

MORE ABOUT THE PRENDERGASTS
A Supplement To
THE PRENDERGASTS
The Study of a Family
by
Dr. Caroline Mattingly Prendergast

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It is a strange coincidence that both Caroline Prendergast of Redlands, California and Richard Prendergast of Maynooth, Ireland should have written Histories of the Prendergast family at about the same time, but entirely independently. Richard wrote his as a thesis, during the school year 1967-68, from extensive research in the libraries in Dublin and Maynooth. Caroline, on the other hand, gained her information during several trips to England, Ireland and Wales in 1960 to 1968. She did limited research in the British Museum in London, the National Library of Wales and in four libraries in Dublin, but also she actually hunted up the various places which she tells us about and got local information first hand. This you will find in her book "The Prendergasts".

Letter to:

Mrs. Jeffry J. Prendergast
1301 College Ave.
Redlands,
California 92373
U.S.A.

St. Patrick's College
Maynooth
County Kildare
Ireland
20 March 1969

Dear Mrs. Prendergast,

I was delighted to get your letter and also that invitation, and feel I must say "Agreed!", whether I will be able to manage it or not. I'm sure I will be able to acquire permission for such a worthy motive, as our authorities here are very historically minded - I hope! I am so glad you are coming back to Ireland to commemorate the arrival of the Normans here and I look forward to seeing you. I hope the Prendergasts here are able to do their share too in the commemoration, and at any rate we are assured the event will not pass un-noticed.

I met Aunt Nellie yesterday and she is investigating the possibilities of having a little commemoration some place other but probably in Wexford. She is also "studying" my thesis, so as to be familiar with the course of Prendergast History! I am sure she will be in contact with you and vice versa, and I will fall in with whatever arrangement emerges. I have not seen any of the famous Prendergast Castles as yet and would be delighted to accompany you on a tour of them. I sincerely hope I will be able to do so. It adds so much to your interest and also to your information to have seen the place which you are concerned with. This was one big difficulty I found in writing the thesis - at times I was not even sure which county I was in. I have said I did not see any of the famous Prendergast Castles - but in fact not so very long ago I had the pleasure of exploring the beauties of Gort Castle and was immensely impressed. I surely look forward to some years when the

Castle is fully restored and I should think it will make a very attractive holiday resort for Americans and Continentals not to mention the asset it will be to the beauty of our own Country. It is a magnificent building with beautiful avenue and surroundings including the lake, and it was a pity the place should ever have had to be deserted. It will be some years before the place is fully restored, but restoration work is in steady progress at the moment and I believe will be habitable to some extent in the very near future. The job must be utterly expensive but I am sure it is a worth while enterprise.

I do hope you will have better luck in the Kings Inn Library next time and you should have little bother in procuring the loan of a "Story of an Irish Property" here - even Maynooth Library has a copy!

I do look forward to seeing you in May and hope we in Ireland can extend you and others a fitting "Norman" welcome.

Sincerely,

Richard Prendergast

Extract from the diary Caroline Prendergast kept on her trip to Ireland in May, 1969.

9 May. Stop at Shannon (Airport), then on to Dublin where Michael Chawke (my fine driver of last year) meets me at 11:15 AM. Now at Shelbourne (Hotel) again. In touch with Nelly (Ellen) Elenor Prendergast. Then at 49 Dodder Road for supper with her nieces Katherine and Margie and nephew Paddy Cathorn.

10 May. Michael Chawke at 9 AM picks up Elenor, Margie and me; we go to see the Carte Mansion Duke of Leinster (near Maynooth), stop at Maynooth for Richard Prendergast, the handsome young priest to be, and so on to Cashel and Cahir House where we have lunch. Cannot locate Larch Grove near Clonmel where Major Thos. Prendergast head of male line of family d s p (died without heir) 1816. Then to views of Newcastle where the 3 Prendergasts climb to the top of tower (Elenor and Margie will tackle anything.) Then east to Bannord near Bally macCarberry to see Stephen and delightful Joan Prendergast Murphy and their 2 dear little girls, Catherine and Rosemary. Richard is thrilled with the sight of Father Jim Prendergast's 18th century vestments made of his mother's wedding gown and promised the use of them for his ordination. We arrive late at Ardfinnan Castle to be the guests of dear Mrs. Mulcahy and her daughter Joan Rencontre for an elaborate tea and a view of the castle. Then managed to find ruined Rochestown House (or Castle) a beautiful Italianate house with trees growing out of 3rd storey windows, and a superb "Laughing Cavalier" in the keystone of the arch at the front. A Mr. McClintock nearby now owns it. Then back to flood-lighted Cashel, where Elenor provides supplies for supper (I paid for the lunch at Cahir) then back to Maynooth with Richard, finally to Dublin at 1:30 AM. Marvelous Day!

