

Jesus is Lord



Their Spiritual Home

THEIR SPIRITUAL HOME

The Cochran Family
of Upper Fahan & Buncrana

1719 - 1911



300

Like many of your own forebears, **The Presbyterian church at Fahan** was the spiritual home of my Cochrane ancestors for the best part of 200 years, so it only seemed natural to research these family connections on the occasion of its 300th anniversary.

My family were of an era where the world was on the move, and with the opening up of the colonies in North America, Australia and New Zealand many of my forebears chose a path which saw them settle half a world away, culminating in 1854 with the emigration of the Reverend John Macky, members of the Cochrane family and the Motherwell family from Burt.

I have been very fortunate that I have been able to follow the Cochrane story through a collection of documents and letters written by members of the Macky family, including the shipboard journal written by the Rev. John Macky. My research also led me to further archived material in various New Zealand and Irish collections which helped verify many of the events mentioned in them. As my research gained momentum, I found the whole process so compelling that I decided to take the challenge to the next stage by documenting my research.

One of my very early intentions in documenting their history was also to lay to rest some of the family speculation about the Cochran family's Irish origins, especially their involvement in the running a Flax & Tow Spinning Mill in Buncrana, mentioned in the Macky letters.

Because there was nothing on the official records, not even a mention in local lore about this connection, my cousin, John Hopkins, and I conducted our own research, pooling and sharing information over several months. This work was documented and provided to the *West Inishowen History & Heritage Society*, based in Buncrana.

Each of the following accounts recalls the lives of several of the Cochran descendants through the eyes of each family member. I hope that the reader will find the kind of inspiration I have enjoyed in putting together this piece and will add their own family histories to the archives of the Fahan Presbyterian church as a resource for future generations.

Congratulations on 300 years .

Wanda Hopkins (Cochrane family descendant)

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Purportedly descended from Waldeve de Coueran c. 1260, **the Cochrane family** originated in Fernois near Paisley, in Scotland. The name “Cochrane” derives from “the lands of Cochrane” in this location.

A family manuscript describing the early history of the Cochran family in the north of Ireland, was lodged with the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia. Written in 1730, it is now known colloquially as the “Deaf Robert” transcript. Robert was a contemporary and cousin of Fahan’s first minister, Ninian Cochran. This account also had the early part of the American history added about 150 years later, but unfortunately there is no later transcript about those in the family who remained in Ireland during the 1800s.

According to this record, a John Cochran of Fernois, first settled in Griblen near Londonderry and then moved to the salmon fisheries near the Foughan Creek in the 1570s. This date predates the official Ulster plantation by more than 35 years so it is assumed that they were just a part of the established migratory pattern between the lowlands of Scotland, and Ulster.

Over time, family gradually found its way from the Londonderry townlands to rural Donegal where they settled and engaged in a number of occupations, both in the linen trade and as farmers and merchants. Others became men of the cloth.

There are a number of historical references to the Cochran family in Buncrana, Burt, Chrislaghmore, Castrues and a number of other nearby townlands and parishes.

Related families over more than one generation include Macky, Dysart, Orr, Motherwell and Cowan. Others include McElwain (Coleraine) and Alexander (Derry).

“I know yet there many things yet are not in due order by reason of the weakness of my memory, and some may be from misinformation, but I have intended the truth. I had one written before but not in any method I was not much of a scholar. I write these lines in order I may not be easily censured by those who it may concern. I conclude I may put my hand to what I have written”.

Robert Cochran
May 1730

Family origins

The Rev. Ninian Cochran is a family member shrouded in mystery and what is known can only be partly verified.

Descended from John Cochran of Fernois, Ninian's date of birth has been put at around 1673, however, this may be as much as ten years later.

Ninian was the second son of Marmaduke Cochran of Mayboy, Londonderry. His mother, Elizabeth Cratts, came from Burt. The early history of the Cochran family's arrival in the north of Ireland is documented in a manuscript commonly known as the "Deaf Robert manuscript" written in 1730. In this manuscript, Robert says, "Ninian not married, he is ye minister of ye gospel in Faun." His siblings include two brothers Joseph and Thomas, and three sisters Jean, Elizabeth (later Murray), and Margaret.

His father and uncle, are also mentioned as being among the ruling elders and commissioners who attended the meetings of the Laggan Presbytery between 1672 and 1700, representing the parish of Glendermott. (Appendix 2)

Namesakes include his grandfather, his uncle and the son of his brother, Thomas. The name Ninian also appears in the family trees of those who later emigrated to Pennsylvania.

Before the advent of higher education in Ulster, it was common for many of Ulster Scots descent to seek out education in Scotland. Like many of his contemporaries Ninian received his BA in 1707 from the University of Glasgow (Appendix 3). He was ordained in February 1719.

During his time as minister of Fahan, Ninian Cochran co-authored a letter to the Rev. Cotton Mather (1663 - 1728) in Boston. Signed by Cochran and nine others, including his brother-in-law, the Rev. Major Murray of Cumber, the letter attempts to address concerns about the character of a James McSparran, a recent emigrant who had come to the attention of Mather (see Appendix 4).

The last mention of Ninian Cochran in this earthly realm is a reference to his Last Will and Testament where he left land at Chrislaghmore to three of his siblings (Appendix 5). Members of the Cochran family would live in the area for a further six generations.

