DINGLE, KILMALKEDAR PARISH, COUNTY KERRY

McMAHONS FROM DINGLE, COUNTY KERRY

TIMOTHY McMAHON abt. 1775 = UNKNOWN

ROBERT McMAHON abt. 1810 = MARGARET McCANN 1821

HENRY A. McMAHON 1857 = HONORA JOSEPHINE SHANAHAN 1854

JOSEPH EMMANUEL INGOLDSBY 1871 = AGNES JOSEPHINE MAHON 1881

A Family History – Kathleen Ingoldsby

In 1829, Robert McMahon would have sailed from this harbor, Tralee, Kerry, Ireland, and followed his brother, Thomas, who left Ireland about 1821 – Photo: June 2018 - Ingoldsby
Dingle Townland ◊ Kilmalkedar Parish ◊ 1821-1829

Smerwick Bay on the western coast of the Dingle Peninsula holds an ancient history, with townlands such as Glashabeg, Ballydavid, and Ballyferriter. Here, Viking, Celtic, and Christian histories meet, and today, hikers walk the paths of Saint Brendan. A stronghold for tradition, it’s one of the few official Gaeltacht regions for the native-speaking Irish language. The Gallarus Oratory nearby, still perfect dry-laid stone, dates from 600 AD. Evidence of census documents, church records, and local lore points to this place on the western shore as where my branch of the McMahon family first settled.

The focus of this chapter is on two McMahon brothers, Thomas, b. abt. 1799, and Robert, b. abt. 1810, who, in 1821 and 1829, respectively, left from homes near Milltown, next to the Kerry port of Dingle, to secure a better life in Ipswich, Massachusetts. Only a few McMahons remain today in the Kilmalkedar or Dingle Parish areas of Kerry.
Glashabeg ◊ Kilmalkedar Parish ◊ McMahon ◊ 1834-1852-1901
Eighteenth-century Irish Catholic families were large, but according to English law, were beholden to landlords as tenant farmers and could not own land, nor worship openly, until the Catholic Relief Acts of the 1770-1790s. Even then, unfettered land ownership was elusive as Catholics were still allowed only a nine hundred and ninety-nine year lease. Land title traditionally also passed to the oldest son, leaving younger sons to find employment elsewhere.

For the two brothers, and possibly their father, Timothy, circa 1800 Milltown, adjoining the port of Dingle, would have been a certain place of employment in the linen, shipping, or fishing trade during the early part of the nineteenth century.
From 1790-1830, Ireland employed, proportionally, more workers in textiles than any other country—producing flax, wool, silk, cotton, and the coarser fibers for sack and rope. The linen industry on Dingle began through the efforts of Robert Fitzgerald, who, in the mid-1700s, imported flax seed, obtained grants for worker bonuses, and began the successful manufacture of linen on Dingle. Centered in the area between Dingle and Tralee (pictured below), this major undertaking increased immeasurably the wealth and prosperity of former tenant farmers, laborers, and “tillers of the soil.”

The linen industry thrived and prospered for forty years, until production was usurped by American inventions that made cotton “king,” so to speak. The spinning jenny in 1764, the frame and mule devices in 1774-79, and the rise in the popularity of cotton in the early 1800s all contributed to a demise of the linen industry and trade on Dingle, beginning about 1818 until linen production became fully extinct by 1835. Economic hardship followed during a period that saw major emigration out of County Kerry and Dingle, which included my great-great-grandfather Robert and his brother Thomas.
On IrishGenealogy.ie, I found the following Timothy McMahon (father/witness/spouse) records (family connection unknown):

- Marriage: TIMOTHY MC MAHON of NR and ELIZABETH HILLIARD, BALLINAHAGLISHY, 12 January 1748;
- Baptism: BRYAN MCMAHON, BALLINAHAGLISH, 21 Sept. 1749;
- Baptism: ISABELLA MCMAHON, BALLINAHAGLISH, 2 August 1750;
- Baptism: MARY MCMAHON of KELUD, 25 March 1809;
- Baptism: CATHERINE MCMAHON of NR on 7 December 1809;
- Baptism: WILLIAM MCMAHON of GLASHEBEAG, 5 September 1813;
- Baptism: JAMES MCMAHON of MURHUR on 17 November 1814;
- Marriage: WILLIAM SEALY of MILLTOWN and CATHERINE MCMAHON of MILLTOWN, 3 January 1830;
- Baptism: ELIZABETH MCMAHON of GLANALAPPA, 23 April 1818.

