

**SOME DESCENDANTS OF  
JAMES and CHRISTEAN IRWIN**

**Compiled by  
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**GOLDEN, COLORADO 1996**

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**THIS BOOK IS  
DEDICATED TO MY AUNT,**

**BLANCHE IRWIN**

**WHOSE EFFORTS AT  
KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH FAMILY  
MADE THIS WORK POSSIBLE.**

## INTRODUCTION

There is still much to discover about the origins of our family, but I have chosen to put into print what has been gathered up to now, and to let younger relatives try to fill in the missing generation[s] which first came to this country.

Data on current family members was provided by someone in that branch of the family. Wherever pictures or documents were sent to me, I have tried to include them. [Those not used did not copy well.]

Much information from a century ago, especially of a personal and often trivial nature, was obtained from reading newspapers published in or near Lawrence County, Illinois, which are available on microfilm from the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield. Principal sources were "The Sumner Press" in Sumner and the "Rural Republican" in Lawrenceville [both in Lawrence County].

Issues before 1885 were rarely available, and even after that, many individual issues and in some cases, whole years were missing. [Sumner Press had nothing for 1893 or 1899] In general, the newspapers covered the time from 1885 until 1912.

United States Census records were searched, and all those found were recorded here. [The 1890 Census is missing because it was accidentally destroyed by fire many years ago.] Where possible, a copy of the Census was made. However, some pages were in very bad condition, making copies unreadable.

The spelling of some names varied from source to source [i.e. Waggy or Waggy, Corbin or Corban]. My rule has been that I usually use the same spelling that my source material used, which can mean different spellings on the same page.

Some pages in this book have a border around them. This indicates that the enclosed data is about the family of an IRWIN in-law. Where possible, these have been placed on the left-hand side, so they can be read separately or concurrently with the IRWIN story.

I have tried to avoid errors, and ask pardon for those that escaped the editing process.

Marjorie Molloy Jansen [Harvey]

## HISTORY

### ULSTER SCOTS AND SCOTCH-IRISH<sup>1</sup>

The Scots were Celts who migrated from Ireland to Scotland about fifteen hundred years ago, eventually, either by conquest or intermarriage with the native Picts, becoming the dominant ethnic group. Viking invasions, beginning in about 800 A.D., added some Norse blood to the mix.

By 1600, the Highlanders and Lowlanders of Scotland had become different, both physically and culturally. The Highlanders were still mostly Celtic, while the Lowlanders were a mixture of all of the peoples who had invaded England and Southern Scotland, including Danes, Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Normans, but were still more Celtic than the English. Their language was primarily English, while Gaelic was still spoken in the Highlands. Most of the Highlanders had remained Catholic, while the Lowlanders followed John Knox and were Presbyterian. After James VI of Scotland became King of England as James I, the Protestant Scots declared their loyalty to him.

#### ULSTER-SCOTS

Life in Scotland was very hard at this time, and Ireland was rebelling at changing its religion, so James I devised a plan to solve both problems, "the plantation of Ulster". King James confiscated all the land either owned by or under fealty to rebellious chieftains. "Loyal" [Protestant] citizens of Scotland or England were allowed to buy or rent this farmland in Ulster, which was the northeastern section of Ireland, closest to the Scottish border area. [The Irish inhabitants either fled southwest or became serfs.] Border Scots [which included the IRWINS] eagerly jumped at this chance to better themselves, and in 1609 and 1610, thousands of them moved into Ulster.

Under CROMWELL, there was another land confiscation followed by another "settlement" in 1654. Finally, after the victory of William of Orange over James II, there was a final confiscation followed by the "Williamite Settlement" [1690-1697]. While there were some English who settled in Ireland during this century, they tended to be scattered over the whole of Ireland, while the Scots, who made up the vast majority of the settlers, almost all lived in Ulster.

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<sup>1</sup> The information in this section was taken primarily from THE SCOTCH-IRISH OF COLONIAL PENNSYLVANIA, Dunaway, Wayland F., Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., Baltimore, 1979

These "Ulster-Scots" tended to be hard-working, and it is said that they transformed Ulster into a garden. They were usually tenant farmers on land owned by absentee landlords in England. The English were happy to have Scots as a bulwark between them and the hostile native Irish. With economic prosperity and the freedom of living away from the limiting life of Scotland, the Ulster-Scots became more adaptable and less traditional and clannish. They began to engage in trade and manufacturing, making Belfast a thriving city.

