

# MICHAEL O'CONNOR & ELLEN HAYDEN 1800 ONWARDS

Details of the O'Connor Family in Ireland before 1830 and even up until they emigrated to Australia in 1857 are very sketchy. It seems that they were poor farm labourers in the then Queens County and there is clear evidence that they lived in and around Mountrath from the mid 1820s until at least 1839.

We are fortunate that Ellen emigrated to Australia with a daughter, her four sons, a daughter-in-law and a grandson in 1857. Her death certificate in Australia provides some of the starting points for discovering what happened to the O'Connors when they arrived in Melbourne.

In particular, it shows that Michael and Ellen had eight children. These names and ages on Ellen's death certificate led to the discovery of the brothers Michael, Fintan and Patrick, not just Andrew, and subsequently two other significant arms of the O'Connor family tree in Australia.

Besides Andrew, aged 38, who arrived in 1857, Ellen's death certificate from 1865 shows that John, aged 40, and Sarah, aged 35, were still alive. No record has been found of them coming to Australia nor can any further details of their existence in Ireland be found.

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## The Baptisms in Mountrath

We have copies of the microfiched records of the five Mountrath baptisms. We don't have the records of baptisms for:

- John
- Andrew
- Sarah

But we do have them for the following:

- Michael 22 Sep 1827 – living in Coote St in Mountrath (assumed Michael died early in life because there was another Michael baptised in 1831)

17/3 May Sat Moran 8:44 Trulson Rob. Brady Judy Collier Farn  
22/3 Miss Wick Comes Nelly Hayden Fintan Moran Mary Mayden Custer  
23/3 Mary F. James Bravano Judy Branton Miss Kennedy Mary Farnell Farnell  
27/3 Sat Wick Kene Custer Moran 8:44 Farnell

- Patrick 23 Nov 1828 – living at (Corn &) Rape Mill which was located on what is now the R430 at Woodbrook just out of Mountrath

17 B James Malack Munman Nelly Doyle Fr & Mary Deegan 2. Mrs. —  
18 B Sallie Conners Ellen Haydee Wink Mary Hayden Tap Mill —  
23 B Joseph W. Cooper James Deany W. and Sizier Dickinson 2. Mrs. —

- Michael 11 Dec 1831 – living at Rape Mill

9 Prof Ann Maria of Dennis Halloran Unimbrisque St. <sup>Margareta</sup> Martin McCall  
11 1/2 Micht Muell Currier Nelly Hayden Wink Dowling Ham & Dowling Ralph Mc  
11 1/2 Peter Pinto <sup>2</sup> Organ Horatio Hayden 2<sup>nd</sup> Wilson Mary Common

- Fintan 5 Jan 1834 – living at “Nockaninah” which would have been the townland Knockanina on the outskirts of Mountrath

2 10 Mary John Doran Lucy Delaney Ellen Dempsey Mary Moran Cole m  
2 5 Peter Mick Connor Ellen Kydon Mick Dooley Margaret Dooley Nachimow  
2 5 Wm Dan Kelly Mary Gibbons Wm Kelly & Bridget Prese. Ws st

- Ellen 9 Jun 1839 – living at what looks like Clonard which is another Townland just east of Knockanina and south of Mountrath

9 Catherine - Patrick Fitzpatrick = Ely Fitzpatrick = Anne Fitzpatrick - Infant Pulse 10<sup>th</sup> Cath.  
9 Ellen - Michael Connor = Nell Connor = Anne Fitzpatrick - Peter Fitzpatrick Connor  
9 Michael - Michael Brophy = Betty Done = Harry O'Brien - - - - - Done

Of these eight children, Andrew, Patrick, Michael, Fintan and Ellen came to Australia with their mother Ellen plus Andrew's wife Margaret Fynes and their son Michael who was a one year old when they arrived.

