

SHEA FAMILY HISTORY IN IRELAND

By: Dick Shea

December 2009

After 30 years of trying to find any record of the Sheas in Ireland, I have managed to find several interesting things on the family in the past few months. I've gotten a lot of help from two of the people who run the O'Shea yDNA project (Margaret O'Shea Jordan and Brian O'Shea, both of Cork, Ireland) and a genealogist in Dublin (Rosaleen Underwood). We've also gotten several intriguing results from the yDNA project which I think would be of interest to several of you. I've written a couple short e-mails showing some of the information, but I thought it is worthwhile to put it all in one report.

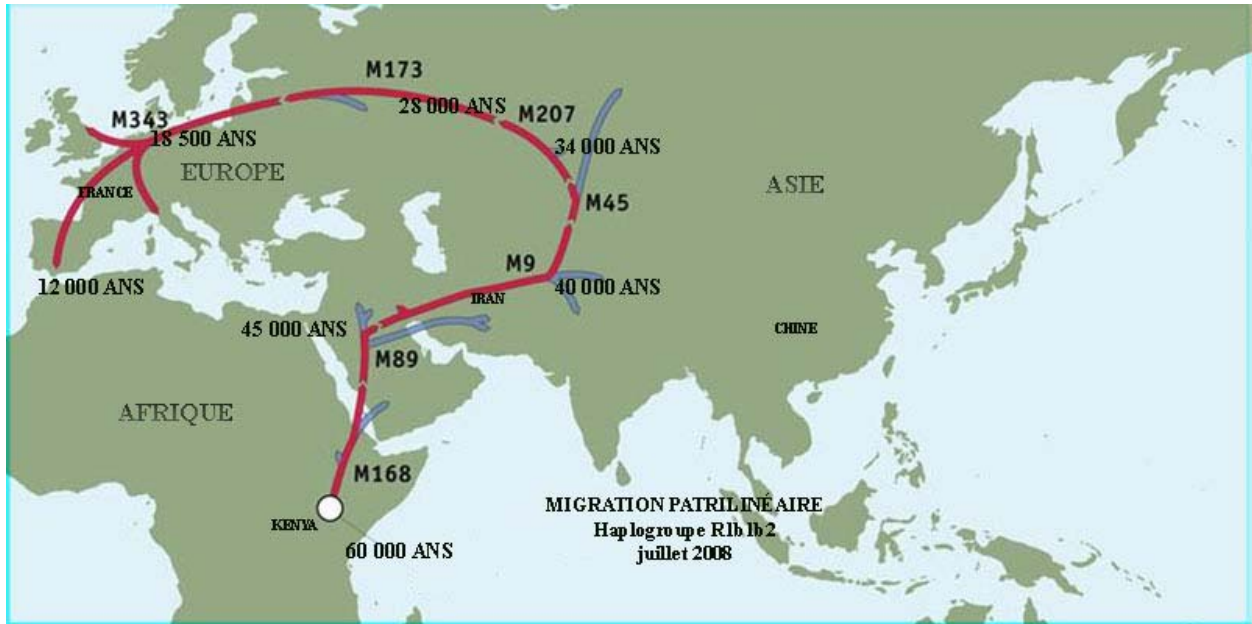
Most of the information in here is factual, but I've thrown in some of my opinions and speculations too. (If I only put in the factual information, this note would be about a page long, and I'd rather write a novel than a short story.) I have "borrowed" some of the information from two excellent websites on the Shea family: www.sheaclan.org and www.osheaclan.org. I have also borrowed heavily from e-mail discussions I've had with Margaret Jordan and Brian O'Shea.

