

**The Ahern Family of County Cork:  
A Journey Across the Atlantic – And Beyond**

**By**

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## INTRODUCTION

I began a class at the University of Washington Extension in the Fall of 2004. Its purpose – “Discover the story of your family's past in this unique nine-month program taught by two expert researchers. The centerpiece of the program is your family history project: a written and visual record that brings to life your ancestors and their world.”

My aim started out slightly differently. I've had a novel I've been mulling over for a few years and wanted to learn how to “make it real.” What was life like? What did people eat? How did they wash clothes? How long did it take to milk a cow? Was there wallpaper in 1873? Was there glass for windows? How much wood would it take to heat the stove to bake a cake?

Over the course of the last nine months, I've learned the answers to some of these questions and come up with many more questions along the way. But I've discovered it's not so much the answers that are important, but the skills to find the answers. The trouble with genealogy is that once you've answered one question – what was her father's name? – you are left with two more – his mother's and his father's name. So the skills are crucial.

Although I still intend to write the novel, I'm no longer in search of characters. In researching my great-great grandfather and his family, I have found flesh and blood people, each with hopes and dreams, victories and tragedies, loves and losses. I feel honored to be a descendent of these fascinating people and to have had the chance for them to share their lives with me.

I researched the family of James Ahern and his three brothers, John, Jeremiah and Michael. In my research I looked for common variants of the name Ahern, including Aherne, Ahearn, Ahearne, A'Hern, Hearn, Hern, Horn, Herron, O'Hern, O'Hearn, and I even found an O'Harin. In my text I have consistently used the spelling I found in the naturalization papers of my ancestor, James Ahern, in which he signed his own name, to refer to the entire family. However, where there was an alternate spelling in a census, deed, or other record, the footnote details the spelling as shown on the record.

*When I was a child a pair of deep mahogany frames hung over our mantle – oval portraits of two women, one with gray hair and light eyes, the other, younger, with dark hair and dark eyes. They were Grandma Kircher’s grandmothers. The portraits had been given to a young bride and groom as a wedding gift. I remember being a bit scared of the gray-haired woman with her stern expression. Her eyes followed us judgmentally around the living room as my friends and I shared girlish laughter at a birthday slumber party. The dark one wasn’t scary – she was just sort of mannish looking.*

*I didn’t ever really think about who they were, even what their names were. The gray-haired one was just Grandpa Bradley’s mother and the dark-haired one was Grandma Bradley’s mother. Eventually, another smaller pair of pictures was hung on either side of the women, their children, Tom and Mary, the young married couple. I didn’t ever know Tom or Mary, either, but I did know their daughter, Agnes, my grandmother. She looked a lot like her father’s mother. Maybe that was just because she was old when I knew her.*

*Many years later when I became a bride, my sentimental brother, Mark, had the portraits of the two women copied for my wedding gift. They have hung in all my living rooms, in Austin, and then San Rafael and now Seattle. They are a connection to my past, and to the past of my past.*

*A few years ago, my husband was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to teach at the University of Limerick. There had been vague stories that I had some Irish ancestors and I thought five months in Ireland might give me a chance to connect with some of these roots. At least I finally learned the names of these women. The scary one was Anna Elizabeth Rugh, and the dark one was Jane Graham.*

*Elizabeth was the granddaughter of a Revolutionary War soldier but her husband was an Irish immigrant from County Tyrone. Jane and her husband James Ahern were both Irish immigrants. So there was some Irish blood in me...*

*Then I heard a snip of a family story about James. He was sent to Australia on a convict ship. A tale the stuff of legend! The poor, starving victim of the famine steals a cow to feed his younger siblings and the nasty Brits send him off to the far ends of the earth. Yet he rises above it all and makes his way to America, the land of opportunity. Now that’s something to catch a romantic dreamer’s interest.*

*I was hooked on learning the stories of these people. I have been digging ever since. Through libraries and courthouses and churches and archives. Always in search of the stories.*

*The portraits of Elizabeth (Rugh) Bradley and Jane (Graham) Ahern still hang on my wall. When the trail to their story disappears, I look at my great-great grandmothers and utter three simple words, “Tell me something.” And in the quiet stillness, they do.*

*This work is some of their stories. And in my quest for their stories I have made some of my own .*

## Chapter 1: 51 51 N – 8 28 W

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century an island nation on the western edge of Europe was devastated. The fates of its people, whether they lived or died, were forever changed. The Ahern family from County Cork was among the millions of people whose lives were touched by the forces of nature whose dark hand swept over the green land of Erin.<sup>1</sup>

The mass exodus from Ireland was precipitated by a fungus, a rot that afflicted the potato, decimating the entire crop and with it, the food source for many of the eight million Irish. The blight struck first in 1846, more heavily the following year. Although grain was grown in Ireland, it was slated for export. When the potato, staple of their diet was eliminated, the poor tenant farmers had virtually nothing to eat. Many scurbed for whatever roots they could dig. A lucky few by the coast were able to fish or gather shellfish or seaweed. The unlucky had nothing.<sup>2</sup>

Starvation decimated the country. Scurvy, typhus, dropsy and other disease wracked bodies from Cork to Donegal. Tenant farmers, unable to pay rent, were evicted from their homes, the houses often destroyed by the landlord to provide pasture for livestock. Children, bellies swollen and distended by starvation, mouths green from the grass they ate to sate their hunger, cried along the roadside, shoeless, their clothes in tatters.<sup>3</sup>

In the years of the famine, Ireland lost roughly a quarter of her population, many to starvation, the remainder to emigration. The strong, those who were able, left their homeland for opportunities abroad, in England, Australia or America.<sup>4</sup>

As a young man or woman would prepare to emigrate, they would spend the week prior to departure saying their good-byes to friends and neighbors. Advice would be given, tears would be shed, letters would be collected for delivery to those already gone. The week would culminate in a wake – an American wake – sending off the loved one in as high a style as could be mustered - food, tobacco, whiskey or stout, and the craic, the magic spell of the music, the conversation, the warmth, the spirit coming together to make an Irish celebration.<sup>5</sup>

The light of dawn breaking on the festivities, the young man would say his final good-byes to his parents. Mothers would cry, fathers would comfort and advise, and the son would start down the footpath, accompanied for a distance by friends not quite ready to make their leave. As denoted by the name of the prior night's festivities, a death of a sort was occurring – the “decedent” departing, never to be seen again by his loved ones, almost as if he had died.<sup>6</sup>

Carrying food and baggage for his journey to a new life, first John Ahern, then James, Michael and Jeremiah made his way to the embarkation point. They might have waited in a port for a week or more, trying to keep away from the disease present in the

filthy overcrowded lodgings in the cities, and also to keep from being swindled out of their meager travel funds.<sup>7</sup>

Conditions on the transatlantic ships of the period varied greatly. Ships left from ports in Ireland, including Dublin and Queenstown (now known as Cobh) as well as Liverpool, to which emigrants would take a small ship across the Irish Sea and catch a larger sailing ship to North America. Ships might hold as few as 60 or 70 passengers or as many as 900. In the hold of a vessel the ship's carpenter would hastily construct bunks to hold the human cargo on the journey westward, the bunks removed as the hold was filled with timber or other crops for the return journey.<sup>8</sup>

If the weather were fair, the passengers might be allowed on deck to take some fresh air, but in rough weather they would remain below, in the darkness, cramped and perhaps seasick. The rats, the feces, the maggot-infested rotting food, all contributed to the atmosphere below. A chamber pot became a prized possession.<sup>9</sup>

The movement of the ship could open the planks of the hull enough to catch a woman's skirts, pinning her as the boards moved back together, releasing her briefly as the ship tacked onto another course, only to catch her again if she wasn't careful. A storm would cast passengers out of their bunks, hurling them across the ship into other passengers, partitions, bunks, whatever was in their path, bruising bodies, breaking limbs, crushing small children. Water might burst through the hatch, soaking all below. When the storm passed through, the disarray in steerage gave testament to the gales which raged above, a collection of shawls, bonnets, pots and pans, water-filled bedding strewn under, over and between the tangled wreckage of the bunks.<sup>10</sup>

With favorable winds and fair weather, the journey could be quick and relatively painless. But with adverse conditions, ships were at the mercy of fate. Passengers' tickets generally provided for an allotment of bread, biscuit, rice, oatmeal, potatoes, sugar, tea, and water, but the seven pounds per week ration provided little more than an insurance against starvation. Passengers could judge that the journey was taking longer than anticipated when the water ration was cut.<sup>11</sup>

Fire was a constant danger on the wooden ships. Passengers were allowed some rudimentary cooking facilities, generally a box lined with bricks. If the wind calmed a bit, as it often did in the early evening, a few passengers would be allowed on deck to cook for themselves and their companions, watched over by Jack in the Shrouds, a young crewman who remained aloft in the rigging, on the lookout for a gust of wind, ready to douse the cooking fires with a jug of water at the first sign of danger. Hungry passengers might protest, but would get no satisfaction.<sup>12</sup>

The baggage allotment for an emigrant on these ships was scanty at best. Some extra food, a few cooking utensils, and if one were lucky, a watchmaker perhaps, he would have room for a few tools of his trade. The farmers and carpenters among the passengers would arrive in America with little more than their wits and their hands.<sup>13</sup>

Passengers would seek amusement to break the tedium of the journey. Perhaps a fiddle or squeezebox would be brought forth to accompany a tenor or a dancer. Another pastime would be the lottery – tickets sold to guess at the time land would be first sighted, the lucky winner taking the pot. Other betting was held on the ship's mileage, a log tied to a line heaved overboard, the length of line trailing out in an hour's time giving a rough estimate of mileage for a twenty-four hour period. Such bets might be paid out in

cash, rum, tea, or salted fish, whatever the passengers had and were willing to risk on a bet.<sup>14</sup>

Ship's fever -- typhus, caused by the lice infesting the passengers --was always a threat in the cramped conditions. The afflicted ran high fevers, suffering from severe headaches, dry mouth, dizziness, delirium. A funeral service would be held on board for the first death, the body prepared, washed, weighted with rocks, covered with a flag, placed on a hatch batten. The captain or chaplain of the ship might read from the English Book of Common prayer, the irony not lost on the Irish Catholics. The batten would be tipped, the body sliding into the water with little but a small splash. After that milestone, the focus of the journey became a struggle simply to survive.<sup>15</sup>

At some point in the journey, seaweed would appear in the water, a heaven-sent sign that land was near and the shores of the promised land would soon be seen. When land was finally sighted, there might have been a call to prepare the ship for arrival. Able-bodied passengers would be ordered to dispose of bedding, transfer the ailing passengers to the deck, shovel the accumulated muck and effluvia from the steerage, scrub and mop, eliminating any evidence of pestilence or disease which might prompt a medical officer boarding the ship to order a quarantine upon the vessel. This beehive of activity was rarely required on the American ships, which were cleaned with regularity during the trip, but was a common sight on those flying the British flag.<sup>16</sup>

The ship, riding the incoming tide amidst the bedding, baskets, ticking and clothing cast overboard, would make its way into the busy harbor. The medical officer would board and ask his questions about how many sick, how many died at sea, how many passengers aboard. Sick passengers would be yanked off to quarantine, separated from companions on board with little chance to devise a plan to regroup at a later date. Dodging vessels of all size and description, the captain would guide the ship toward Manhattan and the piers on South Street to the waiting slip... lines thrown..., the final yards... the journey over.<sup>17</sup>

The eager but exhausted new arrivals would be besieged on disembarkation by all manner of tavern and boarding house runners, ready to guide the unwary immigrant to lodging of questionable character but unquestionably exorbitant price. However, in many cases, members of the Irish immigrant societies stepped in to aid their newly arrived countrymen.<sup>18</sup>

New York was the final destination for many immigrants who found housing in the numerous tenements and looked for employment, despite the prevalence of the NINA signs – No Irish Need Apply. Others left the teeming metropolis for smaller cities and villages, for small farms along the east coast or the vast prairies of the mid-West, for the coal mines of Pennsylvania, or for the gold fields of California.

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<sup>1</sup> James Ahern obituary, *The Sonoma Index Tribune*, Sonoma, California, 21 January 1899, page 3.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament: Ireland 1846-1847 Prelude to Hatred* (New York & London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982) 3-5; John Percival, *The Great Famine, Ireland's Potato Famine 1847-51* (New York: Viewer Books, 1995) ?; Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament*, 10

<sup>3</sup> Percival, *The Great Famine*, ?; Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament* 46-48;

<sup>4</sup> Ireland the Great Famine of 1845, History learning site, online

<[http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/ireland\\_great\\_famine\\_of\\_1845.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/ireland_great_famine_of_1845.htm)>, accessed April 2, 2005

<sup>5</sup> Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament*, 122-23; Percival, *The Great Famine*, ?.

<sup>6</sup> Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament*, 132-33.

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<sup>7</sup>John O'Haran/John O. Ahern, declaration of intention, 1 June 1854 City and County of New York Court of Common Pleas; petition for naturalization 29 October 1856 Somerset County New Jersey Court of Common Pleas; James Ahern, declaration of intention, 6 July 1854 Somerset County New Jersey Court of Common Pleas; petition for naturalization 28 October 1858 Somerset County New Jersey Court of Common Pleas; Michael Ahern, declaration of intention, 2 October 1856 Somerset County New Jersey Court of Common Pleas; petition for naturalization 28 October 1858 Somerset County New Jersey Court of Common Pleas; Jerry Harn/Jerry Ahearn, declaration of intention, 23 February 1856 Somerset County New Jersey Court of Common Pleas; petition for naturalization 1 November 1858 Somerset County New Jersey Court of Common Pleas; Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament*, 155-6

<sup>8</sup>Edward Laxton, *The Famine Ships: The Irish Exodus to America 1846-51* (London: Bloomsbury 1996) 12

<sup>9</sup>Laxton, *The Famine Ships*, 12; Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament*, 201, 206.

<sup>10</sup>Laxton, *The Famine Ships*, 12-13; Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament*, 200-1.

<sup>11</sup>Laxton, *The Famine Ships*, 29-30.

<sup>12</sup>Laxton, *The Famine Ships*, 29; *ibid* 90.

<sup>13</sup>Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament* 154; Laxton, *The Famine Ships*, 12.

<sup>14</sup>Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament* 182-3.

<sup>15</sup>Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament* 225-6; *ibid* 215-19.

<sup>16</sup>Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament* 237; *ibid* 244-245

<sup>17</sup>Laxton, *The Famine Ships* 103; Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament* 251

<sup>18</sup>Percival, *The Great Famine*, ?; Gallagher, *Paddy's Lament* 255



*I used to think that James Ahern was “the only one.” Other than the snip of the Irish convict story, there had never been any stories passed down about family. He must have been sent off to Australia by himself and then gone to America.*

*In August of 2004 my husband graciously agreed to go on a genealogy trip with me. Above and beyond the call of spousal support. What man would fly 3000 miles to New Jersey in muggy August to look at a library and a courthouse in Somerville? Where the heck is Somerville?!*

*But there we found ourselves in the courthouse in Somerville looking through deed indexes from the 1850s, trying to figure out whether James Ahern had ever owned property in New Jersey. Sure enough he did. But not by himself. We found a deed dated April 21, 1857 in which James Ahern, my James Ahern, and one John Ahern bought twenty acres from Frederick V. L. Voorhees. James had a relative – a father, a cousin, a brother – someone. He wasn’t the only one.*

*Mark and I drove around Hillsborough Township in Somerset County, trying to find these acres James and John had farmed. We looked at old maps and found another one, another Ahern, half a mile away. Michael Ahern.*

*The names began to become people, with wives and children and a mother and even another brother, Jeremiah Ahern. From one name, James Ahern, I found a community of family in Somerset County, New Jersey.*

## Chapter 2: 40 51 N – 74 50 W

In 1860 New York City and its neighbor Brooklyn were the home to over a million hungry residents. They were native New Yorkers and recently arrived immigrants. They lived in townhomes and tenements. They were educated professionals and illiterate laborers.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the food for this teeming populace, for the lamplighters and bankers, the saloon keepers and preachers, the boatmen and domestics, the seamstresses and firemen, was grown on small farms in southern New York and northern New Jersey. On three such farms in Somerset County, a fertile agricultural land, its undulating hills cut by the Millstone and Raritan rivers, a family of Irish immigrants tilled the soil and planted the potatoes and corn, milked the cows and churned the butter, to sate the appetites of their neighbors thirty-four miles to the east.<sup>2</sup>

John Ahern, almost 40, a ditcher and farmer, owned twenty acres in Hillsborough Township, just west of the Millstone River. Jeremiah Ahern, 32, farmed twenty acres in Montgomery Township. James Ahern, 28, held 19 acres in Franklin Township, just off the railroad line to New Brunswick. Michael Ahern, the only brother still single, was employed as a blacksmith in Millstone Village, creating the tools and implements that enabled his brothers and the other local farmers, the newly arrived Irish and the longstanding Dutch, to plow and plant and reap and transport the fruits of their labor.<sup>3</sup>

An inventory of Michael Ahern's estate in 1907 tells a bit about the possessions and way of life of such a New Jersey farmer. Michael had three Holstein cows and a Jersey, each with a name – Nellie, Spot, and Fannie were the Holsteins and Ida was their Jersey cousin. They shared the barn with a black horse named Charley and Dan, a grey colt. The four young pigs, tom turkey and twenty fowl on the farm were not so treasured as to be given names. Michael's vehicles included a two-seat surrey, a carryall wagon, two buggies, a light cart a dump cart, a farm wagon and rack and two sleighs, one a cutter sleigh and the other an old fashioned sleigh. He owned a plow, a harrow, a 1-horse cultivator, a mowing machine, a hay rake, and miscellaneous other rakes and shovels.<sup>4</sup> A contrast existed across the time and space between the bustling city and the bucolic countryside. New York, its broad avenues running north to south, its east to west streets, more closely-spaced, was run by the hands of the clock and pages of the calendar. Stores were opened and closed, accounts were settled, profits and losses of banks and insurance companies were calculated, at a certain time on a particular date. The whims of nature played no part when the calendar page turned to the first of a new month.

