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Co. Tipperary Historical Society, The Source Library, Cathedral Street, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, Ireland
353 (0) 52 616 6123 society@tipperarycoco.ie www.tipperarystudies.ie/thc

**Tipperary Historical Journal
2002**

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<https://tipperarystudies.ie/tipperaryhistoricaljournal/>
society@tipperarycoco.ie

ISSN 0791-0655

From Tipperary to Joseph's Prairie: the story of Joe Ryan, the seventh man in Hayes's Hotel

By Alf MacLochlainn

Introduction

When Ireland's largest sports organisation celebrated its first hundred years, among tributes paid was one in five thousand lines of patriotic verse.¹ Of those many lines, eight were devoted to one P. J. O'Ryan:

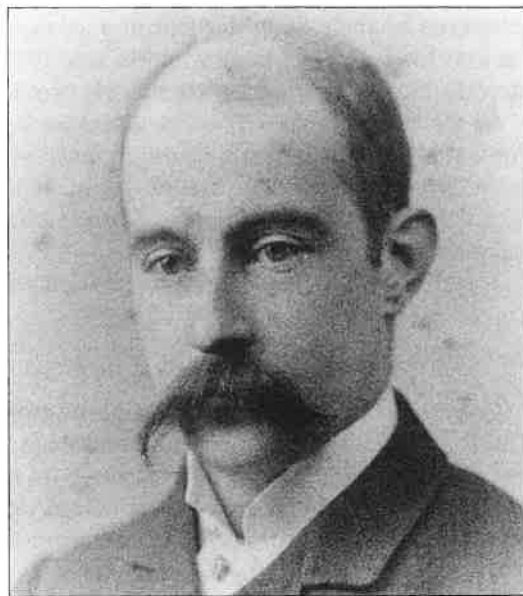
*The youngest name of all we praise,
P. J. O'Ryan, evokes no blaze
In glory's deeds, but let him stand
For those who at that meeting sat
And served unnamed, and for all those
Unnamed whose glory is the cause
They love and serve from year to year,
To God's own heart such names are dear.*

Who those were 'who at that meeting sat', and what was 'the cause they love and serve' is made clear a few lines later:

*Heroes and saints in Heaven above
Saw God's own blessing on our nation
On that All Saints' Day at the creation
Of the Gaelic Athletic Association.*

We may smile at the versification but the meeting had a serious purpose and a long-lasting effect. It was the meeting in Hayes's Hotel, in Thurles in 1884, at which the GAA was, as the verse would have it, 'created'. For 'created' is hardly the word. It was fashioned out of pre-existing elements, one of which was the Carrick-on-Suir Amateur Athletic, Cricket and Football Club, of which 'P. J. O'Ryan' was an active member.

The 'P. J.' initials are an error, first made by Michael Cusack, acknowledged founder of the GAA, in his press-release covering the meeting² and perpetuated by, for example, T. F. O'Sullivan in his pioneering history of the Association.³ Later historians⁴ have corrected the



Formal portrait of Joseph Ryan, by Chancellor, Dublin, perhaps taken on the occasion of his admission as a solicitor. (Original in possession of Doreen McGuigan.)

error and have identified the (O') Ryan present at that foundation meeting of the GAA with Joseph P. Ryan of Carrick-on-Suir, man of two lives, who is the subject of this memoir. One of those lives is that of the young professional man, with a practice in Tipperary and vicinity, married and raising a family there; the other is that of a voluble, articulate, life-and-soul of the party in a small town on the Canadian frontier. His Thurles-born family included his eldest son Arthur, later to be known as Art Ó Riain and to become father of, amongst others, Fionnuala Ní Riain, to whom the author of this memoir has been happily married for fifty years and more.

One could have written a straightforward chronological account of the lives of Joseph Ryan (1857-1918) and his son Arthur (1893-1968), but it was thought better to share with readers some of the excitement we experienced as the quest for the elusive 'Turney Ryan developed, taking us from the shores of the Pacific to the banks of the river Suir.

That quest began almost by accident. We had no idea at the beginning that Joe Ryan had had that modest role at the foundation of the GAA. All we knew was that he had gone abroad to get work. We were planning a trip to western Canada and hunted back through papers left by Fionnuala's late parents, Art Ó Riain and his wife Maighréad, who survived him by not many months. We had seen amongst them a cutting from an Irish newspaper, just a few lines, announcing the death of Joseph Ryan somewhere in western Canada. We thought we might make what was frankly a holiday look more respectable by doing some 'research.' We found our clipping and it merely told us 'March 25, 1918 at Cranbrook, B.C., Canada, Joseph Ryan, Barrister and Notary Public, late Solicitor, of Thurles. R.I.P.'

Barrister? We knew he had been a lawyer, hence the folksy titles 'Turney Ryan or Judge Ryan, and that on going abroad he had left behind a forlorn wife and four young children, who were to pass on only the tiniest morsels of information to their families about the vanished husband and father.

The day before we departed for North America Fionnuala's elder brother brought us copies, prepared by Joe's daughter Dorothy, of two letters from Joe to his son Arthur. One of these told us that Joe had been in Chicago in late 1912, on official business for British Columbia with the deputy-minister for agriculture in the provincial government.

So far three places – Thurles, Cranbrook, Chicago – and a couple of dates. We still had time for some quick checking through lists of solicitors in Thom's *Directory*. Joseph Ryan was admitted to practice in Easter term, 1884, had several addresses, mainly in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, until he disappeared from the list in 1900. And there was no Joseph Ryan among the barristers.

That basically was the equipment with which we started the search in western Canada.

* * *

Few in Ireland, even in this globe-trotting age, have ever heard of Cranbrook, British Columbia. British Columbia is Canada's most western province, stretching from the Rockies to the Pacific. At its south-eastern corner, in a small gusset of territory between the Rockies and the U. S. border, is an area known, from its river system, named by the local native people, as the Kootenays. Cranbrook, at an elevation of 920m, and with a population now of about 16,500, is the principal city of the Kootenays.⁵

In Cranbrook, files of older newspapers were readily put at our disposal, by both the current local paper, the *Daily Townsman*, and the Cranbrook Archives, Museum and Landmark Foundation. The first title we scanned was the *Fort Steele Prospector*.

Fort Steele, ten or twelve miles to the north, is an older town than Cranbrook and fully

expected, a hundred years ago, to be the main regional depot of the Canadian Pacific Railway. At the turn of the century the Kootenay country had not long been under the control of the white man. John Galbraith, an Irishman, had staked out traditional lands of the Kootenays, the native inhabitants, at a place called Joseph's Prairie. Col. Baker, an Englishman, had bought Galbraith's stake from him and proceeded to fence it.

The Kootenays objected and peace was maintained only by the mediation of Fr. Coccola,⁶ a Corsican Oblate missionary. Joseph's Prairie was named by Baker for his English home, Cranbrook. In 1898, the year of its incorporation, the 'city' had a population of about thirty; there were two hotels, not a building on the hill except the Baker homestead, two log cabins and John Hutchinson's store. The main street is still Baker Street.

Galbraith retired to Galbraith's Ferry, which became known as Fort Steele to commemorate Major Steele, who, with a party of Mounties, had been brought into the area in 1883 to maintain local peace. The Kootenays were given a tract of land on the St. Mary's River nearby, which they still occupy, and Fr. Coccola established, at the edge of their reservation, St. Eugene's mission school and hospital, which still stand, now sadly unused and in disrepair.

The ways of British Columbia politics are devious, in particular railway politics; the main C.P.R. depot was established at Cranbrook and Fort Steele slowly died. But in 1912 it could still support a newspaper and as we turned through its fading leaves we came upon the heading (Nov. 12) 'Ordered to Chicago,' and the story following: 'The Minister for Finance has ordered Judge Ryan to proceed to Chicago . . . and take charge of the mineral exhibit at Chicago's Great Land Fair . . . Many thanks are coming from . . . Cranbrook and district to Judge Ryan, for the indefatigable work connected with . . . this exhibit . . .'

In the Museum we continued our scan, this time of the *Cranbrook Herald* (hereafter to be cited merely as the *Herald*), for the date of Joseph Ryan's death. And there indeed was the announcement, in the issue of Mar. 28, 1918.