Back to Africa

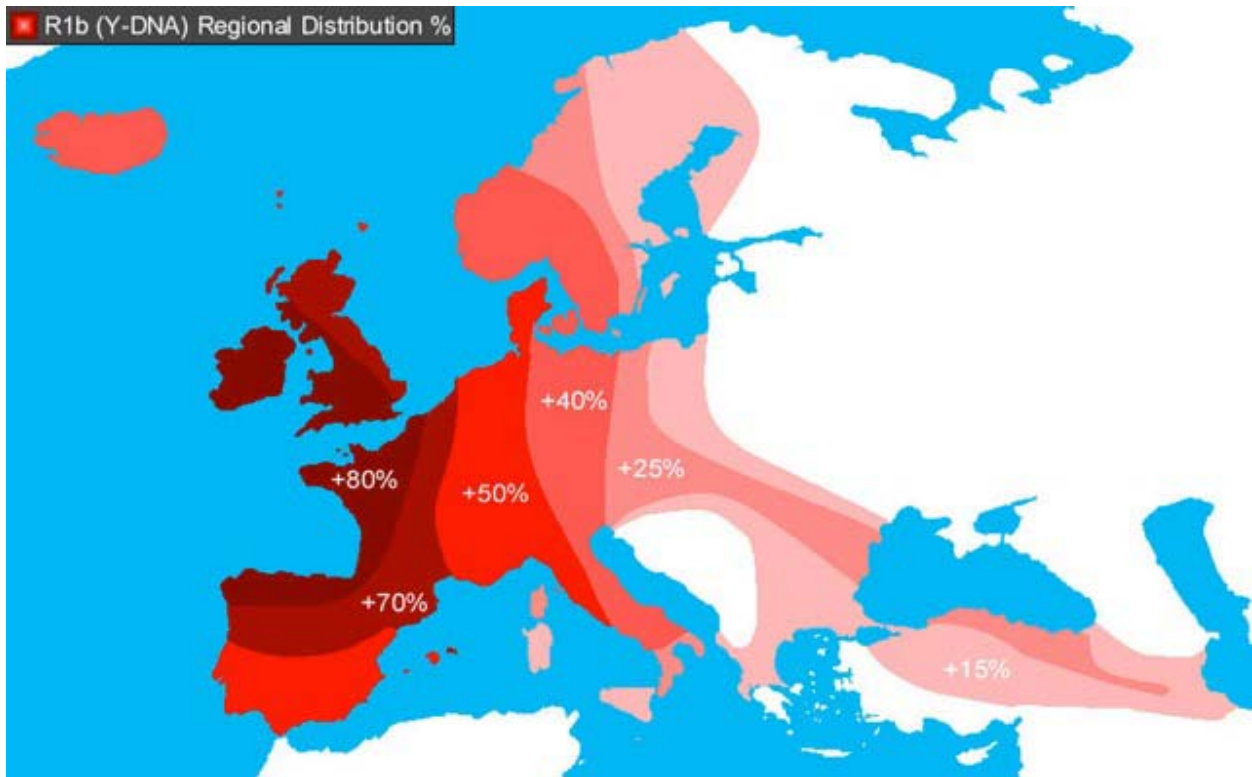
I joined the O'Shea yDNA project about 2 years ago. The yDNA is passed from father to son, so all of my matches should be with other Sheas. I swabbed my cheek and sent the swabs to FamilyTreeDNA in Houston for analysis. They sent the results to me a few months later. By themselves, the results aren't that interesting, but the O'Shea project has collected results from almost 100 Sheas around the world. By seeing how similar your results are with other people, you can get a reasonable idea who closely related you are to them. Our cousin Tim Shea, Warren's son, has recently taken the test. His results haven't been posted yet. I'll discuss the yDNA results in more detail at the end of this note.

One of the findings of the DNA test is your haplogroup. The DNA experts have devised the haplogroups to linked groups of people who had common ancestry. The DNA test showed that our haplogroup is R1b1b2. The experts think that all Homo Sapiens had a common ancestor living in Kenya about 60,000 years ago. The R1b1b2 people moved out of Africa, through Saudi Arabia to Kazakhstan about 40,000 years ago. They migrated west into northern Europe about 20,000 years ago. Our ancestors probably went into Spain and then migrated to Ireland.

