

‘EVER WELCOME LETTERS’ FROM AMERICA ANSWERED BY MOTHER IN KILDARE, 1876-1887

Mary Lee Dunn

Here are excerpts of 19th-century letters from Clane native Anne Farrell Walsh to her children, Catherine Walsh Dunn in Troy, New York, and Oliver Walsh in Greenwich, Connecticut. The letters were obtained from descendant Kathleen Dunn O’Connor in the early 1970s and transcribed by Mary Lee Dunn, whose narrative of the Dunn family appeared in the 2013 issue of Coiseanna.

Parish of Clane.			Diocese of		Kildare.						
DENOMINATIONS.	OCCUPIERS' NAMES	Quantity in each Holding.		QUALITY OF LAND.	Valued Rent per Acre.	Amount of Rent				Tithe per Acre.	Yearly Amount of Tithe.
		Ares.	R. P.			Sh.	d.	£	s.		
Clane	Ed ^d John O'Sullivan	22	3/13	Arable	3/8	36	2	11	1/10		
d ^o	d ^o	6	-	Arable	3/8	9	10	-	1/10	2	16
d ^o	d ^o	33	3/5	Arable	3/8	1	10	2	1/10		
d ^o	William Cornick	1	3/32	Arable	3/8	3	1	9	1/10	3	8
d ^o	James Farrell	1	3/4	Arable	3/8	2	16	2	1/10		
d ^o	d ^o	.	1/8	Arable	3/8	9	6	-	1/10		3
d ^o	Thos ^d Dennis Clarke	1	3/8	Arable	3/8	1	19	2	1/10		
d ^o	d ^o	1	3/4	Arable	3/8	1	12	5	1/10		4

Extract from the Tithe Assessment Book for the civil parish of Clane 1834 showing Anne’s father James Farrell occupying approximately two acres of arable land paying a rent of £2 16s 2d and a tithe of 3s 11d

The text below has been lightly punctuated and edited for readability. The modern name of the townland which Anne spells in various ways is Brockagh, Anne’s spellings have been left unchanged.

Brocus Feb. 8 1876

My Dear Son,

I received your pounds and ever welcome letter which gave me the greatest pleasure to hear you are well. Thank God, my dear

son. I return you my most sincere thanks for your present to me. All I can do is to pray for you, my dear son.

I fretted more than you could imagine when I heard through Kate's husband you were sick. How I thanked God when I heard you were better. How I wished and prayed for a letter from yourself and I hope, my dear son, you will never be so long without writing again to me.

My dear son, your former presents enabled your brother William to build a good house with peace and comfort in my old age. May God bless all my dear children. My dear son, I am in good health as also your brother William. Thank God he does not suffer with his head as he used to.

My dear son, your Aunt Betty had a letter from your Aunt Judy. She got very poor health. I wish you would write to her direct to Tobias Butler, Morias Bixley Co., St. Indianna, America. My dear son, I am sorry to let you know your uncle Michael is very poorly for the last three weeks. I do not know what to say to him. Betty is greatly worn attending him.

Please to let Kate know it is six months since her husband wrote last to me. They were all well. I am expecting one from her.

Your uncle Thomas and family are well. I was speaking to your cousin Thomas a few days ago. He told me they had a letter from James. He is well and in the same place. He wished to take out some of his friends. Thomas said he would go in the spring.

Your uncle Garret and family are well. His son James came home from America and went back again. He never wrote since he is in Chicago. Please give my kindest love to Laurence [Healy], brother and wives and sisters. I am happy to hear of their marriage and to hear they have got good companions.

May God bless them. I am sorry to hear of Anne and Mary not being better. The holy will of God must be in all things. What comes from God is for the best for us. Tell Laura Willey Farrell is still at Mr. Little's and doing well after his mother's death. He removed into Mr. Little's house. They [end]

*Your loving mother
Anne W.*

Brocas April 3, 1879

My Dear Son,

I received your kind, loving and ever welcome letter and your present safe. May God bless you, my dear son. It never was more wanting to your old mother. All I can do is to pray to God to preserve and keep you from all harm.