11 May Sunday. The great Day! Michael picks us up at 9 AM again. We attend mass at 11 AM at Ferns (this is Elenor's Day to command-as Saturday was mine). There we meet delightful "Father Bob" Prendergast, President of the Theological Seminary at Carlow. We all stop for lunch at Marshalstown with Elenor's niece Mary Corcoran Lyons and new husband Maurice. Then on to inspect Enniscorthy Castle, where we are joined by a shy real estate agent named Shamus Prendergast. At White's Hotel in Wexford we pick up Mai McElroy, an artist and our guide who directs us to "the lost city of Bannow", a desolate spot where the fog over the bay suddenly lifted. Then to Clonmines, a dead silver-mining city which lost out in the 16th century. Clonmines Castle was actually lived in till 1849 by descendants of original owner, Sir Roger de Sutton. But the many ruins are quite spectacular. Michael lists all the "sights" on our ventures and handles the camera for me. Beyond a bridge we see the ruins (well, not exactly)

of Wm. Marshall's Tintern Abbey (daughter of the one in Monmouthshire which he built in gratitude for having been saved from a wreck on the sea. Nearby a family named Colclough (Yeah - Cokely!) got it at the Reformation; Mrs. C. has now given it up to the equivalent of the National Trust for a museum; their house within its walls is now being destroyed. Then on past Fethard to Baginbun Beach where Maurice de Prendergast arrived from Milford Haven in Wales in the first wave of the Norman Invasion of Ireland, just 800 years ago today. I distributed a little 2 page account of him and the family, Margie read the account of his most famous exploit, Richard read Aubrey de Vere's poem about it, "The Faithful Norman", and I gave a toast in the champagne I supplied and the orangeade Elenor brought, and the 27 of us were very happy.* Wandered over Kaywood le Gros double fortifications later - 240 paces long, still 12 feet high in places. Then to the wellknown old White's Hotel in Wexford for an excellent dinner (which I wished to provide, but was not permitted to do so) and then, as the night before, everyone (but me) sang all the way home (till after 1 again.) Father Bob took Richard to Maynooth and David to the Curragh which is Ireland's West Point. I especially like Elenor's brother Frank and his many beautiful children, especially Margaret and Michael. My Michael is quite smitten with Margery.

12 May. Only Elenor and I went with Michael today, leaving at 9:45. At Roscrewe (?) the Romanesque doorway, Celtic Cross and Round Tower. Then to Nevagh to see Geoffrey de Marisco's well preserved Keep, then to Dunraven Arms in Adare for lunch, via Limerick where we had a superb view of King John's Castle. The Dunraven Demesne alas is closed on Mondays. (Young Lord Dunraven, a polio victim and still in a wheel chair, goes everywhere and seems very happy now that he has recently married). We go to Lough Gurr area where Elenor has done archaeological work, and finally take her to churchyard where her Paddy O'Neill lies - he died of cancer after the war. Then we go on to ruined Prendergast Johnstown House above Puckan. Michael digs up a stanchion that I stupidly crave, and later cuts off half of it - still too heavy for comfort. Elenor goes to sleep on the back seat of the car. Michael and I talk. There is no singing tonight of the woes of sweet Molly Malone. Forgot to say that we stopped at the Parish Church just below Johnstown House, where a visitor told me the Prendergast family had given the ground for church and churchyard in 1812 - part of the family estate of Johnstown Park. Elenor climbed on the big stone inside an iron railing; together she and Michael used grass and dandelions to scrub the inscription clean. Here lies the Body of Samuel Prendergast Esq. who died at Johnstown Sept. 25 1823 aged about 51 years. Here also lies the body of his nephew Thomas Guy Prendergast Esq. who departed

* Underlined by JSP

this life on the 21st of January 1852 aged 57 years.