Here is a map showing the likely migration route (pardon my French!):



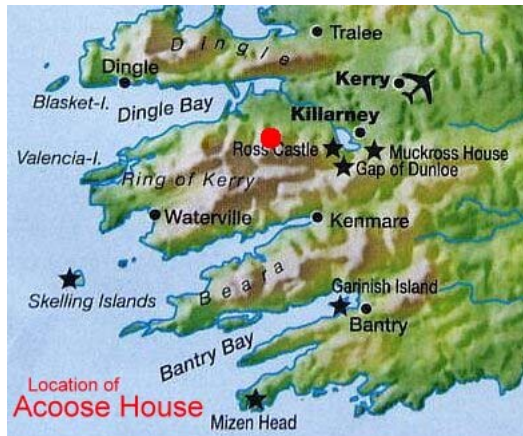
The R1b1b2 haplogroup is the most common DNA type in western Europe. The following illustration shows the percentage of people in Europe that are of the R1b haplogroup.



Almost everyone in Ireland is from the R1b haplogroup, and many of them are from the same offshoot group as we are (R1b1b2).

The First Sheas

The first Shea probably lived in the western part of the Iveragh peninsula in County Kerry, Ireland in the 7th Century A.D. On the following map, the likely location of the first Sheas is near Waterville.

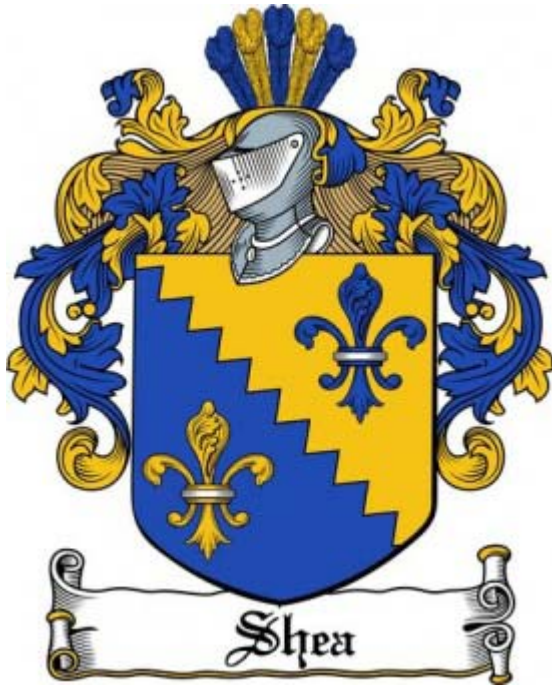


In Irish, the family name is O'Séaghda. The O' means "descendent of". The exact meaning of Séaghda isn't known. I've seen the meaning as "hawk-like". I've also seen the meaning as "the learned one", which I prefer, but "hawk-like" is probably the correct meaning.

The family probably lived in the area much earlier than the 7th Century. Ptolemy in the 2nd Century wrote of the Iverni tribes in Ireland, which probably refers to the people living in the Iveragh peninsula.

The first Shea was a 7th Century Chieftain of the Corcu Duibne kin group. This group also included the Falvey and O'Connell families who were closely tied together with the Sheas. This group ruled Iveragh until the 12th Century. The area was taken over by the MacCarthys, and the Chief of the Corcu Duibne, Murchad Ua Séaghda was expelled from Kerry. His descendents moved to County Tipperary and later to County Kilkenny where they were extensive landowners. Sir Richard Shee founded the Hospital of Jesus in Kilkenny in 1582.

The Shea family was one of the first Gaelic families to receive a coat of arms. The coat of arms is shown in the following illustration:



The Shea clan symbol was the black swan. The battle cry of the O'Sheas was: Eala dubh Uibh Rathack abú (The Black Swan of Iveragh Forever!). This is sometimes shortened to Eala dubh abú.



While the family Chief moved to Tipperary, our ancestors remained in Kerry, subservient to the MacCarthys, who ruled parts of Munster for centuries and then to the English overlords. It is likely that no Shea owned land in Kerry from 1124 to about 1900, a fact I finding amazing.

Irish Life Before Available Records

In the 1169, a Norman nobleman, Maurice Fitzgerald, moved to Kerry and took command of much of central Kerry. The Fitzgeralds and the MacCarthys controlled a large amount of the county. The southernmost sections of Kerry were ruled by the O'Sullivan clan.

The Fitzgeralds were eventually made the Earls of Desmond. The family had vast land holdings in Kerry, Cork, and other sections of Munster. At their peak, they owned almost one million acres of land.

