

Don't Overlook Unmarried Female Ancestors: Who was Bridget M Keenan?

How three unmarried women opened generations of family relationships.

By Jean Morrissey Sanner

The temptation to overlook our unmarried aunts and uncles is powerful. After all, they aren't direct ancestors and usually didn't have children. I have several dearly loved but unmarried family members of my own, and would be sad to think that my descendants might ignore them for their lack of genealogical value. But affection isn't the only reason for investigating our single ancestors. My own experience here stands as an example of why you should never ignore these incomparable ancestors.

Dedication:

*To Bertha, Nannie and Bridget M
Maiden Aunts - Never Forgotten*

Origins

In Summer 2016, I received two boxes of family artifacts by my father's unmarried sister, Bertha Morrissey. They arrived from my first cousin, Linda Wren Palmer. She inherited the information from her mother, Helen Morrissey Wren, who took possession of them after the death of her sister, my Aunt "Berbs." Bertha was the Morrissey family historian. She gathered a lot of information from her paternal aunt, Anna Elizabeth (Nannie) Morrissey (also unmarried.) Much of her work is the foundation for my own research on the Morrissey family in Richmond, VA and Ireland.¹

Background

Within the two boxes of research were quite a few references to the Keenan surname from the area in and around the District of Columbia. These quickly drew my attention because I hoped they would provide clues to the Morrissey family's connection in Washington, D.C. I strongly suspected that my great grandparents, James Morrissey and Elizabeth Keenan had family or friends in the D.C. area based on two facts. James and Elizabeth briefly lived in D.C. during the U.S. Civil War.² And, three of their children married spouses from the NOVA/DC/Baltimore area.³

I knew very little about the life of Elizabeth Keenan before she married James Morrissey. Aunt Berbs indicated on family pedigree charts that she was born in County Armagh to James Keenan and Bridget Barry who married about 1826.⁴ But, I had no documentation for any of this, let alone her siblings or her early life in Ireland or the U.S. The first documentation I had for her was her marriage to James Morrissey in St Louis, Missouri in 1856.⁵

¹ Bertha Morrissey, Genealogy Research Collection, to Helen Morrissey Wren, 2001. To Linda Wren Palmer, March 2016. To Jean Morrissey Sanner, July 2016. Jean Morrissey Sanner, [private address], Chesterfield County, Virginia.

² U.S. IRS Tax Assessment Lists, 1862-1918, Division 6, District of Columbia, 23 Jun 1863, Jas Morrissey and 25 May 1864, line 38, Jas Morrissey; images, *Ancestry.com*, (www.ancestry.com : accessed 13 Oct 2016), citing Records of the Internal Revenue Service, Group 58, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

³ Marriage Record, John P Morrissey to Minnie Sigafoose (of Frederick County, VA), Catherine Morrissey to Burton F Cornwell (resident of Washington, D.C.), and Francis Morrissey to Mary Milholland of (Baltimore, MD)

⁴ Certificate of Death, Commonwealth of Virginia, Anna Elizabeth Morrissey, 25 Mar 1927, Registration District No 6036, Record No 664; *Ancestry.com* (www.ancestry.com : accessed 13 Oct 2016) citing Virginia, Deaths, 1912-2014, Virginia Department of Health, Richmond, Virginia.

⁵ Marriage Registry, Church of the Immaculate Conception, corner of 8th and Chesnut Sts, St Louis, MO, 2 Jun 1856, James Morrissey and Elizabeth Keenan, witnessed by James Kelly and Mary Gaffney, filed and recorded by County of St Louis, Missouri, 8 Jan 1857.

Newly Indexed Irish Catholic Parish Records and the James Keenan Family Bible record

Included in Bertha's records was first a poor photocopy of what appears to be a "Births" page from a family bible record. There are no notes to its origin or author. It lists the children of James Keenan.⁶ Included are a reference to his marriage without a location or spouse listed. "Jas Keenan was married the 28th of July 1826."⁷ Then this is a list of children:

John, b. 18 Jul 1827
 Mary, b. 15 Feb 1829
 Catherine, b. 19 Feb 1831
 Michael, b. 14 Sep 1832
 Solomon, b. 26 Jan 1835
 Elizabeth, b. 5 Sep 1836
 Bridget, b. 4 Apr 1839
 James, b. 13 Sep 1841
 Solomon, b. 9 Jan 1845