This winter has been so severe. We have frost, snow or rain every day since October last that everyone felt a hard time of it and I have been one of them.

May God bless you. I paid for what we had to get with your present the moment I got it but could not clear what I owed in the shop. How thankful I was to give my good boys a present. I felt so proud to say you sent it.

My dear son, I would have answered your letter but I waited as your Uncle Garret is near his end. May God grant him a happy hour of it. If he dies, I will write again. My dear son, my own health is very much broken of late but yet I am thankful to God for being so well.

Your Uncle Patrick is very poorly. Your brother Willy is well in health. Your Uncle Thomas and family are well. They heard from James lately. He is well.

Please give my love to Kate, husband and children. I had a letter from her some time ago. I was very sorry to hear of Mary Healy's death. May the Lord have mercy on her.

John and William Farrell are well and send their love to you all. Kitt Archbold's widow is married again to Ned Flood of Drimmahun. So far he is going on well. Kate Dunne of the Derry is married to James Cook from Healy's bridge. William Dowd is dead, also of Cooleragh. Mrs. Rose Hyland sends love to you and Kate and family. I go see Garret every day so it gives me trouble.

William and Patrick join with me in sending our love to you, Kate and family, to Laurence Healy, brother and sisters. I remain your loving Mother Anne Walsh.

Brocas April 7, 1880

*My Dear Kate,
I received your kind, loving letter and also the present from my granddaughter. May God bless her and her dear parents. Thank God to hear you are well as also Michael and the children. No greater blessing than health, dear Kate.*

I must let you know we applied for some of the seed giving out. William gets one barrel of oats and 200 of potatoes and they must be paid for in October. The oats are one pound and 18 shillings for the potatoes. Though there has been a great deal of money come from America, not a shilling to relieve the people in this part. Our debt was contracted before I got your timely present. May God bless you for it.

My dear Kate, I am very delicate. I went through so much that it is coming against me now.

Dear Kate, let Oliver know I would not be able to take such a journey no matter how I long to see my dear children. You know I am past 70 years and from the state of my health, I could not go. If William went from me, I might go into the workhouse. He keeps the house over my head. So I could not think of parting. The last of my children, some dead and you and Oliver far from me. William sends his love and thanks and hopes you will kindly give his love to Oliver and his thanks in thinking of taking him out. While I am not able to go, he is inclined to remain while I live.

Please to let Michael know I went to see his mother. She is well, as also all friends. They got his letter and also the paper. They send their love to all.

Dear Kate, I have not heard from Tobias Butler since your aunt died. That was before Michael's death. Dear Kate, I do not hear or see John Nugent. I went after Betty's death. He was cold and stiff. I spoke of Catherine's clothes. He said he would keep them for his next wife. I kept my distance since [part missing].

Dear Kate, I must let you know Kate Farrell is married since her father's death to James Scully of Mylarstown. She made her own choice. She asked none of her friends, not even her brother or his wife. We were not at it.

Dear Kate, I seldom see the only brother alive. He passed twice lately and never looked at the house. Judge from that. I asked nothing from him. Please to let Oliver and Laurence Healy know William Farrell is out of health and under the care of doctors for some time.

Mrs. Dunne of the Derry is well as also her family. Kate has a lovely young son. She is in the farm. Alicia is married to a man from Rathbride the name of Tierney. Anne is married up there also. Mrs. Connell has another young daughter. She has six

girls and two boys alive. Three dead. They send their love to you and Michael.

Dear Kate, I must ask a favour of you -- to send me your likeness and that of your family. You can get them taken in one card. Sit in the center and let them stand around. I saw one with 10 persons in one card.