Dingle Parish records are available only from 1821, and those of the adjoining parishes—Ballyferriter, Lispole, Annascaul, Castlegregory, etc.—are available only for even later dates. However, I feel confident in placing the origins of my great-great-grandfather, Robert McMahon, b. abt. 1810, on Dingle Peninsula in Kerry with his brother, Thomas, b. abt. 1799, and father, Timothy. Their journey continues in the following chapter on my McMahon family’s Irish roots, tracing the origins of four of our family’s McMahon generations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
Robert McMahon, my great-great-grandfather, left the port of Tralee in Dingle, Kerry, April, 1829, to immigrate to the United States. Most likely traveling steerage and boarding an empty lumber ship returning to Canada after offloading its cargo in the maritime port of Tralee, he made his way to the United States by way of Vermont. Robert was about twenty-one years old.

Families often made use of “chain migration,” heading to a place where other family members had settled. This has been helpful for research, as one location might attract clusters of immigrants from a specific locale. Indeed, these family connections helped fill in the gaps from almost two hundred years of McMahons from Dingle Peninsula, County Kerry.

On the following page is the first section of the 1838 Massachusetts U.S. Naturalization document for Robert McMahon, Ipswich; it holds a rich account of his immigration. He entered the U.S. from Canada, arriving at Canaan, Vermont, April, 1829. Looking for McMahons in the Vermont neighborhood, I found only one—Johanna (Honora) McMahon Grandfield, Waitsfield, Vermont, most likely related.
Commonwealth of Massachusetts,

ESSEX, ss.

To the Honorable the Justices of the

Court of Common Pleas, held at

Newbury within and for the County

of Essex on the third Monday of December

of 1836, Robert McMahon, a free white person,

late of Dingell in the County of Marrow, Vermont,

now resident at

said Dingell in the County of Essex, in the

said county of Essex, to this Court represents, that he was born at

said Dingell, in the kingdom of

Great Britain of Ireland, under the allegiance of

that he came to the United States and arrived at Canaan

in the State of Vermont

on the fifth day of April 1829. That he made report of himself, as appears by the certificate thereof annexed, and that before the

Court of Common Pleas began sitting at Salem on the third Monday of Dec.

1836 he on oath declared that it was bona fide, his intention to become a citizen of the United States, and to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty whatever, and particularly to

the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain

as by the certificate thereof annexed appears; that he has resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States, five years at least now immediately preceding, and more than one year within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to wit at Salem, that he has behaved as a man of good moral character, attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the same; that he has never borne any hereditary title, or been of any of the orders of nobility, in the kingdom or state from which he came; that he is now ready to declare on oath that he will support the Constitution of the United States, and that he will absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty whatever, and particularly to

Victoria Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain

of Ireland.

He therefore prays the Court here that he may be admitted to become a citizen of the United States, pursuant to the laws thereof in such cases made and provided.

Robert McMahon

Figure 1 Robert McMahon, Essex County Court of Common Pleas, Salem, Dec. 24, 1836, Naturalization Document, pg. 1 of 2; "arrived at Canaan, Vermont, 5th of April, 1829"
The Grandfields were close to the McMahons on Dingle, on Smerwick Bay near Glashabeg, Ballyferriter, or Ballydavid, where early church records of baptisms and marriages contain both names. Grandfields in Washington County, Vermont, when Robert McMahon arrived included Robert, William, Charles, Thomas, Andrew, and John. In Ireland, a Robert McMahon and Cate Currane were sponsors at the 1826 baptism of Johanna Grandfield, daughter of Robert Grandfield and Honora McMahon, in Dingle Parish. Robert and Honora (McMahon) Grandfield are later found in Washington County, Vermont. Other Dingle surnames associated with McMahon on church records were Landers, Moore, Sealey, and Curran.

**Baptism** of JOHANNA GRANFIELD of DINGLE PARISH on 19 November 1826

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>JOHANNA GRANFIELD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>DINGLE PARISH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>ROBERT GRANFIELD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>HONORA MCMAHON</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further details in the record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsor 1</th>
<th>ROBERT MCMAHON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor 2</td>
<td>CATHERINE CURANE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Soon after his arrival in Vermont, Robert relocated to Ipswich, Massachusetts, next to the farm of one Thomas McMahon. Indeed, on December 5, 1845, the two purchased six to seven acres together on the Ipswich River from the estate of Deacon Moses Lord (deed book 361, page 242). Thomas also bought a second lot on Turkey Shore, situated next to Mager Woodbury, his father-in-law (1832 map inset on following page; their land was South of the V-E-R letters in Ipswich River). By 1850, Robert owned real estate valued at $800 (about $25,000 in today’s dollars); Thomas McMahon’s property was listed as $3000, his occupation as farmer, and one Andrew Grandfield, 18, possibly a Vermont nephew and son of Robert and Hanora Grandfield, lived with the family.
Both Thomas’s and Robert’s death records list their father as Timothy; it’s certain that they were brothers, supporting the reason that Robert came to the North Shore of Massachusetts.