A baptism record for Elizabeth Keenan from Irish Catholic Parrish records confirm her parents' names, and the county from her daughter Anna Elizabeth (Nannie) Morrissey's death certificate.⁸ This documentation affirms that Elizabeth's parents were James Keenan and Bridget Barry, and that she was baptized in Lower Killeavy, County Armagh on 6 Sep 1836.⁹ Subsequent searches filtered for James and Bridget in Lower Killeavy, revealed 4 other children baptized from 1835 through 1845:

Solomon, bap. 7 Feb 1835
 Bridget, bap. 5 Apr 1839
 James, bap. 14 Sep 1841
 Solomon, bap. 10 Jan 1845¹⁰

A comparison of Bible record for James Keenan's children and the baptism records found in Lower Killeavy for the youngest 5 children are remarkably accurate. Four events were only a day apart, and the longest was only 12 days.

Comparing Notes from Mount Olivet Cemetery and 3 Death Records

Next, there are notes from Bertha's visit to Mount Olivet Cemetery in Washington, D.C. on 31 Dec 1975.¹¹ She listed those buried in a family plot that included: Bridget M Keenan (1868-1921), Michael

⁶ There are multiple James Keenans and Bridget Keenans within. I've used a middle initial to distinguish when possible or accompanied a name with a birthdate for clarification.

⁷ Family Group Sheet, James Keenan, undated, uncited, photocopy from Bertha Morrissey Collection, privately held by Jean Morrissey Sanner, Chesterfield County, Virginia, 16 Oct 2016. This is a handwritten page of birth of James Keenan's children. This is very similar to pages from James Morrissey's Family Bible in preprinted pages and handwriting, The Holy Bible, Revised with Annotations by the Right Rev. R. Challoner, D.D., Thomas Kelly Publishing, New York, 1878.

⁸ Certificate of Death, Commonwealth of Virginia, District 6036, Register 664, Anna Elizabeth Morrissey, 25 Mar 1927, mother's birthplace, County Armagh, Ireland; *Ancestry.com* (www.ancestry.com : accessed 16 Oct 2016), Virginia Death Records, 1912-2014, Virginia Department of Health, Richmond, Virginia.

⁹ Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1655-1915, baptisms, Elizabeth Keenan, 6 Sep 1836, Lower Killeavy, County Armagh; *Ancestry.com*, (www.ancestry.com : accessed 16 Oct 2016), Catholic Parish Registers, National Library of Ireland, Ireland.

¹⁰ Ireland, Catholic Parish Registers, 1655-1915, baptisms, children of James Keenan and Bridget Barry, 1835-1845, Lower Killeavy, County Armagh; *Ancestry.com* (www.ancestry.com : accessed 16 Oct 2016), Catholic Parish Registers, National Library of Ireland, Ireland.

¹¹ Bertha Morrissey, "Notes on Mount Olivet Cemetery, Washington, D.C., Dec 31st, 1975," privately held by the author, Chesterfield County, Virginia, 16 Oct 2016.

Keenan (1832-1899) and James F Keenan (1861-1905). Also included were Thomas O'Neill (1840-1870), Ellen O'Neill "mother of James F Keenan" (1840-1866) and Nora O'Neill (1849-1874).

Bertha obtained death certificates for Bridget M¹², James F¹³ and Michael Keenan.¹⁴

Name	Michael	James F	Bridget M
DOD	1 Feb 1899	26 Jan 1905	1 May 1921
Birth dates	67 yrs	44 yrs, 6 months	61 yrs
POB	Ireland	"Balto, Md"	Va
Parents' POB	Ireland	Ireland	Ireland
Cemetery	Mount Olivet	Mount Olivet	Mount Olivet
Informant	None listed	None listed	None listed
Residence	None listed	None listed	1743 Park Rd
Occupation	Farmer	Wholesale liquor sales	"None"
Marital status	Widower	Single	Single

The birth/death years for Michael, James F and Bridget M are consistent with their death certificates as well as their burial locations in Mount Olivet. The birth year for Michael Keenan is the same on the tombstone. But it also is the same as James Keenan's family bible record. So, neither James F and Bridget M, based on their estimated birthdates and birthplaces qualify as children of James Keenan. But, Michael Keenan does.