Dear Kate, the winter has been most severe both in weather and want of provisions as crops failed. We had great sickness, heavy cold. Most of them proceeded from [part missing] a great number died everywhere 'round.

Please give my love to Michael and the children. If you send the likeness, I expect all of them. I am happy to hear of [her deceased daughter Rose Walsh Clinton's] children. Give my love and blessing to them. I hear Frank [Clinton, of Troy] is married again. Let me know who she is, please. Give my kindest love to Oliver, to Laurence Healy and sisters. I did expect a long letter from Michael. He forgot to write. I hope you will soon write again to me. Mrs. Hyland is very delicate all the winter. I showed your letter to her. She said you forget her. She is the only relation I make a friend of. She and Mary O'Connor send their love. I remain your loving mother

Anne Walsh

Please give my love to Mrs. Burn and family. I am happy to hear from her.

Brocas March 20, 1881

*My Dear Son,
I received your kind, loving and double welcome letter and present. May God in heaven bless and protect you my dear son. All I can and will do is to pray for you while God leaves me alive.*

Dear son, I am too old to go to America. I am very feeble and should be a burden. Yet my heart inclines me to lie in death with my parents [James and Catherine Farrell] in Downing.

My dear son, I am going to sow the gardens which belonged to Michael and Patrick, about two acres in all. I will get seed oats and potatoes and pay for horses to get it down. What will remain of your present, I will try to live on until the harvest comes.

I will take this plan of seeing what William will do. I did not let him know I got your letter or present.

I must let you know the land league is keeping on. Still there is a large meeting in Kildare today. The people are refusing to pay their rent without reduction. The landlords refuse to yield. It is expected there will be trouble after the March rent is looked for.

Mr. Parnell is still in Parliament. He spends much of his time in France. He banked about 1,800 thousand pounds in Paris. The Land League money. The police are trying to stop the land meetings when they are advertised.

My dear son, I had a letter from Kate. I answered it. Both letters passed each other, one going and yours coming. Thank God they are well. Please give my kindest love to them when you see or write to them. Let me know do you ever see Rose's children. Kate did not speak of them in her last letter. Your uncle Thomas and family are well and send their love. William Farrell is well and sends his love to you and Laurence Healy and friends.

*I remain your loving Mother
Anne Walsh*

Broke March 13, 1883

Dear Son Oliver,

I received your kind and welcome letter on the 5th which found myself and your brother William in good health and left us happy to learn from your letter you are enjoying such good health yourself and getting along so good. Also I am glad Richard Healy and Laurence, Mary and Sarah is in good health but I am very sorry for poor Mary not [part missing]

Dear son, I am very thankful to you for the present you sent me. It never was worse wanting in concenance [sic] of the bad times. Ireland never was so bad as it is at present. Dear son, I would answer your letter sooner only I was waiting for the high wind we expected. It was to be on Sunday night. It didn't, so I waited no longer. We had very high wind the beginning of winter that blew down the trees and the houses.

I had a letter from your sister Kate the same week as yours. Michael Dunne and Kate and all the family is in good health. I am glad of that.

Dear son, I met with great trouble with Law with Mrs. Wheeler about my place. I owed three years' rent. We came on a settlement. I have to make up one year's rent in four months' time to pay it to Mrs. Wheeler. If not, I would be put out.

Some of my bad neighbors thought to take it over my head. I fought my battle well to keep it if I can pay the year's rent and [it] will be very heavy on me. The times are very bad. Dear son, I expect when I pay this year's five pounds, I will have it at the old rent, that is 55 shillings a year.

The arear court is to settle it at that and a lease for 15 years. I am to be in court a land leaguer the last day of this month. It is to be decided there. I demand an answer from you when you

*get this letter from me. This winter is the hardest I ever went through. I bring my letter to a close. I send my love to you.
Your affectionate mother Anne Walsh*

Ireland July 22, 1883

My dear son,

I received your ever welcome letter in due time, also the cheque which I was very glad to receive and for which I thank you most sincerely and fervently pray that God may bestow on you his choicest blessings both in this life and the one to come.