Thomas McMahon’s 1838 Ipswich naturalization papers list his birthplace as Milltown, Kerry (Baile an Mhuilinn), which is just west of the town of Dingle, and his arrival to the United States at Ipswich as November, 1821.

In Ipswich, I found one other McMahon nearby: Florence, married to Sophia Butler (no additional information). In 1826, Thomas married Mary Woodbury, daughter of Mager Woodbury and Mary Appleton. Mary was the great-granddaughter of Isaac Appleton, brother of Samuel, founder of Appleton Farms, Ipswich, continuously in operation since 1739. By 1850, with Robert living next door, Thomas owned forty-four improved acres, one horse, four milk cows, two cattle, one swine, and held twenty-nine bushels of rye grain and one-hundred-fifty bushels of Indian corn.
On December 20th, 1846, Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church in Salem, Massachusetts, recorded Robert McMahon’s marriage to Margaret McCann. Witnesses were Timothy and Julia (Lombard) Curran, also recently married having Robert Mahon as one of their witnesses. The two were close, each from County Kerry, Ireland, and probably related.

Both Timothy Curran and Robert McMahon were listed as laborers on various census accounts. Notable in 1846, Robert granted a parcel of his land in Ipswich to Timothy Curran, the same year as both were married, each a witness at the other’s wedding. (see both 1846 marriage records, next page) A church dispensation was noted in writing (reason unknown) for the McMahon - McCann (or McGann) marriage, my great-great-grandparents.

Figure 3 1856 Ipswich Village—T. McMahan, R. McMahon house sites; historicipswich.org

Turkey Shore, Ipswich River, (above & below)

Figure 4 1893 view, after both McMahon families had left Ipswich, showing former homes.
Robert and his wife, Margaret McCann, (later listed as washerwoman and deaf, 1865 Massachusetts Census), had seven children: Ellen, b. 1848; Catherine, b. 1849 (married Anselme Hebert); Mary Anna, b. 1851; Margaret, b. 1852 (married William H. Blakely); John, b. 1854 (married Annie Scollan); Henry A., b. 1857 (my great-grandfather, married Honora Josephine Shanahan), and Joseph, b. 1859 (married Ida Marshall at some point after changing his name to Pellman, from his step-father, John).
The three Kerry families, the Thomas and the Robert McMahons and the Timothy Currans, carried out the labors of farm life on the banks of the Ipswich River, harvesting crops, tending animals, and gathering salt hay. Turkey Shore, an early and historically important path to the seacoast, included their land along the south side of the Ipswich River. On the McMahons’ 1845 deed, this section was called French’s Cove and it included a point at the river bend, salt marsh, upland, and arable land.
Neighbors on Turkey Shore, South District of Ipswich, held professions or trades, with only one neighbor classified as “gentleman.” A glance at the McMahon’s 1855 Massachusetts Census page found Scottish, Irish, German, and English-born neighbors with trades of weaver, stone mason, currier, yeoman, laborer, butcher, carpenter, machinist, tailor, and teacher.

Tragedy hit the family June 20, 1858, when my great-great-grandfather Robert McMahon suddenly died at age 47. On his Ipswich, Massachusetts, death record, cause of death was noted as “ate poison clams.” Henry McMahon, my great-grandfather, was then not quite two-years old.

![Figure 3 The Cass County Republican, Cass, Michigan, Thu. July 15, 1858, pg. 2](Image)

![Figure 9 Clammers, Ipswich River-George Dexter Image, circa 1910: historicipswich.org](Image)
Margaret McCann, my great-great-grandmother, born about 1821 at Ardmore, Ireland, according to the 1865 Massachusetts Census, was left a widow with six children and another on the way. The 1860 U.S. Census shows her in the same home, real estate valued at $500, with five children all under nine years of age. She remarried, Nov. 21, 1861, to Thomas Ready, but the marriage did not last (Thomas, born in Carrick, Donegal, Ireland, later died of alcoholism). The 1870 U.S. Census found Margaret Reedy (Ready) living alone in Ipswich, still at home on Turkey Shore, Labor in Vain Road, with four of her youngest children, ages 11-14, including my great-grandfather Henry, all employed at the nearby Ipswich Hosiery Mill, and likely working ten hours, seven days week, at one dollar per day (U.S. Dept. of Interior, Statistics of Wages).

