



Shoebox **THE CASSIDY FAMILY** *From Killinure to Camden Township*



Michael Cassidy, his wife Annie Gillen and family. Michael was born in Hungerford in 1852 and died in Stoco in 1916. Michael was the sixth son of Thomas Cassidy who was born in Killinure, County Wicklow, Ireland in 1814.

Throughout the spring of 1847 south County Wicklow was bedevilled by near famine conditions. Within the extended Cassidy family who lived in the townland of Killinure, there was a continuous debate regarding whether to accept or reject the offer of assisted emigration to Canada. William Cassidy was the patriarch of the family. Born in 1777 he was now 70 years of age. William was 21 years of age when he joined the insurgent army and fought in the unsuccessful Rebellion of 1798. He would argue

that in spite of ceaseless labour, the 19 acres which he worked would never be owned by the Cassidy family. Credit would never be given for improvements made. William's wife, Mary Dunn, whom he had married in the church of Clonmore on 13 November 1813, was not anxious to go. She was afraid for the safety of her children and her grandchildren in the wild outback of a snow-covered foreign land. The arguments of William Cassidy carried the day.

Ownership of a family farm was a dream not to be ignored.

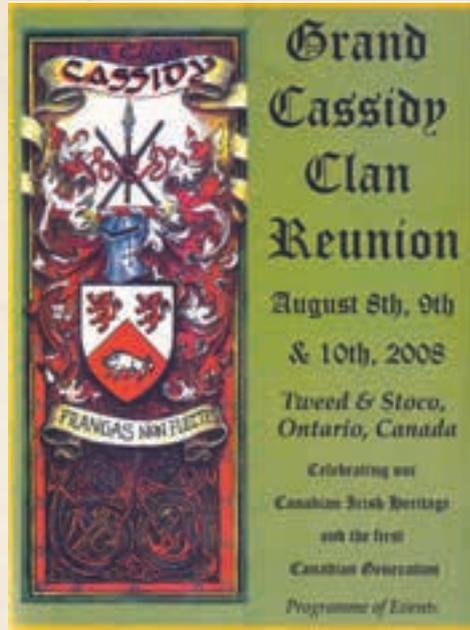


A charcoal drawing of Mary (1835-1920), the daughter of William Cassidy and Mary Dunn. She is pictured with her husband, Lawrence Healy.

This picture is reported to be that of William Cassidy (1777-1854) and his wife Mary Dunn. There is no information written on the back of the photograph. The family are depending on family lore handed down through the generations.



On a summer's morning in 1847, the extended Cassidy family packed their wooden chests on board carts hired by the estate. In the estate emigration books, the Cassidy family had a total of 27 souls. William and Mary had no less than twelve grown children travelling with them. The children who were aged between 11 and 27 were Thomas, John, William Junior, Samuel, Elizabeth, James, Pat, Mat, Michael, Mary, and Bridget. Thomas was married to Bridget Foley and had three children. The family lived on three acres of rented land.



In 1988 the Cassidy clan held a reunion in the town of Stoco. A total of 800 delegates attended the event.

John was married to Bridget Harmon, and they had four children. They lived in a house and kitchen garden which was rented from Mr. Brown. Departing Killinure on the same day were no less than nine neighbouring families: those of John Burkett, Lawrence Healy, William Fenlon, Michael McGrath, Ann Kavanagh, Margaret Kavanagh, Pat McGrath, and Bryan Connors. As the twelve families set forth on their brave adventure, they would have likely assembled in the Crab Lane to receive the blessing of the priest of Clonmore.

The distance between Killinure and the port of New Ross is about 60 miles. It was a journey that took two days travelling. Overnight the families lay by the roadside as they endeavoured to get some sleep. They would spend a third night under the stars as they huddled together on the quayside in

New Ross. On 21 April before they embarked on the *Standard*, Mary Dunn insisted that the vessel should be blessed by a Catholic priest. On approaching Newfoundland, the vessel encountered a severe storm. The able-bodied passengers on board were requested to man the ship. Seven weeks after departure from New Ross the *Standard* dropped anchor at Grosse Isle. It was here that Dan Cassidy, aged three, died in his mother's arms. Dan was the son of Thomas Cassidy and Bridget Foley and the grandson of William Cassidy and Mary Dunn. The little boy was wrapped in his mother's shawl, and following prayers, committed to the depths of the Saint Lawrence River.



Located in the old part of Stoco cemetery is the restored grave marker for William Cassidy and Mary Dunn and their youngest child Bridget. Over the years the stone had fallen and its broken pieces were ploughed over. In 1988 the family retrieved the pieces and put them back together. They encased them in a metal frame and had the memorial stone re-erected.

Having been given the all-clear at Grosse Isle, the Cassidys travelled by boat from Quebec to Montreal and then on to Kingston. From here they walked to what is now Camden Township where they spent their first autumn and winter among friends. Camden had developed into a collection point for emigrants arriving from the southern part of the Coollattin estate. The third eldest son of William and Mary had married Elizabeth Grace. Likewise, the next youngest boy Samuel had married Mary

Hughes. Both men stayed in the area and set up homes in what is now Lennox and Addington County, Ontario. When spring arrived the remainder of the Cassidy clan travelled on to Hungerford Township in Hastings County, Ontario. Here, in return for clearing land, building road frontages and a cabin measuring at least 16 by 24 feet, the Cassidys were given land grants. They now had realised their dream of owning their own farms. Or had they?



▲ **This stone was part of the foundation of the Cassidy homestead, 1813-1847 in the parish of Clonmore Ireland. It was brought to Canada in 1987 and ever since been displayed at family reunions. It has become a relic, honoured and even treated by some as the "Cassidy Blarney Stone." Soil from the 19 acres known as the Cassidy fields was scattered over the Canadian graves of William Cassidy and Mary Dunn. Denied ownership in his own native land, now these Canadian pioneers own a piece of Ireland forever.**

In Hungerford due to a survey error or shoddy mapping, William Cassidy senior built his cabin on Lot 26 Concession 6. It transpired that he had built his first Canadian farmhouse on land allocated to the McGraths. He had to start over again. Like many of their fellow emigrants from south Wicklow who ended up in this part of Canada, the Cassidys were staunch supporters of their church and their schools. A few years after settling in a new land, the Cassidys built the first schoolhouse in Shingle Lane.

In 1854, while in his 78th year, William Cassidy senior passed to his reward. He is buried in St. Edmunds cemetery in Stoco, Ontario. His wife, Mary Dunn, lived out the remainder of her life with her son Christopher. She is buried alongside her husband and her daughter Brigid who died in 1855 at the age of 15.

William Cassidy had been a patriarchal figure amongst his extended family. In Oscar Schindler fashion he had led 27 of his kinfolk from their homeland in Killinure, County Wicklow to Hungerford, Ontario. Today, amongst the Cassidy descendants, the bonds of kinship are just as strong as they were when they left the Crab Lane on an April morning in 1847. The database of Cassidy descendants throughout Canada and the U.S. now numbers more than 3,000.

A CASSIDY CLAN BLESSING

May your party shelf be always full
With a home that's warm and stable,
May your kitchen be a meeting place
Children's feet beneath its table.

May family troubles be not large
May old gain comfort from our youth,
May you share the wisdom brought by age
And friends respect you for your truth.

May you respect our heritage
And honour those who came before,
May you never forget the sacrifice
That brought the Cassidys to these shores.

May our good name always survive
God help us to endeavour,
From one generation to the next
May our Clan go on forever.

May you not fear life's passing days
Do your best and when you're through,
May Heaven's gate swing open wide
Your own mother's arms to welcome you.