

MORRISSEY FAMILY HISTORY NEWSLETTER
DESCENDANTS OF PATRICK MORRISSY AND MARY PHELAN
www.morrisseyfamilyhistory.com

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Welcome to the Morrissey Family History Newsletter. This, and future issues of the Newsletter, will contain Morrissey news and updates for the family history website. I hope you find something of interest in the Newsletter. Please email me if you have news you would like included in the Newsletter or if you know someone who would like to be added to the mailing list. Please email me if you would prefer to not receive the newsletter and I will delete your email address from the list.

OBITUARIES:

Jane Morrissy Allan (1940 – 21 January 2004): It is several months now since Jane Morrissy Allan died in Miramichi, New Brunswick, the end of a long battle with cancer. A daughter of Dr. R.H. Morrissy and Mary Calder Morrissy, Jane is survived by her husband Dr. Charles Allan, sister Kathleen, two brothers, Paul and Richard, nephews, nieces, and other family members. Hearing of my interest in our family's history, Jane contacted me in 1998. For several years we spoke regularly on the telephone and met once—Jane, her husband, and myself—at a restaurant in Westmount.

In the 1930s my grandmother, Edith Sweeney Morrissey, visited Newcastle and spoke later of the kindness of Dr. Herb Morrissey. From time-to-time, other relatives from Montreal also visited Newcastle and it seems to be Dr. Morrissy that is often mentioned in this respect. Jane was proud of her father; if Jane was like her father, then no wonder people were so impressed with Dr. Morrissy. With Jane, one had an immediate intimacy, an immediate friendship. She seemed to be always cheerful, thoughtful, interested in other people, and generous, even in the midst of illness.

Kathleen Morrissy (1911 – 2003): Kathleen “Tally” Morrissy died in 2003 in Miramichi, NB at the age of 92 years. I am told that Tally Morrissy had a distinguished career in social work in New Brunswick. Her father, Charles Morrissy, was Mayor of Newcastle for three years before entering federal politics and being elected as Member of Parliament for Northumberland, NB, in 1926. Tally Morrissy's grandfather was John Veraker Morrissy, a businessman who entered both provincial and federal politics: he served three terms in the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, during which he was Minister of Public Works, as well as being elected in 1921 as Member of Parliament in Ottawa for Northumberland, NB. John Veraker Morrissy was the brother of Edward Morrissy, Jane Morrissy Allan's grandfather. John Veraker Morrissy's father was a

brother of Laurence Morrissey, who moved to Montreal from Newcastle in the early 1840s and is the progenitor of our family here.

Notes on the Callaghans:

I still have an article that I cut from *The Montreal Star* on 21 August 1972, that mentions both Father Martin Callaghan (born 20 November 1846; died 10 June 1915) and his younger brother Father Luke Callaghan (born 2 February 1865; died 12 April 1931). The Callaghans are related to the Morrisseys by marriage. Mary Callaghan married Laurence Morrissey and Johannah Meany's son, Thomas Morrissey, on 20 November 1867 at St. Patrick's Church; this is the church where Father Martin Callaghan would serve for many years, eventually as the first Montreal-born pastor from 1902 to 1908. Father Martin, Father Luke, and their brother Father James Callaghan (born 18 October 1847; died 7 February 1901) are all brothers of Mary Callaghan. The *Montreal Star* article reads, in part,

The Montreal Chinese community dates back to 1863. The first Catholic clergyman to serve the spiritual needs of the Chinese here was Rev. Martin Callaghan. One of his first religious duties was to baptize 58 Chinese. Over the years, he delighted his Oriental friends with his violin street-playing in the downtown area on Saturday evenings.

Assisted by his brother, Rev. Luke Callaghan, he continued his services to the local Chinese until 1912 when advancing years compelled him to curtail this type of work.