The 18th Century brought a number of changes to the lives of the Ulster-Scots. The Presbyterian Church in Ulster shared in the prosperity of its members, causing envy among the ranks of Church of England bishops [who held the title of Lord and sat in Parliament in Dublin]. The Test Act of 1704 not only required everyone to pay tithes to the Church of England, but also to take an oath of allegiance to it in order to hold any public or military office, even a minor one. The Anglican bishops hoped that Ulster-Scots would flock to join the Church of England. Instead, this emptied the town councils of Ulster and removed all the county magistrates. At this time, a few of the Scots emigrated to America, but most remained, although they did not become Anglicans, trusting that their situation would improve.

Another new difficulty was "rack-renting", a system by which the landlord was allowed to raise the rent to exorbitantly high amounts if the land had been "improved". This meant that the tenant farmers who worked hard to make improvements thus furnished the landlords an excuse for raising rent beyond all reason. Many old long-term leases were coming to an end in 1716-1717, allowing the imposition of the new rates. This caused the first large-scale emigration to America, primarily to Pennsylvania [which not only had religious tolerance but also low or no taxes].

Poor harvests in 1727 and 1740 caused other mass emigrations. Besides this, restrictive trade rules were hurting the woolen trade, and finally, the linen industry declined to the point where thousands in Belfast were out of work., triggering the final massive emigration, 1771-1775, when it is said that Ulster lost a quarter of its population in those five years.

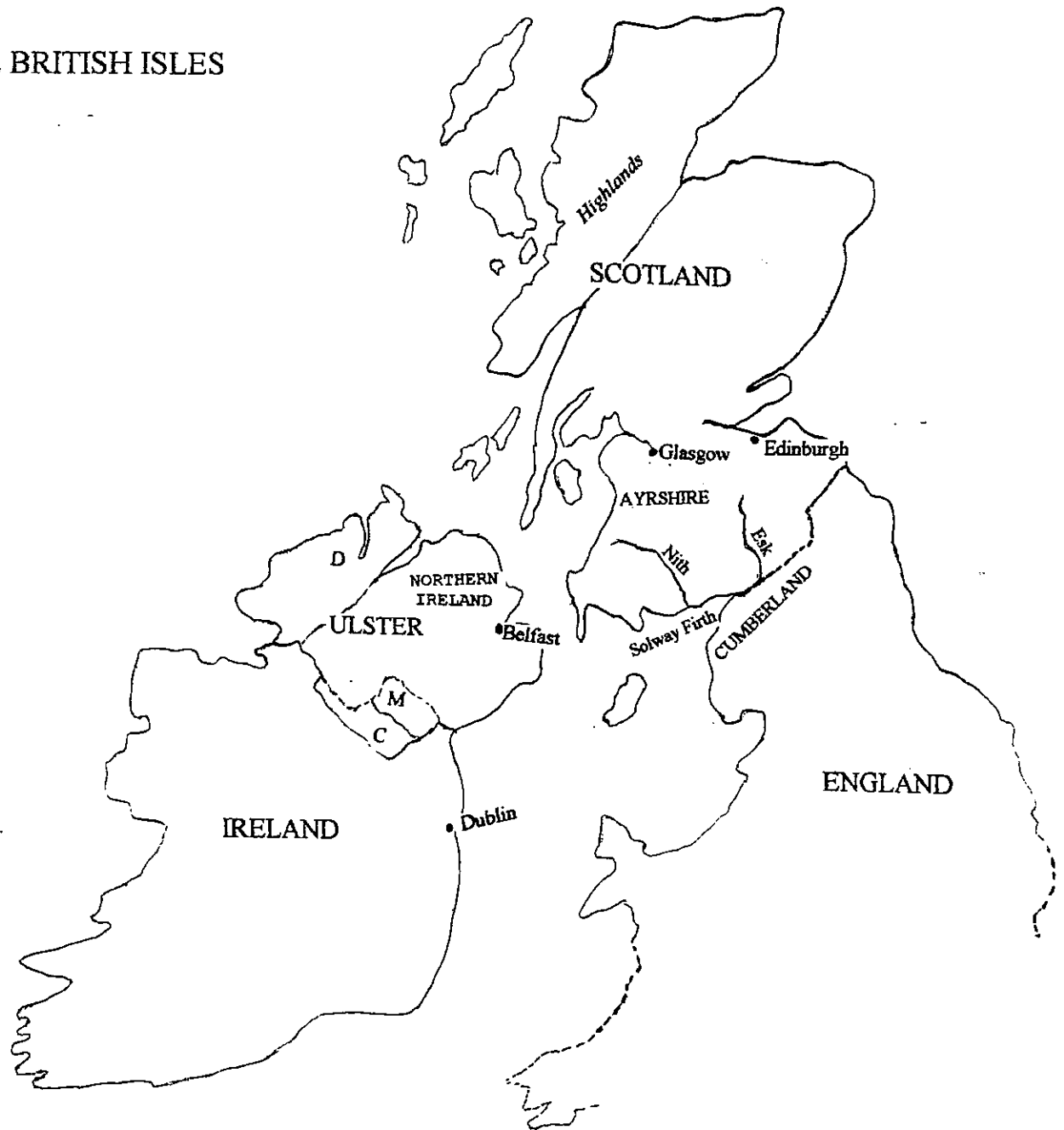
[Some have wondered why the Irish did not join in this emigration. Unlike the Scots, they had a strong emotional tie to the land. Also, they had never known a better life, as the Scots had, so their expectations were low. Not until the famine of the 19th Century would the Irish themselves leave.]