As one left the city behind, however, life and work were dictated by greater forces. An early frost, an unexpected dry spell, a winter too warm to create ice in the canal, all would cause an adjustment to the employ of the farmer. In the midst of a general annual routine of sowing and tending and harvesting and resting to plan for another year, the seeds would be planted, the apples would be picked, the hogs would be slaughtered when the forces of nature, not a clock or calendar, deemed it appropriate.

The warm spring rains signaled the new year for a farmer. His work began in earnest – the task of mucking out the stalls and barns and yards. The dung and manure, perhaps mixed with straw or hay to augment the volume, would be spread over the thawing ground, enriching and renewing the soil. Lodi Manufacturing Company of New York advertised its fertilizing product, Poudrette, in the New Brunswick *Fredonian* and *The Cultivator* promising to “increase the yield and ripen the crop from two to three weeks earlier at an expense of three to four dollars per acre with little or no labor.” Lodi’s “recycled” product, created from the human waste filling the privies of New York City, returned the nutrients taken from the soil by the previous seasons’ crops in the form of a “light, dry, inodorous powder.”<sup>5</sup>

Once the soil had been amended, the horse-drawn plows turning the organic material into the rich earth, the business of planting could begin. The 1860 agricultural census does not list John or James Ahern. As John’s occupation is listed as a ditcher and farmer, perhaps his farming profits fell under a certain threshold. It may be that James was simply missed in the agricultural census as he was in the population census. In any case the agricultural census provides a clue as to the type of crops they might have grown, based on the reportings of their neighbors.<sup>6</sup>

Virtually every farmer in Hillsborough and Franklin Townships grew Indian corn, oats and Irish potatoes. Most also grew wheat and rye, and many reported harvests of buckwheat. All of the farmers had some livestock – horses, swine and cattle – the last providing a ready source for butter production. A few farmers even made wine. About half of the farmers reported income from sale of orchard products.<sup>7</sup>

In the small-scale farming that occurred in this place and time, most farmers continued the age-old method of hand planting. A bag of seed slung over his shoulder, the farmer would broadcast the grain or grass seed, handfuls tossed evenly down the parallel rows, himself or an assistant drawing a roller or harrow over to cover the newly cast seed, protecting it from hungry birds, and beginning the germination process. As the time to sow approached, the Aherns would have hoped for a “fine, soft day,” as the Irish term it – the presence of a gentle, misting rain and moderate temperatures providing the ideal conditions for the delicate seed to begin to sprout.<sup>8</sup>

The hand casting method for grain continued for a number of reasons. It was uncomplicated. It allowed seeds to be over-sown in a field with another crop already growing there. And most of all, it worked. A similar motivation for effective simplicity dictated the process for corn planting. While a mechanical device might be useful in a level field with no rocks, few such locations existed in Somerset County. The preferred method for the Aherns and their farming neighbors would have been a multigenerational, group effort. A hole poked, a seed or two dropped, and the scrape of the hoe to cover, row by row by row, the little children, hands closest to the soil, responsible for dropping the precious kernels.<sup>9</sup>

Potato planting was a group activity as well. The plowman would create a grid in the field, plowing a series of parallel rows in one direction, another series at right angles to the first, forming mounds at each intersection. Then the army of planters would go to work, poke a hole, deposit a forkful of manure, drop in a seed potato, and cover using a hoe or the heel of a boot. Again, the young Aherns, the children and nieces and nephews of the Ahern brothers, worked together with their growing, extended family.<sup>10</sup>

As the days lengthened, spring giving way to summer, the objective of the farmer was to stay ahead of the weeds. Hoes in hand, the young children worked their way through the oats and potatoes and corn, three or four or five times a season, never hoping to eradicate the weeds, just to give the tender seedlings a fighting chance.<sup>11</sup>

With the approach of mid summer, the hopes inherent in the spring planting were coming to fruition. The hay crop was the first to ripen. No child labor involved here, the strong shoulders and backs of the harvesters were put to the test, the mower wielding a sharp scythe through the thick grass. It was grueling work. James and his brothers undoubtedly looked forward to the chance to stop to sharpen the blade, and quench their thirst with a swig of cider or whiskey. On such a day, the air in Franklin Township must have been sweet, filled with the rising scent of the new mown hay.<sup>12</sup>

As John and Jeremiah and James plied their trades in the fields of Somerset County, and Michael manned the blacksmith's forge in Millstone, their wives and mother exercised their calling, motherhood. The mother of the Aherns, Mary, came to America in 1853, living for a time with Jeremiah and later with Michael. John married his wife, Hannah Murphy, about 1854. Jerry and Elizabeth Whalen followed suit in the fall of 1857. James likely married Jane Graham the next summer. Michael's wife, Mary, was the only one of these women who didn't change her name when she married – she was born Mary Ahern. All were Irish immigrants. Beyond that, little is known. Did they come with their parents or siblings or did they travel by themselves? Were any of these brides acquainted with their husbands in Ireland or did they meet once they arrived in America? In New York or New Jersey?<sup>13</sup>

Once married, however, they followed the ethnic and religious traditions of their forebears. The Ahern children arrived early and often. In each of these families, following the typical Irish tradition, the first son was named John Ahern, after their paternal grandfather. Each, too, bore a Mary, named for the mother of the Ahern boys. John and Hannah had many children. Michael and Mary did as well, but few survived to adulthood. In fact, each of these women outlived at least one of her children. A poem of the day, *Little Ones*, by Jenny Marsh speaks to the almost universal experience of loss of a child:

Weep not, mother; o'er his breast  
Fold the little hands in rest;  
God hath called – he knoweth best.

'Round the dead thou lovest so,  
Brightest angels come and go;  
Is it well thou weepst so?

Rather smile, and breathe a prayer,  
Thanking God for his dear care  
Of thy worn heart's blessing rare –

Yes, my Father – I am blest;  
Keep my darling on thy breast;  
*Call for me when it is best.*<sup>14</sup>

The life of a young wife and mother in 1860 was a full one. As these four women came together with their husbands, the brothers working together in the fields and orchards, perhaps the women worked together in each other's homes, sharing a recipe for pot pie, creating a rag rug, canning vegetables from their kitchen gardens. In the fields of Somerset County, the Ahern men continued to harvest the ripening crops. After the hay was cut, it lay in the fields a day or two to cure in the sunshine. The farmers would rake the hay, conceivably using a horse-drawn hay rake. A large comb with wooden-teeth, the hay rake would be pulled until it was full and then, stopped and turned to leave a shock of hay. These shocks would be gathered onto a wagon to be carted off to a barn for storage or placed in a temporary "hay barrack," a movable structure with a wooden roof which would be raised on four or five poles as high as needed to cover the rack of hay below. These structures could be set up in the field, a barnyard, the pasture, wherever it seemed most efficient.<sup>15</sup>

After hay had been harvested, the small grain crops began to ripen. The farmer would begin to look for signs of readiness, judging the optimal time for harvest. A plant, buckwheat for instance, matures from a green-leafed flowering plant to its harvest-ready stage, its leaves bearing a yellowish cast, the filled seeds turning brown, in a matter of seven days. The wheat plants would sprout, grow taller, wheat heads developing on the tops of the stalks as the grain rose in the field. As the plants ripened, the field turned to a warm yellow color with the approach of harvest time.<sup>16</sup>

An attentive farmer watched his grain carefully. In a matter of just a few weeks, the entire grain crop would need to be harvested. A strong wind or a heavy rain or hailstorm and the entire crop could be lost. As with other duties on the farm, the grain harvest, too, was a cooperative effort.

The cutter with his grain cradle would pass through the field and slice the grasses low to the ground. The scythe portion would cut, allowing the stalks to fall onto the cradle portion of the tool, a series of wooden fingers. The cutter continued his swing of the tool into the air and the grass fell into a heap on the ground, emptying the grain cradle for another pass through the crop. Behind the cutter one or two people followed, often women. They gathered the wheat into shocks, tying it into bundles using wheat straw. The bundles would stand in the field and eventually be taken to the barn for storage in anticipation of threshing, an activity often saved for autumn or early winter, when the frenetic pace of the summer had eased a bit.<sup>17</sup>

Smaller crops -- melons, tomatoes, beans, onions, turnips, perhaps the types of fruits and vegetables grown in a kitchen garden -- would begin to be harvested during the summer. This bounty would have been prepared for storage, dried or preserved in some fashion, and placed in a root cellar for the long, dreary days of January and February when little fresh food was available. The kitchens of the Ahern women were full of activity as they undoubtedly worked together on these tasks. In the hot days of August in 1858 as Jeremiah's wife Elizabeth gave birth to their son, John, perhaps her sisters-in-law and mother-in-law worked to ready the larder for the winter ahead, and when James' wife, Jane, had little Mary Agnes the following summer, the women helped out in turn.<sup>18</sup>

August and September would signal the ripening of the apples. Such a joy to bite into a fresh crisp apple after a winter of dried fruit - that, itself, having run out sometime in the spring. The apples could be sold, stored, dried, made into apple sauce, and even

hard cider, the “national drink” of 19<sup>th</sup> century rural America. While many of the other food preparation activities were performed by the women, cider making was a male dominated pastime. Men would gather in the orchards, cider presses set up along the lanes, and crush and press the apples, extracting the juice. Stored in barrels, allowed to ferment, the cider provided a crisp and refreshing beverage. While some pro-temperance farmers may have sought out other markets for the apple crop, as an animal food or to make vinegar, it seems unlikely that the Aherns, particularly Michael, whose occupation at the time of the birth of his son, Michael, in 1876 was listed as “beer saloon” on the birth record, would have been averse to a swig of cider after a hard day in the fields or over the forge.<sup>19</sup>

Apples not destined for the cider press might be sliced and strung up over the fire or woodstove to dry. Others might be dried somewhat, then boiled down with cider to make a sweet applesauce. Stored in a stoneware vessel in the farmhouse cellar, the applesauce would keep through the winter, providing a tasty accompaniment to pork or fowl.<sup>20</sup>

By September or October much of the harvest work had been done, but two major crops remained in the fields, the potato and the corn. Some farmers had a goal to harvest the potatoes in as short a time as possible and get them out of the sunlight into the dark storage of the root cellar. Potatoes left in the sun too long would become tainted with an off color. Other farmers might chose to intersperse the potato harvest with other farm activities, as time permitted. Regardless of the timing, the harvest entailed digging with shovels, forks, or claw-shaped potato hooks. Much stooping was required to harvest the potatoes and it is likely the entire family participated in this activity, the tots, low to the ground, being particularly well suited to the task. Full baskets of potatoes would be placed in a root cellar with cabbages, onions, turnips and the like for consumption throughout the winter. In this cool, dark cellar, the farmer was able to periodically inspect the larder, culling items that were beginning to spoil, preventing rot from transferring to the healthy stock.<sup>21</sup>

The harvest fields again became the center of activity as the corn, tall, tasseled out, was ready to be harvested. The men would clear-cut the field, down each row, a razor-sharp blade slicing through the stalk near its base. Behind them, a helper would gather the stalks together, binding them into tight shocks. These shocks could be easily transported as necessary. Following the cutting of the stalks, the farmers and all available hands, began the tedious task of shucking the ears. The shucked ears would be placed in baskets, the best among them kept aside for seed for next-year’s crop. There was little waste from the corn plant. The corn was stored in cribs or bins to be fed to the livestock; the stalks would be gathered and fed to the swine; the husks would be collected for the Mrs. Aherns to stuff into mattresses.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the ongoing annual processes associated with each crop, the planting and tending and harvesting, the agrarian life held its every day activities as well. Each morning and evening the milch cows were called to the barn for milking. It is likely that all the adults were quite familiar with the process, and as the children grew, they, too, would be called into service for the task. Milk was placed in shallow pans, the fatty cream rising to the top and skimmed off to be churned into butter. The remaining milk was perhaps used at the table or fed to the hogs. Depending on the number of cows the farmer had, some milk might have been placed in large, covered milk cans and

transported by cart or train to New Brunswick or another larger city. Sale of the milk, the butter, the eggs gathered, would have provided a source of cash income to purchase some of the necessary items not produced on the farm – coffee, fabric, sugar, or a piece of penny candy for one of the many Mary or John Aherns traveling on the wagon into New Brunswick with their father.

As the heat of the summer subsided, and the days began to cool, the farmers' attentions turned toward the livestock, well-fed from the summer grazing, to the flocks and herds to be culled. The diets of the cows and other farming conditions existant in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century were such that the cows dried up and did not produced milk again until spring. Rather than feed and tend an unproductive cow all winter long, the farmer might sell or slaughter the animal and restock the herd in the spring. The farm sales often occurred in the fall, the slaughtering a bit later as the colder temperatures set in.<sup>23</sup>

Slaughtering and butchering was a tremendous job and entailed help from all quarters. As the time approached, farmers would pull the large cauldrons out of storage, retrieve the meat grinders and sausage stuffers from the neighbor or brother-in-law who had borrowed them last fall, and sharpen the knives in preparation. The women would thoroughly clean the kitchen in anticipation of the upcoming activity. Then all would wait -- and wait -- for the temperature to drop. Without ready refrigeration, the farmer was forced to be patient for the elements to cooperate and keep the meat at as cold and safe a temperature as possible.<sup>24</sup>

On slaughtering day, the men would rise early to light a fire under the huge cauldron of water. As the water was heating, they would corner the victim, stun it, and quickly slash its throat. It would be raised up to speed the bleeding process and then lowered into the cauldron of scalding water, to facilitate the removal of the animal's hair. Everyone in the household participated, and even transient laborers might be called upon to engage in the work.<sup>25</sup>

If the meat was destined for market, the preparation was simple. Salt would be rubbed into the meat and then it would be packed in brine in a barrel and shipped off on the train or canal boat. The hides and tallow also provided a marketable commodity. If the meat was earmarked for consumption by the family, however, the process was more involved.<sup>26</sup>

The animal was left overnight in the cold to "harden." Portions would be cut into shoulders, chops, and hams. It would be salted and packed away in saltpeter brine in barrels. The organs and tongue were stored in a similar fashion and some of the meat was pickled in vinegar. Meanwhile in the kitchen, the women were making headcheese and sausages. Both the men and women would run the meat through the hand-cranked chopper. The women then stuffed the chopped sausage into the casings and tied the filled casings off at both ends.<sup>27</sup>

After such a day of intense labor, the family of the farmer often spent the next day celebrating the job well done. Maybe one of the Aherns or perhaps an in-law Murphy or friends Malone or Scully, Irish all, would have pulled out a fiddle or tin whistle, a jig or reel the perfect chance to enjoy the company of family and good friends. These young families must have felt blest to be surrounded by loved ones in warm homes, their babies growing, the fruits of their labors stored ready to take them through the winter.

Somerset County was originally a predominantly Dutch settled area. Names of Garretson and Van Liew and Voorhees abound on the censuses and the maps of the mid-

19<sup>th</sup> century. The County seems to have prided itself on its role in the Revolutionary War. In the 1830s, with the creation of the Delaware and Raritan Canal, immigrants from Ireland began to arrive, many laborers, and diggers and boatmen on the waterway. In other areas of New Jersey and New York, there have been reports of anti-Irish sentiment, punctuated even by open hostility, but I have found no direct evidence of discrimination against the Aherns. To the contrary, much of the land they acquired was purchased from the local Dutch or English farmers.<sup>28</sup>

While most of their native neighbors attended the local Dutch Reformed Churches, the Ahern family joined the predominantly Irish Catholic community at St. Peter the Apostle Church in New Brunswick. It was at St. Peter's that many of the Ahern children were baptized. The Aherns were a close family, as evidenced by the selections by each of the brothers as godparents to nieces and nephews. Names of other Irish friends, too, appear in the sacramental records, the Malones, the Murphys, the Creedans. As the Irish population in Hillsborough and Franklin townships grew, eventually a Catholic church, St. Joseph's was built in East Millstone to serve the congregation there. John's son, Andrew, was baptized in this church.<sup>29</sup>

For the most part, the adults of the Ahern family were literate, able to sign their names on deeds and naturalization papers. The cultural values of the Irish in America demonstrate the high importance these immigrants placed on land ownership and education. The Aherns shared this ideal, investing in their farms within a few years of their arrival in New Jersey. The Ahern children, too, would have been educated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century schools of Franklin, Hillsborough and Montgomery Townships, or perhaps at the Catholic school of St. Peter's in New Brunswick.

