

Notes on the family of Patrick O'Brien and Phoebe Loree

The immigrant ancestor of the O'Brien family of Dearborn County, Indiana, was Patrick O'Brien, a native of Ireland [Sources: Patrick O'Brien [Jr.] family Bible; 1850 US Census]. A more specific birthplace in Ireland is not known. It is given differently in three separate sources:

1. County Cavan, Ireland
The family Bible of Patrick O'Brien [Jr.], owned by Gerald O'Brien of Henderson, Tennessee [1995]
2. Dublin, Ireland
"Ripley County, Genealogy--O'Briens" by Cornelius O'Brien [date unknown]
3. Kevin Killislander Township, County Kildare, Ireland
Source: *Seedlings: A History of the Ehler and O'Brien Families of Dearborn and Ripley Counties Indiana* by Arethusa Katherina Watts, 1966

There is no Kevin Killislander Township in County Kildare, however, there is a Killeshandra Parish in County Cavan. "Kevin Killislander" may be a corruption of Cavan Killeshandra, suggesting that Patrick O'Brien was from the area of Killeshandra in County Cavan, Ireland.

The same O'Brien family Bible noted above gives the birth date of Patrick O'Brien as 17 March 1791.

An account of his voyage to America as a young stowaway is given in *Seedlings*. Regardless of how he reached the United States, it appears that he may have been living in Ohio by 1812. Records made by the U.S. government at the time of the beginning of the War of 1812 may show Patrick O'Brien was in Hamilton County, Ohio, by September 1812. The records, as listed in a publication, *British Aliens in the U.S. During the War of 1812*, by Kenneth Scott, 1979, p. 369, includes:

O'Brien, Patrick, age 22, 3 years in U.S., Hamilton Co., [Ohio] weaver,
native of Ireland (18 Sept. - 16 Oct. 1812)

If this is Patrick O'Brien, it would indicate that he came to the United States in about 1809 at about the age of 19. [Note: Killeshandra, County Cavan, was a flax-growing and linen-processing region and would have employed many weavers.]

Regardless of whether this is Patrick O'Brien or not, it appears likely that he was in Ohio by at least about 1813, when he presumably would have married Phoebe Loree. This date is based on the age of their oldest child. [No marriage record for Patrick O'Brien and Phoebe Loree has yet been found.]

The last name of Phoebe is based on the death certificate of her son William O'Brien, who died on 19 February 1900. His mother's "maiden name in full" is given as "Phoebe K. Loree."

Other circumstantial evidence that supports this includes:

1. *Seedlings*, which gives two possibilities: "Scottish--Hart" or "French--Lorre."
2. The first two children of Patrick and Phoebe were named Experience and Solomon,

perhaps for Solomon and Experience Loree, her likely parents. They were both from New Jersey, as was Phoebe Loree.

3. After the death of Patrick O'Brien, Phoebe married John Cunningham. John Cunningham's first wife, Elizabeth Loree (a presumed daughter of Solomon and Experience Loree), is likely a sister of Phoebe. Elizabeth Loree Cunningham was born in New Jersey in 1801. John and Elizabeth Cunningham named one of their children "Pheby," perhaps for Elizabeth's sister.

4. Solomon O'Brien (a son of Patrick and Phoebe) named one of his children Lowre [Bible] or Loring [1870 census], both of which may be earlier spellings of Loree. (This person also later was known by the name of "Loren.")

Phoebe (often spelled as Phebe) was born in New Jersey on 26 November 1797 [Source: Patrick O'Brien [Jr.] family Bible].

Seedlings notes that "they were said to have lived at or near Harrison, [Hamilton County] Ohio." The birth dates and birthplaces of the children indicate that they moved to Dearborn County, Indiana, about 1819.

Patrick, Phoebe, and their children are found in four U.S. censuses:

1820 Dearborn County, Indiana [Perhaps in Lawrenceburg Township, as originally defined in 1826, which included all of present-day Lawrenceburg and Miller Townships, and parts of York and Center Townships.]

