

Title of project: The Key in the Cake

Category for which you wish to be entered (i.e. Revolution in Ireland, Ireland and World War 1, Women's history or a Local/Regional category): Revolution in Ireland): Women's History

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The Key in the Cake

Kathleen Talty and DeValera's Escape from Lincoln Jail

Introduction

Kathleen and Susan Talty from Clare were important women in Irish History and they were very brave. They showed that Irish women could do important jobs for Ireland. The Talty's sister, Mary Anne was married to my great great grandfather Mathew P. Kelly. Mary Anne died one month after Eamon deValera's escape. She was only 35 when she died. I went to her grave in Killofin graveyard. In the picture below are Pat Talty of Rahaniska with Bobby Power (me) and John Power (my grandfather).



Growing Up in Clare

The Taltys grew up in Rahaniska in County Clare. Rahaniska is about 8 kilometres from Kilkee. Their father Hugh was a farmer and his wife Catherine was a house keeper. There were 10 children in the family. Michael was the oldest and Hugh was the youngest. Some of the family were in Rahaniska in the 1901 census: Delia (29), Patrick (28), Marianne

(21), James (13) and Hugh (11). Michael, John, Thomas, Kathleen and Susan are not in the house in 1901. I found Kathleen, Susan, Thomas and Michael. I didn't know about John until I saw the family tree that Pat Talty had. Pat got it from Paddy Waldron who put the tree together. Michael was in Texas near "Irish Ridge". He had a big shop there. The town is now called Talty, Texas. There is a tin knife in DeValera's papers in the UCD Archive and it is marked T. Talty. This might be Thomas Talty's knife. I found a couple of Thomas Talty's from Clare in 1911. One (37) was a civil servant in Dublin from Clare. The other one (34) was in Lisdeen. The one in Lisdeen had a brother called Martin.

In 1911 the same people are in the house as in 1901, except for Delia. Hugh and Catherine's granddaughter May Murrhy (4) is also in the house. She was Delia's daughter. Catherine died on September 30th 1911. Kathleen and Susan's grandfather was probably Michael Talty, who put up the headstone on the family grave. He did this for his daughter Margaret who died in 1863. She was just 17 years old. Below is a picture of the house in Rahaniska where Kathleen and her brothers and sisters grew up. It was dark when I was there to take a photo.



Talty's House Rahaniska, Clare.

Manchester

Kathleen and Susan were living at 28 Rusholme Place, Rusholme Manchester in 1911. They were both primary school teachers and wanted to improve the lives of other women by teaching them. There were a lot of Irish men and women in Manchester at the time. Kathleen was listed as Boro' Council teacher and Susan as Municipal school teacher. There were 5 teachers in the house including the Talty sisters. Margaret Sheehy from Tulla was there with her 9 year old niece Maura. The other two were Margaret and Mary Howard from Glenroe, in Limerick.

Susan married Liam McMahan in Chorlton, Manchester in 1914. Her brother James was probably married in Chorlton in 1914 also. Liam was from Kildimo, in Limerick and was one of the leaders of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in Manchester. He was working for Dowdalls in Manchester. They were butter merchants bringing butter from Ireland to Liverpool and Manchester. Liam was also staying in Rusholme in 1911. He was a commercial traveller and was selling margarine. He lived with two other Irishmen: Thomas Healy, a policeman from Leitrim and Thomas Sheridan, a draper's assistant from Sligo.

Either Kathleen or Susan was captain of Cumann na mBan in Manchester. After the Easter Rising in Dublin some of those who fought were sent to prison camp in Wales called Frongoch. Kathleen visited these prisoners quite often.



Lincoln Jail

DeValera was one of many people arrested in Ireland on May 17th 1918. They were blamed for helping Germany. He was arrested at the train station in Greystones. They brought him to Gloucester Jail in England. In June he was sent to Lincoln Jail.

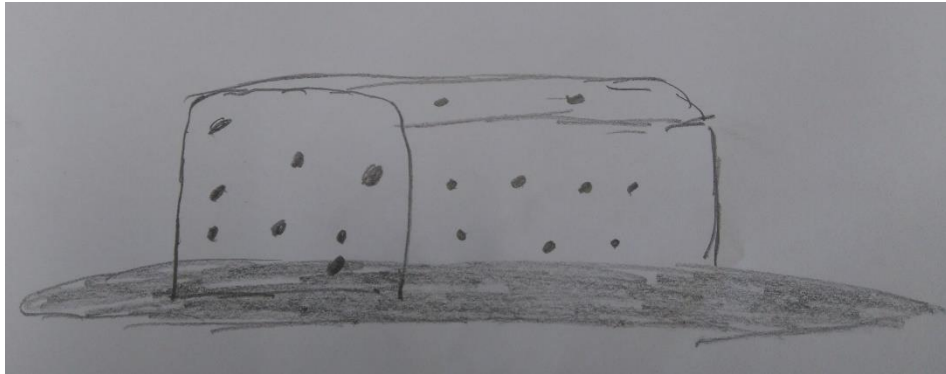
DeValera served mass for the priest in the prison. He made a print of the priest's key in soft wax. Seán Milroy copied the key print onto a Christmas Card. The card was posted to Fr. Kavanagh in Leeds. He gave the card to Liam McMahan and Liam passed it on to Paddy O'Donoghue. Paddy went to Mrs. McGarry's house in Ireland where Michael Collins and himself worked it out.