Although the Scots did not feel that Ulster was their 'homeland', the decision to leave was difficult because the voyage to the American Colonies was long and dangerous. Ships often required eight to ten weeks for the journey, and passengers had to supply their own food. It was the fortunate traveler who still had anything to eat during the final week or two. Many who had no money for the fare, went as indentured servants for a stated number of years, after which they would be free to go wherever they wished

#### SCOTCH-IRISH

The term "Scotch-Irish" was applied to Ulster Scots by the Americans. When the trickle of immigration became a torrent, some Colonists became worried.

## THE BRITISH ISLES



Ulster originally contained nine counties, but most of the Ulster-Scot “plantations” were in the six counties that now comprise Northern Ireland. The other three, Donegal [D], Cavan [C] and Monaghan [M], are now part of the Republic of Ireland.

The following statement was made in 1729 by James LOGAN, an official in Philadelphia:

"It now looks as if [all] Ireland or the Inhabitants of it were to be transplanted hither. Last week I think no less than six ships arrived at New Castle and here [Philadelphia] and they are every two or three days when the wind serves, dropping in loaded with Passengers, and therefore we may easily believe there are some grounds for the common apprehensions of the people that if some speedy Method be not taken, they will soon make themselves Proprietors of the Province."<sup>1</sup>

The fears of the Americans were eased when it was decided to settle the newcomers on the frontier, thus forming a barrier between the English and the natives [the same role they had filled in Ulster]. For the early waves of Scotch-Irish, the frontier was not far from Philadelphia. In 1743, Penn instructed his land agents to sell land to them only in the Cumberland Valley, further west. [From here, many of them moved south into the Virginia and Kentucky mountains, becoming the ancestors of the "hillbillies".]

In 1769, just as the largest wave of immigrants from Ulster was beginning, Pennsylvania settled a border dispute with Virginia, and began selling land in what is now the western and south-western part of the state. This area [from Pittsburgh south] was soon almost exclusively Scotch-Irish. While most of these were the new immigrants, some of the families which had been in central Pennsylvania also moved to the west.

In 1799, when Ohio was the new frontier, there was a rush of Scotch-Irish settlers from Washington and Fayette Counties [PA] into Harrison County in Ohio. After this time, there was a general westward movement, but by individual families rather than large groups.

The settlements that grew up around the Scotch-Irish always included a church, as well as the usual tavern, store and mill. They were all places for socializing: the tavern usually served also as a courtroom and polling place, and the church was the site for all-day family get-togethers whenever a minister was available for a Sunday service.

While playing with cards or dice was not acceptable, drinking and dancing were a regular part of their life whenever friends would get together. The Scottish Reels became the basis of the American Square Dance, while the presence of a whiskey 'still' on almost every farm became a tradition. The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 was a protest by the Scotch-Irish of Western Pennsylvania over the payment of a whiskey tax to the U.S. Government. Although drinking was accepted, drunkenness was not, and as a whole, these people were seen as honest, upright and hard-working. [Their attitude toward alcohol changed in the following century, when most of those who moved into the Mid-west tended towards total prohibition of liquor, while those in the Southern Appalachians continued to distill and drink whiskey.]

