

Barquilla de la Santa Maria

BULLETIN of the Catholic Record Society - Diocese of Columbus

Volume XIX, No. 11

November, 1994

THE CREIGHTON OR McCRAREN FAMILY CATHOLIC PIONEERS IN OHIO AND OMAHA

by Donald M. Schlegel
(Concluded, from Vol. XIX, No. 10)

The children of James and Bridget (Hughes) Creighton

The nine children of James and Bridget Creighton were Alice who married Thomas McShane, Henry, Francis, Mary who married John McCreary, Edward, James, Joseph, Catherine, and John. The only one of these for whom a baptismal record has been located is Joseph, baptized about August 1, 1825; this was recorded at St. Joseph's near Somerset. (19)

Alice, the eldest child, was baptized, according to her son Felix, at St. Mary's church, Philadelphia. (20) She married Thomas McShane and lived near Springfield, Ohio, where their first four children were born, then moved to near New Lexington in Perry County. Her children were Mrs. Catherine Furay, James, Mrs. Ellen Cannon, Edward, Thomas, Bridget, another Thomas, John A., Mrs. Margaret Cannon, and Felix. Catherine and Ellen lived in Omaha. Bridget, who was born in 1847, entered St. Mary's Dominican convent in Somerset on August 14, 1865 and was given the habit on November 9; she made her profession of vows on November 21, 1866, as Sister Mary Joseph. A year later she was sent to St. Columba's Academy in Zanesville to teach. Her career was short, for she died on May 23, 1873 after a long and painful siege of consumption (most such cases are now known as tuberculosis). She suffered with heroic patience, her eyes constantly fixed on a picture of the crucifixion. (21)

Catherine, the youngest daughter of James and Bridget Creighton, after James's death lived with Alice in Springfield and then near New Lexington, where she died in 1847.

It was in Licking County about 1851 that "Henry, the eldest son, passed away, after having left an ineffaceable impression on the minds of the other members of the family. He had learned the trade of a carpenter, and while working at his trade in Louisville, Kentucky, met with an accident, which disabled him for life. We may well believe that his affliction, however painful to himself, and however much of a sorrow to the rest of the family, was in reality a source of great blessing. For to him in a large measure is due the sterling Catholicity of his younger and better known brothers. Could they ever forget the sweet patience of their brother, an invalid for fourteen

years, his winning piety, and the lessons of the catechism, which he explained from his bed of pain? In after years, when memory would picture the old homestead, they would see once again the rude log-house, the puncheon floor, and the sweet, sad face of the saintly brother, whose presence was a benediction, whose life was a prayer, and whose beautiful soul, chastened and made holy by much suffering went at last to receive its well-merited reward. 'Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord: for their works follow them.'

"Francis, the third child of James and Bridget, lived for some years in Springfield, Ohio; but, afterwards, at the invitation of his brother Edward, took up his residence in Omaha, where his widow resides, as also his son, John D. Creighton, and two daughters, Mrs. H. Itner and Mrs. Mathew Maginn. Francis died in 1873." (22)

James Creighton "was the first to settle in the West. In company with his brother Joseph, he reached Omaha in 1856. James was of delicate health, and did not long survive the severity of the rough Western life of those days. He died in 1866. Joseph married and settled in Omaha, where he died in 1893. Mary Creighton was wedded to John McCreary of Omaha, where she died, in 1898, survived by some seven children.

Edward Creighton

"Edward Creighton, the first of the name to acquire fame and fortune was the fifth child of his parents. He was born near the present town of Barnesville in Belmont County, Ohio, on the 31st day of August, 1820. ...Young Creighton was gifted with a bright and vigorous mind; quickly, therefore, he learned all that the school-master could teach; and clearly too, he saw how deficient was his own store of knowledge; but with characteristic determination set about acquiring by individual effort and by private reading that education, which, supplemented by the lessons learned in the hard school of experience, made him a successful man. ...

"At the age of fourteen he was a strong, active lad, rendering his father valuable assistance at one time on the farm, at another, working as a cart-boy on the pike-roads [between Wheeling and Columbus]. In this latter occupation he had as companion no less distinguished a person than young Philip Sheridan, afterwards the brilliant general of the civil war. Even at this early date young Sheridan had merited the sobriquet of 'Fighting Phil.' In those days of strong religious antipathies, young Catholics, and especially young Irish Catholics, were frequently forced into quarrels on the score of religion and race. But neither young Sheridan nor his athletic chum was disposed to suffer any reflection on either score; and we are told that in their own way they established their titles to respect at the hands of their bigoted acquaintances." (23)

When Edward reached the age of eighteen, his father presented to him a team of horses and a wagon, with which he set out to make his own way in the world. He became a wagoner on the roads between Cincinnati, Wheeling, and Cumberland. Soon he found more profitable employment for his team, working on the public improvement of the roads and the construction of railroads throughout Ohio, while still returning home regularly at harvest time to assist and direct the work on the farm. In 1846 or 1847 he took a job to deliver telegraph poles

for a new line being built in southern Indiana and in this new industry he was to prosper.