13 May. Michael and I started out at 10. First to Mt. Jerome Cemetery where with difficulty we found the grave of Jeffry Samuel Prendergast who is not (as I thought) beside his eldest brother, Gen. Chas. O'Neil Prendergast in the Gordon-Prendergast enclave. He is buried with 3 old Cleburne ladies (Phoebe, Ellen and Margaret, who died 1 day before J S P (Jeffry Samuel Prendergast) on 21 Jan. 1884. They all lived at Melville (House) Avoco (Avenue) Blackrock, which we later visited (the records show that M C and JSP both died of pneumonia. His cousin Stephen Gordon signed the record) Melville is a pleasant but dull Victorian house with lovely garden. Prof. Stewart of TDC (Trinity College Dublin) School of Medicine is the present owner. His pretty wife's mother is Sybil de Borocquey who wrote to KS about Swift.

We went to the Royal Irish Academy on Dawson St. (in a John Ensor house) where I had seen the "Book of the Dun Cow" last year. This time I asked to see the Secret Money Book of Dublin Castle 1798 - a shocking document which also shocked Dr. Madden when he consulted it for his "History of the United Irishmen". Cooke and Pollock were frequent well-paid informers, but Thomas Reynolds got £1,000 (24 June) for his work re Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Medical care for the great hero cost £47/60s - records of the MD's who cared for him in his deliriums, etc. and for the man who sat in his room with him. The money book was stolen by a carpenter working in Dublin Castle, who sold it to a Chapel St. grocer, who sold it to Chas. Haliday. The Haliday Collection fills over 200 vols. there. (He was John Patrick Prendergast's close friend.) We later hunted up his Monkstown House at Monkstown, where John Patrick Prendergast always dined on Sundays. The big handsome Victorian house with its double semi-circular bay windows is now a slum, lived in by several families - holes in the semi-circular drive, everything shabby and messy. But beautiful children were playing about.

Also at the Royal Academy we saw the Calendar of the Irish Council Book 1581-1586. It came to light in 19th century and was edited by John Patrick Prendergast.

13 May. To Templeogue House in Templeogue on site of Knights Templar's Castle where James II stayed. Present house an 18th century affair where Charles Lever ("Mr. Quicksilver") did some of his writing. It is now hostel for the Order of St. Columbus. Father Kennedy was most gracious and informative and gave us tea.

At King's Inn Library I saw the Loose Collection of Prendergast Papers but failed to find the last four years of Francis Ensor Prendergast's letters to his father, old John Patrick Prendergast. An old letter of F.E.P.'s about his dying father. No, he can not come to Dublin. Saw the

originals of John Patrick Prendergast's letters to Philip Bagenal (the typewritten vols. of copies which are now at 1076 Brookside Ave.) and some 5 letters of rejection to Bagenal when he tried to publish them (without sufficient editing). He was still trying in 1926 - began in 1896.

Had Margie as my guest to dinner at the Shelburne, and then she took me to the Abbie Theater for John Bull's "Other Island."

14 May. To Art Gallery where Michael took pictures of some things I wanted. The done-over Gallery is very fine indeed. But no one could help me in identifying who had done the portraits of Thos. and Jane Gordon Prendergast about 1760. However it was recommended I see a Miss Anne Crookshank at Trinity College, a delightful person who was really helpful and even came to the hotel at 6.15 to talk with me for half an hour. Well, maybe I shall know, someday. At least I shall follow her lead.

Went to Arbour Hill to see the graves of the 10 heroes of 1916, then to Kilmainham Jail, now a most affecting museum, to Elm Park Golf Club to see Major Sirr's fine house. To Chester Beatty Museum for magnificent collection of Oriental and Persian things, such as snuff bottles.

15 May. My birthday - I am 76 - my 3rd birthday in Ireland in 9 years. To TCD (Trinity College Dublin) to make some enquiries.