Cranbrook lost one of its best known residents [ran the story], through the death on Monday evening of Joseph Ryan . . . It is about eighteen years since Mr. Ryan came to Canada from Ireland. He settled first in West Kootenay, where he spent some six years . . . as a broker and doing . . . conveyancing, his legal training in the land of his birth proving of great value . . . He moved to this district about twelve years ago undertaking Secretarial work in connection with mining undertakings. He was Police Magistrate for several years . . . While not having practical mining experience, Mr. Ryan was a student of geology . . . He was always optimistic . . . being . . . described . . . as the best advertising medium in the district . . .



Joseph Ryan's home, Llandaff Lodge, Thurles. (Alf MacLochlainn.)

The service at the Roman Catholic church is described, particularly the broad attendance. 'At the Offertory, Mrs. J. E. Kennedy sang "Face to face" with deep feeling . . . The pall-bearers were N. A. Wallinger, John Miller, Wm. Greaves, Joseph Brault, Frank Godderis and A. L. McDermott. Burial took place in the Catholic cemetery.'

Unusually, the editorial too was devoted to Joseph Ryan and was printed between heavy black bands top and bottom:

A gloom was cast over the city when the death of Mr. Joseph Ryan was reported on Monday evening . . . [it begins] "Judge" Ryan . . . possessed fluency of language to an unusual degree . . . his Irish brogue and Irish wit . . . will long be remembered . . . As Mining Reporter on the staff of the *Herald* his place will indeed be difficult to fill . . . The *Herald* extends its deepest sympathy to his relatives.

At Fort Steele a large central building, the town theatre of olden days, houses the museum and archives and the archivist laid before us what records he had relating to Joseph Ryan, including a obscure reference in a land-surveyor's note-book suggesting he had examined a tract of land at Ta-ta Creek for Joe, and, most fascinating, the first photograph we had ever seen of Joe Ryan, in the sooty grainy manner of early newspaper reproduction, with the rest of the *Herald* crew which had produced some special issue of the paper.

Had he actually owned land at Ta-ta Creek? We made a call to the local land registry and found that, if he had ever owned it, it had since reverted to the Crown. And if he had had this or any other property at the time of his death, had he made a will? A call to the local courthouse revealed that he had, but wills from so long ago as 1918 have long since been transferred to the provincial capital at Victoria.

We went to Vancouver and thence to Vancouver Island and the provincial capital. There we realised what the 'British' in British Columbia means. Trim front lawns, neat hedges, red pillar-boxes; we might as well have been approaching London through a prosperous suburb. The will is preserved in the Provincial Archives, where the staff on duty, recognising our accents, were more than helpful to enquirers who had travelled seven thousand miles, and quickly provided a photocopy of the last will and testament of Joseph Ryan.

. . . I . . . bequeath all I may die possessed of . . . real or personal property, to my dear Wife, Mary Clare Ryan of 22 Lower Pembroke Street . . . Dublin, absolutely. I would like, however, that my son Arthur get my watch, chain and ring and that my Wife have my pin wounted [*sic*] as a ring in memory of me.

I nominate Noel Arnold Wallinger, Government Agent, and John Miller . . . at the Canadian Bank of Commerce . . . the executors of this my will . . .'

The whole was dated and signed with a bold enough 'Joseph Ryan,' and duly witnessed, endorsed with stamps and statements concerning its probate and so on.

* * *

The *Cranbrook Herald*, which we were able to study at home on microfilm, was a weekly broadsheet, usually of eight pages. It gives a picture of life in a frontier town of about three thousand inhabitants in those opening decades of the twentieth century during which Joseph Ryan lived in east Kootenay.

The churches were well established, schools organised; clubs catered for nearly a dozen outdoor sports; there was an active musical life, visits by touring theatrical companies, moving pictures, and an unconscionable number of fraternal bodies, including Orangemen, Masons, and Knights of Columbus. But there was a raw side to life – what seems a remarkable number of suicides and many industrial accidents, not to mention the restricted area, known as the waterfront, where, a later commentator tells us, madams offered dens of vice to equal any in the province.

Joseph Ryan's first appearance is as a salesman for the Vulcan Smelter Company of San Francisco (*Herald*, Apr. 10, 1902). The off-lead is headed 'To enlarge smelter.' It tells of plans by the Sullivan Company to enlarge the smelter it is constructing at Marysville⁷ (now part of Kimberley), and of the claim by Joseph Ryan that his company's smelters can be erected cheaply, use little flux and in fact make it possible for every mine-owner to have his own smelter and save the expense of transporting ores to the smelter at Trail (where Joe had once worked, as will later appear).

The Sullivan mine is near Kimberley, north-west of Cranbrook, and survives under the banner of the great Consolidated Mining Company (Cominco), still Kimberley's major employer. It was named for Pat Sullivan, one of the group who had originally staked it in 1892, their attention directed to the site by Fr. Coccola.

A Vulcan smelter erected at Kaslo, some sixty miles north-west of Cranbrook, was a fiasco. The *Herald* (Feb. 19, 1903) quoted the *Ferguson Correspondence*: ' . . . One afternoon . . . the furnace was blown in with some ceremony: within forty-eight hours it blew itself out without any . . .' The name of Joseph Ryan, the Vulcan representative, is not mentioned in connection with this failure and his interest in smelters did not falter. His first signed article in the *Herald* (Jul. 28, 1904) is on the 'New smelter,' that is the Sullivan installation at Marysville.

There was a special Christmas issue of the *Herald* in 1904. So much of the advance publicity, of the editorial content of the issue itself and of the later congratulations, pay tribute to Joseph Ryan that it is hard to resist the conclusion that the whole idea was his in the first place. 'Mr. Joseph Ryan' (*Herald*, Nov. 3) 'has been visiting various parts of the district securing information . . . Mr. Ryan is an accomplished writer . . . The issue will be of 16 to 24 pages [in fact it proved to be 40], 2,000 copies will be printed so [of course] now is the time to get your Christmas advertising ready'.

When it appeared (Dec. 15) it contained over sixty photographs of personalities, places and concerns featured in the thousands of words of text, most of it articles by Joseph Ryan. A feature on local shopping, for example, is sub-headed 'Joseph Ryan joins the army of Christmas shoppers' and is thinly veiled advertising in the manner of the modern free-sheet newspaper.



Joseph Ryan's law office was in the pretty Suir View, Thurles, overlooking the river and castle. (Alf MacLochlainn.)

Other features cover the lumber and mining industries of the Kootenays, including the valley of the St. Mary's River and Perry Creek, the important tributary, and the reminiscences of the old-timers.

That of R. L. T. Galbraith, for example, begins:

"You know," said Mr. Galbraith, the Indian Agent at Fort Steele, "that I cannot lay claim to being an old-timer according to the standard of the top-notchers, Dave Griffith and Bob Dore, being about six years short of the full qualifying period of forty years . . . ,

and continues with particulars of his arrival, following his brothers, and his adventures on the journey, including being introduced to a chief of the Spokane Indians by one M.M.Cowley from county Wicklow, who quoted Thomas Moore:

“ . . . A young chief of the pale-faces craves audience of you, he comes from the ould sod . . . from Ireland, . . .
Great glorious and free
First flower of the earth
And first gem of the sea.
That's Greek to you, you hickory-shirted heathen . . .

Of the early gold commissioners of the area he says:

They were mostly Irishmen. I recall the names of Capt. Croghan, the Hon. Peter O'Reilly, J. C. Haynes from Courtmacsherry in the county of Cork, John Ball, of Dublin, a relation of the present astronomer royal, and Judge Vowell, from Clonmel, county Tipperary.

And among the photographs in the annual is that one of the staff-group of the *Herald* of which we had seen a clipping at Fort Steele, with Joseph Ryan, a balding, moustached and portly man, sitting at the editor's right hand, and the note adjoining: 'Some excellent work. In the preparation . . . for the *Herald Annual* . . . the editor has been fortunate enough to have the assistance of Mr. Joseph Ryan, who has done all of the outside work . . .'