Bridget M Keenan's Family

We first find Bridget M alone and living as a boarder in DC in the 1920 Census at the same address listed on her death certificate.¹⁵ In a 1910 City Directory, she is at the same address.¹⁶ But in 1900 she is living with her "cousin," James F Keenan.¹⁷ Both are single and birth information is consistent with their death certificates. Bridget M and James F are not married, or even siblings, but cousins. In fact, the two are first found living with John and Mary Fegan.¹⁸ In 1870, Bridget is with the Fegans as well, James F is not.¹⁹ Bridget M consistently states that she was born in Virginia about 1860. I found a Bridget Keenan (b. 1859, Virginia) living with a Michael (b. 1829, Ireland) and Catherine (b. 1829, Ireland) Keenan living near Covington, in Alleghany County, Virginia.²⁰

¹² Certificate of Death, District of Columbia, Bridget M Keenan, Record No. 265171, 1 May 1921, photocopied reproduction certified by John H Crandall, Chief of Vital Records Division, 9 May 1975.

¹³ Certificate of Death, District of Columbia, James F Keenan, Record No. 159136, 26 Jan 1905, photocopied reproduction certified by John H Crandall, Chief of Vital Records Division, 9 May 1975.

¹⁴ Certificate of Death, District of Columbia, Michael Keenan, Record No. 123367, 1 Feb 1899, photocopied reproduction certified by John H Crandall, Chief of Vital Records Division, 9 May 1975.

¹⁵ 1920 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., population schedule, enumeration district 288, Sheet 14 A (printed), dwelling 211, line 32, B. M. Keenan; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), National Archives and Records Administration, microfilm publication T625, roll 212.

¹⁶ "U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995," Washington D.C., 1910, Bridget M Keenan, p 794, 1743 Park Rd, NW; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016)

¹⁷ 1900 US Census, Washington, D.C., population schedule, enumeration district 95, sheet 10, dwelling 183, James F Keenan; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016), NARA, roll T623.

¹⁸ 1880 US Census, Washington, D.C., population schedule, Washington, D.C. Post Office, p 220; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA, microfilm publication M593, roll 126.

¹⁹ 1870 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., population schedule, 7th Ward, page 220, dwelling 1601, Jno Fagan; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA, microfilm publication M593.

²⁰ 1860 Census, Allegheny county, Virginia, population schedule, Covington Post Office, page 99, dwelling 651, Michael Keenan; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA, microfilm publication M653, roll 1332.

I found a death announcement for Michael Keenan.²¹

KEENAN. On Wednesday, February 1, 1899, at 1:30 a.m., MICHAEL KEENAN, in the sixty-seventh year of his age. Funeral from residence of his nephew, James F. Keenan, 925 Virginia avenue southwest, Friday, February 3, at 8:30 a.m., thence to St. Dominic's Church. Interment private. 2*

Michael Keenan's funeral at the home of his nephew, James F Keenan. But we know that they are not father/son. Since Bridget was living with James F in 1900, this strengthens the case that Bridget is Michael's daughter. And that James F would act as host for his beloved cousin's father's death.

A search for Bridget M in newspapers reveals a social visit to her aunt, Mrs. James Morrissey (aka Elizabeth Keenan) in a Richmond, Virginia newspaper.²² A single Bridget M must be the daughter of Elizabeth (Keenan) Morrissey's brothers.

Miss Bridget M. Keenan, of Washington, is visiting her aunt, Mrs. James Morrissey, No. 616 north Fourth street.

The Will of Bridget M Keenan

Bridget M Keenan's will (signed 29 Mar 1911 and filed 4 May 1921) names her heirs as her "cousins," Catherine Reagan, Elizabeth Reding, James Filgate, Annie Ryan, John P Morrissey, Margaret R Peck, Frank Morrissey, Annie Morrissey, Leo Morrissey and Ambrose Morrissey.²³ And designates the bequest to "their and each of their heirs and assigns forever, share and share alike." So the people from the distribution list have a relationship – cousins, like James F Keenan.

So, a new theory:

Michael Keenan (14 Sep 1842, Ireland – 1 Feb 1899, D.C.)

Son of James Keenan and Bridget Barry.

Married Catherine _____ (~1833, Ireland – after 1850 prob Allegheny County, Virginia.)