I am most happy to hear that you are in good health and hope you may continue so. As for myself, I got very good health and Willy is in good health too. I bought him some clothes with the money you sent me. I cannot express my thanks to you for your gratitude to me for I am now in a position to meet my landlady, Miss Wheeler, who is expected down on next week and pay my rent. I have my place now for two pounds, 15 shillings a year for 15 years and I expect to go on pretty well now with the help of God.

I also intend to buy a pig with the remaining money. I suppose that you never heard that your cousin Kate Farrell is in America. She got married about three years ago, to a son of Andy Scully's of Mylerstown and they had several quarrels among them and could not agree so she sold her place to her brother Joe and went to her sister Mary in America. Tom is living with Joe now and Scully is working with a farmer.

Thomas Farrell from Killeigh is also gone to America. He has got safe to his brother James in Minnesota. I did not write to Kate yet but I soon will. Rosanna Farrell is dead nearly 12 months. I got Miss Connor to write you those few lines. She lives with her aunt Mrs. Hyland of Hodgestown and she does

be very glad to hear from you. I do often go to see them. I will now close with kindest love to you in which Willy joins sincerely praying for you and wishing you every happiness I remain My Dear Oliver

Your loving mother Anne Walsh

Write soon and let me know how you are.

Brokea May 18, 1885

My dear son,

I received your ever welcome letter and was very glad to hear that you were in good health. I am sincerely thankful to you for the two pounds you sent me and I hope God will reward you and increase it back to you tenfold.

I must now tell you that it was very welcome to me. I never wanted it worse for I had a letter from my landlord for the rent a few days before I got your letter and I would have been evicted only you sent me the money. God bless you.

These times are very trying in Ireland. It is very hard to get on at all. There is no work for anyone & the people are not united with each other, as they used to be. I used to get goods on my word some time ago, but the shopkeepers won't do that now, especially when they see no capital.

I am in a poor bad way & only for you I would not be able to keep any place at all now that the times are got so bad. But I trust in your kindness that you will soon send me more help again. It goes very hard on me to ask it from you but indeed I cannot help it. I hope you will not think bad of me in asking you.

I never get a letter from Kate now. I got pretty good health still and Willie is very well in health and is sowing the little crop. I

do often fret when I think how lonely and desolate I am. I hope you will excuse me for intruding on your kindness & I remain as ever your loving mother & brother
Anne & William Walsh

Broka Jan. 25, 1886

My Dear Son,

I received your very kind and ever welcome letter and was very glad to hear from you and also to hear that you were married. All I can say is to wish you and your wife every joy and happiness and peace and comfort through life. I am exceedingly thankful for the kind present you sent me. It will be of great service to me now, as the times are very bad in Ireland, no prices for anything, nor no work for anyone scarcely. This country is in a very poor state at present.

I am happy to tell you I get pretty fair health now and Willie is very well in health too. Thomas Farrell is after coming home from America, but is going to go back again. Mike (the youngest son of Tommy) is in America too. Patrick McCann of Naas was buried last week and died rather suddenly. You know he was a stepson of Marianne Farrell. Mr. Ireland is dead and buried too. Johnny Farrell and Willy is very well. I had a letter from Annie Dunne (my little granddaughter) and she wrote me a very kind letter and sent me a pound for which I was very thankful.

Kitty Sherry was evicted from her farm some time ago, but was let back again and is going to be evicted again for non payment of rent. Her brother Mike is very bad. He was burned in the fire (when in that sickness which he suffers so much from, epilepsy). There are a great many labourers' cottages going to be built for the labourers.

I delayed this letter thinking I could get you the shamrock but there is not a bit of it to be seen yet, as there is a foot of snow out now, and heavy frost along with it. But I will write to you before St. Patrick's Day and send it to you, please God.