The schools of the era were generally one-room structures, sited approximately three miles apart, the distance a child could be expected to walk or ride a horse to school. Children sat on benches, the older children perhaps at tables. Often there was only one teacher for all the grades, who would instruct the children in reading, writing and arithmetic. Sometimes there would be only a few children in each grade, sometimes as many as eight or more. The younger children could hear what the older children were being taught, and so might even be able to skip a grade. Few schools had wells, so drinking water was carried in pails from nearby houses by some of the older boys. They would also shovel snow, clean the outhouses and tend the fire in the pot-bellied stoves.<sup>30</sup>

The school year for the education of the children would be dictated in part to allow them to participate in the required farming activities. As the fall harvest subsided the children would begin again to attend school and the adults would carry on with the ongoing chores of the land, tending to the last of the duties that need to be accomplished before the winter set in.

After the hams and other pieces had soaked in the brine for two months, or so, they were often smoked to further preserve them and provide additional flavor. Many farms had a smokehouse, a small building, similar in size to an outhouse, though a bit taller. The building might have been constructed of wood or brick or stone. The hams and shoulders or sides of beef were hung from the ceiling on s-hooks in this essentially air-tight building, and a fire of green wood, hickory perhaps, was built below. After allowing the meat to hang for a week over this carefully tended fire, the farmer removed the hams and such, wrapping them in cloth and placing them in a cellar for storage.<sup>31</sup>



The final crop-related task to be completed was threshing. Sometimes the threshing was done as the grain was harvested. Often, however, the task was saved for the fall or winter, after other, more pressing chores had been completed. Threshing is the process whereby the grain kernels are removed from the hulls and stalks. This can be accomplished by use of a flail, a tool with a flat wooden bar brought down on the head of the grain.<sup>32</sup>

The grain would be slapped in such a fashion, over and over, until the seed were released. The long stalks were taken away, and used to stuff mattresses. In the case of rye, these straws might be woven into hats, the thrifty farmers ever on the lookout to make full use of the blessings of the land. Eventually the seeds and bits of straw would be winnowed, tossed into the air, the breeze catching the lighter bits of straw, the heavier seeds falling back down. The resultant seeds would be ground into meal or flour. Perhaps the farming families grew more than the family needed and also used this grain as a cash crop.<sup>33</sup>

Winter, too, held its share of activities. This was a time to cut wood. The cold, crisp air was invigorating. Brother and brother or father and son worked together in the woods, continuing the cooperative efforts demonstrated in so many of their endeavors. The dangerousness of the task of woodcutting certainly played a part in this cooperation as well. Here was a chance to enjoy the quiet solitude of the woods, the crunch of the snow under the boot, James or John spying the track of a rabbit, as he began to swing the axe on another tree.<sup>34</sup>

Winter provided the opportunity for some cold weather recreation. The Delaware and Raritan Canal ran through Somerset County on its course from Trenton to New Brunswick. The canal provided barge transport for many goods, including coal. Stories are told of residents whose properties abutted the canal setting up bottles as targets along their fences. The boatmen on the barges, pulled along at the slow pace of the mules along the towpath, would hone their hurling skills, a lump of coal the perfect object with which to engage in a contest against one's mates to see who could knock down the most bottles. And the clever residents who were willing to set up the bottles had a ready (and cheap!) supply of coal for the winter.<sup>35</sup>

As the temperatures dropped the water from the canal was drained from its active level. When the cold of winter set in, a skating track was formed, allowing the hearty athletes to skate as far as New Brunswick if they wished.<sup>36</sup>

In the absence of electricity, another winter activity in Somerset County involved the harvesting of ice. Uniform blocks of ice would be cut, and pulled by wagon to an ice house where, stored in sawdust, it would last to the summer.

Wintertime was also the time to catch up on farm maintenance and home repairs. Fences were mended. Tools were sharpened and oiled in readiness for the spring planting. Many farmers who made their own tools found plans for these in periodicals such as *The Cultivator*, and would use the slow times in January and February to fashion hay rakes and other implements.<sup>37</sup>

Winter gave way to spring. The cycle of life for the Aherns farming in Somerset County began again, with another sowing, and likely another child on the way.

Two of the four Aherns, John and Michael, spent many more decades in Somerset County. Michael, married in 1862 to Mary Ahern, possibly a distant cousin(?) stayed in

Franklin Township for the rest of his life. He and Mary had several children but only two survived to outlive them. Michael appears to have been a jack-of-all-trades, at various times a bridgetender on the canal, a grocer, a blacksmith and, as mentioned above, a “beer saloon.” His daughter, Mary T. Ahern, followed him into the grocery and bridgetending trade. She passed away in 1928, never having married. Michael’s son, John Edward, moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey where he married a Margaret, the widow of John Kilmet. Margaret was the mother of several children with John Kilmet but does not appear to have had any more children with John Ahern. John Ahern worked as a moulder in a factory and died sometime in 1939.<sup>38</sup>

John and Hannah stayed in Hillsborough Township until the mid-1890s. John purchased several additional parcels of land in Somerset, and eventually sold them to his son, Timothy, who continued to farm in Hillsborough for another decade. In the late 1880s or early 1890s many of John and Hannah’s children began to move into the city, settling in the Bath Beach area of Brooklyn. Two of their children moved to New Haven County, Connecticut, where they settled in Seymour. John died in 1906 and Hannah sometime after that, probably before 1910. They were buried in St. Peter’s Cemetery in New Brunswick.<sup>39</sup>

Jeremiah and Elizabeth moved to Fox Township in Elk County, Pennsylvania in about 1866 or 1867. He worked as a coal miner there, and their relocation may have had something to do with Elizabeth’s family, the Whelans. A Cornelius Whelan also lived in Fox Township and property in Kersey was sold back and forth between the two families. The Pennsylvania Aherns had eight children, six daughters and two sons. It does not appear that sons, William or John ever married, nor did daughters Margaret or Mary. I do not know what became of daughters Elizabeth and Sarah. Jeremiah passed away in 1890, and Elizabeth in 1914. Further research will need to be done in Elk County to learn more about this branch of the family.<sup>40</sup>

James and Jane left their family in Somerset about 1864, apparently traveling overland to California. They lived for a time in San Francisco, where James Bernard was born. Curiously, they left Mary and Henry with relatives in New Jersey, likely one of John’s brothers for a time, sending for them in 1867. No mention of James and Jane’s first born son, John, exists in the family stories. It is likely that he died quite young. It may be that his death precipitated their move to California.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell Gibson, “Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 TO 1990: Table 9” (Washington DC: US Census Bureau, 1998)  
<http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab09.txt>

<sup>2</sup> Millstone New Jersey profile, <http://www.idcide.com/citydata/nj/millstone.htm>

<sup>3</sup>For John Ahern age - John Ahern household, 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Hillsborough township, Millstone post office, dwelling 529, family 549; HeritageQuest M653, roll 708, page 827; for Jeremiah Ahern age - Jerry A Herring household, 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Montgomery township, Harlingen post office, dwelling 219, family 229; HeritageQuest M653, roll 708, page 873; for James Ahern age - James Ahern obituary, *The Sonoma Index Tribune*, Sonoma, California, 21 January 1899, page 3 places James Ahern’s birthdate as 1831 making him 28 in 1860; James Ahern is not located in the 1860 census. An extensive review of the 1860 U.S. population census for Franklin township in Somerset County and comparison with the 1860 Beers map of Franklin Township indicates that James should have been enumerated near dwelling number 102-105/ household number 113-116 or near dwelling number 160-171/ household number 172-184 but it

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appears the census taker missed the family for whatever unknown reason; for Michael Ahern age - Michael A Herring in Richard H. Kuhl household, 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Franklin township, Millstone post office, dwelling 248, family 265; HeritageQuest M653, roll 708, page 35; for John Ahern land ownership - Somerset County New Jersey Deeds Z-2, p 344 Frederick V.L. Voorhees to John Ahern and James Ahern, 21 April 1857; Somerset County New Jersey Deeds I-3, p 297 James Ahern, to Hiram Hyde 13 March 1860; Somerset County New Jersey Deeds J-3, p 177 Hiram Hyde to John Ahern, 27 May 1861; for James Ahern land ownership - Somerset County New Jersey Deeds K-3, p 205 Abraham Whitenack to James O. Harin 17 March 1862; for Jeremiah land ownership - Somerset County New Jersey Deeds W-2, p 416 Thomas Huathwaite to Edward Murphy and Jeremiah Ahern, 28 February 1856

<sup>4</sup> For asset inventory - Michael Ahern inventory, Somerset County probate file R675, County Clerk's office, Somerset County, New Jersey.

<sup>5</sup>For agricultural detail - Louis P. Tremante III, "Agriculture and Farm Life in the New York City Region, 1820-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 2000), 192;

<sup>6</sup> For agricultural products - 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, Schedule 4 – Productions of Agriculture in Hillsborough, Millstone post office, pages 1-17; 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, Schedule 4 – Productions of Agriculture in Franklin Township, various post offices, pages 30-45

<sup>7</sup> 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, Schedule 4 – Productions of Agriculture in Hillsborough, Millstone post office, pages 12-13

<sup>8</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 210-211

<sup>9</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 215

<sup>10</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 215-16

<sup>11</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 232

<sup>12</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 241

<sup>13</sup> For detail of Mary Ahern immigration - New Jersey Deaths vol 21 1886-87, FHL film 589309, Somerset County, Franklin Township indicates Mary Ahern, widow, age 91, born in Ireland, resided in New Jersey 33 years, died 18 Nov 1886, putting her in New Jersey in 1853; for Mary Ahern residence information - Jerry A Herring household, 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Montgomery township, Harlingen post office, dwelling 219, family 229; HeritageQuest M653, roll 708, page 873; Michel Ahern household, 1870 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Franklin township, Harlingen post office, dwelling 265, family 284; HeritageQuest M593, roll 888, page 477; Micheal Aharu (Ahern) household, 1880 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Franklin township 3<sup>rd</sup> District, Enumeration district [ED] 159, supervisor's district [SD] 2, Page No. 7, dwelling 57, family 60; HeritageQuest T9, roll 798, page 498, image 1; for John Ahern marriage date - John Ahern household, 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Hillsborough township, Millstone post office, dwelling 529, family 549; HeritageQuest M653, roll 708, page 827 indicates John Ahern Jr. is 5 years old, so I assume a marriage date approximately 1 year prior; for Jeremiah Ahern marriage date - Marriage record James A. Hervey and Elizabeth Whalen ,Births, marr., deaths Somerset Co. v. AE 1848- 1867 - FHL US/CAN Film [ 584581 ], 6 September 1857, page 316. I believe this is the appropriate record for Jeremiah Ahern and Elizabeth Whalen for the following reasons: The marriage date is consistent with the birth of John Ahern as shown on the 1860 census referenced earlier in this endnote. Jeremiah's wife was Elizabeth Whelan as evidenced by a letter from St Boniface Parish, Kersey PA to the author dated 2 December 2004 regarding a baptismal record for Sara Helena O'Hern child of Jeremiah and Elizabeth (Whelan) O'Hern, born 7 December 1867. While the first name on the marriage certificate is clearly "James A.", given that the wife of James Ahern was Jane Graham, it seems more likely that the groom's name on the record was incorrectly recorded, possibly because James Ahern was in attendance at his brother's wedding and may have been a witness. No witness information was recorded in the marriage record for the county; for marriage date for James Ahern - Marriage date for James Ahern and wife Jane estimated based on birth of daughter, Mary Agnes Ahern, as recorded in family bible of Patrick Thomas Bradley and Mary A. Ahern, daughter of James Ahern and Jane Graham in possession of Miriam Grbac Chambers, Bracerville, OH, showing a birth date of 21 June 1859, and a baptismal record for Mary Ahern, child of James and Jane Ahern on 10 July 1859 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 13 December 2004.; for marriage date for Michael Ahern - Township of Montgomery, County of Somerset State of New Jersey record of Marriages, ,Births, marr., deaths Somerset Co. v. AE 1848- 1867 - FHL US/CAN Film [ 584581 ], 26 November 1862, page 350.

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<sup>14</sup> for son's named John – John and Hannah Murphy Ahern: John Ahern household, 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Hillsborough township, Millstone post office, dwelling 529, family 549; HeritageQuest M653, roll 708, page 827; Jeremiah and Elizabeth Whalen Ahern: Jerry A Herring household, 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Montgomery township, Harlingen post office, dwelling 219, family 229; HeritageQuest M653, roll 708, page 873; James and Jane Graham Ahern: Baptismal record for John Ahern, child of James and Jane Ahern, baptized 7 April 1861 at St. Peter the Apostle Church, New Brunswick, New Jersey, dated 28 January 2005; Michael and Mary Ahern: Baptismal record for John Ahern, child of Michael and Mary Ahern, baptized 18 February 1864 at St. Peter the Apostle Church, New Brunswick, New Jersey, dated 3 February 2005; for daughter's named Mary - John and Hannah Murphy Ahern: John Ahern household, 1860 U.S. Census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Hillsborough township, Millstone post office, dwelling 529, family 549; HeritageQuest M653, roll 708, page 827; Jeremiah and Elizabeth Whalen Ahern: Jeremiah Aheron (Ahern) household 1870 U.S. Census, Elk County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Fox township, Ridgeway post office, dwelling 63, family 66; HeritageQuest M593, roll 1338, page 52; James and Jane Graham Ahern: baptismal record for Mary Ahern, child of James and Jane Ahern on 10 July 1859 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 13 December 2004; Michael and Mary Ahern: baptismal record for Mary Ahern, child of Michael and Mary Ahern on 28 August 1866 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 3 February 2005; for loss of children: Hannah Murphy Ahern: John Joice household, 1900 U.S. census, Kings County, New York, population schedule, 31-Wd Brooklyn Borough, ED 571, SD 2, sheet 9A, dwelling 149, family 182, HeritageQuest T623, roll 1069, page 238A; Elizabeth Whalen Ahern: Elizabeth Ahern household, 1900 U.S. census, Elk County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Fox township, ED 32, SD 14, sheet 8B, dwelling 142, family 147, HeritageQuest T623, roll 1406, page 48B; Jane Graham Ahern: James Horn (Ahern) household 1870 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, Petaluma post office, dwelling 75, family 77; HeritageQuest M593, roll 91, page 456 indicates no child in household named John. Additionally James and Jane had a child in 1873 named John (John C. Ahern obituary, *The Petaluma Courier*, Petaluma, California, 24 June 1896, page 2) and Jane died in childbirth with this child (Jane Aheran death record Sonoma County California, 9 October 1873), so it is presumed the first John born to this couple died young, probably in New Jersey, but no death record has been located.; Mary Ahern: Michael Ahern household, 1900 U.S. census, Somerset County, New Jersey, population schedule, Franklin township, ED 81, SD 4, sheet 7A, dwelling 137, family 149, HeritageQuest T623, roll 994, page 197A; for source of poem: Jenny Marsh, "Little Ones," *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine* Vol. 51 (Sept 1855): 256, accessed from American Periodical Series online <<http://proquest.umi.com/offcampus.lib.washington.edu/pqdweb?index=35&did=327019981&SrchMode=3&sid=1&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1114382902&clientId=8991&aid=1>> .

<sup>15</sup> For agricultural procedure - Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 247-9; for discussion of sibling cooperation - Sonya Salamon, "Sibling Solidarity as an Operating Strategy in Illinois Agriculture," *Rural Sociology* Vol 47, No. 2 (Summer 1982) 349-68.

<sup>16</sup> For harvesting information - Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 250; for description of buckwheat – "The live of a Buckwheat Plant," New York State Agricultural Experiment Station Cornell University, Geneva, New York, online <<http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/hort/faculty/bjorkman/buck/Buckgrowth.html>>

<sup>17</sup> For description of harvesting - Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," .

<sup>18</sup> For harvesting information - Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 283; for birth information of John, son of Elizabeth and Jeremiah - Elizabeth Ahern household, 1900 U.S. census, Elk County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Fox township, ED 32, SD 14, sheet 8B, dwelling 142, family 147, HeritageQuest T623, roll 1406, page 48B; for birth information for Mary Agnes daughter of Jane and James Ahern - baptismal record for Mary Ahern, child of James and Jane Ahern on 10 July 1859 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 13 December 2004.