One child, Bridget M Keenan (1860, Alleghany County, VA – 1 May 1921, D.C.), unmarried

James F Keenan's Family

In 1870, James is living with Thomas and Nora O'Neill in D.C.²⁴ The marriage month information (July) is given in column 14 which asks, "If married within the year, state month." Thomas and Nora (Madigan) were married after James F's birth (concurring with the census data.)²⁵ A search in both of their families don't reveal any Ellen's of any kind - O'Neills or Keenans. But, an Ellen Keenan married Thomas O'Neill in

²¹ "Died," The Evening Star newspaper, Washington, D.C., 1 Feb 1899, p 5, col 7; images *Newspapers.com*, (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

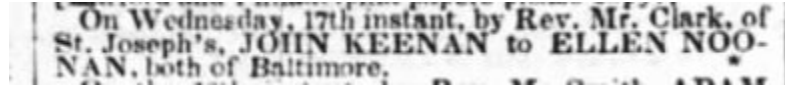
²² "Personals and Briefs," Richmond Dispatch newspaper, Richmond, Virginia, 28 Aug 1887, p 8, col 1; images *Newspapers.com*, (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

²³ District and Probate Courts, Washington, D.C., 1921, Folder 695, Bridget M Keenan; images *Ancestry.com*, (<http://ancestry.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016), Probate Records (District of Columbia), 1801-1930.

²⁴ 1870 U.S. Census, Baltimore, Maryland, population schedule, 4th Ward, page 336, dwelling 2405, Thomas O'Neil; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA, microfilm publication M593, roll 124.

²⁵ District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950, Thomas Oneil and Norah Madigan, 9 Jul 1869; index at FamilySearch.org, (<http://familysearch.org> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

Baltimore in 1864 (after James F's birth.)²⁶ Ellen's tombstone states that she passed in 1866. If this Ellen Keenan O'Neill was James F's mother (according to the tombstone in Mt Olivet), then her maiden name probably wouldn't be Keenan. There is a John Keenan (b. 1827, Ireland) and Ellen Keenan (b. 1829, England) Keenan living in Baltimore in 1860 without any children.²⁷ A newspaper search revealed a marriage in 1858 between a John Keenan in Ellen Noonan in Baltimore.²⁸



The dates and locations for this John Keenan make him a candidate for James Keenan and Bridget Barry's oldest son, John. It's likely that John Keenan and Ellen Noonan were James F Keenan's parents, making him Bridget M's first cousin. After John's passing, Ellen married a second time to Thomas O'Neill. After Ellen's death, Thomas then married Nora Madigan.

Next was the probate announcement²⁹ and death announcement for James F Keenan.³⁰ Neither offers detail into James F's parents, but it confirms his very close relationship with Bridget M as his sole beneficiary.



A first theory about James F Keenan's family:

²⁶ District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950, Thomas O'Neil and Ellen Keenan, 2 Jun 1865; index at FamilySearch.org, (<http://familysearch.org> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

²⁷ 1860 US Census, Baltimore, Maryland, population schedule, 16th Ward, Baltimore City Post Office, p 180, dwelling 1199, line 13, John Keenan; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 464. Note: If these are James F Keenan's parents, they are enumerated on 2 Jul 1860, less than 1 month before James F's birthday on 26 Jul 1860.

²⁸ "Married," *The Baltimore Sun*, 24 Sep 1856, page 2, column 2, John Keenan and Ellen Noonan, 17 Sep 1856; images *Newspapers.com*, (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

²⁹ "Wills Filed for Probate," *The Washington Post*, 1 Feb 1905, p 5, col 6; images *Newspapers.com*, (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

³⁰ "Well-known Business Man Expires Suddenly of Paralysis," *The Washington Post*, 27 Jan 1905, p 10, col 6; images *Newspapers.com*, (<https://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

John Keenan, (8 July 1827, County Armagh, Ireland – after 1860, Maryland)**Oldest son of James Keenan and Bridget Barry****Married Ellen Noonan (1840 – 1866, Maryland)****One son: James F. Keenan (1860, Baltimore, Maryland – 1905, D.C.)****Ellen Noonan m2. Thomas O'Neill about 1865.****Thomas O'Neill (1840-1870) m2. Nora Madigan (1849-1872) in 1869.****Children of Bridget Keenan (b. 1839)**

Listed on Bridget M Keenan's will distribution list were many familiar names, whom I recognized as children of James Morrissey and Elizabeth Keenan: John P Morrissey, Margaret (Morrissey) Peck, Francis Morrissey, Annie Morrissey, Leo Morrissey and Ambrose Morrissey (my paternal grandfather.) Also there were names I did not recognize, including: James Filgate, Annie Ryan, Catherine Reagan, and Elizabeth Reding.