The Three Cakes

There were three different cakes brought to Lincoln prison.

The first cake was baked in Ireland by Tomasina McGarry. Her husband Seán was in Lincoln Jail with DeValera. Fintan Murphy brought the cake into the prison. The key inside the cake was made in Ireland. It did not fit the lock.

The second cake was baked in Susan Talty's house in Victoria Park by her housekeeper, Mrs. O'Sullivan. Two keys were in the cake and they had been made in Manchester. They didn't work either.



The third cake was baked by Susan Talty in her house. It was an oblong fruit cake, there was no icing or decoration on it. Her sister Kathleen brought the cake into the prison. There was a blank key inside the cake and some nail files. A prisoner called Peter de Loughrey used the blank key and files to make a key for the lock. This key worked!

Bringing it to the Prison

Kathleen wasn't nervous at all and felt she had a good chance of getting the key in. She got the 7:30 train from Manchester. It was very cold on the train and it was snowing outside. She had the parcelled fruit cake in a case. When she got to Lincoln she went to Kelly's Hotel with Michael Collins and Frank Kelly. She had something to eat there and then she took a taxi to the jail.

When she arrived she had to write her name and address on a piece of card. The guards asked her to leave her parcels on the floor. She asked to see Peter de Loughrey but the guards would not let her see any of the prisoners.

When she left the prison she went back to Manchester with Michael Collins. She got something to eat at Susan's house, while Liam went with Michael Collins to Paddy O'Donoghue's house.

The Escape

DeValera escaped very early in the morning (just after midnight) on the 4th February 1919, with Seán Milroy and Seán McGarry. They

were taken to Manchester in a taxi with Paddy O'Donoghue and Liam McMahon. Paddy then took DeValera to Fr. O'Mahoney's house. The two Seáns went to Liam and Susan's house. Kathleen and Mary Healy then took them to Mary's house in Fallowfield.

It was not safe for DeValera so after a few days Kathleen brought him to Liam and Susan's in Victoria Park. He was dressed up as a colonial officer. They couldn't risk getting into a taxi so they had to walk six or seven miles. Kathleen was feeling very hungry because she hadn't eaten anything since the afternoon. Then Mary Healy brought him to Fallowfield. Paddy O'Donoghue brought him to Liverpool. He travelled to Dublin from there.



After the Escape

Kathleen finished up teaching during World War II. Susan died shortly afterwards in 1945 and is buried in Deansgrange Cemetery. Kathleen went to live with her niece Mrs. Eileen Chambers in Blessington, Co. Wicklow. Eileen was Liam and Susan's daughter. She later moved back to Clare. Michael Morrissey told me that Kathleen liked horse racing. Her brother-in-law Liam must have liked the horse racing too. He spoke about the Waterloo Cup in his witness statement and dressing Seán McGarry as a bookie. She wrote to DeValera in 1958

and she met him again on his visit to Clare in 1966. DeValera told her in his letter that he had no idea she was hungry on their long walk in 1919. Kathleen is in the picture below with Eamon DeValera, the President of Ireland. Also in the picture are her brother Hugh and Patrick Hillary who became the president of Ireland too.



Kathleen died in her niece's, Mrs. Morrissey's house in Tarmon, Kilkee and Michael found her. She was 88 years old. Her funeral was on Friday October 13th 1972. Colonel R. MacIonraic ADC stood in for Eamon DeValera at her funeral in Lisdeen Church. After her funeral her grand-niece, found the loose middle page of an old autograph book on the floor of Kathleen's bedroom. On the paper were the signatures of Arthur Griffith, Seán Milroy, Seán MacEntee, Eamon de Valera and Harry Boland. The important job played by the Talty sisters (and Mary Healy too) is mentioned by Harry Boland on the paper: "Brave, Brave Irish Girls, Well may we call ye brave".

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Websites

Paddy Waldron's Website: (Paddy's family are also connected to the Talty's of Rahaniska):

www.pwaldron.info/ClareAssociation/

Talty, Texas:

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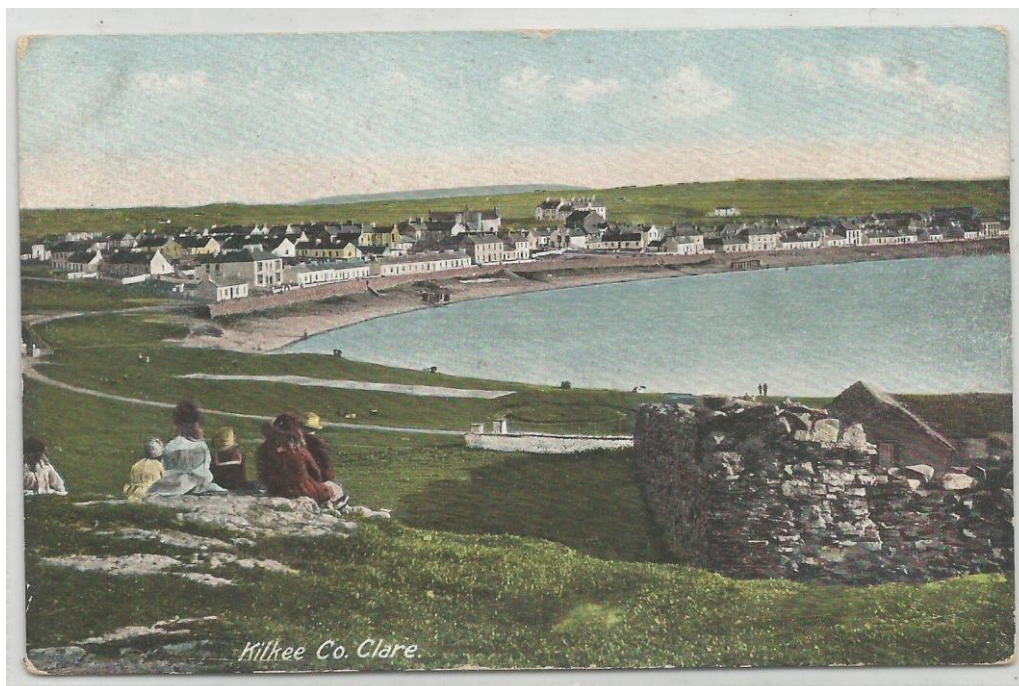
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Primary Sources: Pat Talty and Michael Morrissey

Images

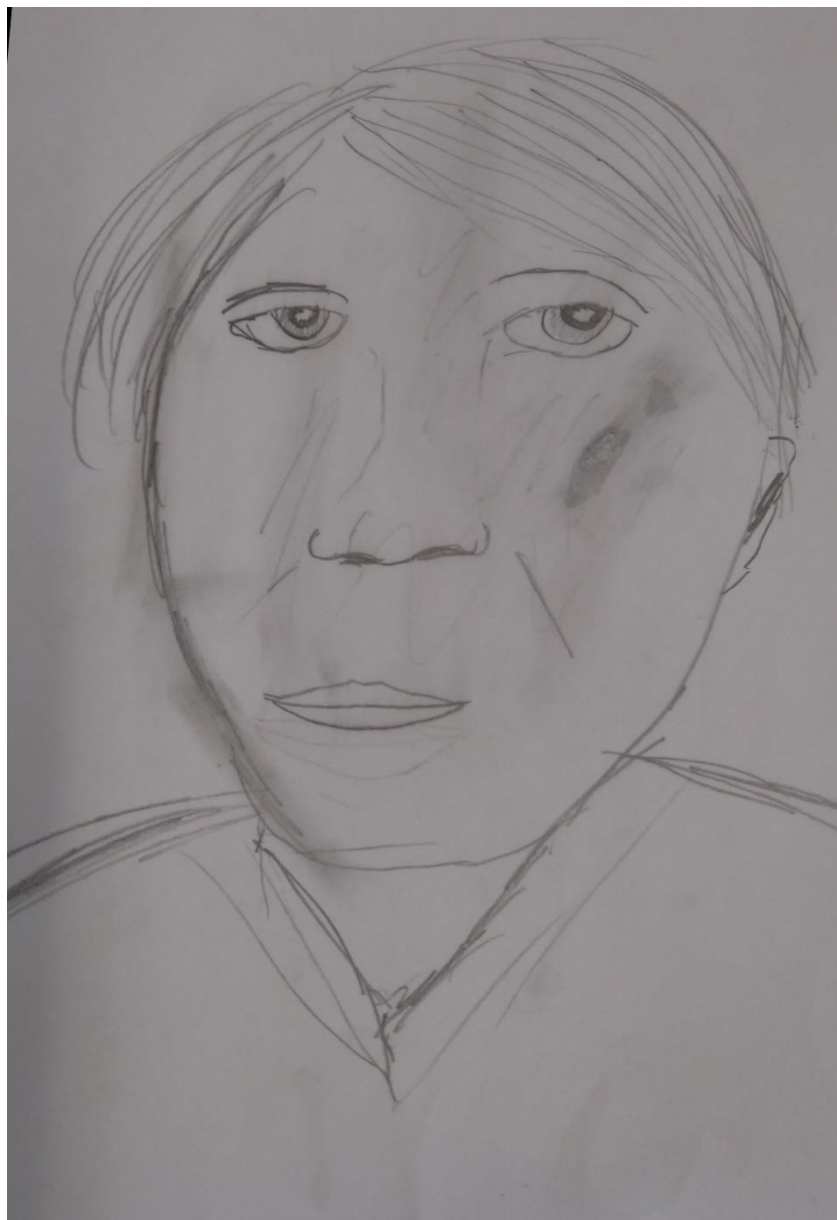


Old Postcard of Kilkee



Michael Talty's General Store in Talty, Texas.

Michael was Kathleen's Brother.



My Drawing of Kathleen Talty.