Edward served as administrator of his father's estate. He kept the lands together until after the death of the eldest brother, Henry. The family still living on the family farm in Franklin Township in 1850 consisted of Bridget, Henry, Mary, and John. In April of 1852 sold the farm and the lands in and about Mount Hope to J. J. Hupp and Strother Hupp for \$3,300. At that time his residence was in Springfield. (24)

Shortly after this, Edward became construction superintendent of a telegraph line being built to New Orleans, while his brother James took a similar job on a line being constructed to the west. Up until 1855, Edward was involved in construction of telegraph lines in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. In 1855 he owned or employed some forty teams in grading a new railroad line near Mexico, Missouri.

In 1856, Edward married Miss Mary Lucretia, daughter of David A. and Mary E. Wareham, of Dayton, Ohio, and took her to the new home that he and his brothers John A. and Joseph and their cousin James Creighton had established in Omaha. He built telegraph lines tying Omaha to St. Joseph, Missouri, and another one into Arkansas. Then, late in 1860, he took on the work that, other than the University that took his name, would make him famous: the connection of California to the east by a cross-continental telegraph line, filling in the missing links between the Missouri River and Fort Churchill, Nevada. He surveyed the route and superintended construction, which began on July 4, 1861. The adventures and drama associated with building and operating this critical link that united the east and west during the Civil War became the backdrop for both Zane Grey's novel Western Union and the 1940s movie of the same name, both of which featured the character of Edward Creighton and admired his drive and his faith. In the telegraph business as well as in wagon freight (before construction of the railroads) and cattle herding, Creighton made his fortune. He assisted mightily in the building up of Omaha and its institutions. (25)

"The end came unexpectedly. On November 3rd, 1874, Mr. Creighton fell on the floor of his bank, stricken with paralysis. Aid was hurriedly summoned, and he was taken home; but he never recovered consciousness, and on November 5th at seven o'clock in the evening his soul took its flight back to its Creator." The funeral Mass, at St. Philomena's Cathedral, and the ensuing procession to Holy Sepulchre cemetery, were attended by masses of people, who had lost their great friend and benefactor. "His private life was spotless. In business he was distinguished for quick perception, rapid decision, unyielding determination... Socially, he was esteemed for his charity and forbearance... To the principles of the Catholic Church he ever adhered with unquestioned loyalty, supporting her institutions, practicing her devotions, honoring, revering and assisting her clergy. In a letter written by his wife shortly after his death, we are told that on the very day on which he was stricken, he knelt down with her and together they said their morning prayers; and she adds that such had been their custom for many years."

Edward Creighton had left no will and, as their only child had died young, his widow was free to leave funds in her will to fulfill his long-cherished desire of endowing a Catholic college. She died less than two years after Edward, in

1876, and left one hundred thousand dollars to found Creighton University. Because of Edward's and John's long association with the Dominican Order in Ohio, the new university was first offered to them. The offer was made to Father Michael D. Lilly, vicar-provincial, but he refused it because of his innate conservatism in combination with the expected short duration of his vicarship. In addition, the Dominican Master General did not look with favor on the college work of the American Dominicans. Upon hearing of this refusal, the Creightons gave the university to the Jesuits. (26)

John Andrew Creighton

John Creighton was unlike his brother Edward in many ways: he seems to have been more intellectually inclined and was more of a merchant than a builder. Nevertheless, they got along well, "and their union savored less of the fraternal than of that holier relation which exists between father and son." John was the youngest of the nine children of James and Bridget Creighton, born in Licking County on October 15, 1831. We can be sure that his education began at his mother's knees; it was continued at a district school. After his father's death, his brother Edward arranged that John's portion of the estate would be used for his education and he was sent to St. Joseph's College near Somerset. There in the annual commencement in July of 1852 he received awards in the second class of Arithmetic, first class of English Grammar, Geography, Sacred History, and Christian Doctrine. At the July, 1853 exercises he

received awards in first division, first class Arithmetic and in Profane History. (27) Despite this Dominican training and his wide experience in business circles, John found it impossible to speak in public.