James Filgate

James F Filgate appears in the 1920 Census living in DC.³¹ This confirms he was alive at the time Bridget M writes her will. He is living with a Nellie E, his wife and 2 children. There is a memorial page on FindaGrave.com in Mount Olivet Cemetery in D.C. with no photograph of his grave marker. Following his census records, I find that he was the son of Thomas Filgate and Bridget Keenan, as he was born in 1870.³² Thomas Filgate and Bridget Kelley were married in D.C. on 26 Apr 1865.³³

Annie (Filgate) Sweeney Ryan

What about Annie Ryan, heir to Bridget M Keenan? Born Margaret Ann, she is the daughter of Bridget Keenan and Thomas Filgate (and full sibling to James F Filgate). She was born about 1866 in Virginia.³⁴ She first married abt 1890, John Sweeney.³⁵ After his death in 1905, she married a second time to Thomas F Ryan.³⁶ So Annie Filgate goes by "Annie Ryan" at the time Bridget M creates her will.

Mary, Kate and Eliza

But in the 1870 Census, Thomas (a baker by trade) and Bridget are living in Richmond (the same city as James Morrissey and Elizabeth Keenan) with 5 children all with the surname, Filgate: Mary-12, Katy- 11, and Eliza-10, all born in DC; along with Anna-4 and John- 2 born in Virginia. Mary, Katy and Eliza (surname Filgate) appear to have been born before Thomas and Bridget were married. Whose children

³¹ 1920 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., enumeration district 1, sheet no 9A, dwelling 105, James F Filgate; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 205.

³² 1880 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., population schedules, enumeration district 83, page 4, dwelling 33, Thomas Filgate; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA microfilm publication T9.

³³ "District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950, database, *FamilySearch*, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XL82-FVC> : accessed 18 Oct 2016), Thomas Filgate and Bridget Kelly, 26 Apr 1865.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ District of Columbia, Selected Births and Christenings, 1830-1955, Female Sweeney, 17 Oct 1893, parents John James Sweeney and Annie Filgate; *FamilySearch*, (www.FamilySearch.org : accessed 18 Oct 2016). Index based upon data collected by the Genealogical Society of Utah, Salt Lake City.

³⁶ District of Columbia, Select Marriages, 1830-1921, 17 May 1906, Margaret A Sweeney and Thomas F Ryan; *Ancestry.com*, (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016).

were they? In the 1860 Census, Thomas Filgate is a baker, living with a German family who are bakers by trade.³⁷ There are no Mary, Katy or Eliza Filgates in the 1860 Census.³⁸

Continuing to search for the three girls in 1860, I searched for a Bridget with three daughters named, Mary, Katy and Eliza. I found a Bridget Kelley living with a Mary and Catherine of the right ages and birthplaces. The head of the family is a James Kelly. Also in the household (with no relationship given) is a Bridget Keenan who was born in 1800 in Ireland. A marriage of James Kelly and Bridget "Kanan" was in D.C. on 28 Jan 1856.³⁹

But what happened to James Kelly? A notice from the Orphan's Court on 14 Oct 1864 gives further insight.⁴⁰ Probate records in the Orphan's Court means James Kelly had children.

ORPHANS' COURT, SEPTEMBER 24th, 1864.—
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, COUNTY OF WASHINGTON. *to wit:* In the case of Bridget Kelly, Administratrix of James Kelly, deceased, the Administratrix aforesaid has, with the approbation of the Orphans' Court of Washington County aforesaid, appointed **SATURDAY**, the 15th day of October next, for the final settlement and distribution of the personal estate of said deceased, and of the assets in hand, as far as the same have been collected and turned into money; when and where all the creditors and heirs of said deceased are notified to attend, (at the Orphans' Court of Washington County aforesaid,) with their claims properly vouched, or they may otherwise by law be excluded from all benefit in said deceased's estate: provided a copy of this order be published once a week for three weeks in the Evening Star, previous to the said 15th day of October, 1864.
 Test:
 sep 26-1aw3w* **Z. C. ROBBINS,**
 Register of Wills.

So we have a James Kelly, who dies before Oct 1864 in Washington, D.C., leaving a least one child. The timeline is shaping up further because Bridget Kelly doesn't marry Thomas Filgate until Apr 1865. This is approximately 6 months after her first husband's death, an appropriate time of mourning.

But, we need further evidence. What happened to the 3 girls Mary, Katy and Eliza. Mary appears with Bridget in 1860 and 1870 and then is lost. Katy (Catherine) appears with Bridget and Thomas in 1880 in DC.⁴¹ And, there is a married record for a Catherine B Kelley who marries a William Reagan on 25 Feb 1884 in D.C.⁴²

³⁷ 1860 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., population schedules, 7th Ward, Washington Post Office, p 64, dwelling 437, line 1, Thomas Filgate; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA microfilm publication M653, roll 104.

