

COPPER COAST CONNECTS

*The Journal of the
Copper Coast UNESCO
Global Geopark*

www.coppercoastgeopark.com



Volume 1 | Number 1 | 2021

ISSN: 2737-7547

Building bridges: connecting the Copper Country, USA with the Copper Coast, Ireland.

John H. Morris

For Figures 1 and 2 see page 5.
For Figure 3 see page 6.

Abstract

This paper presents and explores two examples of personal connections between the geographically widely separated regions of the Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark, Co. Waterford, Ireland and the Copper Country of the Keweenaw peninsula, Michigan, USA.

Copper and copper mining history and heritage define a generic connection between the otherwise geographically very widely separated regions of the Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark in Ireland and the Copper Country of the remote Keweenaw peninsula in northwest Michigan, USA (Figs. 1 and 2). There are many very obvious contrasts between the two regions, ranging from cultural and climatic, to differing historical mining technologies employed in each region, but equally there are distinct similarities, not least the influence of historical Cornish mining methodologies and practices – and in the Keweenaw at least, a culinary legacy – pasties. But there are personal connections as well, both modern day and historical, the Cornish descendant community exemplifying the former. The focus of this paper, however, is to exemplify historical connections by reference to two particular families, one Irish, the other Cornish but with a direct involvement in the 19th Century copper mining activities in the Copper Coast Geopark.

The now relatively small town of Eagle Harbor, Michigan once served a vibrant mining community and part of that legacy is now manifest in the tranquil, sylvan setting of the town cemetery – Pine Grove (Fig. 3). This is quite a large cemetery, with graves dispersed amongst the trees and, judging from the names inscribed on headstones, those interred here were drawn from a variety of ethnic origins – including Irish. These are relatively few in number but the epitaph on a single headstone in that cemetery provides one of two tangible personal links between two of what were once amongst the premier copper mining districts of the USA and Ireland during the 19th C. The epitaph on that headstone, which marks the grave of a Dennis GALLIVAN (Fig. 4), reads as follows:

Dennis Gallivan
Died
July 25 1875
AE. 80 years.
Native of the
Parish of Kill
Co. Waterford
IRELAND.



Figure 4. Headstone on the grave of Dennis Gallivan, Pine Grove Cemetery, Eagle Harbor, MI. AE = age.

For Figure 5 see page 6.
For Figure 6 see page 7.



Figure 7. A gated adit entrance to part of the underground workings of the Petherick mine, with a modern site marker, engraved “Petherick Shaft” in the foreground.

The headstone is, by any standards, of a very high quality⁽¹⁾ which suggests that Dennis GALLIVAN and/or his family were people of some means. It is not just the family name which provides a link between the two regions. It is the specific mention of the “Parish of Kill, Co. Waterford”⁽²⁾, which encompassed the second most productive 19th C copper mining district in Ireland.

That mining district was centred on its primary production complex at Tankardstown (Fig. 1), upon, and after which the UNESCO designated Copper Coast Global Geopark now takes its name and identity – and which has given its name to the now widely used “Copper Coast” regional tourism brand.

Dennis GALLIVAN’s death record notes that he was married; a linen weaver, resident in Calumet, MI (Fig. 5); a son of Thomas and Johanna GALLIVAN; and that he died on July 25, 1875, age 80, simply of “old age”⁽³⁾. His stated age at time of death indicates that he was born about 1795.

Sadly, there are no surviving Irish Catholic Church records for that period for the Parish of Kill. However, a later parish record dated Jan. 14, 1822 notes that a Denis GALVIN married a Mary BLAKE in the village of Stradbally, just to the west of Bunmahon (Fig. 2), and that they subsequently had several, so far known children, all born in the Parish of Kill⁽⁴⁾, Diocese of Waterford and Lismore: two daughters Catherine GALVAN and Joan GALLAVAN (sic) baptised on April 8 1823 and Feb. 26 1828 respectively; and sons, John GALLAVAN and Patrick GALVAN (sic) baptised on June 13, 1830 and October 5 1841.

The variable spelling of the family name in the parish records, GALVIN/GALLAVAN/GALVAN is replicated in property records which note a Denis GALLAVAN (1849) /GALVAN (1851)⁽⁵⁾ living in the townland of Tankardstown, the location of the principal copper mine complex (Fig. 1). That record does not note his employment, although given where he was living⁽⁶⁾, right beside the mine which at its peak in the early 1840s employed 1,200 people⁽⁷⁾, it would be truly remarkable if he was not employed directly or indirectly in some capacity in that industry.