To Powerscourt Desmesne in the rain. Buy a poncho of Arran work, at last come back to Dublin by a different route - very beautiful, thru the Wicklow Hills. To Elenor's at 8, where she had some very interesting people in. Supper about 10, and was I ever surprised! There was a lovely cake, with much singing for me, and even (thanks to Michael) my little cigars that I like. Back to hotel at 2.30 AM.

16 May. To Dublin Castle Geneological Library to visit with Mr. Gerard Slevin, and admire the new arrangement of the crested china, including the Prendergast plate I brought to him in 1963. Out to Sandymount, where 127 Strand Road looked very well kept.* Took Elenor to dinner at the Gresham Hotel, and then she took us to the Dublin Gate Theater to see Michael MacLiammoire's "Ill met by moonlight", which he directed. (Is he a homo? Michael asks me)

17 May. Michael took me out to buy a MacLea music record, a piece of Waterford Crystal for Elenor and some presents for friends at home. He comes to buy some drinks for me at 6, bringing along the stanchion from Johnstown House which he has shortened for me. I pay my bill to him (\$285) which is

*Where John Patrick and Caroline Ensor Prendergast lived with their son Francis Ensor - my father - from the time he was a small boy till he left home after finishing college. JSP

cheap for all he has done. I add a \$35 tip. In AM he had taken me also to March's Library near St. Patrick's Cathedral, where the Keeper, Mr. Bradley (?) was most kind in showing us Swift's assets, 2 bks damaged by shots thru a broken window in 1916, the places where books were chained, and the carrels where students were locked in with the books, some fine Mss and early printed works. (The parchment was made of the skin of unborn lambs.)

18 May Off at 1:15 PM via BEA for London. Michael and Margie took me to the airport, where I engaged a wheel chair to meet me in London. My wheel chair was put on a lift. Libby and Curtis (Prendergast) met me and brought me to my Picadilly Hotel. They later took me to their lovely Regency house on Alexander Place.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE PRENDERGASTS

The Prendergasts were a Flemish family, one of whom was with William the Conqueror when he took over England in 1066. He is listed in the Battle Abbey Roll in the British Museum as "Prenlirlegast." His son is supposed to have been Philip, who went out to Wales with Gerald de Windsor (the ancestor of the Fitzgeralds) in 1102, and perhaps married a de Clare. His son is our authentic hero, Maurice de Prendergast, whom we celebrate today. Born about 1035, and married to a Fitzgerald(?) about 1060, he was easily the best man in the 1069-1070 Norman Conquest of Ireland, if the early 13th century "Song of Dermot and the Earl" is to be trusted. There he appears as a first class fighting man and leader, a convincing and popular speaker, generous, religious, and trusted by everyone. (You must surely know a nineteenth century poem about him by Aubrey de Vere, "The Faithful Norman.")

After being sent on a mission to England and Normandy by King Henry II, he stopped in Wales on his way back to Ireland in 1176, to give his inherited castle in Pembrokeshire to the Order of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem. Two of the 11th century churches on his property are still in use, only a few miles from the ruins of the Order's monastery at Slebech, which was his beneficiary. Data on all this can be found in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. Of his castle at Prendergast Place near Haverfordwest, only some damaged low walls remain.

On his return to Ireland, for reasons only to be guessed at today, he gave up the world in which he had been so successful, and joined the great Order to which he had given his Welsh possessions. When he died, an old man, in 1205, he was Prior of the Order's Consistory at Kilmainham, on the site of the present Phoenix Park.

At the time of his death, there were more landed Prendergasts in Ireland than could have been his children, so it is presumed that Maurice brought some kinsmen with him to the Conquest -- brothers, cousins, maybe uncles, among his 10 knights and many bowmen. As for his two known sons, one can have no way of learning when they came to Ireland. Philip, his heir, of course got all the lands that a grateful Strongbow had granted, including Fernegenel. Gerald went out to the west of Ireland with his friend Richard de Burgo in 1185, where he became quite Hibernicized. His descendants were long called the Clan MacMorris; the head of that line today is Lord Oranmore of Castle MacGarrett, Co. Mayo.. The two brothers shared at least one trait, a great gift of gaiety, but Philip's did not show itself until after he had breakfasted and "put on his robe." He married Strongbow's niece, the heiress Maude de Quincey, thus gaining Enniscorthy (where he built the neat symmetrical castle in 1199) and the richly forested Duffrey below the Wicklow hills.