Desmond's holdings became tempting to many British adventurers during Queen Elizabeth I's reign. This led to two major rebellions. After the first rebellion, much of Desmond's land was confiscated by the Queen. A second rebellion in 1580 which included an invasion of Kerry by Spanish and Italian troops in support of Desmond was brutally stopped by British troops.

Desmond's property was distributed to many of the Queen's favorites, including the Herberts. The British felt that importing English and Scottish settlers into the British owned plantations in Ulster and Munster would stop the rebellions, but this didn't prove true. The plantations in Munster were not successful. The plantations in Ulster led to the "troubles" experienced in Northern Ireland for many years.

Beginning in 1607, the rights of Irish Catholic lords were severely curtailed. The Irish Parliament was made subservient to the English Parliament and voting districts were gerrymandered to ensure Protestant representation.

There was an Irish Rebellion in 1641, which briefly allowed Ireland to be free of British rule. In the English Civil War, the Irish took the side of the Royalists against the Parliamentarians, led by Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell's forces defeated the Irish, and confiscated large parcels of land from, among others, the McCarthys. The land around Kenmare and Tuosist (~5500 acres) was given to Sir William Petty, who surveyed the confiscated land in Ireland for Cromwell. Petty conceived the city of Kenmare across the river from the ancient village now known as Old Kenmare (home of our Richardson family), although the actual city plan was developed by his grandson.

When Petty died, his land eventually went to his daughter Anne's son John Petty-Fitzmaurice, who became the Earl of Shelburne. John's son William became the first Marquis of Lansdowne. William became the British Prime Minister in 1782 and he negotiated the peace between England and the United States following the Revolutionary War.

Our Sheas lived on the land owned by the Marquis of Lansdowne.

From Elizabethan times to almost 1800, a series of laws were passed by the English Parliament against people who were not part of the Anglican Church (Church of Ireland). Although most of the laws were aimed at the Roman Catholics, they also targeted the Scottish Presbyterians who had moved to Ulster. Wikipedia has a long list of penal laws, which are shown below:

- Exclusion of Catholics from most public offices (since 1607), Presbyterians were also barred from public office from 1707.

- Ban on intermarriage with Protestants; repealed 1778
- Presbyterian marriages were not legally recognised by the state
- Catholics barred from holding firearms or serving in the armed forces (rescinded by Militia Act of 1793)
- Bar from membership in either the Parliament of Ireland or the Parliament of Great Britain from 1652; rescinded 1662-1691; renewed 1691-1829.
- Disenfranchising Act 1728, exclusion from voting until 1793;
- Exclusion from the legal professions and the judiciary; repealed (respectively) 1793 and 1829.
- Education Act 1695 - ban on foreign education; repealed 1782.
- Bar to Catholics entering Trinity College Dublin; repealed 1793.
- On a death by a Catholic, his legatee could benefit by conversion to the Church of Ireland;
- Popery Act - Catholic inheritances of land were to be equally subdivided between all an owner's sons with the exception that if the eldest son and heir converted to Protestantism that he would become the one and only tenant of estate and portions for other children not to exceed one third of the estate. This "Gavelkind" system had previously been abolished by 1600.
- Ban on converting from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism on pain of Praemunire: forfeiting all property estates and legacy to the monarch of the time and remaining in prison at the monarch's pleasure. In addition, forfeiting the monarch's protection. No injury however atrocious could have any action brought against it or any reparation for such.
- Ban on Catholics buying land under a lease of more than 31 years; repealed 1778.
- Ban on custody of orphans being granted to Catholics on pain of 500 pounds that was to be donated to the Blue Coat hospital in Dublin.
- Ban on Catholics inheriting Protestant land
- Prohibition on Catholics owning a horse valued at over £5 (in order to keep horses suitable for military activity out of the majority's hands)

- Roman Catholic lay priests had to register to preach under the Registration Act 1704, but seminary priests and Bishops were not able to do so until the 1770s.
- When allowed, new Catholic churches were to be built from wood, not stone, and away from main roads.
- 'No person of the popish religion shall publicly or in private houses teach school, or instruct youth in learning within this realm' upon pain of twenty pounds fine and three months in prison for every such offence. Repealed in 1782. [2]
- Any and all rewards not paid by the crown for alerting authorities of offences to be levied upon the Catholic populace within parish and county.