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<sup>1</sup> LOGAN PAPERS III, page 303, as quoted in THE SCOTCH-IRISH OF COLONIAL PENNSYLVANIA, Dunaway, Wayland F., Genealogical Publishing Co, Inc., Baltimore, 1979.



## EARLY IRWINS

IRWIN is derived from the Celtic 'Erin or Eire viene' which means western [Erin] brave or stout man [viene], according to a 1678 account by Dr. Christopher IRVINE, Historiographer to King Charles II. It is most often written now as IRWIN, IRVINE or IRVING.<sup>1</sup> [Regarding the various spellings of the surname, during the author's visits to Scotland and Ireland, I found IRVINE more common in Scotland [but many IRWINS also], while in Ireland, IRWIN was a common name, not only in Ulster, but in many parts of the Irish Republic.]

"The IRWINS were Brythome Celts who came out of Ireland with the Scots under Fergus about 503 A.D. and inhabited lands about the Irvine Water, Ayrshire, Scotland. In the reign of Malcolm II, (ca 1003) they removed to the West Border, being sent as a bulwark against the Saxons of Cumberland. For hundreds of years, the Irwins have lived on lands bordering the Solway between the Nith and the Esk; from thence younger sons have migrated to other parts of Scotland, Northern Ireland and England."<sup>2</sup>

"Beginning with Duncan I [who was killed by MacBeth in 1040 A.D.], the Dunkeld Dynasty of Scotland held the throne until the death of Alexander III in 1286. During this period...the Clan was taking shape with Duncan of Eskdale [uncle of Duncan I] in support of the Crown. He or one of his descendants built a castle near or on the site of Bonshaw. The new castle was called IRWYN, and its occupants presumably were the beginning of our Clan. There were notables with variable spelling of the name: Robert de HEREWYNE (1226), Alan YREWYNE, who was sent as envoy to Wales in 1258, Roger of IRWIN, clerk of the king's wardrobe in 1327, William IRWYN, clerk register in 1329, Nicholas YREWYNE, Canon of Glasgow in 1384.

"...The long struggle against England began about 1296 when Robert the BRUCE came to Castle IRWYN and asked for protection from the English. It is true that there is a cave nearby where he was hidden briefly, and it is true that when he left, he engaged the young William de IRWYN to accompany him as his armour bearer. William de IRWYN was with BRUCE throughout the entire War for Independence and received a charter for the forest of Drum and Drum Castle [near Aberdeen] in 1323."<sup>3</sup>

THE STEEL BONNETS, a book by George MacDonald FRASER<sup>4</sup>, describes life on the Scots/English border about this time. The IRVINEs are described in the book:

"A Scottish Clan of the Scottish Western Marches of Ammandale, Lower Eskdale, a very tough bunch indeed, the IRVINEs contributed much to the general disorder, [and] despite their comparatively small numbers [were] thoroughly involved in all the West March mischief."

<sup>1</sup> HOLLY LEAF CHRONICLE, Vol VIII, No. 3, Clan Irwin, 1993

<sup>2</sup> SOME DESCENDANTS OF SIX PIONEERS FROM GREAT BRITAIN, Parker, Horatio Newton, 1940, p. 21

<sup>3</sup> HOLLY LEAF CHRONICLE, Vol. VI, No.1, Clan Irwin, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> THE STEEL BONNETS, Fraser, George MacDonald, Publ. Collins Harvill, London, 1989.

During the time of Elizabeth I of England, many Scots signed an oath of allegiance after it was announced that she would be succeeded by James of Scotland. Among these were several URWINS: Cuthbert, Wat, Jeffrey, William and James.

"One tradition is that three IRWIN brothers emigrated from Ayr, Scotland to Donoughmore, County Moneghan, Ireland in 1690 and settled there. John IRWIN, the youngest of the three, participated in the historic Battle of the Boyne [in which William III, Prince of Orange, overthrew the force of James II] and for his valor, was knighted by the king".<sup>1</sup>

There were probably dozens of IRWIN or IRVINE families among the Scots who were moved to Ireland in the 1600s with the promise of land and/or better living conditions, in return for their loyalty to the English. Records of individuals in this mass relocation are almost non-existent. There were certainly many IRWIN families who joined in the migration to America. Therefore, while many can trace their ancestors back to Ireland, it is almost impossible to trace further back to Scotland.