<sup>19</sup> For apple information - Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 287-90; for Michael Ahern occupation - Somerset County, New Jersey Records of births, marriages, and deaths of New Jersey, 1848-1900 FHL film 494180 page 391, Michael Ahern, son of Michael and Mary Ahern 17 July 1876.

<sup>20</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 287-9.

<sup>21</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 292-5.

<sup>22</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 301-4.

- <sup>23</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 314.
- <sup>24</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 334-35.
- <sup>25</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 336.
- <sup>26</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 337-40
- <sup>27</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>28</sup> A. Van Doren Honeyman, editor, *Northwestern New Jersey: A History of Somerset, Morris, Hunterdon, Warren and Sussex Counties* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1927) 17, 220; Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park: Delaware and Raritan Canal History, online <http://www.dandrcanal.com/history.html>, data downloaded April 25, 2005; Somerset County New Jersey Deeds Z-2, p 344 Frederick V.L. Voorhees to John Ahern and James Ahern, 21 April 1857; Somerset County New Jersey Deeds I-3, p 297 James Ahern, to Hiram Hyde 13 March 1860; Somerset County New Jersey Deeds J-3, p 177 Hiram Hyde to John Ahern, 27 May 1861; Somerset County New Jersey Deeds K-3, p 205 Abraham Whitenack to James O. Harin 17 March 1862; Somerset County New Jersey Deeds W-2, p 416 Thomas Huathwaite to Edward Murphy and Jeremiah Ahern, 28 February 1856
- <sup>29</sup> John P. Wall and Harold E. Pickersgill, editors, *History of Middlesex County New Jersey 1664-1920, Volume 1*, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1921) 343; Baptismal record for Mary Ahern, child of James and Jane Ahern, Sponsors Jeremiah Ahern & Elizabeth Ahern on 10 July 1859 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 13 December 2004; Baptismal record for John Ahern, child of James and Jane Ahern, Sponsors Michael Ahern & Julia Byrnes on 7 April 1861 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 28 January 2005; Baptismal record for Michael H. Ahern, child of James and Jane Ahern, Sponsors Thomas Malone & Mary Ahern on 10 July 1859 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 13 December 2004; Baptismal record for Mary Ahern, child of John and Honora Ahern, Sponsors James Ahern & Jane Ahern on 26 December 1858 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 13 December 2004; Baptismal record for Jeremiah Ahern, child of John and Honora Ahern, Sponsors Edward Murphy & Delia McCord on 22 July 1860 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 28 January 2005; Baptismal record for Timothy Ahern, child of John and Honora Ahern, Sponsors Cornelius Crevan & Honor Coffy on 26 April 1868 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 3 February 2005; Baptismal record for John Ahern, child of Michael and Mary Ahern, Sponsors Cornelius Creten & Honera Murphy on 18 February 1864 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 3 February 2005; ; Baptismal record for Mary A. Ahern, child of Michael and Mary Ahern, Sponsors Thomas Hanly & Catherine Shine on 14 October 1866 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 3 February 2005; ; Baptismal record for Margaret Ahern, child of Jerry and Elizabeth Ahern, Sponsors James & Jane Ahern on 6 October 1861 from St Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, New Jersey dated 28 January 2005; ; Baptismal record for Andrew Ahern, child of John Ahern and Hannah Murphy, Sponsors John & Mary Malone on 3 April 1870 from St Joseph Church, East Millstone, New Jersey dated 5 January 2004; Franklin Township photo archive, Franklin Township, New Jersey, online <<http://www.franklintwp.org/photoarchive/photodb/ff3c1f2290a711d4822800104b2d2ee7.asp>> accessed April 26, 2005
- <sup>30</sup> William B. Brahms, *Franklin township, Somerset County, NJ: A History* (Somerset, New Jersey: Franklin Township Public Library, 1998) 349-352
- <sup>31</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 337-39
- <sup>32</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 341-3.
- <sup>33</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 342-3
- <sup>34</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 344
- <sup>35</sup> James and Margaret Cawley, *Along the Delaware and Raritan Canal* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970)
- <sup>36</sup> James and Margaret Cawley, *Along the Delaware and Raritan Canal* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1970)
- <sup>37</sup> Tremante, "Agriculture and Farm Life," 348; The Revolving Wooden Hay Rake, *The Cultivator*, Vol 7, Issue 9, September 1859, page 268 online <<http://proquest.umi.com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/pqdweb?RQT=309&Fmt=11&VType=PQD&VName=HNP&VInst=PROD&TS=1114643133&clientId=8991&did=438860812&SrchMode=3&sid=1&index=3&startPage=4>>

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<sup>38</sup> for marriage date for Michael Ahern -Township of Montgomery, County of Somerset State of New Jersey record of Marriages, Births, marr., deaths Somerset Co. v. AE 1848- 1867 - FHL US/CAN Film [ 584581 ], 26 November 1862, page 350; Michael Ahern inventory, Somerset County probate file R675, County Clerk's office, Somerset County, New Jersey; for death of Mary T. Ahern- "Obituary, Miss Mary T. Ahern Buried," 27 November 1928, *New Brunswick Home News*, New Brunswick, New Jersey; for John Edward Ahern information - IGI, FHL Batch M009210, 9 June 1898, Elizabeth, Union, New Jersey;; John Ahern household, 1900 U.S. census, Union County, New Jersey, population schedule, 9-Wd Elizabeth, ED 111, SD 4, sheet 16A, dwelling 228, family 321, HeritageQuest Series: T623 Roll: 996 Page: 203; New Jersey. Surrogate's Court (Union County) Index to surrogate's dockets, A-G, 1857-1949 - FHL US/CAN Film, 914365, page 14.

<sup>39</sup> For additional land purchases by John Ahern - Hiram Hyde to John Ahern, 30 May 1861, Somerset County New Jersey Deeds J3-177; John Cruser to John Ahern, 18 July 1866, Somerset County New Jersey Deeds S3-615; Edward Bennet to John Ahern, 3 Jan 1874, Somerset County, New Jersey Deeds R4-21; Conrad Rupert to John Ahern, 5 Feb 1885, Somerset County, New Jersey Deeds F6-169; for sale by John Ahern - John Ahern to Timothy Ahern, 7 Aug 1895, Somerset County, New Jersey Deeds A8-306; for children of John Ahern in Bath Beach - John Joice household, 1900 U.S. census, Kings County, New York, population schedule, 31-Wd Brooklyn Borough, ED 571, SD 2, sheet 9A, dwelling 149, family 182, HeritageQuest T623, roll 1069, page 238A; Andrew Ahern household, 1900 U.S. census, Kings County, New York, population schedule, 31-Wd Brooklyn Borough, ED 571, SD 2, sheet 10B, dwelling 172, family 206, HeritageQuest T623, roll 1069, page 239; John Ahern household, 1900 U.S. census, Kings County, New York, population schedule, 31-Wd Brooklyn Borough, ED 571, SD 2, sheet 10B, dwelling 173, family 207, HeritageQuest T623, roll 1069, page 239; Edward Ahern household, 1900 U.S. census, Kings County, New York, population schedule, 31-Wd Brooklyn Borough, ED 571, SD 2, sheet 12A, dwelling 198, family 233, HeritageQuest T623, roll 1069, page 241; for sons in Connecticut - Cornelius Ahearn household, 1910 U.S. census, New Haven County, Connecticut, population schedule Seymour town, ED 453, SD 29, sheet 13B, dwelling 172, family 251, HeritageQuest T624, roll 137, page 30; Michael Ahearn household, 1910 U.S. census, New Haven County, Connecticut, population schedule Seymour town, ED 453, SD 29, sheet 17B, dwelling 256, family 339, HeritageQuest T624, roll 137, page 34; for death of John Ahern - John Ahern death certificate no. 4890 (1906) State of New York; for burial - John Ahern obituary *New Brunswick Daily Times*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 7 March 1906. I have not located a death record for Hannah Ahern and the grave marker for John and Hannah Ahern in St Peter's cemetery in New Brunswick does not list a date of death, but my examinations of the censuses for the households of her children in 1910 do mention her, so I assume she died prior to the 1910 census.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from St. Boniface Parish, Kersey, Pennsylvania, to author dated 2 December 2004 indicates a baptismal record for Sara Helena O'Hern, child of Jeremiah and Elizabeth (Whelan) O'Hern born on 7 December 1867, 1880 census indicates Katie Ahern, age 14 in 1880 was born in New Jersey, placing move in 1866 or 1867, see Geramiah Ahern household, 1880 U.S. Census, Elk County, Pennsylvania, population schedule, Fox township, ED 134, SD 10, Page No. 13, dwelling 112, family 119, HeritageQuest T9, roll 1125, page 364, image 1; for property transactions with Cornelius Whalen see Index to Deeds, Elk County Pennsylvania, FHL film Deed index v. A-D 1844-1910 - FHL US/CAN Film 870473; for death dates - Letter from St. Boniface Parish, Kersey, Pennsylvania, to author dated 15 April 2005 indicates death dates for the family, buried in Section F, row c, graves 1-6. Margaret A'Hern, died 1933 and Mary A'Hern died in 1928, both are buried with their maiden names so don't appear to have married. Additionally, William A'Hern and John A'Hern buried in the same plot don't appear to have wives with them.

<sup>41</sup> Bill Bradley, "Re: I need to cite you as a source." Email message from <bradley547@yahoo.com> Martinez, CA 94553 (925) 335-9188, indicates that James and possibly Jane Ahern left New Jersey in 1864 and traveled by covered wagon, based on a conversation Bill had with Miriam "Brownie" Grbac, granddaughter of James Ahern in the mid-1970s

*My friend, Judy Baumhover, was going back East to visit family. She kindly asked if she could do any research for me when she was there. Well, as a matter of fact, there's a cemetery in New Brunswick, St. Peter's. I know Michael Ahern is buried there – his obit says so. But there must be some others, maybe his brother, John, maybe their mother. It would be great to get pictures of the headstones – perhaps one would hold some little bit of carving – a name, a place, a date – that might give me a clue.*

*I'd been in contact with the sexton of the cemetery. I wrote a letter in November. Called to follow up in January. He'd been busy and hadn't had a chance to get to it, but he would when he could. I called again in February, to let him know Judy was coming and could he find something. He said if she called him and let him know when she'd be there he'd try to see what he could do.*

*I got a phone message from Judy one day. "I called the guy at the cemetery and he said he won't have time to get any information for me but I'm welcome to come and look. He says the cemetery is fifty acres. What do you think?" Yikes! All I could tell her was that these people started dying in the 1870s so look for graves in "the old section." And if it was too hard, just to forget about it. I'd figure out something else.*

*A week and a half later, Judy called from the cemetery in New Brunswick. Her tale...*

*"I was driving to the cemetery and there was the main entrance but I kept on going. I'm not going to turn in there. I went to the next entrance and turned. I got about a block into the cemetery, and all of a sudden I was really thirsty. The straw had fallen out of my drink, so I stopped the car. I was fiddling around on the floor looking for the straw. I lifted my head up, looked through the windshield, and the first thing I saw, dead ahead of me, was the word AHERN on a headstone. It was John and his wife, Hannah."*

*Somebody led Judy right to John. Clearly when I'd asked Jane's portrait on the wall to tell me something, she answered.*

*Judy walked the cemetery and found more treasures. Michael and his wife, Mary. Near John and Hannah, with an marker identical to Michael and Mary, was John McGill. I don't know who John McGill is, but Michael and Mary had nieces who lived with them, Mary and Catherine McGill. I'm still waiting for Jane's guidance in fitting the McGills into this puzzle.*

## Chapter 3: 8 58 N – 79 32 W

The *Ocean Queen*, a 327-foot side-wheeled steamer sat at pier 42 on the North River at the foot of Canal Street in New York. Among the 300-odd passengers preparing to depart were seven-year-old Mary Agnes Ahern and her four-year-old brother Henry. They may have been traveling with a designated companion, although the author's review of the passenger list did not detect any known relatives. Perhaps their parents purchased first class tickets for the youngsters with the expectation that they would be well tended to in such accommodations.

The dockside was a hectic place. Men, women and children bustled about awaiting their chance to board. The decks of the ship were filled with luggage of every size and description. Big trunks, little trunks, carpetbags and valises, bundles and bedding were strewn about, blocking pathways. A gong split the late morning air to alert those not sailing that it was time to disembark. The crowds at the pier were thick, people milling about in all directions. A second gong sounded "All Ashore." A mad rush to the pier ensued, accompanied by much jostling of the passengers still attempting to board. The last gong sounded. Soon the gangways were closed and Captain Connor gave the order to cast off. The ship began to edge forward amidst the shouts of passengers aboard and friends and families left behind exchanging final farewells.<sup>1</sup>

As the pilot navigated the ship toward the harbor entrance, the passengers were herded below decks for the examination of their tickets. Any without a ticket would be sent back to shore with the pilot. The harbor was a busy place, ships coming and going in all directions. Schooners and sloops, barks and steamships filled the waters of the busy port, many of the arriving ships reporting dense fog in the Atlantic. The *Ocean Queen* made her way southward, destined for Aspinwall on the north side of the Isthmus of Panama.<sup>2</sup>

Mary and Henry were likely filled with awe and wonder and perhaps a bit of apprehension at the journey before them. The *Ocean Queen*, built in 1857, had been purchased from the Vanderbilt line by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, which spent a year retrofitting her to their standards. She had been reintroduced into service by Pacific Mail in October of 1866, just seven months before the Ahern children's voyage. As the ship plied its way south, smoke billowed from the two funnels, and the square sails on the three masts harnessed the ocean breezes. Her large paddlewheels on the sides churned the ocean water fifteen times a minute, the eagle figurehead at her bow scanning the horizon.<sup>3</sup>

She had three decks, with the deck for the steerage passengers below that for the first- and second-cabin passengers. On a typical steamship of the era, the first class staterooms were located on both sides of the main deck opening to the dining saloon and other public rooms. Staterooms usually contained three berths, one above another, together with a cushioned locker which could accommodate another passenger. Some rooms were smaller with only two berths, some a bit larger with four. Each room had a



mirror, toilet stand, and washbowl. The floors were carpeted, and the berths were screened with outer damask curtains, extending from top to bottom, and inner cambric curtains. The saloons were furnished with long tables, at which passengers dined. These tables would be used for reading or writing between meals.”<sup>4</sup>

The *Ocean Queen* reached Aspinwall on May 9, eight days out of New York. Aspinwall, formerly Colon, was a town in the midst of a marsh. The streets were little more than bog pathways, some covered with logs or planks. The local inhabitants would meet the passengers of the arriving ships with offers to carry baggage or sell tropical fruits, cigars, rum, or palm-leaf fans. In the warm, rainy climate of the tropics, the natives might be dressed only in a simple cotton shirt or pants, perhaps as little as a loincloth, the smaller children wearing absolutely nothing. It must have been a stark contrast to the plush accommodations and impeccable service on board the *Ocean Queen*.<sup>5</sup>

The passengers may have overnighted in Aspinwall, or perhaps they were able to catch an immediate train to Panama. The forty-seven mile journey from Aspinwall to Panama took three to four hours in the yellow, cane-seated carriages pulled by a steam engine. It was a winding journey up and over the isthmus, crossing over 300 bridges and culverts, before the terminus in Panama City. Along the way, Mary and Henry would have seen a kaleidoscope of tropical colors - purple, blue, orange, pink and white flowers highlighting the verdant green foliage and twining vines. The little, wood-burning steam engine, passing simple huts with roofs of thatched palm leaves, pulled the twenty or so carriages and boxcars as they snaked forward, at times the cars in the front and those in the rear passing upon themselves so closely that the passengers could have exchanged a greeting through the open windows. A drenching tropical downpour may have given way to sunlight upon a distant waterfall. As the clouds lifted the raindrops upon the ferns and leaves sparkled like jewels.

