

THE CUMMINGS FAMILY IN INDIANA AND IOWA

The surname Cummings was derived from the name Comines, or Comyns, of an ancient Flemish family located in northwestern France near the Belgian border. Some members of this family came to England and then spread to Scotland where, beginning in the year 1230, they became undisputed lords of Badenoch. The surname originally starting as Comyn or Comin or Comines, suffered many phonetic changes including but not necessarily limited to Commings, Commins, Commons, Cumin, O'Cumin, and finally Cummings. These variations pose some difficulty in developing the genealogical history of the family described herein and thus the christian names were invaluable in pinpointing particularly the Iowa arm of the Cummings family. Two branches of the Cummings family are discussed herein and as Exhibit A demonstrates, Thomas and Ellen Cummings (Moran) and Richard and Sabina Cummings (Crowe) named their children almost identically. The name Richard never appears as a christian name in either of these two families. Historically, Richard appears as early as 1144 when Richard was an ancestral leader of this clan. There is a family coat of arms, a copy of which is attached; it was assigned during the Scottish history of the family. The armorial description is sheaves of gold with the family crest and a gold lion holding in its right paw a dagger. The family motto and standard was courage. The cumin plant is also shown.

Exhibit A shows the parents of Thomas and Richard were

Daniel and Margret (Norton). The spelling M-A-R-G-R-E-T may be only a misspelling due to phonetics but the name does appear with that spelling from time to time in the Cummings' research.

The existence of Richard Commons (sometimes spelled C-o-m-m-i-n-s and finally Cummings) and his family was discovered by the writer by accident. A search for Thomas Cummings in the records of Marion County and the city directories of Indianapolis for that period prior to November, 1973 when he and Ellen Moran were married had produced nothing. A search of the 1870 U.S. census for Hendricks County in Brown Township revealed to the writer's total surprise that Thomas Cummings did not live in Marion County as previously thought but in 1870 was living with Richard, Sabina, his wife, and their four children, John, Margaret, Thomas and Francis. Although Richard was 32 and Thomas was 21 in the 1870 census, it is likely they were brothers. The only evidence of parentage that is available comes from the Iowa marriage records when Richard and his second wife, Annette, were married in 1885. (Sabina died prior thereto apparently). That marriage record identifies Richard as the son of Daniel and Margaret Cummings. Thus, there is no record of Thomas' parentage because in Indiana, the law did not require parental identification as part of the marriage records. According to the 1870 census, none of the three, Richard, Sabina or Thomas, was literate and in the 1880 census Thomas and Ellen, were listed as illiterate. However, by the census of 1900 Ellen reports herself as being able to read and write. Thomas and Richard were probably

brothers and since most Irish families were large, there probably were siblings of these two. This assumption is important because the phenomenon of the disappearance of Richard and Sabina when they moved from Indiana to Iowa in about the year 1880 may not be unique among the Cummings family. The evidence is this:

1. Thomas, Richard and Sabina probably arrived in the United States between 1864 and 1865. Richard's eldest son, John, was seven in 1870 and was born in Ireland but the next child, Margaret, was five and was born in Indiana. In the 1870 census, Richard was 32, Sabina 30, and Thomas was 21. There is no evidence that he ever lived with anyone except Richard and Sabina and thus would have been about 16 when he arrived. That is probably too young, even for those times, to make the voyage from Ireland alone.

2. Richard and Thomas report themselves from Galway as does Sabina.

3. No one in the writer's family ever mentioned or when questioned ever heard or knew of any additional branches of the Cummings family. The writer inquired of his father, Daniel, now deceased, about the Cummings family, its origin and the name. Not much information was available except that Ellen Moran came from England when she was six. He suggested that the family name was originally O'Commons. No research has reflected that spelling either in the Cummings family or in Galway.

4. For the many years the writer knew his father's surviving brothers and sisters no reference was ever made of any

other Cummings family.

5. Further evidence of the disaffection, schism or split between the brothers and their families, appears in their obvious choice of churches. St. Malachy's Catholic Church served the catholics in Hendricks County and particularly those in Brown Township where the population was largely Irish. Between 1870 and 1880 at least three more children were born to Richard and Sabina and they were baptized at St. Malachy in Brownsburg. No mention of Thomas appears in the decade between 1870 and 1880 of Thomas and Ellen. Thomas and Ellen were married at St. John's Catholic Church in Indianapolis and neither Richard or Sabina were witnesses at the marriage. Between 1873 and the 1880 census, Thomas and Ellen had two children; Margarita (Margaret-Mag) who was baptized at St. John in 1875 and an infant son John who was born in 1879. No record of his baptism or death appears in the records of either church. St. John in Indianapolis was certainly more difficult for residents of Brown Township to attend being approximately 25 miles from Brownsburg. St Malachy was not over five miles at the most from the farms in Brown Township. In 1878 Thomas bought his first farm in Brown Township and it is not reasonable to think that he moved from Richard's home in Brown Township after 1870 to Indianapolis to get married (November, 1873) and then return to buy his first farm in Brown Township in 1878. Simply stated, for some reason the brothers attended different churches.

6. The division between the brothers is further emphasized

by the move from Indiana by Richard and Sabina. Richard had purchased a ten acre farm in Hendricks County just below the Boone County line in 1871 for \$500.00. He and Sabina sold the ten acres in 1877 for the same amount of money and although there is no record of them living anywhere in Indiana except in Hendricks County, their grantors' deed states they were from Boone County. They next appear in the U.S. census of 1880 with their children in Sheridan Township, Cherokee County, Iowa. Exhibit A shows Richard and Thomas named their children almost identically. All but two of Richard's children were born prior to 1880 whereas most of Thomas' children were born after 1880. The naming similarity suggests these names came from siblings of Richard and Thomas.

