

Margaret McCarthy Letter¹

Margaret McCarthy was 23 years of age when this letter was written one year after arriving in America. Her father was Alexander (Sandy) McCarthy, carpenter on the Kingwilliamstown Crown Estate² and a native of the townland of Boherboy, and her mother, Nell, his wife. Margaret emigrated as a single woman on the 7th of September 1849 on the ship, *Columbus*, arriving on the 22nd of October, as part of a group of 114 persons assisted to emigrate from the Estate.³

New York September 22nd 1850

My D[ea]r **Father** and **Mother, Brothers** and **Sisters,**

I write these few lines to you hoping that these few lines may find you all in as good State of health as I am in at present, thank God. I Received your welcome letter to me Dated 22nd of May which was a Credit to me for the style and Elligance of its Fluent Language, but I must say rather Flattering. My D[ea]r **father**, I must only that this [is] a good place and a good Country for if one place does not suit a Man he can go to Another and can very easy please himself. But there is one thing that's Ruining this place especially the Frontier towns and Cities where the Flow of Emmigration is most. The Emmigrants has not money Enough to take them to the Interior of the Country which oblidges them to remain here in [New] York and the like places for which Reason causes the less demand for Labour and also the great Reduction in wages. For this reason I would advise no one to come to America that would not have Some Money after landing here that would enable them to go west in case they would get no work to do here. But any man or woman without a family are fools that would not venture and come to this plentiful country where no man or woman ever hungered or ever will and where you will not be Seen Naked, but I can asure you there are Dangers upon Dangers Attending coming here, but my friends nothing venture nothing have. Fortune will favour the brave. Have courage and prepare yourself for the next time that that worthy man Mr. **Boyan** is sending out the next lot; and come you all together courageously and bid adieu to that lovely place the land of our Birth. That place where the young and old joined together in our Common union both night and day Engaged in Innocent Amusement.

But alas I am now told -- it's the Gulf of Misery, oppression, Degradation, and ruin of every Description which I am sorry to hear of so Doleful a History to be told of our D[ea]r Country. This my D[ea]r **Father** induces me to Remit to you in this Letter 20 dollars, that is four pounds, thinking it might be some acquisition to you until you might

¹ Some sentence and paragraph breaks inserted.

² The townland of Boherboy is in the parish of Duhallow and the townland of Kingwilliamstown is in the parish of Nohavaldaly, both in the barony of Duhallow and the poor law union of Kanturk in Co. Cork.

³ Q.R.O., Correspondence -- Kingwilliamstown, [Michael] Boyan to Commissioners of Woods, 25 September 1849; T. E. Hodder, Government emigration officer, Liverpool to Stephen Walcott, secretary Emigration Commissioners, 7 September 1849.

be Clearing away from that place all together and the Sooner the Better, for Believe me, I could not Express how great would be my joy at our seeing you all here together where you would never want or be at a loss for a good Breakfast and Dinner. So prepare as soon as possible for this will be my last Remittance until I see you all here.

Bring with you as much Tools as you can as it will cost you nothing to Bring them and as for your Clothing you need not care much. But that I would like that yourself would bring one good shoot[suit] of cloth that you would spare until you come here. And as for **Mary**, she need not mind much as I will have for her a Silk Dress, a Bonnet and Viel according, and **Ellen** I need not mention what I will have for her. I can fit her well. You are to Bring Enough of Flannels and do not form it at home as the way the[y] wear Flannel at home and here is quite different for which reason I would rather than you would not form any of it untill you Come, with the Exception of whatever Quantity of Drawers you may have you can make them at home, but make them you may roomly enough. But make no jackets my D[ea]r **father**. I am still in the same place but do not intend to stop there for the winter. I mean to come in to New York and there spend the winter. **Thade Houlehan** wrote to me saying that if I wished to go up the country that he would send me money, but I declined so doing until you come and there after your coming if you think it may be Better for us to Remain here or go west it will be for you to judge, but until then I will Remain here.

Dan Keliher tells me that you knew more of the House Carpentry than he did himself and he can earn from twelve to fourteen shilling a day, that is seven shilling British. And he also tells me that **Florence** will do very well and that **Michael** can get a place right off as you will not be the second day when you can Bind him to any Trade you wish. And as for John, he will be very shortly able to be Bound too, so that I have every reason to believe that we will all do well Together So as that I am sure it's not for slavery I want you to come here. No, it's for affording my brothers and sisters and I an opportunity of Showing our Kindness and Gratitude and Coming on your seniou days that we would be placed in that possision that you, my D[ea]r **Father** and **Mother** could walk about Leisurely and Independently without Requiring your Labour, an object which I am Sure will not fail even by myself if I was obliged to do it without the assistance of Brother or Sister for, my D[ea]r **Father** and **Mother**.

