

Crown Homeland – A Travelogue

This narrative accompanies photos which can be found [here](#).

This leg of my first trip to Ireland was facilitated for the most part by Paddy Travers, who is my third cousin, related to me through the Crown family on my father's side.¹ I have been corresponding with him and other Travers relations about Crown and Travers family history and all things related to Ireland for many years now. Paddy is retired now and lives in County Kildare. He is the kindest of souls with a twinkling humor, he is a walker and a bard and a befriender. Paddy grew up in Dromahair, in County Leitrim, so he knows it well. Because my branch of the Crown family lived closer to Manhorhamilton, Paddy had gone to talk to local people there prior to our arrival about who remembered or knew of any Crown families. Thanks entirely to Paddy, the way for this family history journey was virtually paved.

Friday, May 26, 2023

On Friday, we took the train from Dublin to Maynooth where Paddy was waiting, and off we went on our journey to County Leitrim where our Crown family history originates. Our first stop was at Carrick-on-Shannon, the largest town in Leitrim. We enjoyed walking around the town and had a good lunch at the Bush Hotel. From there, we were off to visit the [Crown Bridge](#), a small little place in our family lore where Crowns and Travers who lived nearby would sometimes gather. We also visited the first school that Paddy attended as a child, which is now almost nearly covered by overgrowth. If you didn't know an old building was there, you'd never guess it. And finally, we also stopped at the church and graveyard where Paddy's parents are interred.

Upon our arrival in Dromahair, we checked into our rooms at the Mill Master's House which is a historic and renovated building, and from there we all took off along the [SLNCR nature trail](#) nearby. This trail uses an abandoned railway route and other minor roads to take one along the fields and River Bonnet and up the hill to the [Creevelea Abbey](#), which dates back to the 1500s. The abbey now has a number of graves within its walls, including some belonging to the Crowns of Friarstown.

Walking back through the town of Dromahair, we stopped for a pint and then rested a bit before our dinner at the Clubhouse pub near our accommodations. A wonderful entry to County Leitrim.

Saturday, May 27, 2023

On Saturday morning, we headed to Manorhamilton to meet Sean and Mary McMorrow. Sean is related to Paddy and he has just recently retired from running a butcher shop in the town where he has spent all his life. Based on my research, I knew basically where the original farm of 23 acres belonging to Richard Crown and Sarah Meehan in Pollboy was located, and so Paddy and Sean had scouted out the current owners of the property and contacted them ahead of time for permission to walk the property where indeed the remains of the original Crown home can still be found. We picked up Sean to show us the way.

Stepping foot on that land in Pollboy was emotional for me. It feels like time standing still because very little has probably changed in 230 years. Most of the acreage is open rolling fields with the house and out buildings tucked into the trees. The main road back in the day was probably on the west side of the property. If I had come only a few years earlier, we would have seen the remains of the original

¹ Paddy and I both descend from Richard Crown and Sarah Meehan of Pollboy.

house still standing. Unfortunately, the stone house had begun leaning farther and farther until the current owner felt it was unsafe, and so he had the house pushed down. But the barn and another out building still remain standing, and there is evidence behind the house of where there was probably a well. Richard and Sarah were occupying this property before 1800, and the property stayed in the family until their grandson died in 1966. My gg-grandfather, Patrick Crown was born there as well as Paddy's gg-grandmother, Bridget Crown Travers, and several other Crowns. The place rather vibrates with three generations of family memories. I wish I could have stayed longer.

But on we went to Morerah about 10 minutes to the south. This is where Richard Crown had a herd's house and along with several other tenant families he apparently used this land for grazing animals. After Richard Crown Sr. died, his son Cormac got possession of it, and Cormac's daughter, Kate Crown, lived and worked there until her death in the 1960s. This property is quite different from the Pollboy land, but is still stunningly beautiful. Upon our arrival there, two of the farmers living there now (McTiernan and Healey) came out to greet us, one of whom had known Kate Crown and helped her out when she got older. He even had an old picture of her! Kate's small house is no longer standing, but the barn where she kept her animals is. Everybody tells the story of how strong Kate was and how she always did all the heavy work any man could do. Again, we could have stayed and explored there for a much longer time.

But there were still miles to go that day. We had a wonderful lunch in Manorhamilton with the McMorrows, and then it was off to the Killasnet grave yard where the Crown family plot had been located. Another emotional moment. First of all, the grave yard is accessed from the top of a long hill through the fields of wildflowers and grazing sheep. Walking down the hill is again like walking into another time and place. Birdsong was everywhere, and I heard for the first time the call of the [cuckoo bird](#), which is apparently common in Ireland. Everything felt magical.