A muddy brown river made its way over the hills, often right alongside the railway. The train might have stopped at a way station to take on water. At such a point the natives would have approached the passengers with offers of melons, bananas, oranges or hard-boiled eggs. Commerce conducted, the train sped its way down the hill toward Panama through groves of coconut and palm trees.<sup>6</sup>

When the train arrived at Panama, passengers would have perhaps checked into a hotel, or made their way to a steam launch which would take them to their outbound ship, bound for New Zealand or the Orient or in Mary and Henry’s case, San Francisco. Mary and Henry boarded the *Sacramento*, another of Pacific Mail’s side-wheeled steamers. Slightly smaller than the *Ocean Queen* at 304 feet and only 2 decks, she held two masts and only one funnel. She was described by an employee of the Pacific Mail as ” a perfect ‘beauty’ – a duck – ... nautical men & engineers say (she) will be the swiftest ship in the world...”<sup>7</sup>

The *Sacramento* began her northward journey in the late afternoon of May 10, her passengers again assembling for examination of the tickets. Woe to any stowaway who would have to be sent back ashore. As was the custom of the day she stopped at Acapulco, arriving on the 16<sup>th</sup> to take on her usual supplies of coal and other provisions. She stopped again, at Manzanillo, to offload miscellaneous merchandise and to take on some freight. She made one more stop the next day to drop off two of her 590 passengers at Cape San Lucas and headed back to sea for her final destination in California.<sup>8</sup>

It was common practice in the nineteenth century that livestock would be carried aboard the ships and cattle, sheep, hogs and poultry would be slaughtered as needed to provide meat for the ship's table. Depending on the voyage and the tastes of the passengers, the food was both praised and reviled. First cabin passengers could expect to sit for breakfast in the dining saloon from 8 to 10 a.m., supper in the early afternoon and dinner from 6 to 8. The evening might be capped off with an impromptu concert or an evening of pleasant talk or games out on the deck before the lights were extinguished for the night.<sup>9</sup>

As Mary and Henry's ship steamed northward along the coast, they must have been anxious to see their parents again after a long absence. After leaving New Jersey in 1864 and James and Jane settled in San Francisco, Mary and Henry remaining behind in Somerset County. As the pleasant May days passed, James would have read the shipping news in the *Daily Alta California*, and looked toward the signal tower on San Francisco's Telegraph Hill for the sign that a side-wheeled steamer had been sighted. What a happy reunion must have taken place that Friday evening on the pier at the foot of Brannan Street when Mary and Henry disembarked into the waiting arms of their eager parents.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Classified ad, Shipping, *New York Times*, 27 April 1867, page 7; Mary Ahern Certificate of Baptism 10 July 1859, St. Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, NJ, dated 13 December 2004; Michael H. Ahern Certificate of Baptism 1 June 1862, St. Peter the Apostle Parish, New Brunswick, NJ, dated 13 December 2004; John Haskell Kemble, *The Panama Route*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1943) 150; Marine Intelligence – Cleared, *New York Times*, 2 May 1867, page 8

<sup>2</sup> Kemble, *The Panama Route*, 150; Marine Intelligence - Arrived *New York Times*, New York, New York, 2 May 1867, page 8.

<sup>3</sup> Kemble, *The Panama Route*, 238-9; Palmer List of Merchant Vessels, <<http://www.geocities.com/mppraetorius/com-qu.htm>>

<sup>4</sup> Kemble, *The Panama Route*, 122-3

<sup>5</sup> Foreign ports, *New York Times*, New York, New York, 26 May 1867, 8; H. Willis Baxley, M.D., *What I Saw on the West Coast of South and North America, and at the Hawaiian Islands*, (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1865) 28; F.A. Blackburn, "From Aspinwall to Panama" 1867 on Trainweb <<http://www.trainweb.org/panama/fatp.html>> accessed 14 May 2005; A. J. Johnson,

<sup>6</sup> Baxley, 28; Albert A. Webster, "The Isthmus and Panama" 1867 on Trainweb <<http://www.trainweb.org/panama/i&p.html>> accessed 14 May 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Kemble, *The Panama Route*, 244; Kemble, *The Panama Route*, 95;

<sup>8</sup> "From Panama – Arrival of the Steamer 'Sacramento'", *Daily Alta California*, San Francisco, California, 25 May 1867 page 1; Kemble, *The Panama Route*, 151.

<sup>9</sup> Kemble, *The Panama Route*; *ibid* 161; *ibid* 159; *ibid* 164.

<sup>10</sup> Bill Bradley, "Re: I need to cite you as a source." Email message from <bradley547@yahoo.com> Martinez, CA 94553 (925) 335-9188, indicates that James and possibly Jane Ahern left New Jersey in 1864 and traveled by covered wagon, based on a conversation Bill had with Miriam "Brownie" Grbac, granddaughter of James Ahern in the mid-1970s;. James Ahern sold property in Franklin Township to Abraham Whitenack on 1 April 1863 per Somerset County Deeds Vol N 3-499 and review of the Somerset County grantor and grantee deed indexes 1785-1916 from FHL films 900520, 900522, 900526 and 900528 do not indicate he was a party to any further land transactions in Somerset County. James and Jane are not listed in the passenger lists for the Ocean Queen or the Sacramento, so it is presumed that Mary and Henry were not traveling with their parents. In addition, James Bernard Ahern's death record dated 6 Nov 1945 from the California death records online accessed through Rootsweb indicates that JBA was born 9 Sept 1866 in California, so James and Jane would have been in San Francisco when Mary and Henry arrived; dock site – John Haskell Kemble, *San Francisco Bay: A Pictorial Maritime History* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1957) p 20

*I had looked at my share of censuses, looking for James Ahern. I found him in 1880, and finally, after much searching, in 1870. In 1870 he was listed as James Horn. But clearly he was living on the same property, in the same town, with many of the same neighbors. My gut told me there had to be some way to take the census and locate it on a map, and find out just exactly where that piece of property was.*

*I took a trip to California in November of 2003 to visit my dad. We set out on an expedition to the Sonoma County Library in Santa Rosa, armed with a list of the names of James' neighbors from the census. We found an 1877 atlas of Sonoma County and began to look at the maps, searching for a name, any name, we recognized from the list. Rose. We found Robert Rose. Oh! There's Ingram! He's right next to the Ahern's on the census. We're close! And there on the crack of the page – "J. A" on one side, "hern" on the other. "J. Ahern." There in Vallejo Township, Sonoma County, California, was the 160 acres of James Ahern. And on the quarter section just to the east we saw Wildcat Mountain. As I look at the map now, it's the only peak identified on the entire page.*

*And my father turned to me and said, "You know, when I was a kid and we'd drive up to Sonoma to see Ma's Aunt Belle, Ma would always say, right when we passed by this knoll, 'I was born at the foot of the Wildcat.'" It took our two generations and the ghost of my grandmother to bring that map to life.*

## 38 11 N – 122 28 W

James and Jane left San Francisco possibly in late 1866 or early 1867. By now, the family had grown again. James Bernard Ahern was born in San Francisco in September of 1866, Mary and Henry arriving on the *Sacramento* in May of 1867 to meet a new baby brother. As they settled in New Jersey, away from the major city, but still only a few hours outside of it, so too, the Aherns found a similar place in California.<sup>1</sup>

They traveled north to Sonoma County, a land of rolling hills situated between the Pacific Ocean and San Pablo Bay. The Aherns settled outside of Petaluma, near the town of Lakeville, which lies on the Petaluma Creek, a narrow, shallow, twisting waterway linking the town of Petaluma with San Pablo bay. Its endless curves, prompting a traveler to remark that its curved path resembled “the track of a man who spent half an hour looking for a lost pocket-book in a field,” made navigation up the waterway by steamer a dicey proposition. Sailing vessels might go up the creek, but the steamers from San Francisco stopped at Lakeville. Passengers continuing on to Petaluma or Sonoma would transfer to stagecoach, or later, railroad. Vessels were in constant danger of running aground in the mud, in which case the unfortunate passengers would be called into service to push the ship to freedom. In some places the waterway was so narrow that a passenger commented, when one boat tried to pass another, “There was not enough room to insert this sheet of paper.”<sup>2</sup>

Lakeville was a not much more than a transfer point. It was seven miles down the winding creek from Petaluma, twenty-five miles up the bay by steamer from San Francisco. In 1873 the steamer, *James M. Donahue*, regularly made the journey from the city in about 90 minutes.<sup>3</sup>

James, with Russell Huntley, purchased a one hundred and sixty acre parcel, a quarter section, from William Bihler in January of 1872 for \$1,620. The Ahern family had been living on that property at the time of the census in July of 1870, perhaps even as early as August of 1867 when James registered to vote in Vallejo Township.<sup>4</sup>

A road ran through the property, connecting it to the north with neighbors Isaac and Mary Ingram, and winding around the four-mile route through the lands of William Bihler and G. W. Kimball to the villages of Lakeville and Donahue’s Landing. Numerous creeks meandered across the lots, connecting the many winding sloughs and streams that coursed through the rolling hills. Just to the northeast of the Ahern farm towered Wildcat Mountain, a 682-foot hill, presumably named for the local predator of the many rabbits and small game that populated the local grasslands.<sup>5</sup>

The nearby terrain consists of grass-covered hills, green in the winter and spring but turning to brown by mid-summer. Stands of oaks dot the hillsides and line sections of the roadways. Eucalyptus trees were introduced into the area in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to act as windbreaks. The climate is mild, the hottest summer days reaching the mid-80s, the nights comfortably cool and dry. Sometimes the fog rolls in from the ocean or the bay, but it generally burns off by late morning.

Hawks fly overhead, circling, eyes alert for a rabbit or vole. Garter snakes, black with turquoise and coral stripes slither through the grass. Blue-belly lizards bask on rocks in the warm sun. Frogs spawn in the streams. Fish swim in the creeks.

Against this pastoral backdrop, James and Jane raised their growing family and made their livelihood as farmers. At the time, Sonoma County was an immigrant land. The 1870 and 1880 censuses from the area read like a geography book, with farmers and dairymen, labors and tinsmiths from China, and Illinois, Australia and Tennessee, Baden and Louisiana, England and Wisconsin, Italy and Ohio and many, like James and Jane, from Ireland. While many children were born in California, only a handful of adults were natives of the Golden State, the remainder drawn by the siren call of all the riches the West had to offer the eager immigrant.<sup>6</sup>

James started out his farm as a dairy. Most of the farmers in Vallejo Township grew some combination of wheat, oats and hay. Many had a single or perhaps two milch cows and kept a pig or two as well as several horses for farm labor and transportation. In 1870, however, James was growing no wheat or oats, just hay for feed for his 17 cows, the 12 in the dairy herd producing some 3000 pounds of butter. The 150,000 residents of San Francisco likely provided a large market for this bounty.<sup>7</sup>

Illustrations of neighboring farms from the period suggest something of the way of life of a Sonoma County farmer. Many houses of the period were two stories with a gabled roof and clapboard siding. Often a large porch allowed the inhabitants to sit out and enjoy the warm evenings. In addition to the home, a dairy farm certainly would have included a large barn. Inside there would be stanchions to secure the cows for milking, a trough running through for the animals to eat from while being milked. On the other side of the barn would have been a tack room. The area above the main section of the barn would have been used for hay storage.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps there was a separate creamery for processing the milk into butter, or maybe that function was carried on in another section of the main barn. Other smaller building would have included an outhouse or two, and a smokehouse. If there were springs on the land, a springhouse might have been built to provide a cool building to store the butter and other perishable items.<sup>9</sup>

In order to operate a successful dairy, a farmer had to be regular in his habits and manner. The cow is a sensitive machine, easily subject to distress and decreased output resulting from inconsistent treatment. A careful dairyman would be deferential to his ladies, milking them at consistent times, twice daily, 365 days a year, treating them with kindness and consideration, and constant concern for their well being and happiness.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time the practical dairyman should also be ever mindful of the management of his dairy, tracking statistics for each cow of volume of milk produced and the butterfat content of the milk. He should know the cost of feed for his cows and assess with regularity the profit or loss from each beast, and be ready to take appropriate action to dispose of any animal which is not producing enough to garner him a profit.<sup>11</sup>

A good dairyman should also be clean and neat and orderly in the management of his farm and creamery. Milk is constantly subject to taint from impurities brought about by dirty milking and storage conditions. It must be kept at a consistent temperature, and watched to determine the correct time to skim the cream, the correct level of acidity to begin the churning process, the exact moment when the fat globules in the milk begin to coagulate and form the butter. The butter must be properly salted to reduce it's tendency

to decompose, and packaged properly, against the damaging effects of heat and light and oxidation, to allow it to naturally age and ripen, just as a fine cheese or cask of wine improves with age.<sup>12</sup>

James conducted his dairy career at the time when a “modern” farmer was learning the science as well as the art of his trade. At the start of his occupation, he was likely leaving the milk in shallow trays or pails to separate, but as the 1870s wore on, advancements were being made in the operation of dairies, including the invention of the cream separator in 1878.<sup>13</sup>

The Ahern family farm’s operations expanded over the ensuing decade, and likely beyond. With the help of various farm hands, the 15 year-old Charles Lucking in 1870, and Lewis Emsond and Henry Robinson, milkers from Switzerland and California, in 1880, and perhaps others in the interim, James began to grow barley and wheat, 40 acres in total in 1880, as well as keeping four dozen chickens. They continued to produce butter and keep hogs. Hogs were a good complement to the dairy cattle. The cream, skimmed off the milk would be turned into butter; the remaining skimmed milk would provide a steady and nutritious food source for the swine.<sup>14</sup>

As the farm operations grew, so too did the family. Daughter Sarah Anne arrived in May of 1869. Jane Isabella, “Belle,” was born in 1871. Her godparents were Isaac and Mary Ingram, the next-door neighbors, who, over the next 30 years would continue to have a deep and lasting relationship with the family. Another birth, two years later, brought life, and death, to the Aherns.<sup>15</sup>

In September of 1873, Jane gave birth to a son, John. This was the second son named John, born to the couple. In about March of 1861, in Millstone, New Jersey, a son was born, John, named for James’ father, carrying on the Irish tradition of naming the first son for the paternal grandfather. He was baptized at St. Peter the Apostle Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on April 7 of that year, his uncle Michael, James’ younger brother as godfather, Julia Byrnes as godmother. Although no death record has yet been found, it would appear that John died at an early age.<sup>16</sup>

Jane, giving birth to the second baby John in Lakeville in 1873, did not survive. The cause of death by the Sonoma County records is listed as “childbirth.” In the case of such a birth, the seventh child born to a 38 year-old woman, it is possible she bled to death, the uterus failing to adequately contract after the birth. The directory in the atlas of the time, doesn’t list a doctor in Vallejo Township, just a Dr. Wells in Petaluma, and generally at the time, women were not attended in childbirth by a physician.<sup>17</sup>

So, in 1873, 41 year-old James Ahern found himself, a widower, a father of six: Mary, age 14, Henry 11, James Bernard, 6, Sarah, 4, Belle, 2 and baby John. In that era, Mary would already have been helping her mother significantly with the household and childcare duties. While Henry was outside, assisting his father with the dairy and farm chores, and Jimmy was gathering the eggs, Mary would have worked along side her mother, learning to bake and cook and sew and clean - to stuff a mattress with straw or corn husks, to can peaches and make applesauce and jam, to bathe and change an infant, to make glue, to preserve eggs, to boil corned beef, to learn the multitude of tasks required of her in her anticipated career of wife and mother. And Mary must have learned them well, preparing her to be a fine mother to her own large family.<sup>18</sup>

Even with the loss of Jane, the Aherns were fortunate. Next door, Mary Ingram, no children of her own, likely stepped in to assist James and Mary in rearing the younger

children. Isaac and Mary's close relationship with the family is evidenced by the honor of being Belle's godparents. The Ingram's too, were farmers, he from Kentucky, she from Louisiana. One can imagine the gracious southern hospitality of this couple next door as they became a second set of parents to the motherless Aherns.<sup>19</sup>

In 1880, Mary, a young woman of twenty, was keeping house for her father, still on the family farm. Next door, at the Ingram's, a carpenter and two farm laborers assisted Isaac in his duties – Charles Graves, a carpenter from New York, James Taylor and Patrick Thomas “Tom” Bradley, farm laborers from Canada and Pennsylvania, respectively. Patrick was twelve years Mary's senior, but somehow the two of them found themselves smitten (perhaps at the urging of Mary Ingram?) and were married in 1881. The following year, Jane Elizabeth, “Lizzie” named after her maternal and paternal grandmothers, was born to Mary and Tom.<sup>20</sup>

In 1909 when she wrote out her will, Mary Ingram still bore a place in her heart for the Ahern family. She left specific bequests to “my friend Mary Bradley of Tiburon,” Mary's sister, “my friend Sarah Ahern of San Francisco,” as well as to Mary's daughter, “my friend Lizzie Bradley of Tiburon.” In addition, Lizzie was also named a residuary beneficiary. Perhaps Mary Ingram was especially fond of Lizzie because of her handicap. Lizzie had been born deaf.<sup>21</sup>

James continued to farm in Vallejo Township throughout most of the 1880s. The 1890 Great Register of Voters for California show Henry had moved to San Francisco where he worked as a teamster. However, James Bernard “Jimmy” and Tom Bradley are both shown as farmers in Vallejo Township, while James is shown as a farmer in Sonoma Township. His obituary indicates that he moved to Embarcadero, a landing place on Sonoma creek, in 1889. He eventually sold his 160-acre farm in September of 1891 to Cornelius Reagan for approximately \$4,900. James lived in the Embarcadero area, near the town of Schellville at least as late as the summer of 1896.<sup>22</sup>