³⁸ 1860 U.S. Census, population schedule, negative findings for Mary, Catherine (Kate) or Eliza (Elizabeth) Filgate; images, *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016)

³⁹ "District of Columbia Marriages, 1811-1950, database, *FamilySearch*, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XLZD-H3B> : accessed 18 Oct 2016), James Kelly and Bridget Kanan, 28 Jan 1856.

⁴⁰ "Orphans Court," *The Evening Star* newspaper, Washington, D.C., 14 Oct 1864, p 4, col 3; images *Newspapers.com*, (<http://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

⁴¹ 1880 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., population schedule, enumeration district 83, p 4, dwelling 33, Thomas Filgate family; images *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA microfilm publication T9, roll 124.

⁴² District of Columbia Marriages, 1830-1921, 25 Feb 1884, Catherine B Kelley and William Reagan; images *Ancestry.com*, (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

Elizabeth Filgate also appears with Bridget and Thomas in 1880 in DC. And, a Sarah E. Kelly marries a John Reding in D.C. on 4 Mar 1883.⁴³ In subsequent census records, John Redding appears with his wife "Lizzie Redding." Sarah Kelly apparently went by her middle name, Elizabeth.

Both Catherine Reagan and Sarah Elizabeth Redding are alive for the 1920 Census, meaning they would have been alive when Bridget M wrote her will. But to cap it off, in the 1910 Census, Catherine Reagan, a widow, is the head of house with Lizzie and John Reding in the same household.⁴⁴

Family of unknown heirs from Bridget M Keenan's Distribution List – Theory

Bridget Keenan, (4 Apr 1839. Lower Killeavy, County Armagh, Ireland – 12 Nov 1888, D.C.)

Daughter of James Keenan and Bridget Barry.

M1. James Kelley (~1825, Ireland – 1866, D.C.) 3 kids:

1. **Mary (~1858, D.C. - ?)**
2. **Catherine (~1859, D.C. – after 1930) M. William Reagan (1857-1904)**
3. **Sarah Elizabeth (24 Dec 1862, D.C. – 23 Jan 1925, D.C.) M. John Reding (1860-1925)**

M2. Thomas Filgate (1839-1896), 5 kids.

4. **Thomas F (1868-1938)**
5. **Annie Margaret (1869-1952) M1. John Sweeney (1860-1905) M2. Thomas F Ryan (1860-1930)**
6. **James Filgate (1870-1940)**
7. **Cecelia Jane (1872-1874)**
8. **Joseph A (1878-1880)**

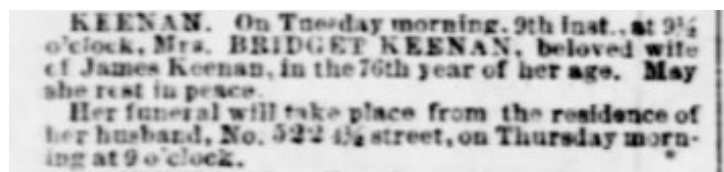
Missing Pieces – James Keenan and Bridget Barry

But, there are still pieces of the very large Irish puzzle that are missing, and people from the James Keenan family bible record that aren't accounted for.

What about Bridget Keenan born 1800 Ireland?

In our search for Mary, Katy and Eliza Filgate, I mentioned that James Kelly, Bridget Keenan and their 2 daughters are living in 1860 in D.C. together with a Bridget Keenan born about 1800 in Ireland. What about her?

Bridget Keenan (b. 1800, Ireland) next appears in the 1870 Census with James Keenan (b. 1808, Ireland).⁴⁵ Then turning to newspapers, we have a death notice for Bridget, wife of James Keenan.⁴⁶



⁴³ District of Columbia Marriages, 1830-1921, 4 Mar 1883, Sarah E Kelley and John Reding; images *Ancestry.com*, (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016).

⁴⁴ 1910 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., population schedules, enumeration district 135, sheet 17 A, dwelling 276, Catherine Reagan; images *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 152.

⁴⁵ 1870 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., population schedules, 7th Ward, Washington, D.C. Post Office, p 217; images *Ancestry.com* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 17 Oct 2016), NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 126.

⁴⁶ "Died," *The Evening Star* newspaper, Washington, D.C., 10 Apr 1872, p 3, col 1, Keenan; images *Newspapers.com*, (<http://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016.)

