

THE SULLIVAN FAMILY: PIONEERS

by

Joseph O'Connell Sullivan

First published in 1912,

Retyped, corrected and reissued in 1982

by

George Thomas McDonald,

With appendices of interest regarding the Sullivans.

Ellen Kennedy Willis
Father Joseph Doman Kennedy
Grandmother Clara Curran
Great Grandmother M. Alice Sullivan Curran
Great Great Grandfather James Sullivan
Great Great Great Grandparents
Patrick Sullivan
Julia Mosse

Ellen Willis Received Oct 1986 from
Ev Lynn and Bub (Francis Kennedy)

PREFACE TO THE 1982 EDITION

This work was written and published in the Fall of 1912 by Joseph O'Connell Sullivan, son of Joseph Sullivan, and grandson of Patrick and Julia Sullivan. While not a particularly in-depth work, it was far ahead of its time in anticipating the present interest in family history. The original edition fell into obscurity, but enough copies survived to ensure its preservation.

In 1981 I obtained a copy of this history, which was so old as to be very nearly illegible. I decided to retype it, make the necessary corrections, and reissue it with a selection of other material regarding the early Sullivan family. I hope by so doing that I will be able to help keep alive the memory of one of the early pioneer families of Wisconsin.

No attempt has been made herein to detail the Sullivan family beyond the children of the first American-born generation, as such records are generally available to any interested person if they wish to look for them. However, the material included in these pages is not so generally accessible, as public record keeping in those early days was haphazard at best. The descendants of Patrick and Julia Sullivan are extremely numerous, and are scattered from Virginia to Washington State.

In fairness to Joseph O'Connell Sullivan, I must say that it was only necessary to make a very few corrections to his original text. These are clearly marked, while the original text is preserved verbatim. Mr. Sullivan did his work well.

Joseph O'Connell Sullivan was born April 16, 1865 and died May 27, 1931. He never married. He was quite a remarkable man, being during his lifetime a columnist for the Shullsburg, Wisconsin Pick and Gad, free-lance mining engineer, farmer, poet, historian, showman and traditional fiddle-player. He always held a keen interest in history in general, and the history of his home-place and family in particular. However,

as was often the case in his time, he was relatively uneducated in the modern sense of the word. Therefore, his original text contains numerous errors in spelling and punctuation. These, in the interest of originality, have been left as they stand. Changes have only been made in cases where to preserve the original would be to risk misinterpretation.

Most of the additional material included in this edition is either from the pen of Joseph O'Connell Sullivan or his father, Joseph Sullivan. It is largely due to the efforts of these two men that the history of the Sullivan family has survived at all.

In the final sentences of his 1912 work Joseph O'Connell Sullivan stated that if his efforts were found of sufficient interest to merit preservation, he would feel amply rewarded. I hope, then, wherever Mr. Sullivan may be, that he indeed feels rewarded, and extend to him and to his father, albeit belatedly, the congratulations due them not only as pioneers, but also as pioneer family historians.

George Thomas McDonald.
Great-great-great-great grandson of
Patrick and Julia Sullivan.
Madison, Wisconsin. 1982.

INTRODUCTION

This little work is not intended for general distribution, as it would be of little interest except to descendeants of the Sullivan family, but as some copies will reach the hands of others besides relatives, a few words concerning the reasons for its publication may not be out of place.

The pioneers of LaFayette County have nearly all passed away, and soon accurate records may be difficult or impossible to obtain; therefore, if the story of their lives and their sacrifices is to be told, now is an appropriate time to do so. Here and there, perhaps, some of this grand old class of people may still be found, who, like sturdy old Oaks, have broached many storms and remain to show the character of their companions, grand and magnificent still in the twilight of their life's day; but their work is done, and soon all will be gone. To all such, the writer extends a friendly greeting, and likewise, at the same time, an apology. It would be both a pleasure and an honor to write the narrative of their lives and deeds, but lack of means and materials forbids; therefore, the task must be left to others.

The contents of this little work are plainly indicated by the title; it is purely a biography, or History, of the older Sullivan Family, the object being to place in convenient form such dates and facts as are deemed worthy of preservation. We trust that no one will misunderstand our motives, and ask the reader to judge the work charitably, as it is issued solely to preserve the family records, and not through any feeling of personal pride, other than that of being descended from one of the many Pioneer families of the great state of Wisconsin, and LaFayette County.