And the editor permits himself on another page a further tribute to his associates: '. . . Mr. Joseph Ryan, the genial Irishman, has done an immense amount of brain work on the Annual, and still maintains that he has brains left . . .' Shortly after (Jan. 19, 1905) the *Herald* quotes, with evident satisfaction, the tribute of a neighbouring journal, the *Moyie Leader*, to the Christmas issue and to its main contributor '. . . Joseph Ryan, who contributed most of the reading matter, has a fluent, easy style and he has shown himself a man of more than average literary ability . . .' Joe may have written as much as thirty thousand words for the Annual and the editor/ proprietor must have been gratified at the amount of advertising space sold.

Meanwhile, Joe had launched himself on yet another career, from Nov. 10, 1904, running a smart advertisement in the *Herald*, heading three lines with a common large initial A:

'Are YOUR
ccounts in
rrears????

If the rush of business prevents YOU finding time to write up your books . . . apply to Joseph Ryan, P.O. Box 217, Cranbrook, B.C.'



Wedding portrait of Joseph Ryan and his bride, Mary Clare Hanly of Nenagh.

In 1905 too there was a special Christmas issue of the *Herald*, but frankly it is a dull production. Full of information, but dull. Slabs of monotonous type and few illustrations. The fact that there are no by-lines need hardly delay us. The articles have the prints of Joseph Ryan all over them – the lyrical praise of the Kootenays and of Cranbrook in particular, the hectoring tone demanding that local people give the lead in local investment; perhaps most revealingly a private joke about his homeland. Of hotelier Victor Rollins we read: ‘. . . it is part of Vic’s secret that he knows a place with a weird name near the famous Devil’s Bit in the County Tipperary, Ireland.’ Who in the east Kootenay but Joe would have even been aware that there is a hill in Tipperary called the Devil’s Bit?

There are descriptions of nine hotels, among them the Canadian, which is said to be the social centre for the French-speaking part of the population, which elsewhere gets scant attention in the *Herald*. The proprietor Joseph Brault was to be a pall-bearer at Joe’s funeral. And a small hotel, the Wilga, which inserted only a small advertisement, was given a generous paragraph in praise of its homely character. Clearly a residential hotel rather than one depending on bar and dining-room, could it have been Joe’s place of residence on his visits from Kimberley and perhaps his home when he moved permanently to Cranbrook in 1906?

Accounts of public offices, businesses and organisations came complete with lists of officers. N. A. Wallinger is thus mentioned for the first time by Joe, as having been recently appointed to take charge of the lands and works department in the government office. Descriptions of new buildings and their sites would allow us to chart much of the development of the city at the time of its rapid early growth. The post office, the utilities, the fraternities, the schools are all described.

Despite the salubrious nature of the climate (‘To a matchless climate we can add a claim for having a city where wonderful health abounds . . .’), St. Eugene’s Hospital, presided over by an

Irish Sister of Charity, comes, ominously, with remarks on two special risks. 'The great majority of cases are surgical as may be reasonably expected in a country where mining, lumbering and railroading form such a bulk of its industries . . .' and again ' . . . the cases of lead poisoning are on the increase with the increase in the silver-lead output and the establishment of the smelter at Marysville.'

As noted, the lumber trade was among the topics treated of by Joe Ryan in the *Herald* Christmas numbers of 1904 and 1905. In July, 1905 he was reported as agent for the Kimberley Milling and Manufacturing Company (in an announcement which confirms his residence in Kimberley at that date) and by August 1906, he is treating of that trade in more detail, in a series of articles (August-December 1906) covering fourteen companies, in his usual mixture of purple patches and competent presentation of hard facts. He returned to the subject only once in later years, reviewing a period of slump. In 1914 Cranbrook cut 100,000,000 feet, in 1916 (*Herald*, Jan. 20, 1916) is not expected to exceed 75,000,000. But (in classical Marxist terms which would have horrified him) the war in Europe is giving capitalists a chance. 'How the smaller concerns may fare in the future is a difficult question . . .'

Within a month of completing his series on the lumber mills Joe Ryan by advertisement (*Herald*, Jan. 7, 1907) tells us of yet another career, as estate agent. Headed 'Kootenay Valley Company', it describes 20,000 acres, offered at from \$3 to \$10 per acre, of selected lands of 'unsurpassed fertility, matchless climate and the most picturesque situation . . . For further particulars apply to T. G. Proctor, Nelson, B.C. or to Joseph Ryan, Cranbrook, B.C.'

But Joe continued with his journalism, spending two days in Creston to prepare an 'excellent write-up of that wonderful country' (*Herald*, Aug. 1, 1907) which is 'backed to the east by a low range of hills that reflects every ray of sunshine . . . there is no doubt but the grape will be profitably and successfully grown here . . .' The grain appears to have been in use already, for soda water, with something mixed in it, is 'esteemed as a popular alleviator of present or future dryness of the gullet. The lubrication or irrigation of the tract in the neighbourhood of the throttle induces a gladsome vision of things as they are in that land of promise . . .'

A year later to the day, on August 1, 1908, at Fernie, on the road to the Crow's Nest Pass, a destructive fire broke out causing grave loss of life and property. Joe Ryan was there to describe it, in terms somewhat short of political correctness, though not of descriptive power. A fire in timber properties had been blazing and abating for several weeks as winds fanned it or rains doused it. Then:

Such a wind as never before visited Fernie began to blow . . . The wind got under the smouldering heaps of rubbish . . . and as the fire advanced it created its own draft. The old town . . . went like tinder, and then . . . the flames leaped almost through the ether . . . it seemed as if a blanket of flame shot down the street and struck the Burns building only to glance off at an angle and strike the Roman Catholic church. Inside of a minute the city was on fire from end to end . . .

A strong man . . . was caught in the . . . wind and slammed . . . against a telegraph pole . . . The sky had grown black as the darkest night . . . it seemed as if the apocalyptic opening of the sixth seal . . . had come to pass. A Slav woman, dull-witted, bovine . . . came near where a man named Scott was fire-fighting . . . and seven wailing children clung to her. Scott yelled . . . 'Take those children back' . . . She looked at him, unsexed, unmothered, and fled, anywhere, anyhow . . . And through it all, heroisms were being done . . . The Anglo-Celt, the Canadian and the American once again proved their deserving of life. They took things in hand and were obeyed . . .

If we think Joe's view of the Slav woman is, to say the least, jaundiced, what are we to make of an essay in the following December (*Herald*, Dec. 17, 1908) which indicates certain attitudes apparently shared by the writers and readers of the *Herald*?

'Burning of modern Rome' it is headed, (by Joseph Ryan):

Had a real, live journalist been present at the burning of Rome [he begins] he would have made the scoop of ancient days . . . but it is the privilege of the *Herald* to have the recording of the destruction of Rome the Second . . . locally called Backa-tha-shop. Calabria . . . has been ever renowned for its . . . banditti. From this place came Guiseppe Spaghetti and his cousin Giovanni Macarroni . . . To Cranbrook, B.C., they bent their steps with a gay tra-la-la . . .

He goes on to allege that these Italians squatted on C.P.R land and built and furnished shacks with purloined materials.

The C.P.R. sued forth . . . direful writs . . . It was a shame to see the uses these swashbucklers made of those writs. Roadmaster Topham said he had a writ of his own that . . . would . . . solve the difficulty . . . he called around with a can of coal oil, some waste and a bundle of pine chips . . . he next took a match, lit it . . . and awaited developments . . . It was good work, that of Topham's . . . All through the night the fire made quite a warm glow around the locality . . .

This is a police magistrate turning an honest penny by describing a piece of sheer incendiarism which he happened to witness; but of course it was all in defence of the fabulously wealthy railway company and the victims were only dagos.

To return to the Fernie fire. A neighbour paper, the *Rossland Miner* (Aug. 12, 1908), carried an editorial tribute under the heading 'Ryan distinguishes himself.' After a verbose preamble, it proceeds:

A number of reporters told the story of the disaster .. but there was one; Joseph Ryan, whose descriptions were superlatively fine . . . Mr. Ryan is not a professional writer, being a barrister, although he turns his hand to anything that comes handy. In the early days of the Rossland camp he worked here in the mines and for a time he pushed a car at the Trail smelter. This shows his . . . adaptability, and the range of his talents. Mr. Ryan's natural forte is descriptive writing . . .