Mary and Tom and Jimmy and his wife Sarah moved from Lakeville to Tiburon in the early 1890s. As time passed the owner of the railroad, James Donahue, moved the terminus of the railroad from Lakeville and the railroad ceased operations in the area and moved its headquarters to Tiburon, a thirty-minute ferry ride from San Francisco. These families and even some of their children and grandchildren continued to be involved with the railroad for many years to come.<sup>23</sup>

In the middle of the 1890s, James again lost a son John. As John's brother Jimmy and brother-in-law, Tom, were in the employ of the railroad, so too was John, as a brakeman for the Southern Pacific Railroad in Oakland. On June 18, 1896, while he was working in the railroad yard in Hayward coupling freight cars, he was accidentally struck by one of the cars, his mangled body thrown to the ground. He was rushed to the hospital on the Oakland train where the surgeons considered amputation to save his life, but the young man was too weak and did not survive.<sup>24</sup>

The relationship of John with the Ahern family is something of a mystery. At the time of his death, he was going by the name, John Lockren. The newspaper accounts of the tragic accident in the train yards refer to the victim as “John Lockren,” although the obituary indicates that John was the “beloved son of Ann Lockren and James Ahern” and survived by siblings “Charles and Mary Lockren, Henry, James and Sarah Ahern and Belle Green and Mary Bradley.” The newspaper two days after his death indicates that it developed at the coroner's inquest, at which time it was determined the death was

accidental, that the “correct name of the young man was John Ahren (sic), he having taken the name of his step-father.”<sup>25</sup>

In his twilight years, James moved in with his daughter, Belle, and her family in the town of Sonoma. Belle and Louis Green lived on Broadway in Sonoma, near the center of town. They had three children, Carlton, Miriam and Florence, but Carlton and Miriam died quite young. James lived to see baby Florence born on December 19, 1898 but died just three weeks later on January 13, 1899. The Petaluma Daily Courier of Saturday, January 14, 1899 noted “James Ahern, a well-known and highly esteemed pioneer resident of this county, died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. L. Green at Sonoma on Friday night at 11:05. Death was due to general debility, and deceased had been failing for several days.... He was a native of County Cork, Ireland, aged sixty-seven years and two months.” James was laid to rest next to his wife at Calvary Cemetery in Petaluma.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Sonoma County Great Register of Voters 1866-1867*, Sonoma County Genealogical Society, page 1 shows James Ahern registered to vote in Vallejo Township, Sonoma County, 3 August 1867; Obituary of James Bernard Ahern, *The San Rafael Independent*, San Rafael, California, 7 November 1945, page 2

<sup>2</sup> James Horn (Ahern) household 1870 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, Petaluma post office, dwelling 75, family 77, Heritage Quest Series M593, Roll 91, p 456.; Adair Heig, *History of Petaluma, A California River Town* (Petaluma California: Scotwall Associates, 1982) 69-70; Harvye J. Hansen and Jeanne Thurlow Miller, *Wild Oats in Eden Sonoma County in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, (Santa Rosa, California: publisher unknown, 1962) 72;

<sup>3</sup> Thomas H. Thompson, *Historical atlas map of Sonoma County, California*. (Oakland: Thos H. Thompson & Co., 1877) 19

<sup>4</sup> Sonoma County Deed, Book , p 440, 18 January 1872; James Horn (Ahern) household 1870 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, Petaluma post office, dwelling 75, family 77, Heritage Quest Series M593, Roll 91, 456.

<sup>5</sup> The Wine Index on American Viticultural Areas 27 CFR Part 9 Subpart C--Approved American Viticultural Areas 9.32 Los Carneros , [http://www.wineinstitute.org/fedlaw/regs/27cfr\\_part09/9\\_032.htm](http://www.wineinstitute.org/fedlaw/regs/27cfr_part09/9_032.htm)

<sup>6</sup> 1870 and 1880 US Population censuses, Vallejo township, Sonoma County, CA

<sup>7</sup> 1870 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, Schedule 3 – Productions of Agriculture in Vallejo Township, Petaluma post office, pages 3-4, line 29; San Francisco Public Library, 1878 & 1880 censuses online <<http://sfpl.lib.ca.us/librarylocations/main/gic/sfpop1880.htm>> April 19, 2005

<sup>8</sup> Thomas H. Thompson, *Historical atlas map of Sonoma County*, 56-57, 72-73, 78-79, 82-83; Jack Withington and Ron Parenti, *Historical Buildings of Sonoma County: A Pictorial story of Yesterday's Rural Structures*, (Penngrove, California, 3rd Wing Press, 2000) 45, 101

<sup>9</sup> Withington, *Historical Buildings*, 65, 75

<sup>10</sup> Henry Stewart, *The Dairyman's Manual: A Practical Treatise on the Dairy* (New York: Orange Judd Company, 1893) 15

<sup>11</sup> *ibid* 14

<sup>12</sup> *ibid* 282, 290

<sup>13</sup> *ibid* 213; Stern's history museum online, Expansion of Dairy Operations, online: <<http://www.stearns-museum.org/bhtc/pages/chapter2/ch2p2.html>> April 19, 2005

<sup>14</sup> James Horn (Ahern) household 1870 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, Petaluma post office, dwelling 77, family 75, Heritage Quest Series M593, Roll 91, 456.; James Ahern household, 1880 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, Enumeration district [ED] 121, supervisor's district [SD] 3, Page No. 2D, dwelling 13, family 14; HeritageQuest T9, roll 84, page 23, image 2; Farm of James Ahern, 1880 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, Schedule 2 - Productions of Agriculture in Vallejo township, ED 121, SD 3, Page No. 1A, Line 8

<sup>15</sup> Baptismal record of Sarah A. Ahern, showing birthdate of 21 March 1869, baptismal date 22 May 1869, St. Vincent de Paul Church, Petaluma California Baptismal record of J. I. Ahern, 21 October 1871, St. Vincent de Paul Church, Petaluma California, parish register 1871, page 128. Note: Every name of the



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person being baptized in this section of the register lists only initials. Someone has gone through and a later time in a different hand and written in first names for all the baptizees under the initials, including “John” under the J.I. Ahern. However, I believe this is not John whose middle initial was “C” according to his obituary, John C. Ahern obituary, *The Petaluma Courier*, Petaluma, California, 24 June 1896, page 2, but instead it is Jane Isabel(le) Ahern, as consistent with the 1880 census for Vallejo Township for the Ahern family.

<sup>16</sup>James Ahern household, 1880 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, Enumeration district [ED] 121, supervisor’s district [SD] 3, Page No. 2D, dwelling 13, family 14; HeritageQuest T9, roll 84, page 23, image 2; Baptismal record for John Ahern, child of James and Jane Ahern, baptized 7 April 1861 at St. Peter the Apostle Church, New Brunswick, New Jersey, dated 28 January 2005

<sup>17</sup>Jane Aheran death record Sonoma County California, 9 October 1873, certificate number 000177583 issued 1 March 2004; Thomas H. Thompson, *Historical atlas map of Sonoma County*, 99, 103

<sup>18</sup>Patrick Bradley household, 1900 U.S. Census, Marin County, California, population schedule, Sausalito township, ED 61, SD 3, Sheet No. 11, dwelling 244, family 248; HeritageQuest T623, roll 93, page 203, subpage A; Patrick Bradley household, 1910 U.S. Census, Marin County, California, population schedule, Sausalito township, ED 50, SD 2, Sheet No. 4B, dwelling 33, family 33; HeritageQuest T624, roll 88, page 209, Subpage B;

<sup>19</sup>Isaac Ingram household, 1880 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, Enumeration district [ED] 121, supervisor’s district [SD] 3, Page No. 2D, dwelling 12, family 13; HeritageQuest T9, roll 84, page 23, image 2. Note: this census indicates Mary Ingram is born in Pennsylvania. The 1900 Census says the same: Isaac (Mac) Ingram household, 1900 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, ED 179, SD 3, Sheet No. 16B, dwelling 244, family 248; HeritageQuest T623, roll 93, page 203, subpage A. However on the 1870 census her birthplace is Louisiana: Isaac Ingram household 1870 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, Petaluma post office, dwelling 333, family 335, Heritage Quest M593, Roll 114, 63B.

<sup>20</sup>Isaac Ingram household, 1880 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Vallejo township, Enumeration district [ED] 121, supervisor’s district [SD] 3, Page No. 2D, dwelling 12, family 13; HeritageQuest T9, roll 84, page 23, image 2; Marriage record, Patrick Bradley and Mary Ahern, 23 November 1881, St. Vincent de Paul Church, Petaluma California, parish register 1881, page 66 item 219; Baptismal record, Elizabeth Bradley, born 15 July 1882, baptized 23 July 1882, St. Vincent de Paul Church, Petaluma California, parish register 1882, page 257, item 37. .

<sup>21</sup>Mary Ingram will (1909), Sonoma County Probate Register 9: 252, County Clerks Office, Sonoma, California, FHL US/CAN Film 1428183, Probate registers, v. 9, 1908-1911

<sup>22</sup>Jane Billings Steiner, *San Francisco, California, 1890 great register of voters* (North Salt Lake, Utah : Heritage Quest, 2001), 4; Sonoma County Genealogical Society, compiler, *Great register of voters, Sonoma County, California, 1890* (Santa Rosa, California: Sonoma County Genealogical Society, 1989), 2, 19; James Ahern obituary, *The Sonoma Index Tribune*, Sonoma, California, 21 January 1899, page 3; Sonoma County Deed, Book 133, p 375, 24 September 1891; *1896 Great Register of Sonoma County by Precincts*, (Santa Rosa California: Republican Print) 117 .

<sup>23</sup>Interview with Miriam Bradley Grbac, Tiburon, California) by Carla Ehat and Anne Kent, 10 March 1978, at the home of Mrs. Thomas Kent, 131 Goodhill Road, Kentfield, California. Transcript held at the Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Library, San Rafael, California. Mrs. Grbac is now deceased; Norman Morris, “By Rail & Ferry to Donahue Landing,” *Sonoma Historian: The Quarterly Journal of the Sonoma County Historical Society*, No. 1, 2003 6-11.

<sup>24</sup>“Deaths – Lockren,” *The Oakland Enquirer*, Oakland, California, 19 June 1896, 3; “Crushed by the cars” *The Oakland Enquirer*, 19 June 1896, 2.

<sup>25</sup>“Accidental Death” *The Oakland Enquirer*, 20 June 1896, 3.

<sup>26</sup>Louis Green household, 1910 U.S. Census, Sonoma County, California, population schedule, Sonoma township, ED 163, SD 2, Sheet No. 12A, dwelling 228, family 228; HeritageQuest T624, roll 109, page 175, Subpage A; “The home of Mr. And Mrs. L. Green,” *The Sonoma Index Tribune*, Sonoma, California, 31 December 1898, page 3; James Ahern obituary, *The Petaluma Daily Courier*, Petaluma, California, 14 January 1899, page 3

*I looked at the family of John and Hannah Ahern. Seven sons and a daughter. When I saw these young families, the children of John and Hannah, each of them with three or four or six children of their own, many within a block or two of each other in Brooklyn, a couple of more in Seymour, Connecticut, I felt that somewhere there had to be some of John and Hannah's great-grandchildren or great-great grandchildren out there. The question was finding them.*

*The United States government has taken a population census every ten years since 1790. Due to privacy restrictions the individual data from these lists is held for 72 years before it is released to the public, meaning the 1930 census is the latest one available. While I eagerly await 2012 for the release of the 1940 census (only 7 years away, but who's counting?!) I looked for other ways to track these families, and see if I could find a third or fourth cousin somewhere.*

*I located several directories for Seymour, stretching from 1906 to 1965. I charted the family of John's son, Cornelius. I could see his boys, George, Frank and Albert growing up (at least on paper) and having children of their own. I saw Albert's son, sometimes called John, sometimes Albert grow up and marry, and start his career as a newspaper reporter. I combed the Connecticut death index, located death records for some of these men, trying to determine what had become of the others.*

*On Switchboard, the internet phone directory, I found an A. J. Ahern in New Haven. Could that be Cornelius' grandson? I called the number, and indeed, it was. I have now met A.J., "Jack" and his sister, Margaret, at least over the telephone. I hope Jack and Margaret can tell me about more of their closer cousins. And I hope that someday, the offspring of James and John and perhaps even Jeremiah and Michael can meet in person.*

## CONCLUSION

In researching this project, I have found numerous relatives that I never knew existed, many deceased, several still living. Again and again I have learned the value of looking at all the relatives, even those with no offspring. Without looking into my great great Aunt Sarah Ahern, I never would have considered searching to see if my great grandmother also belonged to the Native Daughters of the Golden West. And without that information, Chapter 3 of this tale would not have been written. Each life, each piece of this puzzle, connects to another, and brings us closer to the flesh of our past.

I also feel so blessed by the relationships that germinated as a result of this project. Stimulating and inspiring instructors and supportive classmates have kept me on track, thinking and researching and writing. I have met a lovely cousin in Florida. And I have made friends with the wonderful people who own and care for James Ahern's farm in California. They even recently reported sighting fuzzy-headed baby eaglets nesting in a eucalyptus tree on the Ahern homestead.

I still have a few mysteries of the Aherns dogging my brain. In no particular order –

The wife of James Ahern was Jane Graham. I was told that her father was Henry Graham, and her mother was Sarah Keenan. Those given names would be consistent with the names of the children of James and Jane, given the traditional Irish naming patterns. There was a Graham family who settled in Sonoma and San Francisco. Anthony Graham of Sonoma, born in New York, was the adopted father of Rosella, the wife of Hilary Bradley, a grandson of James and Jane. There may be a deeper connection with the family. It is possible that Anthony's father, Henry, could be the brother of Jane Graham. Further research needs to be done in this area.

I would like to be able to trace the family back to their parish in Ireland. At this point, the only information I have is from James' obituaries that indicate he came from County Cork. It would be most helpful to have their mother's maiden name. James' death certificate does not list parents' names. Michael's death certificate indicates his parents were John Ahearn and Mary Ahearn. Elk County, Pennsylvania told me their death certificates don't begin until 1893 which makes it difficult to find a certificate for Jeremiah's death in 1890. John Ahern's death certificate from the State of New York does list parents. John Ahern is the father. The mother's maiden name is written but the penmanship is poor and I have been unable to decipher it. A copy of the death certificate is included in the appendices. I welcome any suggestions as to the name.

I would like to try to connect with more of the descendents of Jeremiah (if any) and John. I am hoping my research will lead me to more of these families. I hope that a family bible will be located which may give a maiden name to Mary.

Associated with Michael Ahern, are some nieces, Catherine and Mary McGill. They are mentioned in the censuses and in the will of Michael's daughter. I would like to find out who these people are. Perhaps the Ahern brothers as outlined in this paper had a sister who married a man named McGill. In the St. Peter's cemetery in New Brunswick is a gravestone of John McGill with carving identical to that on the grave of Michael and Mary Ahern. Certainly there is a connection. What is it?

Finally, as I was nearing the end of my research for the purposes of this paper, I stumbled across a terribly compelling mystery. Quite some time ago I found an obituary in the Petaluma paper for John C. Ahern, youngest son of James Ahern, the baby whose birth resulted in Jane's death. The indicated he died "near Oakland" but listed no cause of death. I had seen John Ahern listed as one of the residents of the James Ahern household in Vallejo Township in the 1880 census, but had been unable to find a baptismal certificate for John from St. Vincent's church. I requested a death certificate from Alameda County but they could not locate one. Six days ago I was researching in the microfilm department of the University of California Library in Berkeley and looked for an obituary for John Ahern. I did not find one. However I found an obituary for John Lockren,

beloved son of Ann Lockren and James Ahern, brother of Charles and Mary Lockren, Henry, James and Sarah Ahern, Mrs. Belle Green and Mary Bradley, a native of Sonoma, California, aged 22 years, 9 months and 17 days.

I read further in the newspaper and found that John Lockren, a brakeman for the Southern Pacific Railroad, was struck by a flatcar and fatally injured. It developed at the coroner's inquest that correct name of the young man was John Ahern, he having taken the name of his step-father. How does a man have a step-father if his mother died at his birth and his father is alive? Perhaps, in James' distress over the loss of his wife, and the prospect of six children to raise, including an infant son, someone, a Lockren family, stepped in and offered to care for the babe, raising him as their own. I have written for the report of the coroner's inquest and I have requests out for the obituaries of Ann and Charles Lockren in the hope that some more information will come to light to help explain this mystery. It is certainly a gripping puzzle.

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**Ephemera:**

Bradley, Patrick Thomas, family data. In family bible. Original owned in 2005 by  
Miriam Chambers, 4702 St. Rt. 82, Braceville, OH

**Interview:**

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held at the Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Library, San Rafael,  
California.