It is not our desire to claim for the Sullivans any credit or honors that may rightfully belong to others, and writing from the standpoint of a relative, both praise and censure are equally out of place. A work of this kind; to be of any value must be accurate; exact dates could not, however, be obtained in all cases, while some points have necessarily been left to the

reader and public to decide; but aside from these we believe the matter given to be strictly correct. The family does not appear to have figured much in business or public affairs, but we believe that this was due more to a disinclination for such life than to any lack of opportunity. At times they have held township offices, but generally seem to have preferred the country home and the quiet of the farm. Many other names figure more largely in the early settlement and progress of Shullsburg and vicinity, but it is not our place to write their history, much as we might like to do. In the last pages hereof, however, is given a brief history of early Shullsburg from records left by the Sullivan family where some of these names appear, but lack of space prevents more than a brief mention of such, and the list is by no means complete.

The labor involved in the preparation of the work has been much greater than was anticipated, and had it not been for the encouragement and co-operation of friends and those interested, probably would never have been completed; but at no time has the task been otherwise than pleasant, not in the end altogether without compensation, for however incomplete or imperfect the work may be, something; at least, in the way of experience has been gained. Acknowledgement is here made of many kind offers of assistance, which although greatly appreciated, it was thought best to decline, and our thanks are due the different members of the family for their aid in securing the information sought.

No attempt at "literary style" has been made herein, as it was not at first our intention to have the work published, but we ask the reader to kindly overlook this, and under the circumstances believe that no further apology is necessary.

Fall of 1912.

The Author.

PART ONE

PATRICK AND JULIA SULLIVAN

Patrick and Julia Sullivan

Patrick Sullivan, Pioneer, and head of the family to whom this work is dedicated, was born in County Waterford, Ireland, in the year of 1793 (THIS IS AN ERROR, PATRICK SULLIVAN WAS BORN MARCH 17, 1792. TO BE SPECIFIC, HE WAS A NATIVE OF THE PARISH OF NEWTOWN, TOWN OF KILMACTHOMAS, CO. WATERFORD. - McDONALD.), and Julia Gosse, his wife, was born in Switzerland, in 1795 (SHE WAS BORN IN MARCH OF 1795, AND WAS A NATIVE OF THE TOWN OF SINNENICKER, SWITZERLAND- McDONALD.), both coming to this country when quite young and at nearly the same time. Our records do not show the date or place of their marriage, but it occurred in the year 1820, and either at St. Louis, or some place in southern Illinois, probably the latter, where the first few years of their married life were spent.

In the Spring of 1828, the family came to Shullsburg, or Dublin, as it was then called, the trip by Ox-team from southern Illinois occupying about three weeks. While the rich lead mines were no doubt the lure that drew so many adventurous spirits here in these early days, yet Mr. Sullivan does not seem to have had any inclination for mining, but engaged in teaming, and such other work as he could find. During the summer he moved his family to Blue Mounds, Wisconsin, where he continued to follow the occupation of teaming until the fall of the same year- 1828 - when they again moved back to Dublin, where three of the children were ~~born~~ -- - John, in January 1829, Patrick, in March 1831, and William, who was born in the Fort on the 15th day of August 1832.

From Dublin, or Shullsburg, the family moved in the spring of 1831 to the Drybone, where in addition to teaming, they cultivated a small field of ground, and it was while living here, on what is now the Sam Derocher farm, that the Blackhawk war broke out, spreading terror and consternation among the border settlements. Mr. Sullivan and family, and practically the entire population of Dublin were forced to seek safety

in the Fort at Galena, and compelled by circumstances to get there as best they could, some having Ox-teams, and others going on foot, but all arrived safely, without accident or incident; after travelling all night. Captain Hamilton, in command of a company of Volunteers, composed mostly of men from Dublin, was sent back to build a Fort, after which all returned to Shullsburg, where for a time they lived in hourly expectation of an Indian raid, which, however, never came.

At the close of the Blackhawk War, Mr. Sullivan moved to New Diggings Township, and from there, in the year 1833, to what is known as the Old Sullivan Homestead, partly in the Towns of Seymour and New Diggings. It has been said that the Sullivans were the first settlers and built the first house in what is now the township of Seymour, but this claim was not made by the family themselves, and may not be strictly true. The first house built by Mr. Sullivan was just west of the township line, in New Diggings, and was a small log building, erected in 1833, while the second building, on Section 30, town of Seymour, which is still standing, was not built until 1842. The latter is a frame building, the timbers of which are of Oak, and were sawed at "Daddy" Cook's sawmill on upper Fever River.