Males	3 under 10	1 26-44
Females	1 under 10	1 16-25

1830 Kelso Township, Dearborn County, Indiana

Males	2 5-9	2 10-14	1 30-39
Females	2 under 5	1 15-19	1 30-39

1840 Jackson Township, Dearborn County, Indiana

Males	2 15-19	2 20-29	1 40-49
Females	2 10-14		1 40-49

1850 Jackson Township, Dearborn County, Indiana

[66 66]			
Patrick O'Brien	62	M	Ireland
Phoebe	54	F	New Jersey
Hester Ann	24	F	Indiana
Elizabeth	20	F	Indiana
Patrick	32	M	Ohio

Based on these census records and what is known of the O'Brien family from other records, the family of Patrick and Phoebe can be reconstructed:

Children	Approx. birth year	Age when census was taken			
		1820	1830	1840	1850
Experience	1814	6	16	married	married
Solomon	1816	4	14	24	married
Patrick	1818 (Dec.)	1	11	21	31 [32]
William	1820 (Aug.)	0	9	19	married
Barzilla Miles	1822		8	18	married
Polly	1824		-	-	-
Hester Ann	1825/26		4/5	14/15	24/25
Elizabeth	1827 (April)		3	13	23 [20]

This evaluation of census records also makes use of data obtained from the Five Points Cemetery, located at Hubbells Cross Roads [or Hubbells Corner] in Jackson Township, Dearborn County, Indiana. It appears that Polly may have died between her birth in 1824 and the census in 1830, somewhere between the ages of 0 and 6.

Land transactions that seem to be definitely connected to Patrick and Phoebe O'Brien are:

Dearborn County, Indiana

Grantee	Grantor	Description	Sec. T R	Acres
F-157 (\$100) 13 Oct 1825	F-158 (\$200) 18 Sep 1829	Part NW¼	18 6 1 [York]	40
C-310 (\$175) 17 Feb 1829	N-39 (\$840) 31 Mar 1837	E½, NE¼	22 7 2 [Kelso]	79¾
R-465 (\$450) 25 Sep 1837	13-498 (\$1000) 25 Apr 1856	E½, NE¼	25 8 3 [Jackson]	[80]

The first recorded land purchase by Patrick O'Brien was in what is today York Township of Dearborn County. [In 1825 there were apparently no political townships in Dearborn County. When sold in 1829, this property was in Lawrenceburg Township. Today, it is in York Township, which was formed in 1841.] Patrick O'Brien purchased this property from Peter Higdon, who perhaps purchased it directly from the federal government in 1815 [see *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana*, F.E. Weakley & Co., Publishers, Chicago, 1885, p. 569.] The description of this land notes: “. . . beginning at the North East corner of Jacob Burnett's land.” Based on notes in *Seedlings*, there may be a connection between Phoebe and the Burnett family. Jacob Burnett's wife, based on the land record of the sale of the adjacent land [F-159, 160], was named Mary. “Polly” is a nickname for Mary. It may be that this is Polly Loree

Burnett, a sister of Phoebe Loree O'Brien and Elizabeth Loree Cunningham. [Note: The wife of Judge Jacob Burnett, referred to in *Seedlings*, is not Polly Burnett, a sister of Phoebe Loree O'Brien. There may be some relationship between these Burnett families, but the information as given in *Seedlings* is not correct.]

Patrick O'Brien's second property, in Kelso Township, was purchased from Benjamin Bonham, who perhaps purchased it directly from the federal government in 1825 [see *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana*, F.E. Weakley & Co., Publishers, Chicago, 1885, p. 578.]

The disposition of the O'Brien land in Sec. 25 of Jackson Township is somewhat unclear. Patrick O'Brien [Jr.] purchased part for \$1000 at a public sale after the death of Patrick O'Brien [Sr.]. He was later sold 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres of what appears to be the same land by John Cunningham and Phoebe for \$1.00, ". . . being the one third [of] my dower as widow of Patrick O'Brien late of Dearborn County deceased."

Using land and census records combined, the dates of moves made by the O'Briens and the places in which they lived can be approximated.

- 1813-1819 "near Harrison, Ohio" [*Seedlings*]. Patrick O'Brien [Jr.] was born "near Cincinnati, Ohio" on 11 December 1818. The next child, William O'Brien, was born in Dearborn Co., Indiana on 5 August 1820.
- 1819-1825 Perhaps Lawrenceburg Twp., Dearborn Co., Indiana [1820 census]
There is no evidence of the O'Briens' owning land during this time period.
- 1825-1829 Lawrenceburg Twp. [today, York Twp.], Dearborn Co., Indiana (Sec. 18) [land records]
- 1829-1837 Kelso Twp., Dearborn Co., Indiana (Sec. 22) [land records; 1830 census]
- 1837-1851 Jackson Twp., Dearborn Co., Indiana (Sec. 25) [land records; 1840 and 1850 censuses]

There is a suggestion in *Seedlings* that Mississippi land connections with Patrick O'Brien and his sons Patrick [Jr.] and William may date to Patrick's travels in Mississippi prior to his settling in Ohio. [Attempts to verify such connections have not been successful.]