The Will of James Keenan

Her husband, James Keenan survives her until 1881.⁴⁷

PROBATE BUSINESS.—The following probate business has been transacted by Judge Hagner:—Estate Benedict Thompson; Alice Thompson appointed guardian; bond of \$300. Estate Ann Healey; order of publication. Will of late Felix Barotti; fully proven. Estate Adolph Kinzig; E. Hanlein appointed administrator; bond, \$900. Will of James Keenan fully proven. He leaves a bequest of \$1 each to all his sons and daughters excepting Catharine Griffin, who receives the balance of his property in the District. John Fegan and H. Digney are named as executors.

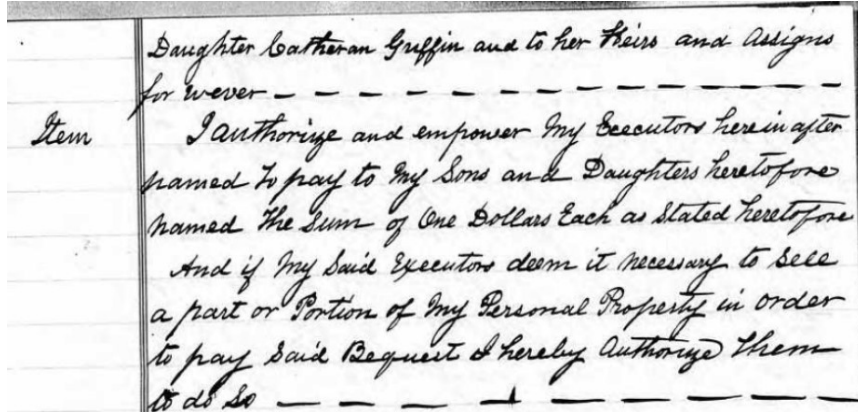
If this is my 2x great grandfather James Keenan, he died about 1881 in D.C. So I looked for him on a census and found him, living with his daughter, Catherine Griffin, a widow and her 5 children. Catherine Griffin was yet another new name. This census record indicates she was born about 1831 in Ireland. Was she was the Catherine from James' Family bible record?

The final piece of evidence about the James Keenan and Bridget Kelly family comes in the form of James Keenan's will, dated 2 May 1880 and recorded 18 Nov 1881 in D.C.⁴⁸ It names his living children including the spouses of his daughters. They are Michael Keenan, Soloman Keenan, Mary (Mrs. John) Fegan, Bridget (Mrs. Thomas) Filgate, Elizabeth (Mrs James) Morrissey and Catherine Griffin. So we have confirmation of quite a few marriages.

Item — First I give and bequeath to my dearly beloved Sons and Daughters as follows — — — — —
 To Michael Keenan and Solomon Keenan One Dollar each and to my Daughters Mary Fegan wife of John Fegan, Bridget Filgate wife of Thomas Filgate and Elizabeth Morrissey wife of James Morrissey the Sum of One Dollar each — — — — —
Item — I give Devise and bequeath All of my real Estate situate in the City of Washington in the District of Columbia Being Part of Lot Numbered Twelve (12) in Square Numbered Five Hundred and Thirty-eight (538) and Also the residue of my Personal Property and Estate therein To my beloved

⁴⁷ "Probate Business," The Evening Star newspaper, Washington, D.C., 19 Nov 1881, p 1, col 6; images, *Newspapers.com*, (<http://www.newspapers.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016.)

⁴⁸ Probate Records (District of Columbia), 1801-1930, James Keenan; images *Ancestry.com*, (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 18 Oct 2016); citing District and Probate Records, 1882-230, box 79.



Catherine Griffin's husband, George appears to have passed away before 1880. James provides for her in her widowhood. Absent from the will, when compared with the family bible record would be his wife, Bridget (who we have passing away in 1888,) John (who passed away before 1865), the younger Solomon (who we can assume passed away in Ireland before 1845) and James (b. 1841.) I have no records of the older Solomon in the U.S. And James (b 1841) due to his absence from his father's will, is assumed to have died before his father did 1881.

From James Keenan's will we also now know the identity of John Fegan, who 'adopted' Bridget M Keenan and James F Keenan. He is husband to Mary Keenan.

Family Summary

James Keenan and apparently his wife, Bridget immigrated to the D.C. area from Ireland along with many of their children. 6 apparently random documents opened up 6 siblings, their spouses and many of his grandchildren

James Keenan (~1802, Ireland - ~1881 Washington, D.C.) He married a Bridget Barry (~1800, Ireland – 1872, Washington, D.C.) in 28 Jul 1826. They had 9 children.