Esling, the editor, was probably an acquaintance of Joe Ryan's, and when he wrote of Joe's experiences in the mines and the smelter he was writing of events a very few years earlier and for people in the neighbouring towns of Rossland and Trail who were in a position to know the truth of these matters. Esling's editorial is the only evidence we have as to Joe's earliest occupations after his emigration, and it deserves authority.

* * *

Zealous, gregarious people are those who form political parties and other voluntary public bodies, and it is no surprise that we should find Joseph Ryan so engaged. Within a year of his moving from Kimberley to Cranbrook, and on the occasion of a local election, it is reported

(*Herald*, Jan. 17, 1907) that the Conservatives have established headquarters in the Aken block on Cranbrook Street, with Joseph Ryan in charge and that the manager of the campaign has for his assistants Joseph Ryan and A. R. Grace. Later in the year (Sept. 26) a large advertisement by the Cranbrook Conservative Association, announcing a public meeting to welcome the leader of the opposition in the Dominion parliament and Richard McBride, the Conservative premier of British Columbia, is over the name of Joseph Ryan, Secretary.

His name continues to appear occasionally in reports of Conservative party functions over the following few years. He is not mentioned in this connection after 1912, but in March, 1908, just a year after his first appearance as a Conservative, he was appointed Police Magistrate.

More than a year later there appears the first report (*Herald*, Jul. 1, 1909) of a hearing before him, when, says the report, he 'had cases of considerable importance to the public to engage his attention.' In one, three worthies were sent for trial who had allegedly assaulted and robbed the man who had been banker in their crap game. It was, of course, only a court of first instance and the attempt to build up these low-level offences into 'considerable importance to the public' suggests that the magistrate himself may have been the reporter. Occasional ponderous mountains made out of legal molehills and occasional flashes of bitterness from the bench relieve a tedious series of drunks and disorderlies, minor thefts and affrays in bawdy-houses.

Joseph Ryan's legal career in Ireland had come to an unexplained end and his career as a magistrate in Cranbrook was to end similarly. He convicted a Chinese man (*Herald*, Jan. 15, 1914) for selling intoxicants to two Indian boys and sentenced him to three months and a fine. An appeal was entered and upheld, the appeal judge commenting very strongly on a magistrate's practice of forcing evidence. Just how "Judge" Ryan was supposed to have forced evidence is not clear but the outcome is - Ryan immediately resigned. He took up a position in the legal business of T. T. Mecredy, a member of a Dublin legal family who had qualified in 1888. But Mecredy's legal career too came to a sorry end. He was struck off, a sequel (*Herald*, Oct. 26, 1916) 'to the removal of T. T. Mecredy some time ago for parts unknown, accompanied by his stenographer.'

If Joe Ryan's zeal for the cause of the Conservative party was less than intense, it was because



The Raworth Block, Cranbrook, B.C., Joseph Ryan's office, now a listed building. (Alf MacLochlainn.)

his real interest, the promotion of the east Kootenay and of Cranbrook in particular, was better served by the activities of the Cranbrook Board of Trade, with which he was associated from, at latest, 1906. In that year he became one of the '100 club,' founded by F. E. Simpson, editor of the *Herald*, and sponsored by the Board of Trade. Each of the hundred members was to subscribe \$5, to be devoted to publicity. It was Simpson who coined the phrase 'banana belt' to signalise the allegedly great fruit-growing potential of the district.

In August 1908, the Board of Trade tendered a banquet to the minister for mines in the Dominion government. 'Joseph Ryan, city police magistrate and a well-known correspondent for prominent papers, responded to the toast of mining and made one of the most interesting talks of the evening.' By 1910 he had established himself at least informally as a public relations officer for the area.

In August, the Board of Trade heard from Joseph Ryan (*Herald*, Aug. 4) 'some striking statements relative to the mineral wealth of the St. Mary's Valley' and he was appointed to prepare a mineral exhibit for the Spokane fair. He was to show mineral exhibits at least five times - twice at Spokane, 1910 and 1916, once with his friend Noel Wallinger (and on both occasions there were difficulties with U.S. Customs), at Lethbridge and Chicago in 1912, and in Cranbrook, 1917.

Joe begins a colourful report (*Herald*, Oct. 31, 1912), the last of three on the Lethbridge event, with a tribute to a colleague at whose suggestion the Cranbrook pavilion had 'a big wide hearth and a log fire blazing in it.' It was, he writes, the only place where a man could light his pipe:

On Wednesday there was a thin searching wind . . . The result was that the ladies simply thronged into the Cranbrook building to get a breath of warm oxygen into their perished lungs. 'By and by every woman who had a baby with a colic in its little inside arrived and commandeered the chairs, . . . the building sounded like a Mormon nursery at spanking time. Such screams and yells may be music to the ears of the truly domesticated man, but to bachelors they are even as sirens and fog-horns to warn them off the deadly lee shore of matrimony.

While Joe cannot actually be accused of stating that he is a bachelor there is certainly here what we can be sure he would be the first to call *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*.

The Cranbrook material shown at Lethbridge caught the eye of the provincial minister for agriculture and he adopted the lot as part of the British Columbia exhibition at the Chicago Land Show. He empanelled Joe Ryan to share with his deputy minister the duties of lecturing in Chicago in support of B.C. propaganda and it was from the Chicago Land Show that Joe wrote a letter to his son Arthur which had given us one of the starting points for our newspaper search.

Joe contributed two long articles to the *Herald* on the Chicago show, the second (Jan. 9, 1913) devoted to the mineral display in his special charge. The minerals

. . . grasped the eyes and the attention of many thousands of people whom fruit and grains did not concern in the slightest and once you had them in conversation it was no trouble to preach the general doctrine that there is no country like Canada and that British Columbia is its jewel.

More interesting is the glimpse we get, in a letter of Nov. 28, 1912 to his nineteen-year-old son Arthur, of Joe's more intimate response to Chicago

. . . I told Mother how it cometh to pass that I am dwelling in actual, literal, marble halls with vassals and serfs galore at my side . . . It would not surprise me a bit but if the Govt. sent me to England and Ireland on a lecturing tour of the resources of B.C. . . . It is a brute of a city, Arthur, heartless as the nether millstone to anyone who is down and out, but a flunkey to one who cares not a damn about any man . . .

I'll be here until about the 12th. December and won't be sorry to get back for all that I was at very Grand Opera last night. It was the first really good music I heard since I left Ireland . . .

And how did Joe know that Chicago was so hard on the poor? Had he perhaps been there before, making his way with empty pockets towards the nearest gold-mines in the Kootenays?

Through 1916, 1917 and 1918 reports in the *Herald* of Board of Trade activities keep us aware of Joe Ryan's role in its publicity. At the annual general meeting on February 22, 1918 he was again elected to the executive and on March 4 he was again appointed chairman of the publicity committee. But this time he was not to live long to enjoy the honour.

* * *

When Joe Ryan spoke at a Board of Trade luncheon at Fort Steele in April, 1917, he recalled his acquaintance with Bob Dore. As early as his mammoth effort in the *Herald* annual of 1904 he had given accounts of the old-timers, and as well as interviewing R. L. T. Galbraith had included a long note on the same Robert Dore. Dore was born in 1833 in Birdhill, near Nenagh, and:

came to the States when quite a young fellow . . . he still retains certain inflections of speech which . . . stamp him as a true son of the Island of Destiny . . .

I had spent the winter of '63 in Walla Walla and . . . five of us set out for the new diggings. From the time we passed the place where Spokane now is, we never saw . . . a white man . . . We . . . depended for meat on our rifles . . . We rather liked the appearance of the crack in the mountain which holds White Horse Creek . . . it was all right . . . bright with gold . . . See that spot there by the old Chinaman's little garden? . . . I took out of it \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20 to the pan of dirt . . . My partners . . . were Len



N. A. Wallinger, Joseph Ryan's friend and ultimately the executor of his will. (Original in possession of Dave Wallinger, Victoria, B.C.)

Harris, Jack Carroll, . . . Pat O'Donnell and Billy Witcher . . . a couple of them were, like myself, Irish . . . Where we are standing now . . . was once a fine town, with big stores, hotels, saloons and dear knows how many hurdy-gurdy dance houses . . .