The following are the known children of Patrick and Phoebe O'Brien:

Experience O'Brien

b. ca 1814
Ohio

d.

m. Isaac Richards

17 October 1831

Solomon O'Brien

b. 25 December 1815
Ohio

d. 23 March 1888
Wilmathville, Missouri

m. Samantha Richards

27 September 1840

Patrick O'Brien

b. 11 Dec 1818
Ohio

d. 21 March 1898
Hancock County, Illinois

m. Eunice Gary

30 December 1849

William O'Brien

b. 5 August 1820
Dearborn County, Indiana

d. 19 February 1900
Ripley County, Indiana

m. Rosannah Ehler

15 August 1847

Barzilla Miles O'Brien

b. ca 1822
Dearborn County, Indiana

d. ca August 1851
Dearborn County, Indiana

m¹ Sarah Anderson

13 August 1843

m² Phoebe Jessup

18 October 1849

Polly O'Brien

b. ca 1824 [?]
Dearborn County, Indiana

d. [before 1830?]

Hester Ann O'Brien

b. 1825/26 [calculated from headstone]
Dearborn County, Indiana

d. 23 July 1851 [headstone]
Dearborn County, Indiana

Elizabeth O'Brien

- b. 10 April 1827 [calculated from headstone]
Dearborn County, Indiana
- d. 12 December 1851 [headstone]
Dearborn County, Indiana

Patrick O'Brien died in August of 1851 [Source: Probate Book 5, pp. 137-160, Dearborn Co., Indiana.] Patrick's son Solomon, administrator of the estate, declared that "Patrick O'Brien departed this life in Said County intestate as he [Solomon] believes on the day [sic] of August 1851." No specific date is given.

The following heirs are listed on page 147:

Phoebe O'Brien, widow	
Experience Richards, Isaac Richards	Switzerland County, Indiana
Solomon O'Brien	Dearborn County, Indiana
Patrick O'Brien, Jr.	Dearborn County, Indiana
William O'Brien	Dearborn County, Indiana
Elizabeth O'Brien	Dearborn County, Indiana
children of Barzilla Miles O'Brien, deceased:	
William F. O'Brien	
_____ O'Brien, daughter [Mary Jane O'Brien]	

The same parties petitioned to sell the property of Patrick O'Brien, deceased. [Recorder's Office, Book 13, p. 498, Dearborn Co., Indiana.] The inventory and sale of the personal property of Patrick O'Brien are also listed in the probate records.

The burial place of Patrick has not been precisely located. Circumstantial evidence, however, points to the high likelihood that he is buried in the Five Points Cemetery with other O'Brien family members who died in 1851. [See Cemetery Notes: Five Points Cemetery.]

Patrick O'Brien's widow, Phoebe, remarried seven years after the death of Patrick. She married John Cunningham of Switzerland County, Indiana. Their marriage license was issued in Dearborn County [9-502], and is dated 2 October 1858.

John Cunningham was previously married to Elizabeth Loree, Phoebe's likely sister. Elizabeth Loree Cunningham died 28 September 1857. They had been married forty years and had eleven children. [See Cunningham family Bible.]

When Phoebe married John Cunningham, she was 61 years old and John was 63. They apparently lived the rest of their lives on the Cunningham farm in Section 35 of Cotton Township, Switzerland County, Indiana. They were recorded in the federal censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880. In the 1880 census, it was recorded that Phoebe's parents were both born in New Jersey. The column for "cannot write" was marked for Phoebe.

The death of Phoebe was recorded in the Cunningham family Bible: “Phebe Cunningham Second wife of John Cunningham Departed this life on the 9th day of October 1880 Aged 82 years 10 months and 13 days.” [The 82-10-13 agrees perfectly with the birth date of Phoebe recorded in the Patrick O’Brien family Bible.]

Phoebe is buried in the cemetery that was part of the Cunningham farm, which is also known as the Melville Cemetery. Her tombstone, in addition to the nearly indecipherable dates, is inscribed: “Phebe wife of John Cunningham.” The tombstone of Phoebe Cunningham is difficult to read, but “d. Oct. 9” and “82-10” agree with the information recorded in the Cunningham family Bible.

John Cunningham died 25 March 1889. He is said to be buried in the Cunningham/Melville Cemetery, but an original tombstone has not been found.

Note: This narrative may be downloaded for anyone's personal use. Suggestions for corrections and additions are invited. Contact:

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