The three Callaghan priests were quite different in temperament. Father Martin was a man of the people, evangelical in spirit, gifted and generous, he converted upwards of three thousand people to Catholicism. His interests were varied and included music, both original composition and performance, and Canadian folklore. Father James Callaghan, the middle brother of the three priests, seems a quiet and unassuming man who was much loved by his parishioners. He first served at St. Ann's Church in Griffintown, the Irish neighbourhood adjacent to both Pointe St. Charles and Old Montreal. Most of his career was at St. Patrick's Church but he was also chaplain at Hôtel Dieu Hospital and the Royal Victoria Hospital. Father James predeceased his two other brothers who entered the priesthood. He and Father Martin are buried in the crypt at the Grand Séminaire de Montréal on Sherbrooke Street West near Atwater. Father Luke was ambitious and achieved much in his clerical career. After earning a doctorate in theology at Urban University in Rome, he returned to Montreal in 1898 where he was assistant Chancellor at the Archbishop's Palace. Father Luke Callaghan's greatest achievement is the construction of St. Michael's Church located at 5580 St-Urbain Street in Montreal's Mile End neighbourhood. A block away from St. Michael's is the Luke Callaghan Memorial School, although it is no longer used for educational purposes.

There is really not enough room here to do justice regarding the Callaghan priests except that they are an honour to the whole family, even these many years after their

deaths. My Aunt Mable Morrissey was proud of the priests, as many of us are proud of them to this day. They were Aunt Mable's, and my father's, great uncles and she probably met both Father Martin and Father Luke when she was young. Allan Hustak devotes a chapter to Father Martin Callaghan in his book, *Saint Patrick's of Montreal: The Biography of a Basilica* (Montreal, Vehicule Press, 1998). Today, if you enter the administrative building of St. Patrick's Church, you will find a Notman Studio photograph of Father Martin Callaghan, along with the other pastors of St. Patrick's, on the wall in the hallway leading to the church offices. If you were to visit the basement of the church, as my son and I have done, you will find a weathered stone plaque leaning against one of the original floor supports, dedicated to Father James Callaghan. How it got there and where it was originally located is unknown to me. It should also be added that the three Callaghan priests came from very humble economic origins. Their father was a shoemaker or leather worker and the parents immigrated to Montreal from Co. Kilkenny, Ireland in 1845, apparently having lived for a while in Newfoundland where their first child, Mary Callaghan, was born on 1 March 1845. They had nine children in all. Their sons Martin, Luke, and James received an excellent education and promotion from the working class by the Catholic Church.

A family anecdote about the priests is that my grandmother Edith Sweeney Morrissey, who married Martin Morrissey in 1895, asked one of the priests for financial help which she didn't receive. I suspect this may have been Father Luke; however, I have a bias in favour of Father Martin who was known for his generosity, even going as far as paying for the education of someone to become a medical doctor. The anecdote continues that one of the priests, this would have been Martin, was buried in a plain wooden casket, while the other, Luke, had a much more ornate and expensive casket, and that the streets were crowded with mourners at Martin's funeral. I have visited the graves of all three brothers, two in the crypt at the Sulpician Seminary as noted above, and Father Luke Callaghan's grave is at Notre Dame des Neiges Cemetery in the Callaghan family plot. (Please see notes # 1 and 2 below.)

It was in 1998 that I first received a letter from Sharon Callaghan and then met both Sharon and her brother Kevin Callaghan. Sharon Callaghan, a great great niece of the three priests, as I am their great great nephew, is the authority on the history of their lives. Indeed, the last twelve months have seen at least two of the three priests, or some aspect of their work, mentioned in the newspapers. Even this month, on 5 May 2004, there was an article in the Montreal *Gazette* on the Fleming Windmill, an image of which serves as the logo of Ville de LaSalle. Father Martin in the early years of the twentieth century owned the Fleming Windmill, which dates back to the early years of the nineteenth century, and which is now the center of some dispute regarding building an outdoor theatre next to the historic structure. Last year, on 28 June 2003, a page-long article by John Kalbfleisch in the Montreal *Gazette*, on St. Patrick's Church, included an early portrait of Father Martin.

There are some interesting photographs that Sharon Callaghan has shared with me of both Fathers Martin and James, taken at the Notman Photographic Studio in Montreal. The Notmans are important in Montreal history for their extensive documentation of life

in the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. At any rate, there are photographs of Father James taken on 3 August 1896 and photographs of Father Martin taken on different dates, including 20 May 1903. A curious coincidence regarding the photographs of Martin is that on the same page of photographs, but taken the next day, on 21 May 1903, appear two photographic portraits of “D. Morrice”, the father of one of Canada’s pre-eminent painters, James Wilson Morrice who was born in Montreal in 1865.

