



Cullen

Mary Lyons

1867 - 1925



The School Teacher

Mary Lyons was born in Rabbitboro, in the County of Roscommon and was baptised on the 16th March 1867. She was the daughter of John T. Lyons and Margaret Greally. James Lyons and Catherine Lyons were listed as her baptismal sponsors, or godparents.

Her father died at an early age, leaving 6 young children - Mary, Catherine, Margaret, John, Anne and Bernard.

Details of Mary's brothers and sisters are recorded as:

Catherine Lyons - baptised on 14th March 1869
Parents - John Lyons and Margaret Greally
Baptismal sponsors - James Greally and Anne Greally

Margaret Frances Lyons - baptised on 19th March 1871
Parents - John Lyons and Margaret Greally
Baptismal sponsors - John Walsh and Mary Lyons

Margaret emigrated to America some time around 1892 and never returned. She was a resident of Lexington, Massachusetts when she married Martin Francis Conry on the 28th April 1902, at the age of 31. Her niece, Annie Cullen (Mary Lyon's daughter), went to stay with her in 1913, but died two weeks later, after being struck by a train.

John Lyons - baptised on 2nd March 1873
Parents - John Lyons and Margaret Greally
Baptismal sponsors - James Lyons and Mary Greally





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*Anne Lyons - baptised on 16th July 1875
Parents - John Lyons and Margaret Greally
Baptismal sponsors - Michael Lyons and Mary Lyons*

*Bernard Lyons - baptised on 27th May 1877
Parents - John Lyons and Margaret Greally
Baptismal sponsors - John Lyons and Mary Lyons*

John Lyons and Margaret Greally were married at Granlahan Catholic Church on the 16th June 1866. John is listed as being 23 years old at the time and Margaret was 20 years of age. The groomsman was John Greally and Mary Greally was bridesmaid. The ceremony was performed by Fr. P. McLoughlin. John Lyon's father was of the same name with his address listed as Carrick, while Margaret's father was called Bernard Greally from Rabbitboro.

Margaret (Greally) Lyons was listed in the 1901 Census, living in Rabbitboro, aged 55 with her youngest son, Bernard, who was 22 at the time. The remainder of her family were most likely married and living elsewhere at this time.

Mary Lyons married Dominick Cullen on the 24th December 1889 at Granlahan Catholic Church, less than four months after the death of his first wife, Kate Prendergast. The witnesses were John Lyons from Aughamore and Catherine Kenny from Rabbitboro and the ceremony was performed by Fr. P. McLoughlin.

She is listed in the 1901 Census of Ireland as a school teacher, aged 33 and she taught at Carrick, Granlahan and Cloonfad National Schools in a career spanning more than 40 years.

An article printed in a Granlahan School Reunion magazine, dated 1996, says a Mrs Cullen taught in Granlahan School from 1880 and gives her address as Coolatinny, just up the road from Carrick - both these townlands are reasonably close for there to be confusion. In fact





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Carrick is surrounded by other small townlands such as Coolatinny, Rabbitboro and Clooncrim and some homes may be on the border of one or more of these.

If this were true she would have been only 13 years of age at that time and Granlahan National School was a girls school, with the boys attending the local Monastery which dates back to 1851.

She wasn't necessarily married at that stage, so the writer of the article might simply have been referring to her by her better known married name - Mrs. Cullen. She is said to have left Granlahan in 1904 to teach at Cloonfad school .

Mrs. Mary Ellen Stanley was the first teacher in the new girls National School at Granlahan in 1875. Mrs. Stanley lived in Ballinlough and it would be reasonable to assume that she identified Mary Lyons, or she was recommended to her, as a suitable trainee teacher.

In the 19th century, a person might start their teaching career as a 'Monitor' or 'Student Teacher' in their mid to late teens. So it is very likely she would have travelled to Granlahan school with Mrs. Stanley daily.

This would account for Mary Lyons moving, immediately, from her National School education at the age of 13 to her new role of Monitor/Teacher which would last for 5 to 6 years or even more.

A Cloonfad National School publication of 1994 contained an article by its Principal and made reference to Mrs. Cullen, who is said to have made the journey each day to and from Cloonfad in a pony and trap. But in later years she opted to reside there to avoid midweek travelling, especially in bad weather.

My father, who was the last born, often told me he hated it when it was Sunday afternoons and time for his mother to leave and return to Cloonfad. Carrick is about five or six miles from





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Cloonfad and in those years, she would have had to lodge in Cloonfad during the working week, as it would simply be too far to commute every day, either by walking or in horse drawn transport.

When I spoke to Delia Fitzmorris, from Clydaugh in Ballinlough, she told me she remembers her first day at school in Carrick National School and her teacher was Mary Lyons. She recalls her teacher quite well and confirmed she was at Cloonfad also, towards the the end of her teaching career, eventually retiring due to ill health. So from this evidence, Mary Lyons appears to have taught at three different schools.

The Carrick National School also brought out a publication in recent years and I have contacted the Principal and he promised to search for any details of Mary Lyons from old records available.

The Principal of Granlahan National School, Billy Phillips, has told me he has many records and papers, concerning the old school, such as class roles and any member of the family would be very welcome to browse through those papers at any time.

The records of all National Schools (including Carrick, Cloonfad and Granlahan) are held in the National Archives in Dublin. According to their website www.nationalarchives.ie the Salary Books, 1834-1939 contain details of payments to National School teachers. Those for the period 1834-1918 are listed, thereafter there is no list and the volumes are inaccessible. It seems possible, therefore, that we could track Mary Lyon's career in these records.

While alive, Mary Lyons was camera shy and never allowed her photograph to be taken. It was the family's decision therefore to take a photo of her as she was laid out in her coffin in the front room of the house in Carrick, Ballinlough. This photo, on the previous page, shows a plate of cut tobacco on her knees. It was a custom at that time, if you were a smoker, to fill a clay pipe from the plate as a mark of respect for the dead.