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**Name: John AHERN**

-----  
Birth: Feb 1821 Ireland<sup>1,2</sup>  
Death: 6 Mar 1906 Brooklyn, Kings, New York<sup>3</sup>  
Burial: 9 Mar 1906 New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ<sup>3</sup>  
Burial Memo: St Peter's cemetery  
Land Purchase: 21 Apr 1857 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>4</sup>  
Land Purchase: abt 30 May 1861 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>5</sup>  
Land Purchase: 29 Jun 1866 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>6</sup>  
Land Purchase: 23 Dec 1873 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>7</sup>  
Land Purchase: 4 Feb 1885 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>8</sup>  
Land Sale: 7 Aug 1895 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>9</sup>  
Father: John AHERN  
Mother: Mary (Unknown) AHERN (~1795-1886)  
**Spouse: Hannah/Honora MURPHY<sup>10</sup>**

-----  
Birth: May 1824 Ireland<sup>2</sup>  
Death: aft 21 May 1906<sup>11</sup>  
Death Memo: she sold property to kids on this date  
Land Purchase: 22 Oct 1901 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>12</sup>  
Land Sale: 11 May 1906 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>11</sup>

**Children:**

-----  
**1 M: John Henry AHERN**

Birth: Oct 1854<sup>13</sup>  
Death: aft 1930  
Spouse: Kate  
Marriage: abt 1885<sup>13</sup>

-----  
**2 M: Edward P AHERN**

Birth: Feb 1856 , , New Jersey<sup>1</sup>  
Death: 23 Sep 1907 Brooklyn, Kings, New York<sup>14,15</sup>  
Spouse: Mary Jane  
Marriage: abt 1885

-----  
**3 F: Mary AHERN**

Birth: abt 1858 , Somerset, New Jersey<sup>1</sup>  
Death: 2 Oct 1898 Brooklyn, Kings, New York<sup>16</sup>  
Death Memo: Bay 35th &  
Baptism: 26 Dec 1858 New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ<sup>17</sup>  
Baptism Memo: sponsors James Ahern and Jane Graham  
Spouse: John JOYCE

-----  
**4 M: Jeremiah AHERN**

Birth: 1860<sup>1</sup>  
Baptism: 22 Jul 1860 New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ<sup>17</sup>  
Baptism Memo: Godparents Edward Murphy & Delia McCord  
Spouse: Catherine  
Marriage: abt 1888<sup>18</sup>

-----

**5 M: Cornelius AHERN**  
Birth: Feb 1862 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>19</sup>  
Death: 24 Feb 1936 , New Haven, CT<sup>20</sup>  
Spouse: Mary BUNYAN  
Marriage: abt 1889 CT<sup>21</sup>

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**6 M: Michael AHERN**  
Birth: May 1865 Millstone, Somerset, New Jersey<sup>22</sup>  
Death: 30 Aug 1948 , ,Connecticut<sup>23</sup>  
Spouse: Anna  
Marriage: abt 1892 CT<sup>21</sup>  
Spouse: Margaret DRISCOLL  
Marriage: abt 1939

---

**7 M: Timothy AHERN**  
Birth: 16 Apr 1868<sup>17</sup>  
Death: 25 Feb 1951 Stamford, Fairfield, CT<sup>24</sup>  
Baptism: 26 Apr 1868 New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ<sup>17</sup>  
Baptism Memo: Cornelius Crevan & Honor Coffy godparents  
Spouse: Mary Ellen MAHER  
Marriage: 27 Nov 1895 East Millstone, Somerset, NJ<sup>10</sup>

---

**8 M: Andrew AHERN**  
Birth: Mar 1871 , Somerset, New Jersey<sup>13</sup>  
Baptism: 3 Apr 1870 East Millstone, Somerset, NJ<sup>10</sup>  
Baptism Memo: Godparents John and Mary Malone  
Spouse: Margaret NEICEY  
Marriage: 10 Jun 1896 Manhattan, New York, New York

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**9 ? : AHERN**  
Death: bef 1900

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**10 ? : AHERN**  
Death: bef 1900

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#### **Notes for John AHERN**

New Brunswick Daily Times  
Wednesday 7 March 1906  
Page unknown

John Ahearn

The body of John Ahearn will be brought here from Batch Beach, L.I.  
[transcriber's note - should be Bath Beach in Brooklyn] on the 12:18  
p.m. train Thursday for burial at St. Peter's cemetery. He died at the  
residence of a son on Tuesday. He formerly lived at Millstone. He is  
past middle age and is survived by seven sons. Undertaker McDede will  
be in charge.

## **Sources**

1. "US Population," Hillsborough Twp, Somerset, NJ, 3? July 1860, Heritage Quest, Series: M653 Roll: 708 Page: 827, 8.
2. "US Population," 31 Brooklyn, Kings, New York, 9 June 1900, Heritage Quest, Series: T623 Roll: 1069 Page: 238, 28-29.
3. "Certificate and Record of Death," 6 March 1906, State of New York, 4890, Microfilm, LDS Film 1324117.
4. "Frederick VL Voorhees to John Ahern and James Ahern," 21 Apr 1857, Z2-344, Somerset County, New Jersey.
5. "Hiram Hyde to John Ahern," 30 May 1861, J3-177, Somerset County, New Jersey.
6. "John Cruser to John Ahern," 18 July 1866, S3-615, Somerset County New Jersey.
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8. "Conrad Rupert to John Ahern," 5 Feb 1885, F6-169, Somerset County, New Jersey.
9. "John Ahern to Timothy Ahern," 7 Aug 1895, A8-306, Somerset County, New Jersey.
10. Fran Brownlie to Mary Roddy, 5 Jan 2004, Records of St. Joseph Parish, 34 Yorktown Road, Millstone, NJ.
11. "Hannah Ahern to Edward P Ahern et al," 21 May 1906, V10-50, Somerset County, New Jersey.
12. "Timothy Ahern to Hannah Ahern," 26 Oct 1901, O9-371, Somerset County, New Jersey.
13. "T623, Roll 1069, p 239B," 31 WD Brooklyn, Kings, NY, 1900.
14. "Death Certificate - Edward P Ahern," Kings County, New York, 19516.
15. "Jeremiah Ahern et al to Louis Mabus," 22 Jan 1915, J14-337, Somerset County.
16. "Coroner's Certificate of Death," 2 Oct 1898, City of New York, State of New York, 16977, Microfilm, LDS Film 1324010.
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19. "US Population," Seymour, New Haven, Connecticut, 19 June 1900, Heritage Quest, Series: T623 Roll: 147 Page: 59, 22-25.
20. "Seymour (Connecticut) Alphabetical Directory," 1936, 876, Ancestry.com.
21. Seymour (East), New Haven, CT, 1930, T626-279 35B.
22. "T 623, Roll 147, p 42," Seymour, New Haven, CT.
23. Telegram, Bridgeport Connecticut, 30 Aug 1848, <http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~aherns/ahobits4.htm>.
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---

Last Modified: 11 May 2005

Created: 11 May 2005

**Name:** Jeremiah "Jerry" AHERN

-----  
Birth: 1828<sup>1</sup>  
Death: 1890 , Elk, PA<sup>1</sup>  
Burial: , Elk, PA<sup>1</sup>  
Burial Memo: St Boniface Cemetery, Kersey, Elk, PA Sec F, row c, #6  
Occupation: farmer in New Jersey; coal miner in Pennsylvania<sup>2</sup>  
Father: John AHERN  
Mother: Mary (Troyrey) AHERN (~1795-1886)  
Marriage: 6 Sep 1857 Montgomery Twp., Somerset, New Jersey<sup>3</sup>  
-----

**Spouse:** Elizabeth WHELAN

-----  
Birth: 1830<sup>1</sup>  
Death: 1914 , Elk, PA<sup>1</sup>  
Burial: , Elk, PA<sup>1</sup>  
Burial Memo: St Boniface Cemetery, Kersey, Elk, PA Sec F, row c, #5

**Children:**

-----  
**1 M:** John AHERN

Birth: Aug 1858<sup>4</sup>  
Death: 1906<sup>1</sup>  
-----

**2 F:** Margaret AHERN

Birth: abt Sep 1861<sup>1</sup>  
Death: 1933<sup>1</sup>  
-----

**3 F:** Mary AHERN

Birth: Jun 1862<sup>4</sup>  
Death: 1928<sup>1</sup>  
-----

**4 F:** Elizabeth F AHERN

Birth: 17 Jul 1862  
-----

**5 F:** Catherine "Katie" AHERN

Birth: abt 1866<sup>2</sup>  
Death: 1881<sup>1</sup>  
-----

**6 F:** Sara Helena AHERN

Birth: 7 Dec 1867 Elk, PA  
-----

**7 M:** William J AHERN

Birth: Oct 1871<sup>4</sup>  
Death: 1947<sup>1</sup>

**Sources**

1. Fr John Kuzilla, "Return Letter to Mary Roddy," 15 April 2005, Possession of Mary Roddy, Jeremiah Ahern file.
2. "US Pop. Census," Fox Twp, Elk, PA, 9 June 1880, T9 R1125 P364.
3. M509452, 1848-1867, Film, 0548581 V. A-E.
4. "US Pop. Census" Fox Twp, Elk Cty, PA, 15 June 1900, T623 Roll: 1406 Page: 48, 67.

**Name:** James AHERN

-----  
Birth: Nov 1831 County Cork, Ireland<sup>1</sup>  
Death: 13 Jan 1899 Sonoma, SONOMA, CA.<sup>1,2</sup>  
Death Memo: 11:05 pm  
Burial: 16 Jan 1899 Petaluma, Sonoma, California<sup>3</sup>  
Burial Memo: Calvary cemetery, Section 1, Row 2, plot 135  
Land Purchase: 1 Apr 1858 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>4</sup>  
Land Sale: 13 Mar 1860 Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ<sup>5</sup>  
Land Purchase: 17 Mar 1862 Franklin Twp, Somerset, NJ<sup>6</sup>  
Land Sale: 1 Apr 1863 Franklin Twp, Somerset, NJ<sup>7</sup>  
Land Purchase: 18 Jan 1872 Vallejo Twp, Sonoma, CA<sup>8</sup>  
Land Sale: 24 Sep 1891 Vallejo Twp, Sonoma, CA<sup>9</sup>  
Immigration: 1852<sup>10</sup>  
Occupation: Farmer/ Somerset Co., NJ; Farmer Sonoma County, CA<sup>11</sup>  
Religion: Roman Catholic  
Occupation: Farmer/ Somerset Co., NJ  
Cause of death: Brochitas (sic)<sup>2</sup>  
Father: John AHERN  
Mother: Mary (Troyrey) AHERN (~1795-1886)  
**Spouse:** Jane GRIMES/GRAHAM

-----  
Birth: Jan 1835 Northern IRELAND<sup>12,13,14</sup>  
Death: 9 Oct 1873 Petaluma, Sonoma, California<sup>12</sup>  
Death Memo: Cause of death - Childbirth  
Burial: 12 Oct 1873 Petaluma, Sonoma, CA<sup>3</sup>  
Burial Memo: Calvary cemetery, Section 1, Row 2, plot 135  
Father: Henry GRAHAM  
Mother: Sarah KEENAN

**Children:**

-----  
**1 F:** Mary Agnes AHERN  
Birth: 21 Jun 1859 Millstone, Somerset, New Jersey<sup>15</sup>  
Death: 22 Sep 1937 Tiburon, Marin Co., CA.<sup>15</sup>  
Baptism: 10 Jul 1859 new Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ  
Baptism Memo: St Peter the Apostle Church, sponsors Jeremiah Ahern and Elizabeth Ahern  
Spouse: Patric Thomas BRADLEY  
Marriage: 23 Nov 1881 Petaluma, Sonoma, CA<sup>16</sup>  
Marriage Memo: St. Vincent dePaul Church, Witnesses Blair Hart and Martha Teresa Walsh

-----  
**2 M:** John AHERN  
Birth: abt Apr 1861<sup>17</sup>  
Baptism: 7 Apr 1861 New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ<sup>18</sup>  
Baptism Memo: Godparents Michael Ahern and Julia Byrnes

-----  
**3 M:** Henry Michael AHERN<sup>19</sup>  
Birth: 30 Apr 1862 NJ.<sup>19</sup>  
Death: 14 Feb 1900 San Francisco, San Francisco, CA<sup>19</sup>  
Spouse: Rebecca CALKINS

-----  
**4 M: James Bernard AHERN**  
Birth: 9 Sep 1866 San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.<sup>20,21</sup>  
Death: 6 Nov 1945 Marin, California<sup>20,21</sup>  
Spouse: SARAH E DAVIDSON  
Marriage: 18 Jun 1893 Petaluma, Sonoma, CA<sup>22</sup>  
Marriage Memo: St Vincent's church  
Spouse: Laura Alice COAKLEY  
Marriage: abt 1903  
-----

**5 F: Sarah Anne AHERN<sup>16</sup>**  
Birth: 21 Mar 1869 VALLEJO TWP., SONOMA, CA.<sup>16</sup>  
Death: 15 Jan 1928 San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.<sup>23</sup>  
Baptism: 22 May 1869 Petaluma, Sonoma, California<sup>16</sup>  
Baptism Memo: Baptized at St. Vincent de Paul Church, Sponsors John Fitzgerald and Maria Mahoney  
-----

**6 F: JANE Isabelle "Belle" AHERN**  
Birth: 11 Jun 1871 VALLEJO TWP., SONOMA, CA.<sup>16</sup>  
Death: 1 Nov 1931<sup>24</sup>  
Baptism: 20 Oct 1871 Petaluma, Sonoma, California<sup>16</sup>  
Baptism Memo: St. Vincent de Paul Church, Petaluma, Sonoma, CA  
Sponsors Isaac H Ingram and Mary Ingram  
Spouse: Louis Henry GREEN  
Marriage: 28 Dec 1892 Sonoma, Sonoma, CA<sup>25</sup>  
Marriage Memo: St. Francis de Solano Catholic Church  
-----

**7 M: John C. AHERN**  
Birth: 1 Sep 1873 VALLEJO TWP., SONOMA, CA.<sup>26</sup>  
Death: 18 Jun 1896 Near Oakland, Alameda, CA<sup>27</sup>  
-----

#### **Notes for James AHERN**

Petaluma (California) Daily Courier, Saturday, January 14, 1899

#### A Pioneer's Death

James Ahern, a well-known and highly esteemed pioneer resident of this county, died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. L. Green, at Sonoma on Friday night at 11:05. Death was due to general debility and deceased had been failing for several days. He was a native of county Cork, Ireland, aged sixty seven years and two months, and leaves five adult children as follows: Mrs. Thos. Bradley and James Ahern of Tiburon, Sarah and Henry Ahern of San Francisco and Mrs. Jennie Green of Sonoma. His wife died about twenty-five years ago and a son, J.C. Ahern died about two years ago.

The funeral will take place in this city Monday morning on the arrival of the 9:30 train. Services will be held at St. Vincent's church and the remains will be interred in the family plot at Calvary cemetery.

The Petaluma Argus, Saturday, January 14, 1899

Died:

AHERN- In Sonoma, Jan. 13, 1899, James Ahern, father of Mrs. Thos Bradley, Henry, Jas, and Sarah Ahern, Mrs. S. Green, and the later J.C. Ahern, a native of County Cork, Ireland, age 67 years and 2 months. The funeral will take place from St. Vincent's church in this city, Monday 16th, at 10 o'clock.

21 Jan 1899

The Sonoma Index Tribune, page 3

James Ahern Passes Away

James Ahern, for the past ten years a resident of this valley, died at the home of his daughter, Mrs. L. H. Green, in this place, on Friday night of last week. Mr. Ahern had been ailing for several months and his death was not unexpected. The deceased was a farmer for many years near Lakeville, from which he removed to Embarcadero in 1889 where he followed the same occupation. Mr. Ahern was a widower, his wife having died over 25 years ago. The deceased was a native of County cork, Ireland, and aged 67 years and two months. He was the father of Mrs. L. H. Green of this place, Mrs. Thomas Bradley and Henry, James and Sarah Ahern.

The funeral took place from St. Vincent's Church, Petaluma, Monday morning at 10 o'clock, the deceased being laid beside his wife in the Catholic Cemetery of that city.

Oral History has James being exiled from Ireland to Austrailia for an unknown offence, although he apparently was at some point branded with the letter "P", which some say meant political prisoner, some say pickpocket, and some say just prisoner. James and family migrated west by wagon train prior to 1864. The 1878/79 Polk Directory has James owning 160 acres in Donahue, on Petaluma Creek, south of Petaluma, CA. This location was serviced by the steamer 'James Donahue'.

#### **Notes for Jane GRIMES/GRAHAM**

Died Oct. 9, 1873, aged 38 years, 9 month according to the Sonoma County Death Registry. Cause of death listed as childbirth.