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## Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

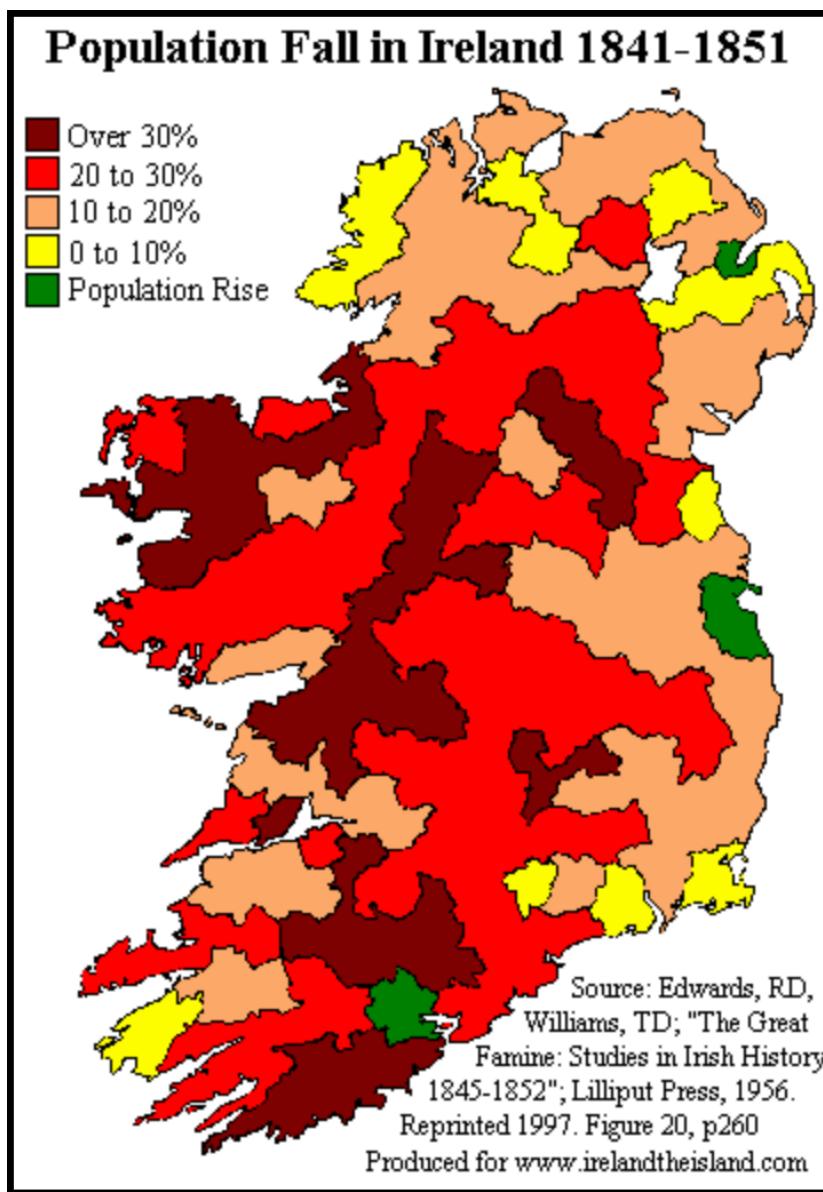
The 19<sup>th</sup> Century was a period of major agricultural hardship in Ireland with crop failures in 1800, between 1816 and 1819, and again in 1822 and the shortage of food was followed by disease. We assume that during the Great Famine in Ireland, from 1845 to 1850, or some years later, some or all of the surviving O'Connors, like so many Irish people at the time, may have emigrated to England to find jobs and to survive. Two factors support this assumption, namely the marriage of Andrew to Margaret Fynes in Sheffield in 1854 and the fact that so many of them came out to Australia in 1857 on the Medway which had sailed from Plymouth.

The lot of Catholics in Ireland during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was very difficult. It wasn't just the various famines and crop failures but also the brutal laws imposed by the British. Then there was the population explosion from 1780 through to 1830 when the number of people in Ireland more than doubled. Ireland didn't have the industrialisation to cope with this and it was the poorest labouring classes who saw the biggest increases. Because of the tradition of subdivision of Catholic landholdings between all male members of the family, everyone got some land to live on which, while increasingly small, allowed them to stay where they were. The growth in population became a timebomb, which with the smaller and less productive plots, meant that a poor harvest or crop failure would lead to a disaster. This became increasingly common through the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century culminating in the Great Famine.