The town was mostly built over our ground . . . Out of this place, which was the principal street . . . we took at least \$500,000. You see that corner? A saloon stood there. It was there that Yeast Powder Bill shot Walker in a drunken quarrel. [The gravestone of Thomas Walker 'a native of the county Donegal, Ireland, died August 6, 1864, aged 27 years,' survives in the Fort Steele Museum.] Bill got out of the camp in a hurry. I followed him. I got the drop on him and marched him back. He was tried by a jury of the boys, who acquitted him of murder. I ordered him out of the camp within half an hour. He went . . .

Dore admits to having made a fortune and says: "'I did throw away a deal of it, mostly, I am proud to say, helping my countrymen and the land that gave me birth in her struggle against unjust laws. "'

Bob Huggart was mentioned by Joe as early as 1904, as one of the trappers of the St. Mary's valley whom you might not find at home. He lived until 1932 or later, as in that year he was photographed outside his log cabin, a spare, wiry man, with a shock of flowing white hair and sunken cheeks, smoking a pipe.⁷ But he had entered the record as early as 1902 when he was reported (*Herald*, Aug. 2) as having made a silver-lead discovery at the head of one of the forks of the St. Mary. He was cast as the star of a feature by Joe ('In camp with Bob Huggart, and a bear story or two,' *Herald*, Sept. 15, 1910), which takes the form of a chat around the fire at a remote campsite.

'Our fire . . . made mystery of the world outside . . .' The talk always worked round to bears and their ways and a good deal of information about the animals is put, in folksy manner, in the mouth of Bob Huggart, though his lines occasionally lapse into a poetic tone which stretches credulity a little. "One evening in early October . . . the time of year when the evenings make the far-off hills like the place we are all hunting for and never reach." "Tir-nan-Oge, maybe," said I, . . . "Tir-nan-Oge," repeated Bob slowly, "what language is that? What does it mean?" "It's Gaelic for the land of youth. No one in that land gets to be ever more than four and twenty". "I was there once," said Bob, catching the poetry of the idea . . .'

Up to the end, Joe was cultivating the company of these veterans. In 1918 (*Herald*, Feb. 14) he gives us the account, attributed to one Jimmy Dewyer, of an incident at a camp where the trail to civilisation and strong drink was long and hard at the best of times. There came into the camp a fellow with a bottle of whiskey hidden in his blanket roll. After whetting the appetites of the boys with reminiscences of the pleasures of drink, he made \$100 by auctioning his bottle! 'The days whereof Jimmy spoke were the golden days, the untrammelled days . . . for we were all young then.' He hasn't actually claimed that he personally, Joseph Ryan, was one of those old timers, but the use of the 'we' certainly comes close to giving that impression.

* * *

We know from his pastor's eulogy at his funeral that Joe Ryan was in good standing in his Catholic community. His first journalistic contribution on a Catholic subject is an account (*Herald*, Jun. 25, 1908) of the celebration of Corpus Christi at St. Eugene's mission:

Last Sunday the Mission was arrayed in gala dress . . . the houses of the chief, the beautiful church and the schools being a blaze of flags and decorations . . . Looking about,

one noticed that only the oldest Indians . . . wore the traditional dress, the blanket of many colours, the embroidered shirt, the effective hat with the heavy band of silver, and the coloured leggings and moccasins . . . The women, for all their bravery of reds and orange, bright blues and combinations of colour that can out rival a flower-bed, look always depressed, down-trodden and sad beyond all telling under the burden of the inevitable papoose . . .

By and by the bell rang for service . . . the Indians filled the aisles and the white people being relegated to the gallery . . . a simply worded sermon translated without a moment's pause by . . . the interpreter and the procession of the Sacred Host passed with band and banners, salvos of rifle fire, quaintly sung hymns, strewn flowers . . . The procession passed one cottage where a girl . . . lay inside the open door leaning against the breast of the old blind Indian Ta Ta. The little, hacking cough . . . the deadly attenuation of the almost transparent hands, proclaimed her . . . another victim of the white plague . . .

He was not always so objective in his treatment of the Indians. Joe Ryan and W. E. Cline were the first signatories of a valedictory address to a departing bishop in March, 1910. It recited the work of the Oblates for the Indians, then:

. . . We are proud that the Fathers of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate are doing work of inestimable value amongst the Indians . . . steadily uplifting them . . . far more valuable and enduring are the splendid results of their ministry amongst us, the dominant race . . .

There is a significance to the appearance of Ryan and Cline at the head of the short list of signatories. They were respectively Grand Knight and Past Grand Knight of the local council of the Knights of Columbus, a social and fraternal, pledge or honour-bound organisation of Catholic men which had come into existence when membership of oath-bound bodies, such as the Freemasons, was forbidden to Catholics.

A session for the 'exemplification of degrees,' whatever that may mean, made the lead story in the *Herald* (Jun. 23, 1910); thirty-nine candidates were admitted, many with Irish surnames. At a following social function 'Miss Mabel Wellman most kindly contributed a most artistic accompaniment to Judge Ryan's song, "With heart bowed down," which he sang in his very best style and voice.'



Arthur Ryan (later Art Ó Riain, pen-name Barra Ó Caochlaigh), in 1909. (Original in possession of Maeliosa Ó Riain, Limerick.)

(For comparison, we may quote from a religious census, or more accurately a survey of Christian numbers, reported in August, 1916. It showed 396 Protestant families (Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist) and 59 Roman Catholic, with 50 divided families, presumably families in which the partners were of different sects. Where pseudo-bachelors may figure in all this is not clear.)

* * *

As early as 1902 (*Herald* 23.10) a Mr. Ryan of Kimberley was attracting public interest in Cranbrook by a daring wager with a local race-horse-owner. Could a horse pull a 2,000 lb. sack of sand at the end of a 2240ft. rope? Was there another Ryan in Kimberley besides our Joe who would have courted publicity in this manner? But his next reported appearance as a sportsman (12.9.1905) was less amusing; returning from a hunting trip he fell from a moving train and dislocated an elbow.

Of the hunting, he wrote to his son in 1916:

. . . My sight is not what it used to be and I have to wear glasses for writing and reading. At a distance my sight is as good as ever and I can shoot just as well as when at home. I have knocked the daylight out of many a bear . . . yes, and the dreaded grizzly, and faith, he's the one that can put up a scrap . . .

Most of his entertainment, however, centred round the hotels of Cranbrook, where, it seems, there was an endless succession (of which Knights of Columbus functions formed but a small part), of luncheons, of banquets and smoking concerts for visiting dignitaries and departing worthies. At these, Joe Ryan was regularly present, obliging with songs or proposing or responding to toasts – to the guests, to the ladies, to the bald-headed, to the old-timers, sometimes with his friend Noel Wallinger. One of many commendations of his performance must serve to illustrate all. 'The singing,' we are told (10.8.'08), at a banquet for a visiting Dominion minister, 'was entrusted with most excellent judgement to F. W. Reeves, Joseph Ryan and H. B. Nelson . . . Mr. Reeves and Mr. Ryan, by their vocal work in the past, have established enviable reputations in Cranbrook . . .'

The departure in November, 1909, of F. E. Simpson, proprietor and editor of the *Herald*, was doubly marked, by a presentation from the *Herald* staff and by a complimentary supper. At the first:

in addition to the regular staff there were present Mr. Joseph Ryan, an old and valued correspondent . . . But after the presentation of a cordial address and Simpson's reply Joseph Ryan, as the oldest member of the staff, claimed the privilege of speaking first.

Was he or was he not a member of the staff? (We might as well ask was he or was he not a lawyer? A bachelor?)

He told of his first arrival in Cranbrook a dozen years ago, with 35 cents in his pocket and his Irish gall. "Judge" Ryan said that he braced the Old Man for a job and was given an assignment to write up the smelter then being established at Marysville . . .

We must pause to protest. We know exactly the date of Joe Ryan's article on the Marysville

smelter; it was July 28, 1904, just over *five* years before the Simpson departure. No 'dozen years' this.

And at the Simpson supper, Joe Ryan responded to the toast of the old-timers and sang four songs.*

Cranbrook had a musical life apart from the informal occasions noted – there was a band, there were music teachers, performances by local and visiting groups. Miss Mabel Wellman, who had accompanied Joe's singing, advertised as a teacher, as did Mrs. Wallinger, a violinist. Public music performances were regularly reviewed in the *Herald* and while none of the reviews are signed a strong suspicion remains that the music critic was Joseph Ryan. (The reviews cease with his death.)