I think it's pretty easy to see why the Irish hated the English.

The living conditions of the Irish peasants were bleak. The typical peasant house was made of mud with a thatched roof and a dirt floor. Most had a single room. A hearth tax was imposed on Ireland in 1662, so most Irish responded by removing the hearths from their houses, keeping a fire going on the dirt floor. Without a hearth, they had to keep the cottage door open to allow the smoke to leave. Another tax imposed was based on the number of windows in the dwelling, so many peasants cottages had no windows. The following is a drawing of a typical farmhouse:



The Irish population grew rapidly from the 17th century to the 1840's. There was a census taken in 1659 of Ireland. There were only 63 Shea families in County Kerry at that time. Only 6 of them were in the Kenmare area. Griffith's Valuation in 1852 shows 1140 entries for Shea families living in Kerry, and many families, including ours, had already emigrated to the U.S.,

Canada, and England. The population of Ireland was about 4.5 million in 1800 and had grown to over 8 million by 1841.

The increase in population created one of the major problems in Ireland in the 19th century. All peasants leased land from the landowners. They paid an annual rent. In ancient times, the rents were generally paid by barter, offering the landlord a pig or a portion of butter. When the British took over ownership of the land, payment was almost always in cash, raised by sale of livestock or other farm goods at markets.

It was common practice for the father to divide his lease among his sons when he was old or when he died. As a result, the land worked by his children was much smaller than his original land. After several generations, the average peasant had a tiny lease, in many cases consisting only of a house and a garden.

Although foods like butter, milk, and grain were eaten, the main crop of the Irish peasants was the potato, which would grow in abundance in poor soil conditions. It is said that the potato was introduced to Ireland by Sir Walter Raleigh, who owned land in Munster, given to him for his work in stopping the Desmond Rebellion.

In 1845, a potato blight hit parts of Ireland (along with most of Europe). The blight infected about a third of the potato crop that year. In 1846, however, almost all the crop was affected, causing widespread starvation of the population. The British government, for the most part, made the problem worse. Irish exported significant amounts of beef, pork, and grain to England, and continued to do it enough though the population was starving. Aid was sent from Europe and America to Ireland, but the English authorities demanded taxes from the ships arriving there. Help did come from private sources in England, such as the Quakers, who set up soup kitchens in many market towns, including Kenmare.

Because of the widespread devastation of the famine, many of the better off peasants (including our Jeremiah) decided to emigrate. They went mainly to England, Canada, and the United States.

With minimal or no food available, many peasants abandoned their farms and went to towns such as Kenmare to live in poorhouses where there was a chance that they would be fed. By 1850, there were over 3000 people living in the poorhouses of Kenmare.

The population loss was staggering. The population of Ireland dropped from over 8 million in 1841 to 6 million in 1851, with about 1 million dying and 1 million emigrating.

The Marquis of Lansdowne, who owned much of the worst hit parts of Kerry, hired a new estate agent for his Kerry land in 1849 named William Stuart Trench. Trench assessed the situation and recommended that the Marquis pay for the passage of the Kenmare poorhouse population to

the New World. Trench's autobiography pictures himself as the savior of these people, but the real reason was simple economics. It cost less to ship them to the U.S. or Canada than it did to feed and clothe them in the poorhouse. Once they were put on the ship, they were someone else's responsibility.

Trench enlisted the aid of an Irishman, Jeremiah Shea of Gortagass (probably our remote cousin), to take the poor from Kenmare to Cobh harbor in Co. Cork, and put them on ships to Liverpool, and then to the New World. Initially, Trench allowed them to pick their destination, giving them a choice of Quebec, Boston, New York, or New Orleans. After a while, they were all being shipped to Quebec, because the fare was cheaper to that port. Many of the emigrants eventually left Quebec and most settled in New York City. Trench did not provide them with adequate money, food, or clothing for their trip, and many died during passage.

The Lansdowne emigration scheme began in 1850. By 1853, there were only 3 people in the poorhouse in Kenmare.

