

Family Branch: KEOHANE | SULLIVAN

Branch 2 of 7

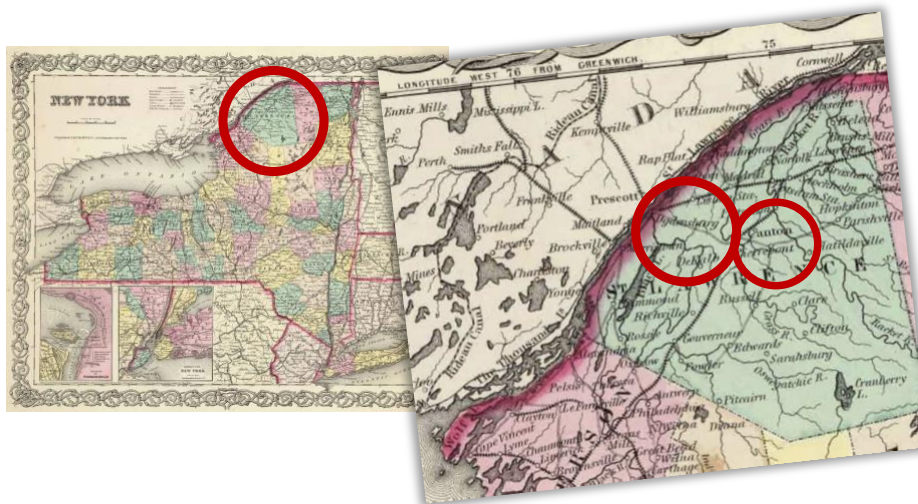
Mary Keohane

January 5, 1852 — June 16, 1928

Great Grandaunt

Born in 1850s Ireland, Mary Keohane was the second child and eldest daughter of Denis Keohane and Catherine Sullivan. In 1868, at the young age of fifteen, Mary married twenty-year-old John Sullivan (1846–1919) in County Cork. For a family line where marriages were traditionally delayed until men and women reached their late twenties or thirties, this youthful union stood out as a distinct exception.

Looking for a more stable future in the immediate wake of Ireland's agricultural transitions, the young couple chose emigration. They crossed the Atlantic and arrived in the United States in 1870, becoming the very first of



Canton, New York

Map 1880

Located in the St. Lawrence River Valley/Northern New York region. An area traditionally occupied by the Mohawk Nation (Kanien'kehá:ka). The first European permanent settlement was established in 1801. The village grew as a center for industry and agriculture.

Denis and Catherine's children to establish a foothold in America. They traveled north to the rugged farming country of upstate New York, permanently settling in the town of Canton, located within St. Lawrence County.

By 1880, Mary and John had successfully carved out a life in Canton, where John found steady employment as a laborer and farmer. Like many of her generation who grew up in the rural West Cork countryside prior to the widespread expansion of National Schools, Mary never learned to read or write, though she spoke English fluently. John, however, possessed full literacy skills, with the 1900 U.S. Census recording him as able to read, write, and speak English.

The family navigated the turn of the century with quiet endurance, but the 1910s brought a series of devastating personal losses to the Sullivan household. The 1910 Census notes that while Mary and John had been blessed with five children over the course of their marriage, only four had survived to adulthood.

Tragically, a wave of illness and mortality soon swept through their immediate family line. By the spring of 1919, not only had their unnamed fifth child passed away, but three of their adult children—their son Dennis Thomas Sullivan, alongside daughters Katie Sullivan and Anna Sullivan—had also preceded their parents in death.

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Exhausted by decades of manual labor and deep family grief, the 1915 New York State Census records John, at age seventy, as officially unemployed. He passed away a few years later on April 3, 1919, leaving Mary a widow.

Following her husband's death and the loss of the majority of her children, the elderly Mary left the Canton homestead. She relocated approximately twenty-five miles north to the city of Ogdensburg, located right on the St. Lawrence River, to live under the care of her sole surviving daughter, Mary (Sullivan) Ross. Surrounded by her remaining family, Mary passed away at the age of seventy-seven in her daughter's home, leaving a legacy as a brave pioneer who paved the trans-Atlantic path for the rest of her family.



The Next Generation: An overview of Branch 2...Descendants of Mary and John Sullivan.

1. Anna Sullivan

abt 1871 — abt 1884

1st cousin 2x removed

Anna's brief presence in the historical record is captured only on the 1880 U.S. Federal Census. At the age of nine, she was recorded living with her parents and sisters in Canton, New York, where she was actively enrolled as a student. Lacking further documentation, it is highly likely that Anna was one of the children who tragically passed away in her youth or early adolescence during the late 19th century.

