Cork land today and across the globe.



Ní imithe uainn atá sí, ach imithe romhainn. She is not gone from us but gone before us.



The following section shifts from Denis and Catherine’s shared story to brief profiles of their surviving children and grandchildren.