7. Richard and Sabina disappear from St. Malachy's records after 1877. Thomas and Ellen begin to appear in the records of St. Malachy's around 1880 and from 1880 on their children were baptized at St. Malachy. In the 1880's, Thomas and Ellen appear frequently as members of St. Malachy's parish. Thus, the disappearance of Richard, Sabina and their children virtually without record or family history acknowledging said disappearance suggests the possibility that other Cummings' families may also have disappeared.

Thomas Cummings bought an additional 40 acre farm in 1896 near the first farm further establishing the Cummings' presence in Brown Township. The presence of a large number of Galway immigrants in Brown Township is explained in the church history

of St. Malachy written prior to 1930 by some of the old timers.

At one part it stated:

"A small band of Irish settlers came from Galloway (sic), Ireland to the shores of the new world and from there courageously trudged inward to northeastern Hendricks County * *"

The Irish who came from Galway and were the principal settlers were attracted to Brown Township because it was largely undrained land which suited the Irish who were able to work it and turn it into some of the most valuable farm land in Indiana. While all the Irish were from Galway, not all came directly to Brown Township. For example, Jim Tarpy, born in Galway, came to Hendricks County and Brown Township from Kentucky and his wife, also from Galway, came via St. Louis.

The descendancy from Thomas and Ellen is as follows:

Thomas and Ellen died in 1918 and 1922 respectively and were buried in Holy Cross Cemetery in Indianapolis. The oldest daughter, Margaret (Mag) married a prosperous saloon owner named John Deveney. They had four children, Noble, Tom, Mary and Dan. Noble, Tom and Mary died without issue. Dan Deveney died in November of 1988, survived by a wife and two adult children. The next child to Margaret was John, who may have died in infancy and appears only in the 1880 census. (There was no 1890 census due to fire). Martin died in 1913 and was survived by his son Leroy Cummings, who lives in Springfield, Illinois. Daniel F., the writer's father, died in 1941 and was survived by his wife, and the writer; Delia Benson (Cummings) died childless in 1961. Mary Casserly (Cummings), the widow of Tom Casserly,

died childless about 1963; Walter Cummings died about 1970, also childless. The 1900 census reports that there were eight children, two of whom were deceased. Also, the records of Hendricks County indicate there were eight children. Burial records and baptismal records do not state who the eighth child was or the date of baptism or death. Due to the similarity of names of the children of Richard and Thomas, the writer guesses that the name of the missing child was Thomas.

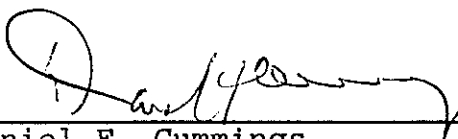
Richard Cummings' descendants were as follows: John Cummings who died in 1942; he had four children, Margaret, Ellen, Lyle and Maurice. Margaret Stepheny (Cummings) committed suicide in 1928. Her uncle Francis (Frank), date of death unknown, died without wife or issue; Thomas Cummings died without wife or issue at the age of 52; Daniel was murdered in January of 1912 in a drunken debacle and left neither wife nor issue; Martin was brutally murdered, decapitated and his limbs severed in Mariden, Iowa in 1925 leaving no wife or issue. The murderer was not found. Dennis (Dionysius) and Patrick died leaving neither wives nor issue. Ella Bowers (Cummings) was last known to live in Cherokee, Iowa, and Michael Cummings was last known to have lived in Omaha in 1925. Margaret (Maggie) married William Harrison Metcalf when she was twenty years old. They may have lived in Sioux City although surviving issue is unknown. Sabina did not live past 1885 and the place of her death and burial are not known; Annette, sometimes referred to as Anna Cummings (O'Boyle-Reynolds) also from Galway, married Richard in 1885. They had

no children.

As of this writing, no living grandchildren or great grandchildren of Richard and Sabina have been located.

This genealogical report is prepared and submitted to genealogical libraries who have expressed interest in the Cummings family and the suggestion that there may be other similarly undiscovered Irish families.

Submitted this 27 day of November, 1991.



Daniel F. Cummings

November 27, 1991

D A N I E L a n d M A R G R E T

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* Thomas (x Ellen Moran)

* Richard (* Sabina Crowe)

Margaret
John
(Thomas ?)
Martin
Daniel
Mary
Delia
Walter

John *
Thomas ***
Margaret ***
Francis ***

Daniel ***
Martin ***
Dennis ***
(Dionysus)
Ella ***
Michael)
Patrick) Twins **
Anna O'Boyle Reynolds
 Cummings

* = Born in Ireland
** = Born in Cherokee, Iowa
*** = Born in Indiana
x = Born in England

All children of Thomas and Ellen born in Indiana.

EXHIBIT A

SOURCES

Indiana State Library, Genealogy Department, Indianapolis, Indiana

Public Library, Plainfield, Indiana

Public Library, Danville, Indiana

Public Library, Allen County, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Church Archives, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Indiana; St. John Catholic Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

Woodbury County Genealogical Society, Sioux City, Iowa

Ms. Glenna Ferrone

PERSONS WHO ASSISTED

Sister Kevin Cummings, Archivist, Diocese of Sioux City, Iowa

Ms. Donnabell Cummins, Cherokee, Iowa

Edgar Parker, Pittsboro, Indiana

Ms. Fanchon Tarpay King, Brownsburg, Indiana

Father Martin Peter, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Indiana