Figure 10  In 1868, Amos A. Lawrence established the Ipswich Hosiery Mills in the old stone mill that stood near the dam; by 1900, Ipswich Mills had become the largest stocking mill in the country. A 1913 workers’ strike demanding a wage increase at the Ipswich Hosiery Mills plant was organized by members of the local Industrial Workers of the World. Postcard photo, circa 1900 image: historicipswich.org
With Thomas McMahon’s family grown, and soon after his brother Robert’s 1858 death, Thomas’s census reports show a decrease in agricultural output. By 1860, his agricultural holdings were reduced to twenty-three acres, one horse, one milk cow, and two swine, with forty bushels of rye and sixty-eight bushels of Indian corn. (Indian corn was the colonists’ name for ear corn, as opposed to the British term of maize.)

Thomas, by then classified as a yeoman, died the next year, December, 1861, intestate, leaving land valued at $1500 and salt marsh valued at $150 to his widow and two remaining daughters, Elizabeth S. McMahon, single, and Priscilla Baker (McMahon) Choate, married to John Choate. The inherited property with premises (above) were then sold in 1862 to James Galbraith, with Elizabeth McMahon as executor. Earlier, 1837-38, Thomas and Mary McMahon had lost two young daughters to disease, Mary Appleton and Martha Jane, buried in Old South Cemetery, Ipswich. The middle names of three of their daughters reflected their maternal grandmothers’ or great-grandmother’s surname: Appleton, Baker, and (possibly) Sawyer.
Figure 12  By 1872, Mary, the widow of Thomas McMahon, had moved from the Foss house (shown above) to the Soward house, two houses away, inherited from her father Mager Woodbury. Margaret, the widow of Robert, still lived on Labor in Vain Road. Note that Prospect Street later became Turkey Shore Road. 1872 map historicipswich.org

Figure 13 Labor In Vain-McMahon House: former Robert McMahon house site: see Mrs. McMahan house icon above on map at right. www.historicipswich.org
In 1874, my great-great-grandmother Margaret McCann married a third time to John Pellman, a weaver from Austria, relocating to Lowell. And although Margaret was likely born in Ardmore, Waterford, where I found a Margaret McCann born April, 1821, to John and Margaret (Kinelly) McCann, there also are Ardmore townlands in Donegal, as well as in Kilmalkedar, Dingle, Kerry. Ardmore translates to “great heights.” I’m not sure if this cabinet card (at right) in my grandmother’s Lowell photograph collection is of Margaret McCann, but it does reflect the period’s home textile arts with a lace-making display, and does not resemble other known portrait images. The same Marion Studio imprint was also on an 1886 cabinet card of infant Florence (Floss) Hebert, Margaret’s granddaughter. It’s an interesting sidenote that, 1818-1822, Luddite lacemakers fled Nottingham, England, to Ipswich when hand lacemaking was usurped by machinery.

Henry Mahon’s 1880 U.S. Census listed his mother as born in Halifax, NS, unlike most records listing Ireland, so there’s possibly a family link to Nova Scotia. Margaret McCann/McMahon/Ready/Pellman died of apoplexy, June 2, 1890, living in “The Acre,” 31 Adams Street, Lowell. Her husband John Pellman died four years later in Manchester, N.H.
At some point before his June 10, 1879, marriage to Honora Josephine Shanahan (Annie Shannon [Fig. 15]; witnesses: Humphrey Barsdow and Mary Pike) in the City of Lowell, Henry shortened McMahon to Mahon.