This past summer Harvey Shepherd, also writing in *The Gazette*, on 26 July and again on 21 September 2003, informed readers of tours of St. Michael’s Church available to the public. St. Michael’s is a landmark in Montreal, visible from several miles away at the lookout on Mount Royal facing towards the Plateau and the east end of the city. The church is built in the style of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey. St. Michael’s is a large domed structure with an entrance façade and minaret on the east side to the rear of the church building. Shepherd writes, “Back in the early 20th century, it [St. Michael’s] was said to be the largest English-speaking parish in Quebec, with more than 1,800 families or close to 15,000 parishoners, mainly Irish in origin.” Of course, after reading this article with its offer of a tour, I soon visited St. Michael’s Church, which I had so far only seen from the outside. As you enter, on the far left side on the ceiling, is Father Luke’s name written in Latin. St. Michael’s now serves a predominantly Polish congregation. The church was built in 1914-1915 with funds largely raised by Father Luke Callaghan.

Aristide Beaugrand-Champagne, the architect of St. Michael’s, achieved what was then highly innovative in his design and construction of the dome of the church. The magnificent dome is constructed with reinforced concrete, a first in Montreal until duplicated, but on a much larger scale, at St. Joseph’s Oratory on Queen Mary Road. The dome at St. Michael’s has a diameter of 23 metres and is flanked by two half domes; covering the nave that reaches 40 metres from the centre of the dome are two arches with a diameter of 16.5 metres each. The inside of the church seats 1400 people and in Father Luke’s day simultaneous services were held in a large basement auditorium, seating over 1200 people, because of the capacity attendance inside the church. Incidentally, Beaugrand-Champagne also designed the award winning Chalet de la Montagne, facing south on Mount Royal and overlooking the downtown of the city. Now called Parc du Mont Royal, the design of this prominent park, inaugurated in 1876 and located in central Montreal, is by Frederick Law Olmstead who also designed Central Park in New York City.

Original art work at St. Michael’s was created by Guido Nincheri, who was born in Prato, Italy, in 1885. In 1914 Nincheri moved to Montreal where he and his wife lived until his death. Nincheri’s first large commission in Montreal was to create the frescoes and stained-glass windows that decorate the dome and walls of St. Michael’s Church. The stained-glass windows, circling the entire circumference of the dome, flood the entire church with light and colour. When standing on the upper pulpit overlooking the interior of the church—as I have done—one is overwhelmed with sunlight and the magnificence of this building. Later, between 1928 and 1951, Nincheri designed the interior of the prestigious St-Léon-de-Westmount Church on Boulevard de Maisonneuve in Westmount.

Although Nincheri lived for a few years in the United States he considered Montreal his home and was buried at Notre Dame des Neiges Cemetery after his death in 1973. St. Michael's Church deserves some much-needed restoration work and the church could then be used, at least part-time, as a concert hall. It is a remarkable edifice—both magnificent and majestic—and well worth visiting on a Sunday morning when open to the public. I am grateful to Mr. Kevin Cohalan, the Executive Director of the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal, who was instrumental in organizing the summer-long open-house at St. Michael's which was an invaluable opportunity to visit the church pretty much at one's own convenience during daytime hours. I was given, generously, *carte blanche* to go where I liked in the church on my two visits there last summer.

Another tour, organized for a few of us by Sharon Callaghan, was of Le Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice de Montréal, immediately adjacent to Notre Dame Cathedral in Old Montreal. Notre Dame is in some ways the most prominent church in Montreal. Facing Place d'Armes on Rue Notre Dame, it is at Notre Dame Cathedral that funerals for distinguished politicians are held, for instance, Prime Minister Trudeau, and others. This was the tour of a lifetime as the Séminaire is not usually open to the public. We met the curé, visited his apartment in the Séminaire, and met other "Gentlemen of St-Sulpice" as they are known. The Séminaire has a vast archival collection going back to the 1600s that is being sorted and organized on the premises by a curator and several assistants. Founded in France by Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657), the Sulpician Order played a pivotal role in Montreal's history. The Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice, established between 1657 and 1740, had nine rural parishes on the Island of Montreal, including the mother parish of Notre Dame. The first building of the Seminary was constructed in 1685, followed by additions in 1705, 1715, and 1848. Monsieur Rolland Litalien, p.s.s., our guide on this tour, took us throughout the whole fascinating complex of buildings that make up the Séminaire. This included the attic where old books line the walls, to the basement where a wine cellar and root cellar were once located, and then a sub-basement 35 feet below street level where meat was stored year round. The whole visit was fascinating and ended with an epiphanous moment when we emerged from a long hallway to find ourselves in Notre Dame Cathedral itself. Incidentally, Father Luke Callaghan gave the first sermon in English at Notre Dame Cathedral on 6 September 1904.