But is the Dennis GALLAVAN buried in Pine Grove, the same as the namesake, allowing for spelling variations, living in Tankardstown in 1849/1851? For the moment that is uncertain, but as there is no record of any other person of that name in the “Parish of Kill” at that time, the working hypothesis is that they are one and the same individual. If so that leaves even more presently unanswered questions: when did he emigrate to the USA; did he emigrate with his family and if so why are none of them buried with him in Pine Grove; why, if he lived in Calumet (Fig. 5) did he choose to be buried in Pine Grove; are there any descendants of that family still resident in Michigan—and/or Kill, Co. Waterford; and, not least, when and where did he become a “linen weaver”?



Figure 8. The semi-derelict, 3 storey over basement house, Bunmahon, Co. Waterford known locally as "Petherick's house". It was built in the 1840s and served as the home of John Petherick for much of the time while he was employed by the MCI.

The 19th C linen weaving industry in Ireland was primarily concentrated around the Belfast region, with minor centres scattered elsewhere around the island, including Portlaw in the northern part of County Waterford, about 12 miles (19km) north of Tankardstown. Might he have commuted daily that sort of distance in the 1840s to work in the linen industry in Portlaw? That is unlikely. And if he did not learn his trade in Ireland before emigrating to the USA where and when might he have acquired that skill there? Was there even a linen industry in Calumet during the 1860s-1870s? Without answers to some, or all those questions, Dennis GALLIVAN is likely to remain an intriguing enigma.

The second connection between the Copper Country and the Copper Coast is far less enigmatic. William PETHERICK (1803 - 1866)⁽⁸⁾, who worked for one of the Keweenaw copper mining companies, the Copper Falls Mining Company between 1855 and c.1862⁽⁹⁾, and after whom the Petherick Mining Company (Figs. 6 and 7) was named, was the twin brother of John PETHERICK (1803 – 1877) the manager (Mine Captain) of the Knockmahon/ Tankardstown mines between 1832 and 1852 (Fig. 8).

The careers of both these men, and their elder brother Thomas (1794-1880), is the subject of a biography currently in preparation by the author and Des Cowman. John PETHERICK was appointed manager of the Knockmahon/ Tankardstown mines by the Mining Company of Ireland (MCI) in 1832⁽¹⁰⁾. While a man of considerable mining knowledge and expertise, he had a very strong social conscience, in keeping with the philosophy of the Quakers who established the MCI. It was, however, a trait which frequently brought him into conflict with persons in authority, including his employers, especially as the influence of that founding philosophy waned within the company management over time. Throughout that period, he lived locally (Fig. 8). Like his brother William, he travelled extensively at various times working in countries as far afield as Mexico, Spain, the USA and Norway. He died in 1877 and is buried with his wife in Kingston-upon-Thames Cemetery, London, UK.

Acknowledgements.

The author thanks the following individuals for various forms of assistance and hospitality extended to him during the course of research for the Petherick biography, in preparation, and this article:

Mike Sweeney, Kilgobinet, Co. Waterford
for the aerial view of the Tankardstown Engine
House complex (Fig. 1)
Fred Geis, Copper Falls, MI.
Jean Ellis, Eagle Harbor, MI.
Lee Degood, Grand Rapids, MI.

Any comments, suggestions or information concerning any of the individuals mentioned in this article are both encouraged and would be very welcome. The author's contact details are on file with the staff at the Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark Centre, Bunmahon, Ireland.

References and notes.

- (1) Note the relatively rare form of bas-relief engraving in the upper part of the epitaph, in contrast to the far more common intaglio form used in the lower part of the epitaph.
- (2) Kill is the anglicised version of the Irish word for either "coill", meaning wood, or "cill" meaning church. The latter is more likely in the case of this parish; and probably of the village of Kill within that parish.
- (3) Source (accessed April 24, 2020): https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/60872/44471_355318-00526/96140?b_ackurl=http%3a%2f%2fsearch.ancestry.com%2fcgi-bin%2fsse.dll%3fdbid%3d60872%26gsfn%3dDenis%26gsln%3dGallivan%26msddy%3d1876%26msdpn__ftp%3dCalumet%26hc%3d20%26new%3d1%26rank%3d1%26uid%3d000%26redir%3dfalse%26msT%3d1&backlabel=ReturnSearchResults&queryId=1b4e1e78a0a37ea8bd26a202184d5dbc
- (4) The name of the parish, in the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore, is variously recorded as Kill, Killbarrymeaden, Newtown, Rossmore or various combinations of these names.
See: <https://registers.nli.ie/parishes/1110>
- (5) Griffith's Valuation Survey: surveyors report 1849; published record 1851. <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffithvaluation/>
- (6) Cowman, D. 2006. The making and breaking of a mining community: the Copper Coast, County Waterford 1825-1875. Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland. A maximum of only 41 houses are noted (p.70) in that townland in 1847, of which 8 lay unoccupied by 1848 as a consequence of the Great Famine 1845 – 1850.
- (7) Cowman 2006, *ibid*, p. 28
- (8) Morris, J. H. 2018. William Petherick and the Petherick Mining Company. Superior Signal, the Journal of the Keweenaw County Historical Society.
- (9) He worked also for the North West Mine, while living in Copper Harbor between 1852 – 1853; and at the National Mine, Ontonagon between 1854 and 1855.
- (10) Cowman 2006, *ibid*, pp. 31 – 37. The Mining Company of Ireland was established by Act of Parliament in 1824.