Henry and Annie (Honora Josephine Shanahan) Mahon first began married life in Lowell living with her family (see County Cork chapter), Henry listed as painter, Annie as “works in cotton mill,” in the 1880 U.S. Census. They soon had three daughters (shown in tintype pictured): Gertrude L., b. 1880, Agnes Josephine, my grandmother, b. 1881, and Helen C., b. 1883. The Mahons moved to Fayette Street, then remained in Lowell on Varney Street with their three daughters through the early 1900s. Shown with the three Mahon sisters, Fig. 16, Mary McCarthy, b. 1887, far right, the daughter of Honora Josephine Shanahan’s sister, Ellen Shanahan McCarthy.
My uncle, Francis Ingoldsby, born 1906, held some memories of his grandfather, Henry A. Mahon, who died in 1923. According to Fran, Henry “worked street machinery” in Ipswich; however, I haven’t been able to confirm this. On various census reports, Henry’s occupation was usually listed as “engineer,” and in one case “Stationary Engineer,” that is, operating steam or other powered industrial machinery. Stationary engineering trades emerged during the Industrial Revolution, separate from engineers operating mobile power plants, such as locomotives or ships. Among my grandmother’s photographs was this view of a steam engine, and I can presume that this is Henry Mahon at work. Private U.S. Postal photograph postcards of this style and exact reverse format, regulated by the government, were produced from 1901-1907.

Figure 17  Henry A. Mahon, Stationary Engineer, family postcard 1901-07. A steam engine this size could power an entire factory or a large mill. It is a one-cylinder engine, most likely double acting. Some could run continuously for 50+ years with minimal maintenance.
As adults, the first American-born generation of Robert McMahon’s family settled in the Lowell, Massachusetts, area, which provided access to extended family, a major presence of the Catholic Church, work in the textile mills, Irish community, and plenty of customers for other trades.

Catherine McMahon, Henry’s sister, married Philippe Anselme (Samuel) Hebert in 1871, and set up housekeeping at 23 Adams Street, Lowell. Many Irish settled in “The Acre” surrounding Saint Patrick’s Church, which included Adams Street. The couple had two daughters, Lillian K, b. 1872, and Florence M. (Floss), b. 1886. In census reports, Samuel’s occupation was listed as grocer, Catherine as house keeper.

At that time, Catherine’s mother Margaret lived with them on Adams Street, as did her brother Joseph (McMahon) Pellman, initially. Joseph was also listed as a grocer in early census reports and later as a butcher. In 1888, he married Ida M. Marshall. Joseph and Ida relocated to Boston in 1891, and directories listed his line of work as “provisions” at 594 Shawmut Avenue there, while they resided in Roxbury. And, curiously, he was a prizewinner at the 1891 Boston Cat Breeders Association Show:

![Image of a newspaper article about a prizewinner at the 1891 Boston Cat Breeders Association Show.]

As for two of Henry Mahon’s other sisters, no paper trail or evidence could be found after 1865 (Massachusetts Census, Ipswich) for Ellen McMahon or Mary Anna McMahon.
John McMahon, Henry’s brother, left Lowell for Boston after his marriage in 1879 to Annie Scollan. John became a railroad conductor for Boston & Albany Railroad and Old Colony Railroad, and died in 1894.

My grandmother, Agnes Josephine Mahon, was born February 2, 1881, to Henry and Josie Mahon on Fenwick Terrace, in “The Acre,” adjacent to Saint Patrick’s Cathedral in Lowell, where she was baptized, February 3, 1881, sponsored by her uncle, Denis Shanahan, and aunt, Margaret Shanahan. On Varney Street in 1900, Agnes began her career as saleslady. Later, she’d spend thirty-five years, 1918-1953, with Filene’s Coat Dept. in Boston.
In 1903, my grandmother, Agnes Josephine Mahon, married Dr. Joseph E. Ingoldsby. He’d spotted her at Holy Cross Cathedral in Boston one Sunday, and they soon courted. They had two sons, my father, Joseph, born in 1904, and my uncle, Francis, born in 1906.
Epilogue: In June of 2018, I traveled to the Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry seeking information on the McMahon family, not having very much to go on. I credit Mary McMahon, shown with me (on right), in Dingle, for pointing me to Ballydavid, the Dingle library, and to St. Mary’s Catholic Church records office.

My grandmother Agnes Josephine Mahon passed away when I was nine years old. I remember asking her “what we were,” meaning what nationality. She’d dutifully reply: one-quarter Irish, one-quarter Scottish, and, on my maternal side, half Lithuanian. I learned no more of the Mahons until my uncle related the connection to Ipswich, Massachusetts.

A trip to the Ipswich, Massachusetts, Town Clerk’s office followed in 2005, finally providing the names of my great-grand-uncles and aunts. Then, as the abundance of digital records grew online, I discovered the naturalization papers for Robert McMahon, my great-great-grandfather, and found that he was Irish after all, and that although McMahon was a Scottish-sounding name, “what I was” turned out to be an even fifty-fifty.