THE LIFE AND TIMES OF
MARY DRISCOLL
(1822-1915)

By

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History 300
8-23-1980

From The Savannah Biographies, Volume 5. Lane Library, Armstrong Atlantic State University, Savannah, Georgia 31410-1997
It is necessary to suggest from the start that Mary Driscoll evolved into the most interesting person who has graced me with the opportunity to research her background. It is with great regret that due largely to a lack of time, fuller coverage of this subject has been impossible. From time to time as new information surfaces, it will be supplied to this paper as a supplement. If per chance the reader should stumble onto some bits and pieces of the puzzle, please add such to this material.

Much of this biographical sketch is speculation and not completely documented. These are listed as such and circumstantial explanations are attempted in the appendix. May you enjoy some of the discoveries cited as the presenter of this paper has and will continue to do so.
"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Such which my mind recalls is indicative of the life and times of Mary Driscoll. Although, specifics of her character remain a puzzle, it is fair to conclude that she was a woman among women. She experienced many trials and tribulations during her life, but vanquished them admirably with confidence. She lived to be 93 years old.

To have lived in the midst of three wars, become a widow and to live to bury four of her own children, she survived the battle of nerves such incidences create. It is suggested to you, the reader, that she did so with a triumph of the will. Yes, Mary Driscoll overcame, not because she had to, but because she willed to do so for the good of her family and for the good of humanity indirectly.
Mrs. Mary Driscoll
(1822-1915)

Mary Driscoll or O'Driscoll is a fine example of a courageous woman who endured much pain and sorrow during multiple periods of her life. Despite the onslaught of adverse events from time to time, she fulfilled her role admirably as a person, a wife and a mother. It is intended to depict Mrs. Driscoll in retrospect from scarce information resources in terms of her character. From this author's perspective that character is one of a strong will, to take life's rewards and punishments in stride. She received her share of both. That character spoken of above was affected by the contemporary spirit of the times, happenings of the times and by the most important people in her life, her family.

1. One winterish day in December of 1822 a couple awoke with the realization that they had become the proud parents of a daughter who they named Mary in the dominion of some part of Ireland. As all proud parents they nurtured her and began to teach her about cherished values which she would never put aside as folly. Mary's or Aimie's earlier days can be described as that of a normal Irish Catholic family during the period. The calendar years rolled by and suddenly Aimie was a young woman very mature for her age. Near the year 1840 Ireland experienced a broad and consuming potatoe famine. Many Irish people fled their homes during the period bound for the United States and other countries seeking golden opportunities unavailable in their homelands. Many of these people unable to afford the venture came to this country in service. Such is the case with Mary who at the tender age of 17 or 18 in 1840 also immigrated to the United States probably in service. She did so leaving her parents behind. Soon she arrived in the Americas probably at the Port of Charleston in South Carolina where so many Irish immigrants first set foot on American soil. Thus a new chapter began in her life.
Initially, Mary was impressed with her adopted homeland as she was equally discouraged by the bias of the times towards people of her nationality. It must be recalled that slavery still existed and white indentured servants were normal entities. It is fair to suggest on resources available that her first few years in this country must have been tough given the spirit of the times. Also soon two wars would witness American participation and times were unstable politically and economically. Aimie soon met a nice American male in the person of William C. O'Driscoll. He was a successful small businessman who could be considered very wealthy in the context of his time given five figure accounts of his estate at a later date. After a proper length of time as a good catholic should, she accepted his proposal of marriage. They were probably married in South Carolina between 1845 - 1847. 

Alas, Mary became Mrs. Driscoll or more appropriately Mrs. O'Driscoll. At first she went under the name Aimee Miriam O'Driscoll. In 1847 she had Francis, her first child. She would have five more children during her childbearing years. There names were Cornelius, James, Kate, John and Mary.