Laurence Malone of Caragh died yesterday morning very sudden. Tom McGuire is dead and Sam Thompson of the hill and old Charley is dead also. Elias Thompson is married to his first cousin (Miss Russell) and is living at the Castle. Simon Hickey thought to become landlord in Blackwood, but he was cast in law, and evicted himself, but was let back again and has now to pay a good rent himself.

I will now close with kind love and best wishes to you and Mrs. Walsh and once more let me wish you both many happy days in health and prosperity.

With sincere thanks to you and hoping God may reward you, I remain Your loving Mother Anne Walshe

Brockes May 12th/1886

Dear son and daughter

I received your kind and welcome letter on yesterday. It found me and your brother Willy in good health, thank God. I am over glad to hear you and wife are enjoying such good health and doing so well. I hope you will always do well. I give you my blessing a thousand times and God may bless you for your kindness to me.

Dear Oliver, I am after a great bout of sickness. I was very near dying. Your Uncle Tommy Farrell is getting bad health. Ellen Farrell is married to a school master.

Dear Oliver, you and wife must excuse me for not sending you the shamrock. The snow and frost had it covered. Not one ever

wore it on Patrick's day in Ireland. We had heavy frost and snow this spring. I never hear from Kate this long time. I hope she and her family is well.

Dear son, the check you sent me Larry Connell made it all right. God bless you for your goodness and kindness to me. I expect an answer from you when you get this. I hope you will have this letter before you will go to the country.

Dear Oliver, tell Kate to write to me. My little granddaughter promised to write to me constantly. Michael and George Dunne's Mother [Mary Connelly Dunn, widow of Laurence Dunn, of Derrymullen] is dead. I will say no more at present.

Hoping soon to hear from you again. My love to you and wife. Your Affectionate Mother AW

Broka 22nd March 87

My Dear Son

I received your very kind and welcome letter & also the two pounds you kindly sent me for which I return you my most sincere and heartfelt thanks & also to your kind & dear wife. I was very glad to hear of another little granddaughter in our family & I trust in God she may be spared to be and wear her name well & like her ancestors. I must now wish you and Mrs. Walsh much joy on the occasion of the birth of Mary Anne.

I am very sorry to tell you that myself and Willie has suffered very much from sickness since I heard from you before. We were lying for ten weeks with scarletina & was very bad. It knocked us about greatly & left us very backward in every way. I am pretty strong again & Willie is quite recovered. I paid my half year's rent with the money you sent me. We had a very severe winter here, frost & snow all the year round and very bad crops. The agitation is going on still. Willie and Johnny Farrell are well. Tommy's sons and daughters are well. Ellen

is after getting married to the schoolmaster of Robertstown. He is a policeman's son and living in Kilmeague. Tommy McCann and Mike Sherry are at law about the ground. Larry Connell is after burying his second daughter of decline. Mr. Wilson and Matty Doran were at law about the bog & Mr. Wilson cast him. Fr. Keller is after being sent to gaol for intimidation. There are a great many people evicted. I am very sorry to hear of poor Mary Healy not getting better.

*I must now close with kind love to you and Mrs. Walsh and baby. Sincerely wishing you every happiness and many thanks from your loving Mother Anne Walsh.
I shall be very glad to see Baby's picture. Love from Willie.*



These photographs showing the simple stone marking Anne's grave in St Mary's Cemetery, Troy, New York State were taken by Ed Dyer. Danny Catlin, St Mary's caretaker is in the second photograph. Other Irish surnames are evident on the neighbouring gravestones.

In the late 1880s, Anne Walsh and her son William emigrated to America. They are buried in St. Mary's Cemetery in Troy. A simple marker flat in the ground bears Anne's name. It is across a narrow roadway from son-in-law Michael Dunn's lot, which is marked only with cornerstones that say "D". His birth family lived in Derrymullen and Mylerstown, near Robertstown, in Kildare.