Philip's heir's family soon ended in daughters, so in order to follow the male line, one must go along with his younger son William, who married a de Bermingham and traded his Co. Tipperary inheritance from his mother, for Newcastle in Co. Waterford, which had belonged to his all too wellknown brother-in-law, Geoffrey de Marisco. He must have liked de Marisco, for he named his elder son for him. This first Jeffery Prendergast, who died in 1289, began the 73- year quarrel with the Fleming family of Slane over the Newcastle property. Eventually the Prendergasts won, and held it until Cromwell ruined it in 1656. (Castle built 1222)

A much later descendant, James Prendergast, married Eleanor Grace of Courtstown Castle in Co. Kilkenny; the tomb of her brother, Sir John Grace the Great, in St. Canice's Cathedral at Kilkenny, is the one so badly battered at target practice by Cromwell's soldiers when they were stabling their horses in the Cathedral. James and Eleanor's son Jeffry (1550-1615) made a record by marrying into the two greatest families of Ireland at one time; his bride was Joan Butler, a granddaughter of the Earl of Desmond, a Fitzgerald. Joan, heir to Cahir, died young. Later her 10-year old son Thomas was forced by Queen Elizabeth to sign away his rights to Cahir in favor of his mother's cousin, Sir Theobald Butler. It was Butler's heirs who held the place until old Colonel Charteris gave it to the town a few years ago. Thomas Prendergast's son James was killed in a duel over Cahir in 1627.

Ardfinan Castle, built by King John in 1185, was a possession of a female line of the Prendergasts by the late 17th century. Its exact history is impossible to trace. It is today the only habitable Prendergast castle. The last owner (and only heir) Admiral Sir Robert John Prendergast (1864-1946) sold it in 1919 to the Mulcahys, who had long admired it, and have expended much taste and money upon it.

In the period of the Civil Wars, the Prendergasts supported the losing Stuart cause and suffered confiscation and exile for their trouble. A 19 year old Jeffery Prendergast (my husband's ancestor) was in the disastrous Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Jeffery was the younger son of "Old" Thomas who died in 1725 at 110 years, if the evidence of his now vanished gravestone in the cemetery of the ruined church at Newcastle is to be believed. Jeffery was devoted to his older brother Thomas (Sir Thomas Prendergast I) who became a famous person and died at the battle of Malplaquet in 1709. Sir Thomas I's childless son, Sir Thomas II, was most bitterly attacked by Swift in "The Legion Club." Through 2 female lines, Sir Thomas I is the ancestor of the Viscount Gort and his late brother, Field Marshal Gort of World War II fame.

"Old" Thomas' son Jeffery was the father of still another Thomas, who married rich Mary Keating and was killed in

a duel at Clonmel in 1761, not for love, but for that very bad combination of religion and politics. The gun-toting Thomas' great grandson was Ireland's greatest historian of recent times, John Patrick Prendergast (1808-1893). His grandson was Jeffry Joseph Prendergast of Redlands, California (1875-1962) who held the empty position of head of the male line of the family for the longest period on record -- 65 years.

One branch of the family whose Prendergast background has not yet been traced in Ireland, lives in Spain, to which Daniel Prendergast with his wife and small son migrated from Cork in 1767. The most notable member of that group is Segismondo Prendergast y Moret, a native of Cadiz, to whom the town has erected a fine monument. He was Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court of St. James in the 1870's, and Prime Minister thirty years later, and was besides a well-known author. The Spanish family today is numerous, handsome, rich, well educated and liberally supplied with titles.

Over the centuries the Prendergasts have shown two marked skills, both of them exemplified by the great founder, Maurice -- for fighting and for speech, whether written or spoken. The high sense of honor for which he was so notable still survives. A talent for making or managing money seldom appears. A love of horseflesh seems to be general, so it is well that the name of Maurice's warhorse still survives -- it was Blanchard.

Caroline Mattingly Prendergast
Redlands, California
11 May 1969

(Caroline wrote, had mimeographed, and distributed this historical sketch to those attending the gathering at Baginbon Beach on May 11, 1969, where Maurice de Prendergast landed on May 11, 1169, just 800 years before to the day. J.S.P.)