The review of a 1917 concert (Aug. 23) is characteristic. Miss McCormick

most certainly deserved the . . . many imperative encores . . . and gave little vocal gems . . . notably "Mavourneen," a ballad that is genuinely Irish in its construction and words and sentiment . . . [Then] . . . three or four drunken louts . . . succeeded in completely spoiling a considerable part of Miss McCormick's programme for all those occupying a number of the back seats . . . It was outrageously bad conduct and should have been dealt with by the police . . .

* * *

Now to return to that career of Joseph Ryan's which lasted longest, his mining column in the *Herald* and ultimately his ventures into mining speculation. He referred repeatedly in his writings to the St. Mary's valley, and particularly Perry Creek, the important tributary within that valley, and to the mythologised Wild Horse diggings. As early as the mammoth 1904



Joseph Ryan's gravestone in Cranbrook, British Columbia.

annual there is an advertisement for the Perry Creek Hydraulic Mining Company, capital \$1,000,000, 'for the purpose of operating upon the thoroughly prospected unexhausted placers of the famous Perry Creek . . .'

By 1910 (a lead story, *Herald*, November 3, on 'The new Perry Creek') the only building left is the hotel, where in the 1860s there were two thousand men, with dance-halls, saloons, stores, houses, a government office, a gaol. Joe wants the grave of old man Perry (or Perrier) marked; 'These graves of old pioneers should be carefully marked with some form of permanent headstone.'

But by 1914 there is renewed interest. 'Mining expert gives cheering report on Perry Creek . . . '(*Herald*, Aug. 27) . . . Capt. E. E. Rodgers . . . a well-known mining engineer . . . stated . . . he was very confident that it was one of the greatest gold mining properties on the continent.'

Several times in 1914, 1915 and 1916, Joe Ryan repeats the early history of Perry Creek and extols the virtues of the claims there, sometimes with a touch of nostalgia added. For example, we read (*Herald*, Mar. 4, 1915):

Perry Creek seems to have had its full share of attention. Every little tributary . . . had its own name and these . . . call up the men who conferred them. We have Galway, Limerick, Shorty's . . . and Antwerp Creeks . . . Galway and Limerick hint at the ache in the heart of some exiled son of the Emerald Isle who hoped to make a stake and visit his old home before he cashed in his chips . . .

There are at least five laudatory references to that Capt. Rodgers, of whom more hereafter. For example, that same 1915 story, mentioning the incorporation of the Cranbrook Homestake Mining Company, tells us: 'Captain Rodgers, a veteran of the civil war and one of the most respected mining engineers in the United States, takes the position of general manager.'

We are hardly surprised, therefore, by a front-page story (*Herald*, Apr. 6, 1916) which tells us of 'a local company formed to develop the Wild Horse Creek property and Perry Creek.' On April 20 a full-page advertisement gives the Wild Horse Placer Mining Company prospectus, the objective stated to be the working of those properties on which Capt. Rodgers had acquired options along Perry Creek and Wild Horse. A letter from N. A. Wallinger to Joe Ryan is quoted in full, telling the oft-repeated tale of the early wealth extracted and the continuing, if modest, success of the industrious Chinese. The articles of association are given, naming the first board of directors, Elmer Ellsworth Rodgers, Joseph Ryan, Charles E. Ward, Lester Clapp and Archibald Raworth. Solicitor to the company is Thomas Tighe Mecredy.

There is an unwonted quietness about Joseph Ryan's mining columns for the short remainder of his life. He chronicles occasional brokerage deals of his own. In August, 1917, he fires off the last salvo we are to hear from him of his standard two hundred words of abuse, this time directed at a 'mining shark' who had come to Cranbrook and said he wanted 'just a few good mines . . . ' Transport and visits were arranged. 'Then came the attempted "swift touch," a matter of \$200, say, for a week as he had been sent by the capitalists so quickly . . . that he forgot his money . . . '

The closing passage of Joe's last column begins: 'Before bidding adieu to the valley of the St. Mary river . . . ' but he cannot have known that it was a final adieu. The next issue of the *Herald* leads with the account of his death and that of T. T. McVittie, justice of the peace at Fort Steele after the withdrawal of the Mounties and whose wife was a niece of R. L. T. Galbraith. The heading of that lead story accords to Joseph Ryan an honour to which he had long aspired: 'Dual passing of old timers.'

Joe's reports on Perry Creek developments quoted both N. A. Wallinger, government agent and gold assayer, and Capt. Rodgers. Of Capt. Ro(d)gers we know little more than already indicated, but Wallinger and his family are well documented and still well known in the Kootenays. There is a Wallinger Creek, tributary of the Wild Horse, and the main street of Kimberley is Wallinger Avenue.¹⁰ Wallinger was English, more or less of an age with Joe Ryan, and arrived in the Kootenays in the 1880s, engaging in a variety of occupations and later holding a series of public offices, appointed government agent in 1913.

During his tenure of that office he refused to allow the people of Kimberley to go hungry when the local mines were out of production, and their main street is named to honour his issuing what are locally held to be the first welfare payments in Canada. In 1895 he married Jessie Beale, sister of a Cranbrook associate of Joe Ryan's, and prominent as a musician. At a concert (*Herald*, Oct. 8, 1914), at which the pupils of St. Mary's were 'dressed in true Irish costume' and paraded to the tune of 'It's a long way to Tipperary', she conducted the orchestra, which included another associate of Joe's, Archie Raworth and Mrs. J. E. Kennedy, who sang at Joe's funeral.

We are obviously in the presence of a close group of friends and this is testified to by a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wallinger, Mrs. Muriel Wallinger (she resumed her maiden name), who, like Joe Ryan's last surviving daughter, died only in 1992. She was of course only a teenager when Joe Ryan died, but, to quote from her son Dave's letter to us, 'she remembers Mr. Ryan well,' and adds something which must raise our eyebrows a little. 'She did recall that there was some suspicion that he was somehow connected with a militant nationalist movement and had found it discreet to disappear from Ireland.' There is no evidence to support this but it is interesting that he should, seemingly, have let it be believed of him, just as he let it be believed that he was an old-timer, a barrister, a bachelor.

Noel Wallinger, as we have seen, was a pall-bearer at Joe's funeral and was named the executor of Joe's will and in the nature of things must have read the will shortly after Joe's death. This explains a significant difference between the announcement of that death in the *Herald* of March 28, 1918, and a later tribute. The *Herald* editorial closed with the conventional if perfunctory 'The *Herald* extends its deepest sympathy to his relatives.' At its April 2 meeting the Board of Trade adopted a resolution ending 'Be it further resolved that we offer to his bereaved family our expressions of sincere and heartfelt condolence.' The mere 'relatives' have become 'his bereaved family' because his friends had learnt, for the first time, from Wallinger's perusal of the will that Joe had left behind in Ireland not mere relatives but a sorrowing widow and children.

In view of the reputation enjoyed by the Wallingers, it came as a tremendous shock to the people of Cranbrook when in 1922 N. A. Wallinger was dismissed from his post as government agent by the provincial premier, Oliver. The circumstances of this dismissal did not become clear until an exchange of correspondence between Wallinger and Oliver was published in the *Herald*, July 13 and 27.

Oliver dismissed Wallinger because he, Oliver, had had sight of a letter written by Wallinger to none other than Capt. E. E. Rodgers, which seemed to support Rodgers's charge that Wallinger had converted government money to his own use. But wait. Money was due to the government agent, Wallinger explains, for leases of claims by Rodgers's company. Rodgers paid \$225 of the \$500 due, saying that the company had no funds and that this was his own money; would Wallinger hold it until the company came through with the payment?

The company did not pay up, so Wallinger deemed the leases had fallen in and that he had in his custody \$275 of Rodgers's own money:

As I am the sole executor of the estate of the late Joseph Ryan, . . . and as Captain Rogers was indebted to the said estate in a large sum, I was hoping . . . that he would consent to this money being appropriated to the Ryan estate, and I wrote and spoke to him . . . making this suggestion and this was my sole reason for retaining this money.