2. Katie Sullivan

abt 1872 — abt 1884

1st cousin 2x removed

Mirroring her sister Anna, Katie appeared on the 1880 Census as an eight-year-old student residing at the family home in Canton. Like her older sister, she appears to have been lost to the family well before the turn of the century, a quiet reflection of the high youth mortality rates that shadowed rural 19th-century communities.

3. Mary Sullivan

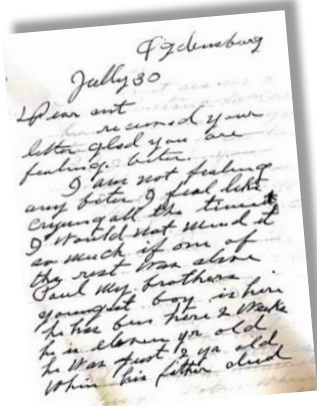
abt 1874 — June 23, 1940

1st cousin 2x removed

Mary appeared on the 1880 Canton Census at six years old. In 1904, at the age of thirty, she married Raymond Ross (1880–1964). By 1910, the couple was renting a farm in Oswegatchie, New York, located about thirty-five miles south of the Canton homestead, where Raymond farmed and took in two boarders to help supplement their income. By 1915, they relocated north to the river town of Ogdensburg, where Raymond worked as a teamster, driving horse-drawn teams to transport freight.

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By 1920, the couple successfully purchased their own home in Ogdensburg, and Raymond became the proprietor of a local meat shop. It was into this bustling household that Mary took in her widowed mother, Mary (Keohane) Sullivan, following John's passing in 1919.



When her mother passed away on June 16, 1928, Mary found herself completely isolated from her immediate family, as both of her parents and all four of her siblings had now passed away. Her profound grief is captured in a preserved letter she wrote to her maternal aunt, Julia (Keohane) Deneen, dated July 30, 1928, responding to condolences and a memorial Mass arrangement: *"I am not feeling any better; I feel like crying all the time."*

In the letter, Mary also expressed gratitude for hearing from her first cousin, Florence Crowley (Bridget Keohane), who had similarly extended comfort from Elmira. Mary passed away at the age of sixty-six. Raymond outlived her by twenty years, residing with their only child, Robert, and his family. By the time of Raymond's passing, the family line had successfully expanded to include three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Children: Robert Ross

4. Ella Sullivan

September 9, 1876 — April 28, 1921

1st cousin 2x removed

At the age of twenty, Ella married Frederick William Melvin (1873–1959), a local blacksmith residing in Canton. In 1905, seeking new agricultural opportunities, the couple made a significant international move, relocating roughly seventy miles north to Russell, Ontario, Canada. There, Fred established himself as a successful farmer. Notably, while the broader

Keohane line remained fiercely Catholic, Ella and Fred raised their family within the Anglican faith.



Tragically, Ella passed away at the age of forty-four from an exophthalmic goiter accompanied by hyperthyroidism. Her illness coincided with a fascinating and devastating chapter in North American public health history. During the early 1920s, governments began the rapid, mandatory introduction of iodine into the public food supply via commercial table salt to combat widespread goiter belts. However, for individuals like Ella who suffered from long-standing, undetected, or untreated thyroid issues, this sudden surge of dietary iodine frequently triggered a severe, often fatal form of hyperthyroidism, leading to a temporary spike in mortality across the region.

Children: Muriel Mary (1898–1981), Hadley Frederick (1900–1970), and John Allen (1904–1972).



Ella Sullivan Melvin

5. Dennis Thomas Sullivan

March 15, 1881 — 1919

1st cousin 2x removed

The youngest child and only son to survive to adulthood, Dennis showed an early, ambitious interest in the emerging electrical age. He enrolled in an Electrical Engineering course through the International Correspondence School (ICS) in Scranton, Pennsylvania—one of America's grand, pioneering institutions for distance learning, which allowed rural working-class men to attain highly technical certifications from home.

At the age of thirty, Dennis married Mae Loretta Canfield (1888–1971). They settled in Gouverneur, New York, where Dennis put his distance education to work, built a steady career as a professional electrician, and raised three children. Tragically, Dennis's life was cut short at the age of thirty-eight when he succumbed to a sudden, unexpected bout of appendicitis. Local newspapers noted that his funeral at St. James Catholic Church "was largely attended," a testament to his standing in the community.

Children: Marion C. (1913–?), William John (1914–1983), and Paul T. (1917–2008).