## Across the Irish Sea

There are no shipping or immigration records in the UK for this movement of people from Ireland across the Irish Sea to England but compared with travelling to America which many did, this was a bargain, just a few pence for a deck passage across to places such as Liverpool. This cheap passage meant that you got to stand outside for the whole way, whatever the weather. Conditions were terrible and these deck passengers were afforded a lower priority than baggage and livestock. This had been a common passage for many decades, not just during the Great Famine.

However, the following map shows the dramatic fall in the population during the 1840's highlighting that Co Laois (then Queens County) and Mountrath were part of the most extremely affected areas during the Great Famine. We can note also that the populations of Dublin, Cork and Belfast all increased during this period because they had industrialised during the 1700's and early 1800's.



### What we don't know

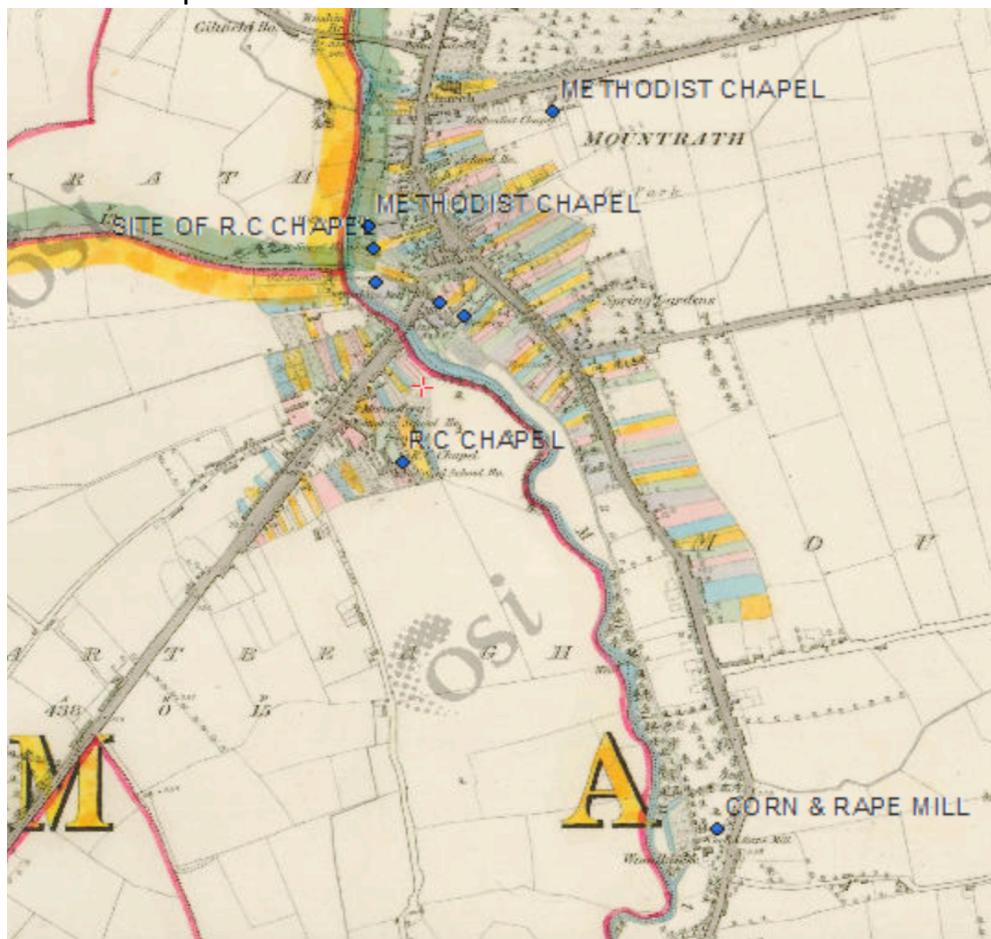
Despite extensive searching, we can find no record of a birth, marriage or death for Michael O'Connor in Ireland. Advice from a family historian in County Laois is that the likelihood of finding any relevant records prior to about 1830 is very remote. We also have been unable to locate any birth information for Ellen (nee Hayden).