This engraving of "Count" John A. Creighton appeared in the Catholic Columbian of January 12, 1895.

John left school to help his brother Edward in his contracting business in Ohio, then followed him to Missouri, Iowa, and Nebraska (they were in Iowa at the same time that James Hartley, future Bishop of Columbus, was born there). He helped with the telegraph construction projects, then went into many other businesses in the growing West, such as railroad construction, and merchant trading and shipping. He invested in cattle, mining,

banking, a stock yard, and Omaha's street railroad, though all of which he became a millionaire.

In 1868 John married Miss Sarah Wareham, sister of Edward's wife, before Bishop O'Gorman at the St. Philomena's Cathedral in Omaha, and at last settled down there. The couple had one child, a daughter, who died in infancy.

John Creighton made good use of his money by making large donations to the Jesuits' new Creighton University, Creighton Hospital in Omaha, and various Catholic organizations. In 1895 he was named a Count of the Papal Court by Pope Leo XIII, a distinction that had been received by only one other American at that time. This was done "in recognition of the many and valuable services rendered" by him "to religion and education." (cf note 23) In 1900 the University of Notre Dame conferred upon him the Laetare medal, for his munificence in behalf of charity and Christian education. (28)

"To his co-religionists no less than to those of different creed, he is remarkable for his fidelity to the teachings of the Roman Catholic church. In his devotions he is as simple as a child. The foundations of his belief and pious practices were laid deeply and firmly, and not all the wild and rough life of the mountains and pre-airies could ever shake them. His first thought in the hour of danger, whether to himself or to his acquaintances, is of God and religion....

"In the days of the A.P.A. excitement in Omaha, Count Creighton was looked upon as one of the most vigilant and determined enemies of the association. He never hesitated to condemn the odious organization, and he did all in his power to nullify its influence. Recently he walked in procession with his fellow parishioners, who were taking the Jubilee visits -- an edifying sight, truly, for under the burden of threescore and ten years the venerable Count has lost some of his youthful vigor." ...

The Count died Feb. 7, 1907 in Omaha. His funeral was from St. John's church on the University campus. William Jennings Bryan was one of the pallbearers and Creighton University students formed an honor guard. None of Edward or John Creighton's cousins or nieces or nephews or their descendants have ever matched the earthly prominence or wealth of these two brothers, but at his funeral the celebrant summed up his life, as well as his brother's and those of many others of the family: "He was a man of faith and heart."

NOTES

19) Bulletin, Vol. 1, page 58

20) The baptismal register of old St. Mary's in Philadelphia for this period has been lost for many years, so this statement cannot be verified.

21) Information on Sister Mary Joseph was kindly supplied by Sr. Mary Agnes McMahon, Archivist at St. Mary of the Springs.

22) Francis H. Creighton, born about 1816, was a farmer in Springfield township, Clark County, in 1850.

23) See also the Catholic Columbian of Jan. 12, 1895.

24) Licking County, Ohio Probate Records, 1828-1904; Licking County Genealogical Society, 1975; p. 29. Deed Record 62/469; see also deed 49/32. Census of 1850, Franklin Township, Licking County, page 465.

- 25) Edward Creighton's career was more fully documented in a Master's thesis prepared at Creighton University by Barbara Sorensen under supervision of Prof. Frank L. Byrne. A good summary appeared in "The Creightons: Builders of the West" by Robert Fell, in the university's Alumnus in the 1970s. A copy of the latter is on file with the Record Society.
- 26) O'Daniel, V. Rev. Victor F., O.P., The Dominican Province of Saint Joseph, Historico-Biographical Studies; Somerset: The Rosary Press, 1942; page 290. Father O'Daniel describes this as a tradition of the province, but having "some documentary support." With thanks to Dr. Tony Lisska for calling this to the attention of the author.
- 27) Somerset Post, July 15, 1852; Catholic Telegraph, August 6, 1853. His name does not appear in the 1854 commencement lists; it would seem that he attended and left the school one year earlier than the histories say.
- 28) In addition to Rev. P. A. Mullens's book, information on John Creighton can be found in many places, such as the Catholic Columbian of January 12, 1895; The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, XI/369; and the Dictionary of American Biography, II/534.