When Jane's daughter Mary Agnes Ahern married Patric Thomas Bradley in 1881, the church records of St. Vincent de Paul Church in Petaluma, Sonoma, California, record Mary as being the daughter of James (Jacob) Ahern and Jane Graham. However, baptismal records from the same church for 2 of James and Jane Ahern's children, Sarah A Ahern and J I (Presumably Jane Isabel?) Ahern list the girl's mother as being Joanna GRIMES.

As a researcher, I would assume that a mother present at the baptism of her own children would be more likely to give an accurate maiden name that the daughter of said mother would when she was being married 8



years after that mother's death. An alternative explanation is that the priest wrote what he heard.

#### **Sources**

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2. "Sonoma County Death Record," State of California, County of Sonoma.
3. Calvary Cemetery, Petaluma, Sonoma County, California, transcription, available at cemetery office. Copy in possession of Mary Roddy.
4. "Frederick VL Voorhees to John Ahern and James Ahern," 21 Apr 1857, Somerset County, New Jersey.
5. "James Ahern & wife to Hiram Hyde," 13 March 1860, Somerset County, New Jersey.
6. "Abraham Whitenack & wife to James O. Harin," 17 March 1862, Somerset County Deeds Vol K3 205-208, Somerset County, New Jersey.
7. "James Ahern & wife to Abraham Whitenack," 27 May 1863, Somerset County New Jersey.
8. "William Bihler to Russel Huntley and James Ahern," 27 Jan 1872, Sonoma County Records office, page 440-442, Sonoma County, Calif.
9. "James Ahern to Cornelius Regan," 24 Sep 1891, Sonoma County Records office, page 373-375 (Vol 133, Sonoma County, California.
10. 28 October 1858, Somerset County, New Jersey, "James Ahern," Court of Common Pleas.
11. "US Population," Vallejo Twp, Sonoma, California, 29 July 1870, Heritage Quest, Series: T9 Roll: 1125 Page: 364, 1.
12. "Sonoma County Death Records, 1873-1905 Second edition, Sonoma County Genealogical Society," Death Record 41:1, Santa Rosa California Genealogy Library.
13. "Death Record Jane Aheran," 1 March 2004, Sonoma County, Sonoma County, California.
14. "US Population," Sausalito Twp, Marin, CA, 10 April 1930, Heritage Quest, Series: T626 Roll: 177 Page: 176, 76.
15. "Family Bible of Patrick Thomas and Mary Agnes (Ahern) Bradley," Miriam Chambers, 4702 St Rt 82, Braceville, Ohio 44444-9511, Photo copy in possession of Mary Roddy.
16. "Church Records of St. Vincent dePaul Church," Petaluma, Sonoma, CA, Petaluma, Sonoma, CA.
17. St Peter the Apostle, New Brunswick, Middlesex, New Jersey.
18. St Peter the Apostle church, New Brunswick, NJ.
19. Chronicle, San Francisco, California, 16 Feb 1900, "Ahern," 10.
20. San Rafael, Marin, CA, 7 Nov 1945, "San Rafael Independent," 2.
21. Vitalsearch, "California death index 1940-2000," [http://www.vitalsearch-ca.com/gen/ca/\\_vitals/cadeygen.htm](http://www.vitalsearch-ca.com/gen/ca/_vitals/cadeygen.htm), Decedent Paul G Bradley.
22. "Record of St Vincent de Paul Church," Petaluma, Sonoma, CA, 1894, pg 105.
23. San Francisco, 17 Jan 1928, "Chronicle," 14.
24. Lori Wicks, "Saint Francis Solano Cemetery," [http://interment.net/data/us/ca/sonoma/stfrancis/fran\\_eg.htm](http://interment.net/data/us/ca/sonoma/stfrancis/fran_eg.htm)
25. "Church Records of St Francis Solano Church," Transcribed by Mary Roddy, Nov 14, 2003.
26. Enquirer, Oakland, California, 19 June 1896, "Death - Lockren," 3.
27. Petaluma, Sonoma, California, 24 June 1896, "Courier," 2.

**Name: Michael AHERN**

-----  
Birth: abt 1834 Ireland<sup>1</sup>  
Death: 8 Mar 1907 Franklin Twp, Somerset, NJ<sup>2,3,4</sup>  
Burial: 11 Mar 1907 New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ<sup>5</sup>  
Burial Memo: St Peter's cemetery  
Land Purchase: 6 May 1867 Franklin Twp, Somerset, NJ<sup>6</sup>  
Land Purchase: 28 Mar 1868 Franklin Twp, Somerset, NJ<sup>7</sup>  
Land Purchase: 11 Apr 1870 Franklin Twp, Somerset, NJ<sup>8</sup>  
Land Purchase: 13 Dec 1895 Franklin Twp, Somerset, NJ<sup>9</sup>  
Land Sale: 10 Feb 1888 Franklin Twp, Somerset, NJ<sup>10</sup>  
Occupation: Nov 1862 - Blacksmith; 1900 census - Bridgetender  
(canal); Death cert - grocer<sup>1,3,11</sup>  
Father: John AHERN  
Mother: Mary (Troyrey) AHERN (~1795-1886)  
Marriage: 26 Nov 1862 Montgomery Twp., Somerset, New Jersey<sup>1</sup>

**Spouse: Mary**

-----  
Birth: abt 1837 Ireland<sup>1</sup>  
Death: aft 1914<sup>12</sup>

**Children:**

-----  
**1 M: John Edward AHERN**

Birth: abt Jan 1864<sup>13</sup>  
Death: aft 2 Nov 1929  
Baptism: 18 Feb 1864 New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ<sup>13</sup>  
Baptism Memo: Cornelius Creten & Honera Murphy godparents  
Spouse: Margaret  
Marriage: 9 Aug 1898 Elizabeth, Union, New Jersey<sup>14</sup>

-----  
**2 F: Mary A AHERN<sup>13</sup>**

Birth: 28 Aug 1866<sup>13</sup>  
Baptism: 14 Oct 1866 New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ<sup>13</sup>  
Baptism Memo: Thomas Hanley & Catherine Shine godparents

-----  
**3 F: Mary T AHERN**

Birth: Aug 1871  
Birth Memo: per 1900 census  
Death: 23 Nov 1929 Franklin Twp, Somerset, NJ<sup>2</sup>

-----  
**4 M: Unnamed AHERN**

Birth: 25 Jan 1872  
Death: bef 1900<sup>15</sup>

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**5 M: Joseph AHERN**

Birth: abt 1873 , Somerset, New Jersey<sup>11</sup>  
Death: bef 1900<sup>15</sup>

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**6 M: Michael AHERN**

Birth: 17 Jul 1876 Blackwells Mills, Somerset, New Jersey<sup>11</sup>

Death: bef 7 Oct 1903<sup>15</sup>

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**7 M:** **Henry AHERN**

Death: bef 1900<sup>16</sup>

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**8 ?:** **AHERN**

Death: bef 1900<sup>16</sup>

#### **Notes for Michael AHERN**

New Brunswick (New Jersey) Home News, 12 Mar 1907

#### FUNERAL OF MICHAEL AHEARN

The body of Michael Ahearn who died at his home on Friday at Blackwell's Mills, was consigned to its last earthly resting place in St. Peter's cemetery yesterday.

The funeral services were held at St. Joseph's Church, Millstone of which parish the deceased was a faithful member. The mass was celebrated by Rev. Father Tighe, assisted by Rev. Father Caton of St. Peter's Church as deacon, and Rev. Father Dunphy as sub-deacon. During the services several appropriate hymns were rendered.

Mr. Ahearn reposed in a handsome solid quartered oak casket, open full length, adorned with a massive solid silver crucifix and extension bar handle. The floral tributes were many and beautiful.

The pallbearers were the six sons of the brother of the deceased.

Undertaker A. J. Martin directed.

(date of death 8 Mar 1907)

#### **Sources**

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2. Probate records Estate Index v. A-H 1804-1972 FHL US/CAN Film 875760, New Jersey Surrogate's Court Somerset County, examined by Mary Roddy, Seattle, WA Oct 30, 2004
3. "State of New Jersey Bureau of Vital Statistics," 15 Feb 2005, State of New Jersey.
4. Home News, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 12 Mar 1907.
5. Home News, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 12 Mar 1907, "Deaths - Michael Ahern."
6. "Peter P Runyon to Michael Ahern," 6 May 1867, V3-171, Somerset County, New Jersey.
7. "Isaac Voorhees to Michael Ahern," 9 June 1868, W3-587, Somerset County, New Jersey.
8. "John B Williamson to Michael Ahern," 11 Apr 1870, D4-139, Somerset County, New Jersey.
9. "Maggie Howard to Michael Ahern," 24 Feb 1896, D8-396, Somerset County, New Jersey.
10. "Michael and Mary Ahaern to Mary T Ahaern," 30 Aug 1888, S6-357, Somerset County, New Jersey.
11. "US Population Census," Franklin Twp, Somerset, New Jersey, 4 June

1880, Series: T9 Roll: 798 Page: 498, 44-49.

**12.** "Farm and Business Directory of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties New Jersey," Wilmer Atkinson Company, 1914, 159.

**13.** St Peter the Apostle church, New Brunswick, NJ.

**14.** M009210.

**15.** "Last Will and Testament of Michael A'Hern," R675, Somerset County NJ.

**16.** "US Population," Franklin, Somerset, New Jersey, 6-7 June 1900, Heritage Quest, Series: T623 Roll: 994 Page: 197, 33-37.

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John AHERN

|       John AHERN  
|        bd. Feb 1821, Ireland  
|        dd. 6 Mar 1906, Brooklyn, Kings, New York  
|        brd. 9 Mar 1906, New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ  
|        |       John Henry AHERN  
|        |        bd. Oct 1854  
|        |        dd. aft 1930  
|        |        |       John AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. Jul 1886, , , New York  
|        |        |        Jeremiah AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. Oct 1888, , , New York  
|        |        |        Warren AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. Apr 1893, , , New York  
|        |        Edward P AHERN  
|        |        bd. Feb 1856, , , New Jersey  
|        |        dd. 23 Sep 1907, Brooklyn, Kings, New York  
|        |        |       Isabel AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. Apr 1886, , , New Jersey  
|        |        |        Helen AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. Apr 1889, , , New Jersey  
|        |        |        Gertrude AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. Aug 1891, , , new York  
|        |        |        Caroline AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. Jan 1894, , , New York  
|        |        Mary AHERN  
|        |        bd. abt 1858, , Somerset, New Jersey  
|        |        dd. 2 Oct 1898, Brooklyn, Kings, New York  
|        |        |       Norah JOYCE  
|        |        |        bd. Jun 1888  
|        |        |        Thomas JOYCE  
|        |        |        bd. Jun 1889  
|        |        |        Mary JOYCE  
|        |        |        bd. May 1891  
|        |        |        John JOYCE  
|        |        |        bd. Nov 1891  
|        |        |        Herbie JOYCE  
|        |        |        bd. Feb 1894  
|        |        |        Michael JOYCE  
|        |        |        bd. Feb 1898  
|        |        Jeremiah AHERN  
|        |        bd. 1860  
|        |        |       Lilian AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. abt 1892, , , New York  
|        |        |        Raymond AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. abt 1901, , , New York  
|        |        |        AHERN  
|        |        Cornelius AHERN  
|        |        bd. Feb 1862, Hillsborough, Somerset, NJ  
|        |        dd. 24 Feb 1936, , New Haven, CT  
|        |        |       George AHERN  
|        |        |        bd. 13 Mar 1891, CT  
|        |        |        dd. 8 Dec 1963, Derby, New Haven, CT  
|        |        |        Francis AHERN



|           brd.   , Elk, PA  
 | Elizabeth F AHERN  
 |           bd. 17 Jul 1862  
 | Catherine "Katie" AHERN  
 |           bd. abt 1866  
 |           dd. 1881  
 |           brd.   , Elk, PA  
 | Sara Helena AHERN  
 |           bd. 7 Dec 1867, Elk, PA  
 | William J AHERN  
 |           bd. Oct 1871  
 |           dd. 1947  
 |           brd.   , Elk, PA  
 | James AHERN  
 |    bd. Nov 1831, County Cork, Ireland  
 |    rel. Roman Catholic  
 |    dd. 13 Jan 1899, Sonoma, SONOMA, CA.  
 |    brd. 16 Jan 1899, Petaluma, Sonoma, California  
 |    Mary Agnes AHERN  
 |       bd. 21 Jun 1859, Millstone, Somerset, New Jersey  
 |       dd. 22 Sep 1937, Tiburon, Marin Co., CA.  
 |       brd. 24 Sep 1937, Mt. Olivet Cem., San Rafael, Marin, CA  
 |       Jane Elizabeth "Lizzie" BRADLEY  
 |           bd. 15 Jul 1882, Petaluma, Sonoma, CA  
 |           dd. 17 Dec 1968, Alameda, California  
 |           brd. 22 Dec 1968, San Rafael, Marin, California  
 |       John Francis BRADLEY  
 |           bd. 3 Jul 1884, San Rafael, Marin, CA.  
 |           dd. 23 Mar 1959, SANTA CRUZ, CA.  
 |       James Ahern BRADLEY  
 |           bd. 19 May 1886, San Rafael, Marin, CA.  
 |           dd. 14 Jun 1963, NAPA, CA.  
 |       Mary Agnes BRADLEY  
 |           bd. 25 Oct 1888, Sonoma, CA  
 |           dd. 16 Aug 1968, Ross, Marin, CA  
 |           brd. 20 Aug 1968, Mt. Olivet Cemetery, San Rafael CA  
 |       Hilary Patric BRADLEY  
 |           bd. 17 Mar 1893  
 |           dd. 3 Jun 1920, San Rafael, Marin, CA.  
 |       Anna Margaret BRADLEY  
 |           bd. 19 Nov 1896  
 |           dd. 23 Jun 1897, Tiburon, Marin, CA  
 |       Miriam Marcella "Brownie" BRADLEY  
 |           bd. 22 Oct 1899, Tiburon, Marin, CA.  
 |           dd. 25 Feb 1995, San Rafael, Marin, CA.  
 |       Thomas Graham BRADLEY  
 |           bd. 4 Jul 1902, Tiburon, Marin, CA.  
 |           dd. 15 Nov 1957, SAN FRANCISCO, CA.  
 |       Unk BRADLEY  
 |       Unk BRADLEY  
 |       Unk BRADLEY  
 |       Unk BRADLEY  
 | John AHERN  
 |    bd. abt Apr 1861

Henry Michael AHERN  
 bd. 30 Apr 1862, NJ.  
 dd. 14 Feb 1900, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA  
 brd. 17 Feb 1900, Petaluma, Sonoma, CA

William Henry AHERN  
 bd. 27 Aug 1894, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.  
 dd. 19 Sep 1977, , Marin, CA

James AHERN  
 bd. 18 Oct 1896  
 dd. 8 Jul 1957, , Contra Costa, CA

James Bernard AHERN\*  
 bd. 9 Sep 1866, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.  
 dd. 6 Nov 1945, Marin, California  
 brd. 9 Nov 1945, San Rafael, Marin, California

ELIZABETH Joyet "Bessie" AHERN  
 bd. 24 Jun 1894  
 dd. 1 Jun 1980, Sutter, CA

Irene L AHERN  
 bd. 27 Sep 1896  
 dd. 16 Mar 1966, Los Angeles, CA

Agnes Jane AHERN  
 bd. 28 Oct 1898  
 dd. 15 Feb 1900, Tiburon, Marin, CA

James Bernard AHERN\*  
 bd. 9 Sep 1866, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.  
 dd. 6 Nov 1945, Marin, California  
 brd. 9 Nov 1945, San Rafael, Marin, California

Gertrude AHERN  
 bd. abt 1904  
 dd. 5 Jun 2002  
 brd. 11 Jun 2002, San Rafael, Marin, California

Alice Laura AHERN  
 bd. 5 Jan 1905  
 dd. 30 Mar 1992, Marin, California  
 brd. 2 Apr 1992, San Rafael, Marin, California

Maurine AHERN  
 bd. abt 1908  
 dd. 10 May 1936

James Bernard "Sid" AHERN  
 bd. 10 Jan 1910  
 dd. 8 Sep 1967, San Francisco, San Francisco, California  
 brd. 12 Sep 1967, San Rafael, Marin, California

Sarah Anne AHERN  
 bd. 21 Mar 1869, VALLEJO TWP., SONOMA, CA.  
 dd. 15 Jan 1928, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.  
 brd. Petaluma, Sonoma, CA

JANE Isabelle "Belle" AHERN  
 bd. 11 Jun 1871, VALLEJO TWP., SONOMA, CA.  
 dd. 1 Nov 1931

Carlton GREEN  
 bd. 14 Jan 1894, Sonoma, Sonoma, CA

Miriam Genovevam GREEN  
 bd. 22 Mar 1896, Sonoma, Sonoma, CA

Florence A GREEN