### Maps and Photographs around Mountrath

The following pages provide both historic maps from approximately 1830 and current day photographs of some of the key family locations around Mountrath. The first historic map shows Coote Street running south-west from the main town. The Corn & Rape Mill is in the lower right hand corner but it had stopped by the mid 1800s and there are no traces of it surviving. These were two of the locations where the family lived when various children were baptised.

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## Historic Map



Coote Street today looking south west – Michael #1 Baptism 1827

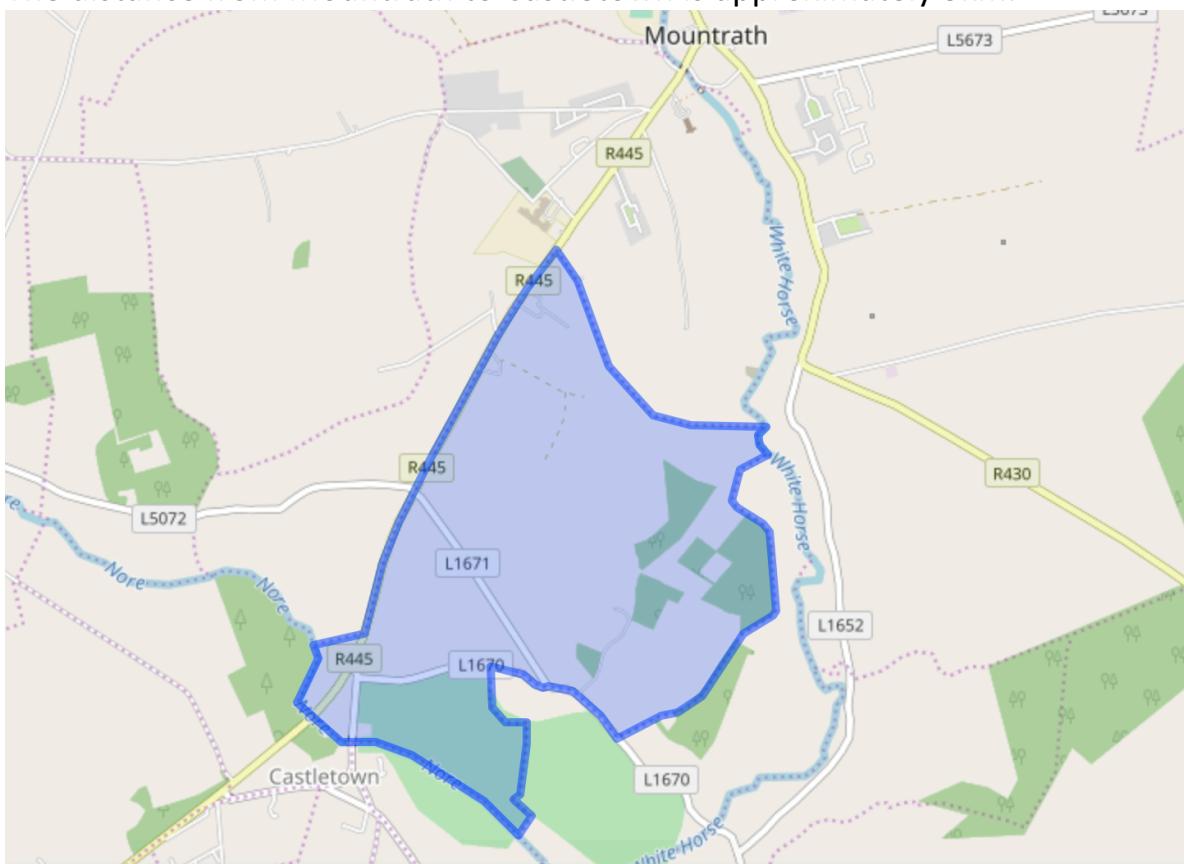


## MICHAEL O'CONNOR & ELLEN HAYDEN 1800 ONWARDS

Site of former Corn & Rape Mill, on R430 about 1km south of the main street in Mountrath  
Baptisms of Patrick 1828 and Michael #2 1831