Numerous references show that Capt. Rodgers had sustained a long interest in mining in the east Kootenay and had often been written of in glowing terms by Joe Ryan himself. If he in some way swindled Joe Ryan, Joe seems to have little to blame but his incurable optimism. Why did Rodgers owe Joe Ryan a large sum? Why was the company broke in 1922? We shall never know.

Suffice to say that the Wallinger and Ryan families regard him as a crooked mine operator, a view shared, or at least hinted at, by the *Herald* editorial (July 27): 'Who . . . knowing anything of the person whom it is presumed is the main informant of the premier . . . would be likely to accept . . . the charges he might make against Mr. Wallinger?' There is no doubt what the people of Cranbrook thought. Wallinger was triumphantly elected to the provincial parliament for the Cranbrook riding, the only Conservative returned in an election that was otherwise a landslide victory for Oliver's Liberals.

A later writer¹¹ in the *Daily Townsman* recounting the history of Perry Creek remarks: 'If anyone is interested in the "Wild Horse Placer Mining Company," this writer has (somewhere) some very pretty sheets of paper indicating a \$100 interest in said company, and they can be bought very cheaply. Any takers?' But Joe Ryan's faith in Perry Creek and even in Capt. Rodgers had lasted until his death.

* * *

Joe's son Arthur was to gain some note as a writer in Irish, and when asked to provide biographical details for a reference work recorded of his early years merely that he had spent them in Thurles. His mother was to say that the worst day of her life was that dreadful day in Thurles when she stood on the station platform there, three small children clutching her skirts, her baby in her arms, as she waited for the train to take them away from the scene of their disgrace.

We went to Thurles, wondering if our enquiries there would reawaken some bitterness towards a long-dead solicitor, who might have wronged in some way a parent or grandparent a century ago. We had tea in Hayes's Hotel, scene of perhaps the most famous event in Thurles's history, the foundation of the GAA in 1884. That foundation was part of the nationalist movement, mainly in the emerging Catholic middle-class, for separation from Britain, and there is a hint of a hidden agenda. Certainly in the early years the leadership of the GAA was usurped by Fenians, and one authority quotes police reports of a Fenian meeting before 1884, which sought means of preparing bodies of fit young men to be ready for military training when the right hour struck.

Not far from Hayes's Hotel is the office of the *Tipperary Star*, and the paper kindly published a letter of cautious enquiry from us. Some time later we received a reply from Séamus Ó Riain, a former president of the GAA and a student of its early history, in particular the author of a definitive biography of its first president, Maurice Davin

The Davin brothers, Maurice and Pat, notable athletes and record holders in field events, were of a prosperous farming family near Carrick-on-Suir and one of their associates in the local athletic club in 1879 and later at that historic meeting in Thurles had been one Joseph Ryan or O'Ryan (earlier erroneously reported as P. J. Ryan, as already noted). This Joseph had

been described by an oral informant as a local solicitor who left the country under some cloud shortly after 1884. Could this man be the subject of our enquiry?

We established a cordial exchange of information with Séamus Ó Riain and comparison of copies of signatures on Carrick-on-Suir Athletic Club minutes in Séamus's possession with those on British Columbia documents in ours left no doubt on the matter.

We went to Carrick-on-Suir and in the Catholic parish register we found record of the baptism on 28th April, 1857, of Joseph Patrick Ryan, son of James Ryan of Main Street and his wife Maria Coghlan. The offering to the priest for the ceremony was well above that commonly paid, £1 instead of the more usual 6d. or 1/-, and one of the god-parents of the infant Joseph was a priest – all suggesting that the [O]Ryans were among the more prosperous citizens of the town. And James of Main Street, according to Griffith, enjoyed a valuation much higher than most of his neighbours.

Joseph trained as a solicitor, again a sign of middle-class prosperity, qualified at Easter, 1884 and set up in practice in Thurles and in Callan, Co. Kilkenny, not far away. Solicitors were required to have an accommodation address (or town agents) in Dublin and Joseph's was the offices of Mentons, the solicitors with whom he had served his time, as had Pat Davin. So indeed had a member of the Carrick-on-Suir family of Quirk, whose law business is still happily with us and is now the repository of those Carrick-on-Suir Athletic Club minutes which identify Joseph O'Ryan of that foundation meeting of the GAA with Judge Ryan, of Cranbrook, B.C. And we note – coincidence or conspiracy? – that one of the Menton family was a member of the Fenian committee seeking to establish a pre-military athletic association.

The extrovert Joe Ryan was quickly engaged in organised society in Callan and the *Kilkenny People* (Jan. 3, 1885) records that he sang the hymn *O salutaris hostia* as soloist at the New Year liturgical celebrations. According to family tradition, it was at a musical evening that Joe met Clare Hanley, when she played the piano to accompany his singing. She was of a prosperous family in Nenagh. They were married in 1892 at the Cistercian abbey of Mount St. Joseph, Roscrea. They settled in Thurles and there their four children were born, at home, apparently, as was the custom of the time, at Llandaff Lodge. This was, and indeed is, a substantial residence, formerly the dower-house of the Llandaff estate, and it is entered from a narrow street beside Hayes's Hotel.

Joe conducted his practice from a pretty house not far away, across the bridge beside the castle which marked the medieval limit of the town. Local papers report his court appearances, but in the late '90s at least there is a difference between his appearances and those of his legal confrères. Each assize day Joe would appear, it seems, for only one client, while each of his colleagues might appear for five or six in different cases, for whatever reason – by more diligent touting for business, or by enjoying a higher reputation. By the time Joe and Clare's youngest child, May, was born, in May, 1899, his appearances in court have ceased, the last recorded being in March of that year.

Joe's name appears in the list of solicitors in practice in Thom's *Directory* for 1899 but not in that for 1900. Matter for inclusion in such directories, for sale late in the year preceding the nominal year, must be collected and edited in the summer or at latest early autumn of that preceding year, so we can conclude that by mid-1899 the legal authorities knew that Joe Ryan had ceased practice. Joe's later active social life in the hotels of Cranbrook might suggest that as a younger man, with the expenses attached to a growing family, he had cultivated a life-style beyond his means. This coupled with a neglect of his business may have left him unable to meet the ordinary bills of butcher and baker. He may even, as can so easily happen, have given in to a temptation to dip into clients' funds. Without any formal process of being struck off, he

may have simply decamped quietly, setting off for the gold of north-western America to the relief of those legal authorities.

We may safely date his departure to the middle of 1899. If he had left before his daughter May's birth, surely the day of that lonely birth would have ranked blackest with the abandoned mother. Gently reared, Clare was ill-fitted for the hardship she was to endure for many years; an old newspaper spread on the table instead of fine linen was not a way of life for the daughter of a prosperous merchant in Nenagh.

The train from Thurles took Clare and the children to Dublin, and they lodged for a while with Clare's unmarried sister in Dalkey. But what maiden aunt can happily share her home with four small children, as well as their mother? Eventually Clare and the children had to leave and, as family folklore has it, walk the streets of Dalkey until some kind neighbour offered them hospitality.

From an address in Dalkey – the house still stands – Arthur was enrolled in the O'Brien Institute at Marino, an endowed boarding-school where boys of good family but in necessitous circumstances were given an excellent education by the Christian Brothers. Arthur had fond recollections of his schooldays and in particular kept up a friendship with one of his teachers who might have fulfilled for the virtual orphan the role of surrogate father. The O.B.I. had a liberal curriculum and while there the young Arthur won a prize for sight-reading at the Feis Ceoil. He left school in 1910 and in 1913 entered the civil service.

Arthur's sisters too were accommodated as charity pupils in schools of the nuns of Loreto, of whom Clare herself had been a pupil. His brother Desmond, on the strength of one of the rare cheques from Cranbrook, was sent to the boarding-school attached to Mount St. Joseph's, Roscrea. At that time, the years before 1916, An Fear Mór, Séamus Ó hEocha, later to found the famous Irish school at Ring, Co. Waterford, was teaching in Roscrea, and it could have been from him, via Desmond, that Arthur acquired an interest in the Irish language and the language movement. Photographs of Desmond, c.1923, show him wearing a Fáinne. Arthur spent his holidays in Baile Mhic Íre and acquired great mastery of the language.