Figure 1. Copper Harbor at the northern end of the Keweenaw Peninsula, Michigan (MI), USA, looking north.



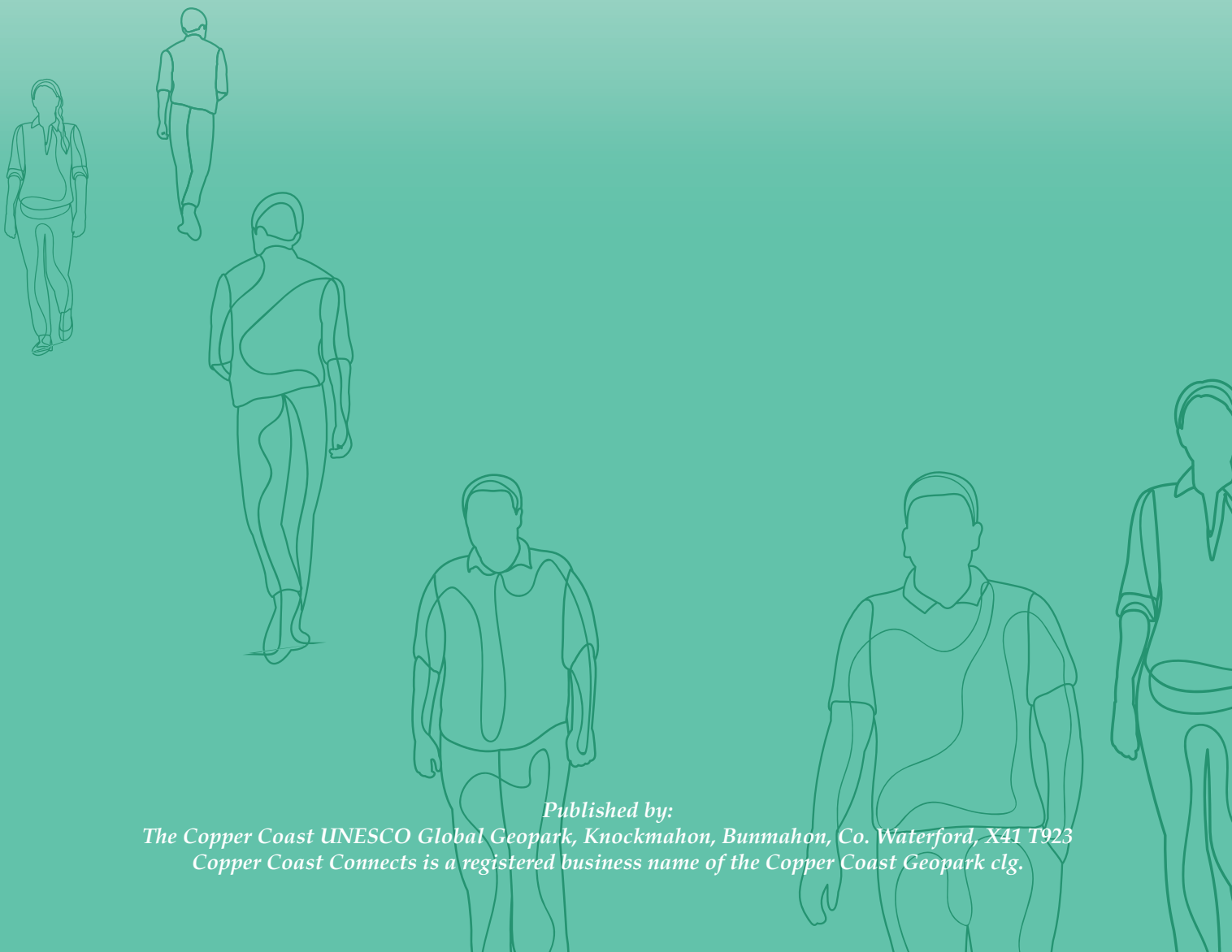
Figure 2. Cornish design engine houses at the Tankardstown minecomplex, Co. Waterford, Ireland, looking west towards the village of Bunmahon in the middle distance. The village of Kill is about 2 miles inland to the north. The conserved mine buildings are owned and operated as a tourist attraction by the Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark.