I am proud and happy to be away from where the County Charges man or the Poor Rates Man or any other Rates Man would have the Satisfaction of once Impounding my cow or any other article of mine. Oh how happy I feel and am sure to have looke[d] as[at?] the Lord had not it destined for [me] to get married to Some *Loammun*⁴ or another at home that after a few months he and I may be an Incumberance upon you or perhaps in the Poor House by this [time]. So my D[ea]r **Father** according as I have Stated to you I hope that whilst you are at home I hope that you will give my Sister Mary that privilege of Injoying herself Innocently on any occasion that she pleases so far as I have saw Innocently and as for my D[ea]r Ellen I am in Raptures of joy when I think of one day Seeing her and you all at the dock in New York and if I do not have a good Bottle of Brandy for you Awaiting your arrival its a causion.

⁴ In Irish, a poor man or one of no prospects

Well I have only to tell my D[ea]r **Mother** to Bring all her bed Close and also to bring the Kittle and an oven and have handles to them and do not forget the Smoothing Irons and Beware when you are on Board to Bring Some good floor[floor] and Ingage with the Captain['s] Cook and he will do it Better for you for very little and also Bring some whiskey and give them [to] the Cook and Some Sailors that you may think would do you any good to give them a glass once in a time and it may be no harm.

And D[ea]r **Father** when you are Coming here if you Possibly can Bring my Uncle **Con** I would Be glad that you [] and I am sure he would be of the greatest acquecession to you on board and also [] tell **Mary Keeffe** that if her Child died that I will pay her passage very Shortly and when you are coming do not be frightened. Take courage and be Determined and bold in your undertaking as the first two or three days will be the worst to you and mind whatever happens on board. Keep your own temper. Do not speak angry to any, nor harshly. The Mildest Man has the best chance on board. So you make your way with everyone and further you are to speak to Mr. **Boyen** and he, I am sure, will get our Request for you. Mr. **Boyen** will do it for me. When you are to come ask Mr. **Boyen** [to gi]ve you a few lines to the Agent or Berth Master of the Ship that will Secure to you the Second Cabin which I am sure Mr. **Boyen** will do and as soon as you Receive this letter write to me and let me Know About everything, when are to come and what time and state the particulars of evry thing to me and direct as before and if you are to come shortly when you come to Liverpool wright to me also and let me know when you are to sail and the name of the Ship you sail in as I will be uneasy untill I get an answer.

No More at present But that you will give Mr. and Mrs. **Boyen** my best love and hope and let me know how they and family are as they would or will not be every better than I would wish them to be. [A]lso Mrs. **Milton** and **Charles**, Mr. and Mrs. **Roche** and family, Mr. and Mrs. **Day** and family, Mr. **Walsh** and as for his family, I [am] sure are all well. Mr. and Mrs. **Sullivan** and family,⁵ Mrs. **O'Brien**, Con **Sheehan**, wife and family, all the **Hearlihys** and family, **Tim Leahy** and family, **Owen Sullivan** of Caragan and family, **Darby Guinee** and family,⁶ **John Calleghan** and family, **Timothy Calleghan** and family, **Timothy Sheehan** and Mother. So No More at present from your Ever Dear and Loveing Child,

⁵ According to the Q.R.O. records, the Pat Sullivan family, of the townland of Carriganes, parish of Nohavaldaly, emigrated in October 1850, a month after this letter was written. The family consisted of Pat (50) a farmer, his wife, Judy (43), and their children, May (14), John (12), Michael (8), Pat (7), Dan (4), and Judy (1).

⁶ According to the Q.R.O. records, the Darby Guinee family, of the townland of Glencollins, Upper and Lower, parish of Nohavaldaly, emigrated in October 1850, a month after this letter was written. The family consisted of Darby (50), a laborer, his wife, Kitty (37), and their children, Dan (17), daughter, Joney (13), Eileen (11), Bidy (9), twins, Tady and Ben (5), and Darby (3).

Margaret McCarthy

NOTE: the envelope addressed to:

Michael Boyan Esqre., Kingwilliamstown Kanturk post office County of Cork
Ireland.

to be forwarded to Mr. Alexander McCarthy, of same place.

There is no evidence that Margaret's family joined her in America.