

LAND OF ELY

For hundreds of years before 1590 AD, the O'Carrolls ruled a sovereign land called Ely. This land was the home of our ancestors. Nestled between the Sleive Bloom Mountains to the east and the Little Brosnagh River to the west, this sovereignty was protected with over 25 fortified castles and comprised the more modern baronies of Clonlisk and Ballybrit. Near its demise, Ely was 150,000 acres supporting over 5000 clan members and including over 2500 cattle roaming and grazing freely upon the land. At its peak, Ely was thought to have included the two additional baronies of Ikerrin and Eliogarty, in modern County Tipperary, and to have spanned as many as 350,000 acres.

Strangers did not dare enter the Land of Ely. The O'Carrolls were fierce warriors that did not take kindly to the breach of their boundaries. It has been said that all boys at the age of 16 were required to begin an arduous training in the art of combat. When the Irish clans did unite to fend-off foreign invaders, the O'Carrolls could always be counted upon for being at the thick of battle. One such early battle occurred in 1014. Over 1000 O'Carroll Clansmen with their battle axes and broad swords joined 19,000 other Irishmen to defeat the Vikings at the Battle of Clontarf. Fewer than two dozen Vikings are said to have survived.

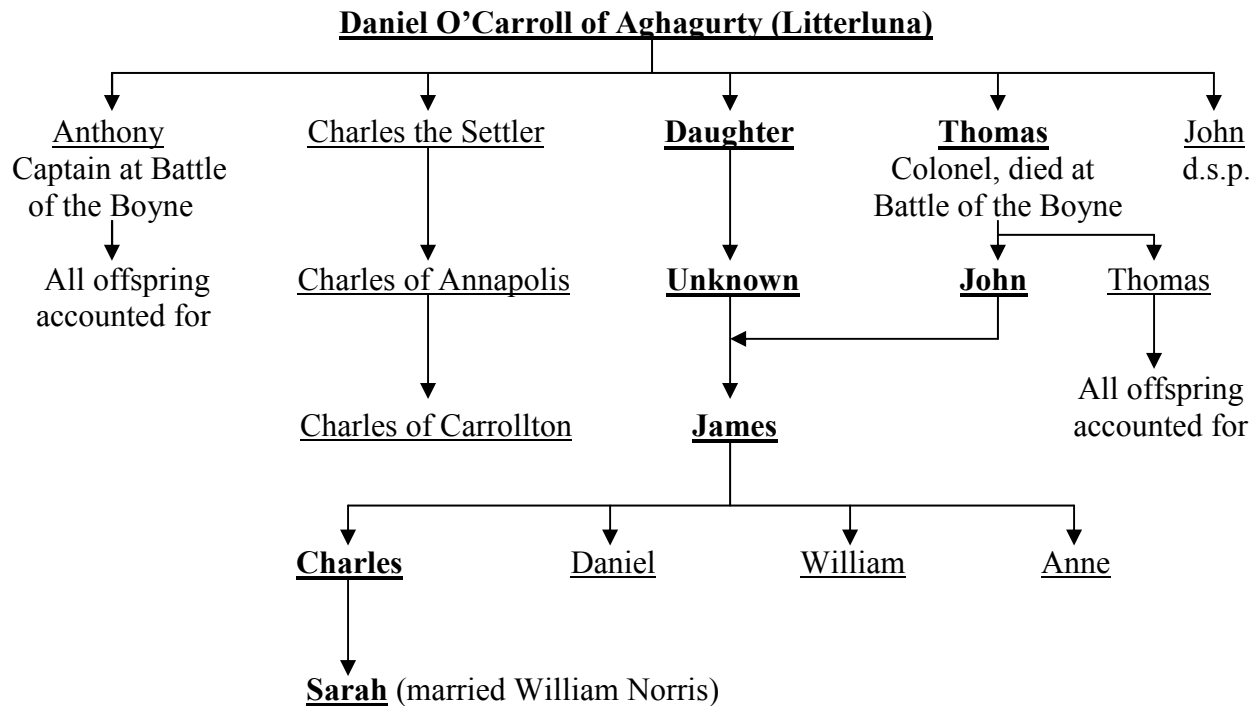
Being at the very heart of Ireland, Ely O'Carroll was one of the last clan lands to fall prey to the English onslaught. This downfall was perhaps caused mostly by in-clan conflicts and selfish political maneuvering as well as clan to clan fighting and the lack of all clans uniting against the English. However, in the year 1690, northwest of Dublin, many Irish clans united for a last great effort towards the quest for Irish Independence. The O'Carrolls were there at the Battle of The Boyne where they fought bravely and where many did die. The following year, in 1691, a truce was signed allowing soldiers of the Irish Army to exile into France. Many O'Carrolls would fight and many would die as mercenaries for France and other countries. Those who did not exile returned to the former Ely.

The years from 1600 to 1823 were truly hard transition years for the O'Carrolls and most other Gaelic Clans as well. English laws were imposed upon the Irish Society in order to decimate their old ways and to force upon them the new and acceptable standards. One law turned most into illiterates overnight by making it illegal to speak and write in Gaelic. Another made it illegal to own land if one was a Catholic. Some O'Carrolls married into English families to ease their life. Some also denounced their Catholicism in order to own and or inherit land. Those who did not were essentially forced into tenant farming and could barely eke out a living for their families. It was also during this period that the O and Mac prefixes were dropped to ease the Gaelic burden. Only one alternative remained for the adventuresome --- and that was emigration.

First to emigrate from Ireland was Charles Carroll, the Settler. He came to Maryland in 1690 and would become one of the wealthiest men in the colonies. His son, Charles of Annapolis, would continue to grow the family fortune. However, Charles of Carrollton, The Settler's Grandson, would become the most famous Carroll of all and longest lived signer of The Declaration of Independence. When Charles of Carrollton died in 1832, the Federal Government shut down in his honor. This was done only once before to honor the passing of George Washington.

Our Carroll lineage parallels that of Charles Carroll, the Settler. The Settler's Father was Daniel O'Carroll of Aghagurty (Litterluna). Daniel is thought to have been James Carroll's Great Grandfather. As can be seen from the schema below there are two lines of possible descent. One is through Daniel's Son, Thomas, and the other is through his Daughter. Research has lead me to believe that Daniel's Daughter married a Carroll from another branch of Ely O'Carroll. This would of course allow the Carroll name to be passed down to descendants. Either way, this means that Daniel O'Carroll of Litterluna was my 8G Grandfather.

W. D. Saylor April 2009



The O'Carroll connection

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