ST. PATRICK MISSION, OLD WASHINGTON AND LEATHERWOOD
BAPTISMS IN EAST-CENTRAL GUERNSEY COUNTY
1829-1872

(Continued, from Vol. XIX, No. 10)

1859, continued

- May 8 In the church of St. Patrick, Washington, James Lyons, son of Patrick and Ann, born March 20; spon. Thomas Ragan and Ann Gallagher. John M. Jacquet
- May 9 At Cambridge, Bridget Mitchel, daughter of John and Helen, born April 13; spon. John Flaherty and Mary Whalen. JMJ
- June 12 In the church of St. Patrick, Washington, Ann Gildea, daughter of Daniel and Mary, born May 29; spon. John Laughman and Catherine Laughman. JMJ
- July 11 At Cambridge, Mary Ann Flaherty, daughter of John and Elizabeth, born July 1; spon. Michael Ford and Jane Nevil. JMJ
- July 12 John Whalen, son of Patrick and Bridget, born June 20; spon. John Quinn and Mary Finton. JMJ
- July 31 At Cambridge, Mary Picket, daughter of Thomas and Helen, born July 27; spon. Joseph Clancy and Helen Flaherty. JMJ
- Aug. 11 (At Cambridge) conditionally, Joseph Clancy, son of Joseph and Ann, born Aug. 9; spon. Roger Kerrigan and Ann Quinn. JMJ
- Aug. 13 James Thomas O'Grady, son of Dennis and Margaret, born Aug. 3; spon. Patrick Murphy and Mary Mulligan. JMJ
- Nov. 17 At Cambridge, Honora Bean, daughter of John and Mary, born Oct. 8; spon. Thomas McNamarra and Ann McNamarra. JMJ
- Dec. 12 At Leatherwood, Meranda Gallagher, daughter of Edward and Martha, born Sept. 7 last; spon. George Gildea and [blank] Gallagher. JMJ

1860

- Jan. 8 At Washington, Margaret Helen Early, daughter of John and Bridget, born Jan. 3; spon. Edward Carr and Margaret Breslin. JMJ
- Feb. 13 At Cambridge, Catherine Cullen, daughter of William and Mary Jacoba, born Jan. 8; spon. Patrick McNurny? and Mary Ann Whalen. JMJ
- Apr. 12 On the railroad, Elizabeth Finton, daughter of Patrick and Mary, born March 21; spon. John Delany and Susanna Carr. JMJ

- April 12 John S-- Lee, son of William and Ann, born Feb. 20; spon. Patrick Gallagher and Mary Currens. JMJ
- April 12 George William Ragan, son of Thomas and Mary, born March 15; spon. Dennis O'Grady and Bridget Whalen. JMJ
- April 12 Catherine Kennedy, daughter of Patrick and Susanna, born March 22; spon. Patrick Gallagher and Elizabeth Mouney. JMJ
- June 30 At Cambridge, Mary Bowman, daughter of Richard and Mary, born yesterday; spon. John Ryan and Helen Donevan. JMJ
- Aug. 15 (At Cambridge) Michael Kerrigan, son of Roger and Hellen, born Aug. 13; spon. Michael Flaherty and Mary Tracy. JMJ
- Sept. 30 In the church of St. Patrick, Washington, Joseph Laughman, son of John and Catherine, born Feb. 23; spon. James and Ann Carr. JMJ
- Sept. 30 In the church of St. Patrick, Washington, Helen Callon, daughter of James and Catherine, born April 15; spon. Patrick Kennedy and Mary Breslin. JMJ
- Sept. 30 In the church of St. Patrick, Washington, Sara Cecilia Gallagher, daughter of James and Susanna, born Aug. 6; spon. John and Bridget Early. JMJ

1861

- April 7 In the church of St. Patrick, Washington, James Gildea, son of Daniel and Mary, born March 2; spon. Patrick Kennedy and Mary Laughman. JMJ
- April 7 In the church of St. Patrick, Washington, Susanna Cunningham, daughter of Cornelius and Mary, born March 22; spon. William Breslin and Margaret Mullen. JMJ
- April 7 In the church of St. Patrick, Washington, Helen McKerny, daughter of Michael and Mary, born Feb. 1; spon. John McEvoy and Catherine Callan. JMJ
- May 7 In Cambridge, Louisa Honora Lefler [Loftus?], daughter of Philip and Mary Ann, born April 13; spon. John and Catherine Ryan. JMJ
- June 4 At Cambridge, Honora O'Grady, daughter of Dennis and Margaret, born May 6; spon. Bartholomew and Catherine Murphy. JMJ
- June 5 At Washington, Elizabeth Gallagher, daughter of Charles and Priscilla, born April 12; spon. James and Ann Gallagher. JMJ
- July 10 At Leatherwood, Charles Robert Hidleback, son of Washington and Maud, born May 18; spon. James F. Gallagher and Susanna Carr. JMJ
- Aug. 25 On the railroad, Jane Finton, daughter of Patrick and Mary, born July 24; spon. Peter and Jane McNurny. JMJ
- Nov. 5 At Cambridge, Thomas Picket, son of Thomas and Helen, born Oct. 20; spon. John Quin and Jacoba Doyle. JMJ
- Dec. 29 At Cambridge, Helen Bullman, daughter of John and Margaret, born Dec. 22; spon. James McDonoll? and Mary Bullman. JMJ