Articles written by Father Martin Callaghan can be found in the archival holdings at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Québec; they include Father Martin Callaghan's talk on the subject of religious missions in Montreal, given before fellow delegates on 10 June 1909, at the Washington Congress of Missionaries. Also, Father Martin's sermon, "The Shamrock or Ireland's threefold love" can also be found at the library, and was presented by Father Martin at St. Patrick's Church on, appropriately, St. Patrick's Day, 17 March 1877. A speech by Father James Callaghan, entitled "Columbus, 1492-1892: 400th anniversary sermon", given at St. Patrick's Church on Sunday, October 23, 1892 is also catalogued at the library.

I remember, a few years ago, Sharon Callaghan visiting our home and I commented at that time that it was remarkable that our families, united in 1867, still

know each other after so many years. This was doubly impressed upon me when Sharon mailed me the baptismal certificate of John Michael Callaghan, who was born on 15 April 1862, and is Sharon's great grandfather as well as being a brother of the priests and of my great grandmother Mary Callaghan. Sharon pointed out that Laurence Morrissey, my great great grandfather, was John Michael Callaghan's godfather. A last note: Sharon Callaghan is writing a history of the priests which I obviously support and very much look forward to reading. It should make fascinating reading, for the three priests dedicated themselves to their religion, community service, education, and improving society.

Notes:

1. The Callaghan plot at Notre Dame des Neiges Cemetery is 0055 N. Among other family members, also buried there are Thomas Morrissey (buried 15 October 1916) and his wife Mary Callaghan (buried 30 April 1906); and Mary's parents John Callaghan (buried 27 April 1905) and Bridget Phelan (buried 20 February 1890).
2. A crypt is a place of burial in the basement of a building, in this case a seminary and adjoining church. I believe the crypt at the Sulpician Seminary is the only one still in use in Quebec and possibly in North America, although the crypt at the Grey Nuns Convent on present-day Boulevard Rene Levesque may also still be in use. The crypt at the Sulpician Seminary is fairly large, bright with natural light from windows as well as fluorescent lighting, and remarkably antiseptic. You descend some wooden stairs to the crypt where there is a cement walkway; wooden crosses with names of the deceased are placed where there are graves. The names of members of the Sulpician Order who were buried here in the past, including Father Martin Callaghan, can be found written in a list on black wooden boards. After fifty years, bodies are disinterred and any bone fragments, and so on, that remain are placed in separate boxes in a cabinet at the far end of the crypt, labeled with the priest's name; this is where Father James Callaghan's remains can be found.

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INFORMATION, & WEBSTATS:

Kathleen Tansey: Margaret Morrissey (born, 29 December 1871; died, 28 October 1927) married Patrick Tansey at St. Anthony's Church in Montreal on 14 February 1898. Margaret Morrissey Tansey is the great granddaughter of Patrick Morrissey and Mary Phelan, the granddaughter of Laurence Morrissey and Johannah Meany, the daughter of Thomas Morrissey and Mary Callaghan, and the sister of Martin Morrissey (born, 14 June 1874; died, 13 February 1932). I recently came across some of the history of the Tansey family in Montreal, of which Kathleen Tansey is a direct descendant. The Tansey family have lived in this city since at least 1845. Kathleen, a lawyer practicing in Montreal, lives only a few blocks from my home.

Webstats: Since www.MorrisseyFamilyHistory.com came on-line in mid-July, 2003 to mid-May, 2004 there have been over 4,500 individual visitors to the site and over 30,000 hits. Visitors to the site are from all parts of the world. On average, each day there are about twenty visitors to the site.

Spring has finally, but tentatively, arrived in Montreal. We are all looking forward to a pleasant summer!

Stephen Morrissey

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