Many early Lansdowne emigrants landed in New York City, and went to live in the most notorious slum in the world, Five Points. It was common for visitors to New York to go "slumming" to visit Five Points. Charles Dickens, who was familiar with the slums of London, was appalled at the horrid living conditions of Five Points.

The physical condition of the Lansdowne emigrants was so bad when they arrived that a hospital in New York had an entire section which they called the Lansdowne Wing caring for the emigrants.

Most of the Lansdowne emigrants were Sheas and Sullivans.

The movie "Gangs of New York" is a slightly fictionalized account of life in Five Points. The Leonardo DiCaprio character would have probably been a Shea in real life.

Shea Family Records in Ireland

I have been researching the Shea family since 1976, and had not found a single record of the family in Ireland until September 2009. U.S. records had shown that our ancestor Jeremiah Shea was born "near Kenmare", but we were unable to find the exact place.

The only information we knew on our Sheas in Ireland was that Jeremiah Shea was born December 24, 1809, his wife Ellen Richardson Shea was born May 15, 1818, and their son John was born February 28, 1842.

Irish records are notoriously difficult to find. The British held censuses of Ireland every 10 years beginning in 1841. The census records prior to 1901, however, were destroyed in 1922 when the Public Records Office in Dublin was burned in the Irish Civil War.

Catholic Church records exist for most parishes, but they were not kept until relatively recent times. The church records in Kenmare begin in 1799, and the church records in Tuosist only begin in 1843. The major problem had been that the records could only be accessed by sending letters to the individual churches or by looking at microfilms of the church books in the National Library of Ireland in Dublin.

The only easily accessible record is Griffith's Valuation, a tax roll from 1852. By 1852, our Sheas had already emigrated to Quincy, Illinois. The only record in Griffith's that we could identify with the Sheas is a record of Mary Richardson in Old Kenmare, who was likely to be a relative of Jeremiah Shea's wife Ellen Richardson.

Margaret Jordan gave me the name of a genealogist in Dublin named Rosaleen Underwood. In September, I asked Rosaleen to look up two records. I asked her to look at the Kenmare Church of Ireland record to see if could find any records on our family. The thought was that the Richardson family, who were of English descent, may have been Protestant. The other record that I asked her to investigate was the Tithe Applotment Book, another tax roll from about 1824. (This tax was a very unpopular proposition, in which all landowners were tithed a certain amount to be paid to the Church of Ireland, the Protestant Church).

Rosaleen reported the results to me a few weeks later. The search of the Kenmare Church of Ireland records found the banns for the wedding of our Jeremiah Shea and Ellen Richardson in August, 1841. Banns were a common practice in Protestant churches, announcing a couple's intent to marry. The banns were posted, usually for 3 weeks, to see if there were any reasons why a couple should not marry (e.g. one of the participants were already married). It is possible that the Banns had to be posted in the Church of Ireland, even if the couple were Catholic.

The search of the Tithe Applotment Books was also very productive. She looked in the books for any references to Sheas in the Kenmare area. She found Sheas in 9 townlands in the Kenmare area. One townland looked extremely interesting. The townland of Gortnadullagh adjoins Old Kenmare, where Mary Richardson lived in 1852. This location appeared to be the very likely home of our Sheas. It is about 3 miles southeast of Kenmare:



In the 1824 Tithe Applotment, there were 3 Sheas who headed families in Gortnadullagh. The record showed the size of their farms, although the areas are shown in unusual units (gneeves and sessiaghs). After a bit of looking, I found that there a gneeve was equal to 10 Irish acres, with a sessiagh equal to a quarter of a gneeve. I also found that an Irish acre was 1.62 statute acres. Running that through the calculator showed that the land holdings for the three Sheas in Gortnadullagh were:

Name	Statute Acres
Darby Shea	14.2
Timothy Shea	12.2
Daniel Shea	4.1

A note on the name Darby – the name in Irish is Dermot which had a nickname of Darby. The name was somehow translated into Jeremiah in English. Our Jeremiah, for instance, was known as Darby according to his son's death certificate.

One of the Sheas shown above was undoubtedly our Jeremiah's father.

In late November, 2009, the parish records of County Kerry were put online by the Irish Ministry of Arts, Sports, and Tourism. For the first time, it was possible to look past individual parish boundaries and easily find records for an individual even if the parish was unknown.