Mrs. O'Driscoll experienced many hard knocks throughout her life. It has been previously mentioned that she survived two wars and now a third war which was the great war to end all wars took place in her lifetime also. The fact that her husband left her a widow in 1871 didn’t soften the knocks. And the fact that her husband left all of his belongings to his grands and not to her, indicates the possibility that there may even have been some marital problems. The fact that they were not divorced if the speculation is accurate is no indicator as catholics seldom divorced which could incur heavy penalties by their faith. Perhaps her saddest hour is in the deaths of four of her children. It is most depressing to outlive a child. Even her grandson, the Infant Driscoll, died at three days old on July 12, 1896 and was buried at the Catholic Cemetery in Section M. Lot # 39. These events could drive an otherwise sane person insane.
It can be conceived that her motto was to live every day and every hour if her actions are to be interpreted. She refused to allow the demise of her husband and four children get to her. Her game was survival and she was the fittest. As her first task to overcome the malaise, she bought and established a new home located at 418 Bryan Street. On July 6, 1886 she was indentured by Southern Mutual Loan Association for the sum of $1,500 used to purchase the eastern half of lot #10 in the Warren Ward. The property was bounded on the north by a lane, on the east by lot #9, on the south by Bryan Street and on the west by the western half of lot #10. The property was initially subject to an annual ground rent of $7.50 payable to the Mayor and Alderman. On April 2, 1890, Mary Driscoll paid 166 dollars to the City Council permanently releasing exclusive ownership to her. Not much is known of her subsequent activities, but it is certain that her children must have brought smiles to her figure while they lived.

Each child of Mrs. Driscoll led lives representative of integrity. Francis matured to become a successful merchant in the family firm of O'Driscoll and Guhne. He became a family man when he married Belle Cohen on May 8, 1866. They had three lovely children named Edith, Fanny or Frances and Belle.

Cornelius continued to work at A.& G.H.R. and later at S.F. & W. Ry. in 1879. James also became a family man by getting married to Anna Higgins on July 25, 1868. He was employed as a grocer and ran a saloon until his death. Kate continued to live with her mother at their new home referred to above. Of her surviving son and daughter as of 1900, John was her favorite son while Mary was her favorite daughter.

John Driscoll became the proud husband of Mary Cash on June 19, 1895. They had one daughter, May who eventually married Walter F. Schaal of Miami on January 21, 1925 and moved to Miami herself. John was a sexton by profession for the Catholic Cemetery after bouts as a laborer and longshoreman. Jhn's wife, Mary, followed in the courageous tradition of Mary O'Driscoll as a per-
son. She, too, was an Irish immigrant, one girl among three brothers named Andrew, Joseph and Michael Cash. She was employed as a clerk in Gray & O'Brien and later with K. Platshek. Finally, Mary Driscoll continued to live at their new homestead.

Triumph of the will in a word concisely describes the good and the bad times in the life of Mrs. O'Driscoll. The good times were sweet and yet the bad times were all so bitter. It is clear that the will to survive as the prime imperative co-mingled with the closeness of her family as indicated by the number of children staying home, helped make the burdens bearable. This fabulous personage was very pragmatic as she began to look towards the grave.

Although, never abandoning a zest for life, she began to prepare for her demise being a realist in the knowledge that her days were numbered. On December 20, 1898 she prepared her last will and testament. In the event of her death all personal property would revert to Mary Driscoll, the executor, while all real property would be diverted to John Driscoll, the executor of the estate. Of course, they were her Daughter and Son respectively.

Beginning on June 6, 1915, Mrs. Driscoll became very ill of Maup Ploquin. Six days later the courageous domestic worker from Ireland who came to this country amid troubled times and experienced some hard knocks it is certain to her surprise died. An invitation to attend her funeral service was issued in the newspaper. The service began from her home at 3:30 P.M. at continued at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist Church at 4:00 P.M. Later that same Sunday, she was buried at the Catholic Cemetery on June 13, 1915. This warrior had stifled off adverse circumstances and now she died at the ripe old age of 93 years. Yet her legend lives on in her family and in her history.