This house, while not pretentious, was comfortable, and ample for the needs of the family, and here they entertained many a weary traveller with food and shelter for himself and beast. Here Patrick and Julia Sullivan met and shared alike both joy and sorrow, for here some of their children were born, and here, too, was where some of them died. Here, also, in later years, the young folks and often the older ones gathered at the old fashioned Country Dance, while the old homestead rang with the merry strains of "Money Musk" the "Arkansas Traveller" and other old favorite tunes, played, in a manner such as only the old-time musicians could play them. In these early days neighbors were not plentiful, nor very near,

but all were "neighbors" indeed, in the true sense of the word, and while pioneer life may not have been all sunshine and roses, yet the people of that period seem to have been more contented, more honest, and in general as one writer has asserted, less of a fraud than at the present day. Absorbed in the work of making a home and with none of the later temptations to extravagance, life flowed peacefully and uneventfully on until the ebb of the tide, which sooner or later bears all away upon its receding waves.

After the close of the Blackhawk war the Indians did not at once disappear, but small bands continued to roam through the country and on one occasion the Sullivan family upon arising in the morning discovered that a Village of Wigwams had sprung up during the night on the hillside about half a mile from the house. During the day Mr. Sullivan visited the encampment, which he found to be that of a hunting party of Winnebagoes, and was received in a friendly manner by the Indians who were then at peace with the whites. As they were about to eat, they invited him to remain and share their meal, which, however, he declined, upon seeing the character of the victuals, which consisted of "greens" and the entrails of a deer boiled up together - a savory mess, no doubt, but not very tempting to the appetite of a white man. Later, some of the Indians, having wounded a deer, called at the Sullivan home for the purpose of getting the dogs to trail it down, but at their approach the Sullivan boys sought refuge under the bed and as the dogs would not go unless the boys went too, the Indians were forced to go away disappointed. They however got even with the boys by stooping down and making faces at them as they lay huddled up under the bed, thinking, no doubt, that every minute would be their last.

Patrick Sullivan served as a private in Capt. Hamilton's Company, Wisconsin Volunteers, during the Blackhawk War, and this company as has before been stated, built the Fort or stockade at Shullsburg. He never held public office, as far

as we know, but was we believe, a member of the first petit jury for Lafayette County in the year of 1847.

Mr. Sullivan is described as a man of medium height, and rather slightly built, with a fair education, and quiet, unassuming manner. Mrs. Sullivan, as has before been stated, was a native of Switzerland, and spoke with a pronounced accent, and was a woman of generous disposition and very great energy. No picture of either one is now known to exist. Both sleep side by side in the Old Catholic Cemetery, at Shullsburg, and the following inscription appears on the Monument over their graves;

"Patrick Sullivan,
Died January 21, 1858, aged 65 years.

Julia Sullivan
Died December 29, 1857. Aged 62 Years.

Beneath this stone lie the Mortal Remains of Patrick Sullivan and his wife, Julia. Their affectionate children dedicate this Tablet to their memory as a mark of their affection and as a Monument of Divine Interposition."**

The Sullivan family like many others, has changed greatly in Sixty Years. Of the eleven childre - - eight sons and three daughters - - only one, James Sullivan, at present residing in North New Diggings, and past seventy-six years of age, is now living, while most of their descendents have either blazed the way or followed the trail of civilization to the western states. Neither Patrick Sullivan nor his wife lived to be very old, but they lived to see the country thickly settled with near neighbors on all sides and to build up a comfortable home and a competance where once was the unbroken prarie and virgin forest of Seymour and New Diggings. At their death the old homestead became the property of their sons Owen and John, the former of whom died in 1859, but John Sullivan and family lived there until 1877 when they sold the place and moved to Platteville. It is now a part of the Phillip Lacke estate.***

** NOT A COMPLETE COPY OF THE INSCRIPTION - McDONALD

*** MUCH OF THE OLD SULLIVAN HOMESTEAD REMAINED IN THE HANDS OF DESCENDENTS FOR MANY DECADES, SOME UNTIL THE PRESENT TIME (1982). - McDONALD