A check of the records for the parish of Tuosist showed dozens of Sheas in Gortnadullagh. They showed the baptism of Catherine Shea in 1845, the daughter of Jeremiah Shea and Ellen Richardson, clearly showing that our family lived in Gortnadullagh, and that it is likely that our

Jeremiah was born there. Unfortunately, the Tuosist records only begin in 1843, so that there is no baptismal record for Jeremiah, Ellen, or their son John, born in 1842.

The records show many Sheas and Richardsons living in Gornadullagh. The Tuosist records don't show anyone living in Old Kenmare, so I think Gortnadullagh probably covered both townlands.

The following table shows Shea couples from Gortnadullagh that had children baptized in the years from the beginning of the Tuosist records in 1843 to 1870:

Husband	Wife
Jeremiah Shea	Ellen Richardson
Daniel Shea	Julia Harrington
Daniel Lynch	Bridget Shea
Denis Shea	Johanna McCarthy
Cornelius Shea	Johanna Shea
Denis Shea	Margaret Sullivan
Timothy Shea	Ellen Casey
Edmund Shea	Honora Sughrue

In addition, several Sheas showed up in the record as sponsors of children for Gortnadullagh couples. They include Mortimer, John, and Patrick Shea.

There were a few Richardson references in Gortnadullagh, too. Michael Richardson, who eventually married our Jeremiah Shea's daughter Mary in Quincy, was baptized in 1845, the son of James Richardson and Mary Sullivan. I believe Mary Sullivan Richardson was the person shown in the 1852 Griffith's Valuation in Old Kenmare. Mary Richardson was the sponsor of our Jeremiah's daughter in 1845. She lived with the Sheas in Quincy. A Michael Richardson was the sponsor of 2 Shea children in Gortnadullagh.

There were also references to Richardsons in several other townlands in Kerry. They were in Kenmare, Gortagass, Gorthamullen, Cladanure, Lacka, Claydh, Ballygriffin, Fioromore, Killaha, Feorus, Slatefield, Dromaghty, Muxnaw, Direenachala, and Muckera. The Feorus and Killaha records were in conjunction with Sheas. The Killaha baptism was for John Shea, the son of Cornelius Shea and Ellen Richardson, and one of the sponsors was Jeremiah Shea (ours??). The

Feorus record was for Peter Shea, the son of John Shea and Mary Richardson, and one of the sponsors was Michael Richardson. I think both of those records are for our direct family. Feorus and Killaha are both within about 10 miles of Gortnadullagh.

I have seen several records that indicate that our Jeremiah emigrated to the U.S. in 1847. My guess is that he and his family went to Cobh harbor in Cork, caught a boat to Liverpool, and then caught a ship to New Orleans. (Ancestry.com has a partial list of the passenger lists into New Orleans, but our folks don't appear on it.) The major ports had people waiting at the docks to meet the arriving ships. Most of them were trying to cheat the newcomers, but, occasionally, there were people trying to help them. It is possible that someone there mentioned Quincy, Illinois to the family and they traveled up the Mississippi River to Quincy. (The family had close ties to Thomas Redmond, who was an Irishman leading a major contracting company in Quincy, and he may have paid for their passage to Quincy. Redmond later became mayor of Quincy.)

In the 1850 Census, Jeremiah, Ellen, and John are shown in Quincy. The little girl born in Ireland, Catherine, probably died during the famine.

Jeremiah and Ellen had 12 children, but 7 of them died in infancy. Martin died at 17, Dennis died in his mid-20's. Only three children lived to reasonably old age, John (our ancestor), Jerry, and Mary (who married Michael Richardson). Jeremiah worked as a laborer, and eventually started his own business doing road paving and sewer installation. His son Jerry expanded the sewer contracting enormously, putting in the sewers in Quincy, Hannibal, Mo., Chicago (with brother John), Kansas City, Atlanta, Houston, New Orleans, and Los Angeles. Jerry was also an alderman, and headed the Democratic party in Quincy for many years, before moving to the south.

I've written up the history of our family in the past, so I won't reiterate it here.