Our IRWIN ancestors were among those who settled in Pennsylvania. The Census of 1790 shows 111 "IRWIN" families [with several variations in spelling] in that state. By 1800, there were 150 such families there. Many of these began moving into Ohio after 1800, as did our ancestors.

The absence of records, except for a few scattered church lists, has made it difficult to follow the movement of any particular family. What we know is that our family is descended from James IRWIN who was born somewhere in Pennsylvania in 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence. His wife, Christean [maiden name unknown], was born about 1786, also in Pennsylvania. They may have remained there until after they were married, or they may have moved to Ohio with their families, and met and married there. We know that they were living in Ohio when their son, James, was born.

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<sup>1</sup>ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PENNSYLVANIA BIOGRAPHY, Vol 9, pg 203

## LIFE IN OHIO IN 1818

Excerpts taken from:  
LETTERS FROM THE WEST; OR A CAUTION TO EMIGRANTS  
by John Stillman Wright. Published in 1819.<sup>1</sup>

John Wright was a farmer near Saratoga, N.Y., who caught "Ohio Fever" in 1818 and spent several months in Ohio and Indiana looking for a new home and farm for his family. He wrote a series of letters about his findings. At the end of his trip, he decided to remain in New York. Following are excerpts from his letters.

OHIO RIVER: The sudden rise of the water was to me really astonishing. It began to rain about noon and continued steadily until night, at which time we found the water beginning to swell; the next morning, it appeared, on an exact admeasurement, to have risen seven feet three inches perpendicularly.... Many of these places suffer by frequent inundations; Marietta, perhaps, more than others, for although it stands on a bank, at least thirty feet above the present surface of the stream, yet I actually saw high-water marks on the second stories of many buildings.

FOOD: Purchased food is expensive, with salt at 8 dollars for 100 pounds. I estimated that for the average farmer, including transportation costs, it would cost him one hundred (100) bushels of corn to pay for this salt. ... The living, or food, of the country people, is extremely unpleasant to an eastern stomach, it consists - to use their own language - of "hog, homminy, and hoe cake" [corn bread]. Their cattle are small, compared to ours, and their cows do not yield so well; it is thought a good one, that gives from five to six quarts at a milking; and a hog that weighs 200 lbs is over the usual size.

LAND: [Settlers] admit that the country is not natural to grass; nor can it ever become so, in consequence of the general growth of a certain kind of wild grass, by some ... called "nimble Will", which chokes out the English grass, and at the same time is not good itself; for as soon as it springs up to the height of five or six inches, it becomes so hard and tough that cattle cannot eat it.

PEOPLE: The inhabitants are ... contented to live in log cabins, containing only one room, with the chimney on the outside, and five or six lusty dogs within. Very rarely is a school house or church to be seen, and scarcely a bridge of thirty feet in length. The improvement of public roads is entirely neglected... ...It is impossible to dream long in a land of such palpable realities. They are a motly

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<sup>1</sup> LETTERS FROM THE WEST: March of America Facsimile Series #64.  
(Re)Published by University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, MI, 1966.

assemblage of Pennsylvanians, Virginians, Carolinians and Kentuckians with a few Yankies intermixed, scattered over the face of the country, at the distance of from two to eight or ten miles apart, in order, as they say, to have sufficient range for their cattle, and mast [acorns] for their hogs. At this distance they wish to keep; and they look with a malicious, scowling eye, on the New England men who settle among them...

HAZARDS: In certain parts of this country, there are poisonous roots or weeds, which frequently kill the cattle that eat much of any of them: and should a hog, dog or wolf make a feast of the carcase, it inevitably proves his last. Poisoned milk, too, is quite common, of which, if people eat they sicken immediately, and will need medical aid before they are restored to health. Another of the evils of this "garden of the world" is what is termed 'sick wheat': this is most frequently found on the rich bottom lands, and is supposed to be owing to the fogs, which often prevail there. It is only to be distinguished, while growing, by the fuzzy end of the berry containing a small red speck: in all other respects, it appears like healthy wheat: it is said to be certain death to any creature that eats of it: consequently, whenever a crop is found to be infected, the whole must be destroyed. While on the subject of poisons, I will mention snakes, which are rather numerous; especially the copper-head and rattlesnake, which annoy the happy inhabitants of this "terrestrial paradise".