A man of the cloth



Courtesy of Kevin Whittton

Chrislaghmore home of the family of the William Cochran family, formerly of Castrues, painted in 1898. This branch of the family inherited the property from Joseph Cochran who died in 1877. The painting is property of descendants of John Cowan Cochrane, who settled near Essendon in Victoria, Australia.

Chrislaghmore, Co. Donegal



John Kendall Hopkins 2014

Gravesite of Rebecca Cochran nee Orr d. 1826, first wife of Joseph Cochran d. 1865, and mother of Samuel and Joseph Cochran, later of New Zealand.

Dorcas Cochran, d. 1919 is the daughter of Joseph's brother, William, and first cousin of brothers Samuel, Joseph and James Cochrane, and Cochran sisters, Catherine Macky, Rebecca Macky, Ann Alexander and Sarah Campbell.

St Muras, Fahan Co. Donegal

Second Codicil to my will of March

first being attached to the will & bearing same
Cochran do make this Codicil to my will & I be-
legate their legacies & of all legacy
request I have made my wish Mission in con-
with the General (the) Presbyterian Church
in the following terms: The Home
Mission in Connection with the (the) Church, the
Beloved Church of my (the) Mission now goes under
the name of the (the) Irish Mission, I
leave and bequeath from all legacies, fifty pounds annually
to be paid from the Cornshanagh property, by Samuel Cochran
and his heirs & Successors. This bequest I now revoke &
cancel & I leave this £50 fifty pounds annually to. Rev. J.
B. McBride absolutely during his life, a charge on the
Cornshanagh property which I have bequeathed to Samuel
Cochran.

The benefactors



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Presbyterian Church, Fahan, Co. Donegal

1719 - 2019

Following the tradition of naming patterns of the times the Cochran family of Donegal and Londonderry had a succession of Josephs in their family tree, with four close family members sharing that name in the first half of the 19th century. Similarly, the name Samuel was also very common.

The **Joseph Cochran most strongly associated with the Presbyterian Church at Fahan**, was a cousin of his namesake and my 3x great grandfather, Joseph Cochran (1789 - 1865). According to his last will and testament, he was adamant that family money stay in Ireland. He had acquired much property in Co. Donegal, often as the result of other family members forfeiting their rights to various properties through loans, bankruptcy and emigration.

Joseph was the older son of Samuel Cochran (1755 - 1845) and Elizabeth Motherwell of Chrislaghmore. Samuel was the brother of my 4x great grandfather, Joseph (1753 - 1838).

The newspapers note that Joseph's father, Samuel, donated two silver flagons to the congregation of the Presbyterian Church at Fahan in 1832 (appendix 6). A Samuel Cochran had also been instrumental in raising money for the rebuilding of the Presbyterian meeting house at Cashel in 1813 (ref. www.fahanchurch.org).

Six years prior to his death in 1877, "cousin" Joseph granted two acres of land at a nominal rent for the building of a manse. There had been some difficulty acquiring freehold land nearby (ref. Northern Whig, 10/2/1871).


But by far the largest act of generosity arose from Joseph Cochran's Last Will & Testament. It also caused the most controversy with various family members or "heirs-in-law" contesting the will, including Samuel Cochrane of New Zealand (at the time NZ Emigration Agent in Belfast), Joseph Macky, third son the Rev. John Macky and Rebecca Cochrane Macky of New Zealand, and the Rev. Joseph Morton of Roscommon (family connection not established). The Irish newspapers tracked these court cases and their outcomes over a period of two years.

While the bulk of his property was left to his cousin, William Cochran of Castrues, and subsequently to William's son, Samuel, he also left a very generous bequest to the Rev. J B McBride minister of the Fahan Presbyterian church, and one of the executors of the will. This legacy consisted of a one-off payment of £200, and £20 to an endowment which became known as the Cochran Endowment payable to the Minister of the church. A codicil increased this to £70 p.a. to be paid in two £35 instalments in May and November. A further £4 was payable from the property "Roddy's Hill". The land the manse was built on also became rent-free.

Joseph Cochran's will also stipulated that the Carnshanagh School house be left to the Minister & Session of Fahan Presbyterian Church.

In response to the Cochran and other similar endowments, the 1885 Educational Endowments (Ireland) Act was put into statute. Although not finalised for a further eight years, this Act protected and lay down the rules governing all endowments of, and belonging to the congregations under the care of the Presbytery of Derry and in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

£50. 0. 0
Received from Samuel Cochrane Esq
Fifty Pounds less Income Tax being the
Amount of One years Annuity to the Rev^d
J. B. McBride Under the Will of Joseph
Cochrane Esq due and ending 10th June
1891 one.
Dated this 16th July 1891.
John B. McBride



Courtesy of Robin Moran

Official receipt for annual bequest to Rev.
John B McBride dated 16/7/1891, Presbyterian
Church of Fahan.

“After granting various small legacies to relations and others, testator (Joseph Cochran d.1877) bequested to Rev. John McBride of the Presbyterian congregation at Fahan where the testator and his ancestors had for the last 150 years resided “

Freemans Journal, 5/6/1878



Courtesy of Robin Moran

Current day photograph of the former manse belonging to the Presbyterian Church of Fahan, built on land donated by Joseph Cochran in 1871, and bequeathed, free of rent, in his Last Will & Testament, in 1877.