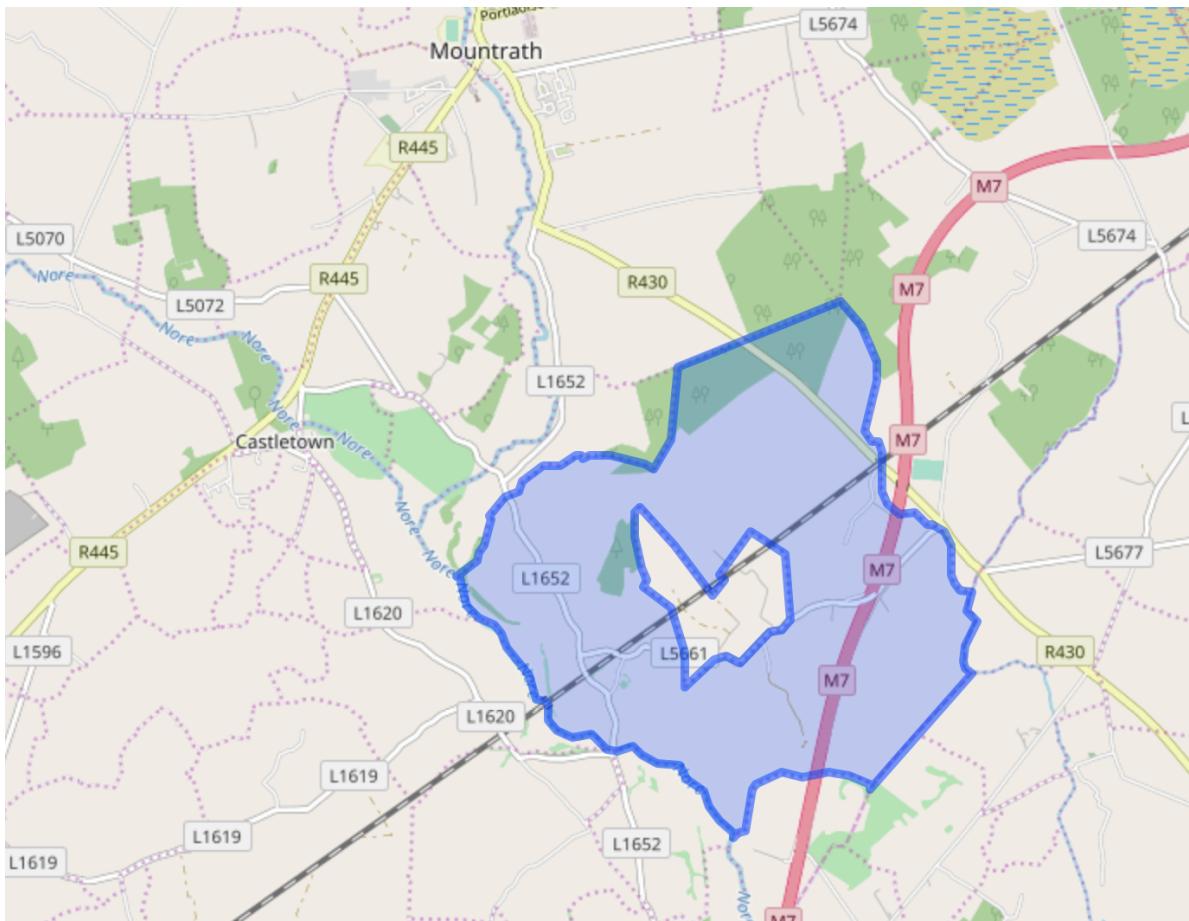


Location of Knockanina Townland (Historic Map) – Fintan's Baptism 1834  
The distance from Mountrath to Castletown is approximately 3km.



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Location of Clonard Townland (Historic Map) – Ellen's Baptism 1839



These Baptisms took place at St Fintan's Church in Mountrath.