This biographical sketch has intended to gather information from scarce data to depict the life and times of Mary Driscoll in terms of the spirit
and historical significance of the time as well as how her family may have influenced her character. In summary this paper suggests that she possessed a strong will which allowed her to make avail of every living moment despite the extremely difficult occurrences in her life. As she now rests in peace she must be satisfied that while she was in this world she fulfilled most of her obligations to Him.
APPENDIX

Several assumptions serve as the foundation of this negative biography. These assumptions are not based on solid documentation, but rather on inference from a variety of primary and secondary resources. The evidence of a circumstantial nature was convincing enough to be used in this presentation. Some of these basic assumptions include the marriage of Mary Driscoll and Wm. C. O'Driscoll, their parenage of 6 children, the death of her alleged husband, the death of her 3 day old grandson and even the conclusion that her daughter-in-law had three brothers. Here we will try to elaborate on those conclusions, suggest sources as yet to be traced and to suggest other sources traced in vain.

It is clear to your writer that the odds of Wm. C. O'Driscoll being married to Mary Driscoll are better than even. Let us deal first with the nominal differences.

The research project card issued to me listed the subject’s name as Mary Driscoll. If the 1900 Census is accepted as valid, we can conclude that she took a liberal approach with her name as many people of the period did. The cited Census listed her and her son, John, as O'Driscoll. An 1850 Census records a Aimie Miriam O'Driscoll which is a diminutive for Mary. The latter Census also lists her age as being 28. This age is identical to what Mary Driscoll's would be at the time in 1850 and, as suggested, Aimie Miriam are substitutes for Mary and we have already witnessed her liberal attitude with her name. Thus her last name is identical to the alleged husband's and they lived at the same location in 1850. He was 36 and she was 28, a compatible age. Francis O'Driscoll was listed at the same address and his age was three years old. It is reasonable to assume that they were married probably in S.C., their listed origins in this country, and had a son Fran-
We could be more precise here if a marriage record could be found probably by checking S.C. archives. No local records establish such a connection. By writing Macon or Salt Lake City, the immigration records could provide additional data. She is listed to have immigrated in 1840 by the 1900 Census. Also, Aimie Miriam O'Driscoll is listed as buried with Wm. C. O'Driscoll in Bonaventure Cemetery. Although originally buried at Catholic Cemetery, her body could have later been removed which may be why there is no given lot number for her at the Catholic Cemetery. Burial records at the two cited cemeteries are identical to those at Ga. Historical. Records were burned at the Catholic one and although a lot number is given at Bonaventure, it is insufficient information to locate the grave. One would have to look at every grave to trace it down.

As for the other five children, a brief look through city directories and cemetery records as well as certain Census reports all cited in the bibliography all tend to establish the relationship cited. It may be an age correlation in comparison to the marriage and deaths of the presumed father and mother. It may be facts surrounding identical residencies, particularly those living with our subject. It would be helpful to obtain birth certificates away from our area if such exists. Also, many of them are buried in the Catholic Cemetery.

We conclude that our husband died somewhere between 1877-1878. He signed his will in 1876 and his executor petitioned for payment of debts on July 26, 1878. Wm. C. O'Driscoll was listed in the 1877 City Directory, but not in the succeeding year. He probably died during 1877 late in the year or in very early 1878.

Infant Driscoll died at 3 days old about a year after John Driscoll married Mary Cash. And Mary probably had three brothers named Joseph A., Michael and Andrew. They all lived at the identical address for prolonged periods. Their ages preclude them from being Mary's (Cash) children.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
8. Estill's Savannah City Directory, 1878.
11. Record of Burial, Catholic Cemetery, Savannah, Georgia, 7-12-1896.
13. Will of Wm. O'Driscoll, June 4, 1876.
15. Record of Marriage Certificates, July 25, 1868. Chatham County.
22. Ibid.
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