1862

- Feb. 4 At Cambridge, Mary Callen, daughter of Michael and his wife, born Jan. 1; spon. [blank]. JMJ
- May 6 (At Cambridge) Edward Hill, son of James and Sara, born April 4; spon. Thomas and Elizabeth Moony. JMJ
- May 6 Margaret Elizabeth Gallagher, daughter of Edward and Martha, born April 13; spon. Patrick and Mary Lofters. JMJ
- June 4 Elizabeth Early, daughter of John and Bridget, born Feb. 18; spon. William Breslin and Margaret Mullen. JMJ
- June 4 Cecilia Kennedy, daughter of Patrick and Susanna, born 20 (May?); spon. John and Bridget Davy. JMJ

- July 12 (At Campbell's Station) Thomas Ragan, son of Thomas and Mary, born June 5; spons. James Ragan and Helen Kerrigan. JMJ
 Oct. 8 At Leatherwood, Honora Liney? [Lyons?], daughter of Patrick and Ann, born Jan. 28; spons. Roger Flagherty and Susanna Carr. JMJ
 Nov. 5 On the railroad, Bridget Kerrigan, daughter of Roger and Hellen, born Oct. 11; spons. Thomas Ragan and Margaret Lofters. JMJ

1863

- Jan. 7 (At Leathewood) Dennis Finton, son of Patrick and Mary, born Dec. 11; spons. John Quinn and Bridget Whalen. JMJ
 Feb. 4 (At Gibson's Station) Patrick Emil O'Grady, son of Dennis, born Feb. 2; spons. Cordilia Emilia Heidleback and Patrick Whalen. JMJ
 March 22 At Leatherwood, Mary Callen, daughter of James and Catherine, born March 2; spons. William Breslin and Mary Ragan. JMJ
 April 5 [Between entries dated May 3 and May 10] On the railroad, George William Lofters, son of Patrick and Mary, born the 5th of ths month; spons. Roger and Helen Kerrigan. JMJ
 July 7 (At Cambridge) Sara Elizabeth Cunningham, daughter of Cornelius and Mary, born June 11; spons. Patrick and Susanna Kennedy. JMJ
 July 8 (At Gibson's Station) John Delany, son of Michael and Mary, born today; spons. James Sullivan and Margaret Breslin. JMJ
 Nov. 3 At Cambridge, Michael Mitchell, son of John and Helen, born Oct. 10; spons. Michael Flagherty and Elizabeth Mooney. JMJ
 Nov. 4 At Leatherwood, Dennis Lockman, son of John and Catherine, born Oct. 3; spons. Michael Donevan and Mary Breslin. JMJ
 Nov. 4 At Leatherwood, Emma Gallagher, daughter of Charles and Priscilla, born July 22; spons. George W. Gildea and Ruth Gildea. JMJ

1864

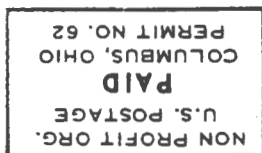
- Feb. 9 (At Gibson's) John Finton, son of Patrick and Mary, born Jan. 18; spons. Patrick Whalen and Mary Sullivan. JMJ
 March 8 (At Cambridge) Elizabeth Bowman, daughter of Richard and Mary, born March 5; spons. John Bowman and Catherine Ryan. JMJ
 May 29 Near Cambridge, John Patrick Gallagher, son of Edward and Martha, born May 20; spons. Thomas Mooney and Bridget Flynn. JMJ
 June 8 Anna Lines [Lyons], daughter of Patrick and Ann, born Nov. 26; spons. Roger Flagherty and Mary Lockman. JMJ

(To be concluded)

 CREIGHTON INSCRIPTIONS

There are only two Creighton tombstones at Holy Trinity in Somerset. Their inscriptions are: "John Creighton, born Dec. 25, 1793, died Sept. 14, 1865. May he rest in peace," and "In memory of James Creighton a native of the County Monaghan Ireland, Parish of Clentubrit who departed this life March 5th 1848 Aged 60 years. O good reader pray for me/And if God permits I'll pray for thee. May he rest in peace."

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