Figure 3. Pine Grove Cemetery, Eagle Harbor, Michigan, USA.



Figure 5. 5th Street, Calumet, Michigan, its principal commercial district.



*Published by:
The Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark, Knockmahon, Bunmahon, Co. Waterford, X41 T923
Copper Coast Connects is a registered business name of the Copper Coast Geopark clg.*

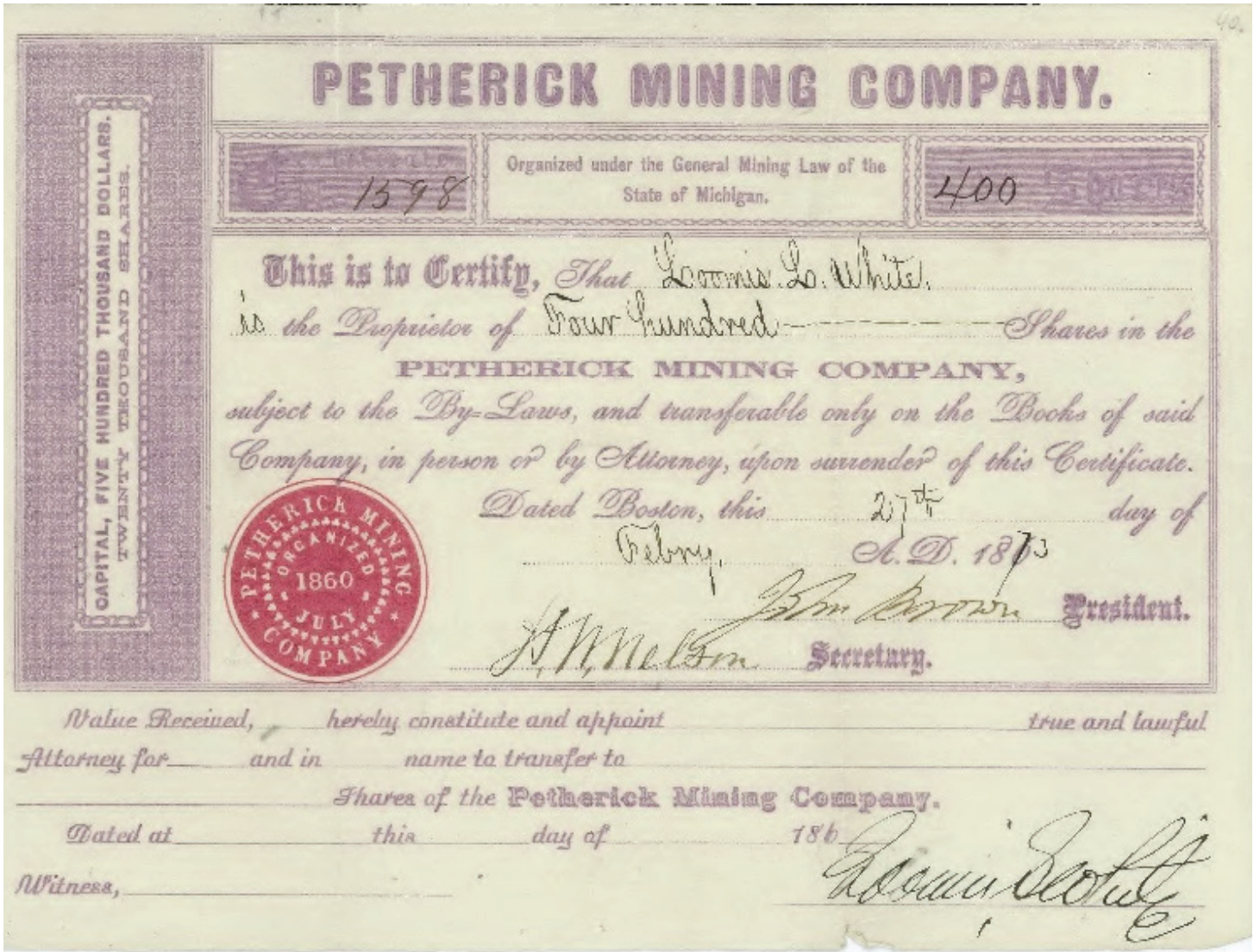


Figure 6. A Petherick Mining Company share certificate (reproduced by kind permission of Joe Wildberg).