

Below is a transcription of the text of Ellie O'Sullivan's letter to her godson, Edmond Burgess born May 1859 (I have seen other secondary records giving the dob as 1853).

"Eddy" is migrating to Australia with his uncle, Michael Magnor.

Edmond is my great-grand uncle as he is the son of John Burgess and Abigail McBride and sister to Mary Agnes, my great grandmother.

A copy of the original letter which also appears below was passed to me by my father, Michael Christian Daly, during his genealogical researches in the early 1980's. There is no indication of where the original letter is.

MWJ Daly
Brisbane
June 2009

*14 Grand Parade
Cork
March 9th 1875*

My Dear Eddie,

As I hear that you are going away to Queensland with your uncle, I write to wish you a safe voyage & every wish & blessing. I send you a little gift and only wish I could afford to give you a better one, but you must take "the will for the deed". At all events you have my best wishes & I will pray for your safe journey & your success in life. I am sure you will continue to be always the good boy you now are & never forget your father & mother and your little sisters & brothers & also whatever part of the world you may be in never neglect your duty to God & faith. His Blessings you will have every success.

Hoping Please God dear Eddie, we may meet again some day. With every good wish & love to you.

*I remain my dear Eddie
Your affectionate Godmother*

Ellie O'Sullivan

What was happening in Ireland at the time of Eddie's emigration? Why did he undertake a relatively dangerous voyage to the ends of the world? Why did he decide to forsake his family and friends forever?

14 Grand Parade
Cork
March 9th 1875

My Dear Eddie
as I hear that you are going away to America with your uncle, I write to wish you a safe voyage & every wish & blessing. I send you a little gift and only wish I could afford to give you a better one, but you must take "the will for the deed." at all events you have my best wishes & I will pray for your safe journey & your success in life. I am sure you will continue to be always the good boy you now are & never forget your father & mother and your little sisters & brothers & also whatever part of the world you may be in never neglect your duty to God & faith. His Blessings you will have every success.
Hoping Please God dear Eddie, we may meet again some day. With every good wish & love to you
I remain my dear Eddie
your affectionate
godmother
E. M. O'Sullivan

Ireland underwent major highs and lows economically during the 19th century. from economic booms to severe economic downturns and a series of famines, the last threatening in 1879. The worst of these was the Great Irish Famine (1845-1849), in which about one million people died and another million emigrated.

Ireland's economic problems were in part the result of the small size of Irish landholdings.

1870

The first Irish Land Act (introduced by PM Gladstone) was passed with the objective of providing some protection in law for tenants.

However well-intentioned, the Act, fewer than 1,000 tenants took up the provisions since the terms were beyond most peasants and many landlords did not wish to sell. In 1871 the government had to pass the Coercion Act because of the increase in violence in Ireland and it lost support to the Home Rule Movement.

1872

Sectarian rioting broke out in Belfast. Several Catholics were killed as Protestant mobs forced Catholic families out of Malvern Street.

1873

Isaac Butt, a Protestant MP and president of the Amnesty Association, established the Home Government Association to campaign for 'Home Rule' for Ireland. In essence 'Home Rule', proposed that Ireland should have its own parliament for domestic matters whilst remaining an integral part of the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland.

1874

Following the results of the British election Prime Minister Gladstone lost office and were replaced by a new Conservative government. Of the 105 Irish seats, some 60 of these were won by candidates pledged to support the call for Home Rule. This group then came together to form the Irish Parliamentary Party. A House of Commons motion proposing the introduction of Home Rule for Ireland was easily defeated.