1. John Keenan, (8 July 1827, County Armagh, Ireland – after 1860, Maryland)
Married Ellen Noonan (1840 – 1866, Maryland)
One son: James F. Keenan (1860, Baltimore, Maryland – 1905, D.C.)
Ellen Noonan m2. Thomas O'Neill about 1865.
Thomas O'Neill (1840-1870) m2. Nora Madigan (1849-1872) in 1869 in D.C.
2. Mary, (15 Feb 1829, County Armagh, Ireland - 9 Aug 1881, D.C.)
She married John Fegan (1828 Ireland – 1895, D.C.) No issue.
3. Catherine, (19 Feb 1831, County Armagh, Ireland – 5 Dec 1910, D.C.)
Married George Griffin (1831, Ireland – aft 1875, USA). 5 children.
Francis E, a son, (1862-1894)
Roseanne (1864-1923)
Mary C (1866-1860)
George E (1870-1940)
Ellen F (1875-1913)
4. Michael, (14 Sep 1842, Ireland – 1 Feb 1899, D.C.)

Married Catherine _____ (~1833, Ireland – after 1850 prob Allegheny County, Virginia.)
One child, Bridget M Keenan (1860, Allegheny County, VA – 1 May 1921, D.C.), unmarried

5. Solomon, (26 Jan 1835, Lower Killeavy, County Armagh, Ireland – died, pre-1845, probably Ireland).
6. Elizabeth, (5 Sep 1836, Lower Killeavy, County Armagh, Ireland – 25 Jun 1905, Richmond, VA.)
Married James Morrissey, 2 Jun 1856, St Louis, Missouri. 11 kids.
Mary (1 Jun 1857 – 21 Jun 1857, St Louis, Missouri)
Elizabeth (1 Jun 1857 – 1 Jun 1857, St Louis, Missouri)
John P (18 Mar 1858, St Louis, Missouri – 10 Jan 1919, D.C.) M. Minnie Sigafoose, 4 kids
Mary Ellen (15 Aug 1861, Richmond, VA – 17 Jan 1905, Alabama), unmarried, Nun.
Anna Elizabeth (6 Dec 1864, D.C. – 25 Mar 1927, Richmond, VA), unmarried, no children
James (10 Jan 1866, Richmond, VA – 20 Sep 1872, Richmond, VA), accident
Margaret Rosalie (2 Sep 1868, Richmond, VA – 5 Jul 1950, San Diego, CA), M. Charles Thomas Peck, 3 children.
Francis Michael (23 Dec 1870, Richmond, VA – 18 Feb 1870, Richmond, VA) M. Mary Elizabeth Millholland in 1902, 9 kids.
Catherine Agnes (11 Jul 1873, Richmond, VA – 12 Oct 1899, D.C.) M. Burton F Cornwell in 1893.
One child, Claire Elizabeth.
Ambrose Augustin (7 Dec 1875, Richmond, VA – 21 Dec 1949, Richmond, VA) M. Marie Louise Stumpf in 1918. 6 kids.
Joseph Leo (1 Oct 1878, Richmond, VA – 13 Jan 1940, D.C.), unmarried, no children.
7. Bridget Keenan, (4 Apr 1839, Lower Killeavy, County Armagh, Ireland – 12 Nov 1888, D.C.)
M1. James Kelley (~1825, Ireland – 1866, D.C.) 3 kids:
Mary (~1858, D.C. - ?)
Catherine (~1859, D.C. – after 1930) M. William Reagan (1857-1904). 3 kids.
Sarah Elizabeth (24 Dec 1862, D.C. – 23 Jan 1925, D.C.) M. John Reding (1860-1925), no kids.
M2. Thomas Filgate (1839-1896), 6 kids.
Thomas F (1868-1938)
Annie Margaret (1869-1952) M1. John Sweeney, M2. Thomas F Ryan
James Filgate (1870-1940)
Cecelia Jane (1872-1874)
Joseph A (1878-1880)
8. James Keenan, (13 Sep 1841, Lower Killeavy, County Armagh, Ireland – bef May 1880)
9. Solomon Keenan, b. 9 Jan 1845, Lower Killeavy, County Armagh, Ireland - living 1880) Named in his father's will but, location unknown.

Conclusion

I think that my Aunt Berbs would be tickled pink that I've been able to parse her bits and pieces of research together to form a complete picture of James Keenan and Bridget Barry's family. I also think that she might wish that she'd been living in the internet age, so she might have had the satisfaction of completing her work herself. Then again, isn't that what family is for?