Once to the grave yard, we found the graves surrounding the ruins of a small church or chapel – so it seems clear that this is the place where the Crowns came to worship. Then there was the Crown family plot. The very weathered headstone of Anthony Crown of Lurganboy² and his family is still standing, but there was another headstone next to it that had been knocked over, probably from vandals because the base is much too heavy to have fallen even in a strong wind. The celtic cross at the top was broken off into a couple of pieces, and the base was face down until Sean and Mary had somehow managed to roll it over. There on the underside of the base was the inscription for the family of John Crown of Manorhamilton who had been a grocer and publican in the late 1800s. Unbelievable. But there was still more surprise. Once the base of the broken headstone had been rolled off, it seemed clear there was another flat gravestone in the earth beneath it, but it was mostly covered with years of dirt and moss. Sean and Mary said they would come back later to see what they could do.

And so we returned to Dromahair, and even though weary, we were treated later in the evening to local musicians and singers who came to the nearby pub that night just for us. The traditional music was wonderful to watch and hear, and Patrick Hugh Kelly's singing was especially moving to me. There was no better way to end such a full day.

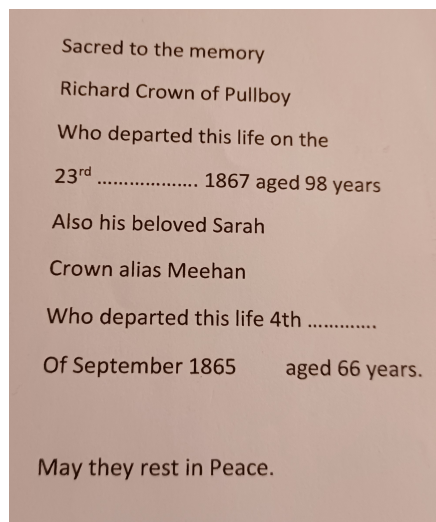
Sunday, May 28, 2023

On Sunday, Paddy and I went to Mass in Glencar where prayers were offered for my father and grandmother, and all our deceased Crown and Travers ancestors. From there, Paddy treated us to a boat ride on Lough Gill which left from Parke's Castle. It was such a beautiful day, and we enjoyed

² Anthony Crown Sr. was a brother of Richard Crown Sr.

hearing the history and poetry associated with the area while floating along. Paddy even did a recitation, which of course, was a special treat.

We then visited the grave yard where Bridget Crown Travers and her family are interred. From there, we took another short walk in Milltown Woods, and then returned to the McMorrows home to a visit with a local historian. However, the McMorrows had another surprise to tell. They had indeed returned to Killasnet grave yard and cleared off the buried grave stone in the Crown family plot enough to see very clearly the names and dates of Richard Crown and Sarah Meehan. Mary provided me with this transcription of what is carved on the stone:



Sacred to the memory
Richard Crown of Pullboy
Who departed this life on the
23rd 1867 aged 98 years
Also his beloved Sarah
Crown alias Meehan
Who departed this life 4th
Of September 1865 aged 66 years.

May they rest in Peace.

Emotional moment #3. I am still somewhat stunned by this discovery knowing that so many Irish graves either had no headstone or the headstone was simply a rock from the field, or if a headstone had existed, it was most likely weathered to the point of being illegible like so many others. I came to Leitrim with no expectation of actually seeing the gravestone for our Crown progenitors – we didn't even know that one existed. And yet by some miracle this broken and buried stone has literally been unearthed after all this time. And some how I am the first Crown relation to witness this revelation just because I made the journey and the kindness of strangers helped me. I am still having trouble finding words.

And so with that, we thanked the McMorrows and bidding them farewell, returned to Dromahair for our last night in Leitrim. On Monday morning, we stopped to get flowers, and then trekked back to the grave yard so that I could see Richard and Sarah's stone with my own two eyes. The morning sun was shining and the air was soft, the sheep rubbing on the gate to the grave yard. I left my flowers at the Crown graves and lingered there in the silence and peace. My father, if alive, would have turned 90 during this trip, and naturally he was present with me in this faraway moment. His name was Richard.

Walking back up the hill in the quiet morning, we paused one more time to take in the vista. Now that I know where the Crown farm was in Pollboy, I could pick out its location in the landscape, and at the same time I could also see the Killasnet church ruins at the bottom of the hill. The path between the two places seems so clear, probably a walk of 1.3 kilometers. The Crowns walked through these fields on their way to give thanks and pray, much as I seem to have done now. They baptized their children and buried their dead, some married, some did not, some left and made homes in distant places, and

some remained. They all had struggles and laughter and stories now nearly forgotten. But now they are remembered, and our way forward more securely anchored in knowing it was their strength and hopes that made our future possible.

My gratitude could go without saying, but it will not: I am now and shall forever be thankful to Paddy Travers and Sean & Mary McMorro for caring about family history the way that I do, and for their efforts to find and revive the stories of all those who came before. I feel sure that God will give you a special place in heaven, and the ancestors will greet you with great cheer. And of course, those who come behind will remember you well, and the story of guiding an American lady through the magical Leitrim landscape for a few days in May when the skies did not rain.

Mary Ann Schaefer

3 June 2023, Boulder, CO