Years of strife culminated in the establishment of the Irish Free State with a government dedicated to the cultivation of the national language. For this they needed civil servants fluent in Irish and Art Ó Riain, as he now was, became secretary to the Minister for Education in that government. A further testimony to his language skill was his collection of short stories, *An tost*¹² (which won first prize in an Oireachtas competition in 1924), published in 1927.

Domestically, Art and his mother had developed a mutual dependency deriving from his role as eldest son in the absence of the father. To his siblings his pet-name was, revealingly, 'guv.'

On the committee of An Fáinne Art met Maighréad Nic Dháibhidh, who had been reared in the family of Cú Uladh, one of the earliest activists of Connradh na Gaeilge. They were married in 1925 and it was natural that they should rear their children as Irish speakers.

When they moved from a city flat to larger houses in the suburbs Nana, as Clare their grandmother was called by the children, moved in with them; but they were not the first couple to learn that a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law in the same house do not make for a happy family. ("If you're entertaining your friends I'll give Arthur his dinner in the kitchen." "Arthur always likes to read at his meals.") As the birth of her fourth child approached, Maighréad told Art in no uncertain terms that she would go to the nursing-home for the birth of her baby and that if Nana was still in the family home when she returned, she, Maighréad, would go elsewhere. When she did come home, Nana was gone. The strain on the marriage, never overt, was probably never fully healed. As Joe would have been the first to point out in cliché terms, the evil that men do lives after them.

It was about this time that Art was writing his best-known work, a novel with the title *Lucht ceoil*,¹³ published in 1932. The hero, a journalist from London, on holiday in Ireland, more precisely in Dalkey, lodging in a house facing the railway (just such a house as Art grew up in) with a family supported by a music-teaching mother, abandoned by a treacherous husband and father. In the second half of the story our hero is employed, and framed for a crime, by a defaulting solicitor. The son of his host family becomes a priest and is killed in a railway accident. Young Desmond was ordained in the S.M.A. in 1923 and died of a heart attack in 1926.

Art acknowledged to his children that the priest in his story was fashioned after his brother but he never, even if he realised it, acknowledged that he was working out in the villains in his story some bitterness against his absent father. Indeed, he never spoke of his father and if pressed "An bhfuil sean-athair againne?", "Cá bhfuil ár sean-athair?", would merely say that he had died abroad where he had had to go to get work. Nor did he ever acknowledge, even if he knew it, that his father had had any role, if only a slight one, in the foundation of the G.A.A.

But he did pass on to his children something more valuable than gossip about Thurles or Cranbrook: the love of music which had brought Joe and Clare together so many years before. The Ó Riain home was full of formal and informal music and several of the children, and of their children in turn, have been notable performers. If he did not speak to his children about their grandfather, he felt less embarrassment in speaking to his grandchildren. Our son Colm, when aged five, asked his Daideó what was the gold fáinne on his lapel? Art explained the purpose of the badge, an explanation lost on Colm who at the time spoke only Irish; and Art then went on to explain where that particular fáinne came from.

'When my father was in Canada', he explained, 'he sent me a little deerskin pouch of tiny gold nuggets. When I wanted to get my fáinne I went to a jeweller here in Dublin and asked him could he make me one out of this gold. He said "yes" and when I called back to collect it I asked him how much I owed him? "Well", he said, tipping over the little purse, "there's one of these nuggets left and that will pay me handsomely".'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to many people in Ireland and North America, who helped us in our research and journeyings, in particular to my sister Charlotte Groarke, Calgary, Alberta, her late husband John, and their son Michael, to other relatives Maeliosa Ó Riain (Limerick), Úna Ní Riain, M.M.M. (Drogheda), Ita Whelan, Eithne Stanley, Doreen McGuigan (Dublin), Tim McGloughlin (Limerick). Our late son Fred and his dear friend Fatima Justiniano restored and reframed the formal portrait of Joseph Ryan and his wife Clare.

In Canada, we were given valuable help by Elinor Annis, Cranbrook; Harold Haggland, Calgary; Dave Wallinger, Victoria; Frances and Ron Welwood, Nelson; Deryll White, Fort Steele; in Carrick-on-Suir, by Michael Fitzgerald, St. Nicholas's Church and Michael J. Quirk, solicitor; in Chicago, by Ann and John Coyne; in Galway, by John F. Cunningham; in Thurles, by Rev. Maurice Dooley, P.P., Loughmore and Patrick J. O'Meara, solicitor.

A large number of officials and institutions responded generously to our enquiries, addressed in person or by correspondence, or otherwise gave us access to their resources: Boole Library, University College, Cork; Boston College Libraries, Chestnut Hill, Mass.; British Columbia Provincial Archives, Victoria; Cranbrook City Engineer's Office; Cranbrook Museum, Archives and Landmark Foundation; Dublin Archdiocessan Archives; Fort Steel Heritage Town Archives; Galway City Public Library; James Hardiman Library, University College, Galway; Irish Christian Brothers (per Br. Drohan); Mercer Library, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland; Mount St. Joseph's, Roscrea (per Fr. Nivard Kinsella, O.C.S.O.);

National Archives; National Library of Ireland (per Dónal Ó Luanaigh); Nenagh Heritage Society; St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Cranbrook; Society of African Missions, Cork; Thurles Urban District Council (per Alice O'Connell).

The proprietors and staff of the *Daily Townsman*, Cranbrook, *Nenagh Guardian* and *Tipperary Star* gave us access to older newspapers in their custody or on occasion the hospitality of current editorial pages.

Numerous individuals, from Carrick to Kimberley, helped us with hints and tips and we must thank especially Marcus de Búrca and Séamus Ó Riain who shared with us their knowledge of Tipperary and the early years of the GAA and Peggí Bean Uí Aodha, Cúil Aodha, who made enquiries on our behalf concerning Art Ó Riain's Irish teachers in Baile Mhic Íre.

Errors and omissions in this memoir and in this list of acknowledgements are the responsibility of the author.

NOTES

1. Crióstóir O'Flynn, *Centenary: a poem*. Baile Átha Cliath, Foillseacháin Náisiúnta Teo. [1984].
2. As quoted by Marcus de Búrca, *Michael Cusack and the G.A.A.* (Anvil, 1989).
3. T. F. O'Sullivan, *Story of the G.A.A.* 1916.
4. de Búrca, as cited above; Séamus Ó Riain, *Maurice Davin (1842-1927): first president of the G.A.A.* n.d. [1994] (his appendix on Joseph Ryan in collaboration with the present writer); W. F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish nationalist politics 1884-1920* (1987).
5. David Scott and Edna Hanic. *East Kootenay Chronicle*. Langley, B.C., Mr. Paperback, 1979.
6. Nicolas Coccola. *They call me Mather: memoirs of Father Nicolas Coccola*. Ed. by Margaret Whitehead. Vancouver, Univ. of B.C. Press, 1988.
7. Willa McClure (ed.) *Memories of Marysville* [cover title: The forgotten years: memories of Marysville]. Marysville, B.C., n.pub., 1980.
8. On the death of Francis Joseph Deane, another popular editor of the *Herald*, in 1913, it was Joseph Ryan who provided the paper's main tribute, published as an editorial with, unusually, the writer's by-line. I have discussed the career of F. J. Deane, his association with Joe Ryan and the disposal of his personal library in 'A small-town newspaperman's library, 1914', *BCLA Reporter*, v.36, 4 Sept. 1992.
9. A modest permanent memorial was erected by his grandchildren in early 2000 to mark Joseph Ryan's last resting-place in the cemetery at Cranbrook.
10. [James H. R. Davis and Grace E. Leighton] *Mountain treasures: the history of Kimberley*, B.C., Kimberley, Kimberley Senior Citizens History Book Committee, [1979].
11. D. A. MacDonald's regular column, 'Come with me to yesterday', *Daily Townsman*, Jul 28, 1971.
12. *An tost agust sgeálta eile*. Barra Ó Caochlaigh [leas-ainm, i.e. Art Ó Riain] do sgríobh, B.Á.C., Thom, 1927.
13. *Lucht ceoil*. Barra Ó Caochlaigh do sgríobh. B.Á.C., Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1932.