I don't know what happened to the other Sheas of Gortnadullagh. The 1852 Griffith's Valuation shows no Sheas in Gortnadullagh. Most of the land is shown as being occupied by the Marquis of Lansdowne, indicating that no one was farming it. One amazing statistic – the population of Gortnadullagh in 1841 was 138 people – the population in 1851 was 19. Our Sheas were in Quincy by that time, but I don't know where the other family members had gone. Some may have emigrated to the U.S., Canada, or England around the same time as our Jeremiah in 1847. Others may have moved to other parts of Kerry to find work. Others may have been part of the Lansdowne emigration. There is no way of knowing for sure.

Only 2 other Sheas show up in the Quincy, Ill. records, Denis and Johanna, who lived there in 1870. Most of the Richardsons moved to Quincy.

DNA Project

As mentioned previously, I have participated in the O'Shea yDNA Project. FamilyTreeDNA provides an analysis of a given set of markers, which can be compared with the results of other people. The analysis I did tested 37 markers.

The O'Shea yDNA project presently has 89 members. Our first cousin Tim Shea has recently joined.

FamilyTreeDNA has estimated that the probability of any given marker mutating is about 1 in 250, or, in other words, a 99.6% chance that the given marker would be passed exactly from father to son. If you look at all 37 markers, however, the chance that it will be exactly the same in father and son are only 86.2%. Taking it out several generations gives the following probabilities:

Number of Generations	Probability of Being Identical (37 markers)
1	86.2%
2	74.3%
3	64.1%
4	55.3%
5	47.6%
6	41.1%
7	35.4%
8	30.5%

If you go back over 4 generations, there is less than a 50-50 chance that you would have the same yDNA as your ancestor.

By comparing your yDNA markers with other peoples, it is possible to statistically estimate how closely related you are. FamilyTreeDNA provides a table showing the probability that you have a common ancestor within 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, and 24 generations.

Here is a table showing the probability that you have a common ancestor within x generations:

Number of Matching Markers	37	36	35	34
4 Generations	83.5%	59.0%	29.4%	12.6%
8 Generations	97.3%	89.0%	69.2%	48.6%
12 Generations	99.6%	97.5%	89.5%	77.5%
16 Generations	99.9%	99.5%	96.9%	91.8%
20 Generations	100.0%	99.9%	99.1%	97.4%
24 Generations	100.0%	100.0%	99.8%	99.2%

Using 30 years per generation, 8 generations would be a common ancestor born in about 1710, and 24 generations would be a common ancestor born in about 1230.

We know the family back 4 generations, and none of the other Shea test takers are descended from our Jeremiah (except for Tim).

When I got the results of the test, 1 fellow matched me exactly, 2 had 36 markers the same, 4 had 35 markers, 7 had 34 markers and 4 had 33 matching markers.

Michael O'Shea of Fort Worth is an exact match to my DNA. I called Michael and talked with him for an hour following his testing. He is a retired school principal. It turns out that he is a 2nd cousin of 2 of the fellows who were 35/37 matches. It appears that his family has had a couple recent mutations in the DNA. His family lived in Tralee before it emigrated to Laconia, New Hampshire. It is likely that our families had a common ancestor about 8 or 10 generations back.

Edward (Tad) Shay and Philip (Chip) O'Shea matched me on 36 of the 37 markers. Tad and Chip are from Massachusetts and New York, respectively.

Tad's family is from Falls River, Massachusetts. There were a lot of Sheas in that town in the late 1800's. What is interesting is that many of the names match up with the Gortnadullagh names. For instance, there was a Margaret Shay in the 1850 census with sons Daniel, Timothy, and Patrick. All of her children were born in Ireland, but they were born prior to the beginning of the Tuosist records. There was a Cornelius Shay with wife Johanna, as seen in the Gortnadullagh

records. The problem is that all of these first names were so common, so it is impossible to make definite matches.

Tad has done his genealogy, and found a record that one of his Irish forebears was Margaret Clifford. The Clifford surname is common in Northern Kerry, but there were few Cliffords near Kenmare. The Clifford name, however, was translated into Irish as Cluvane, and there are dozens of Cluvanes living in the Tuosist area, for example, with several of them married to Sheas, so there is a possibility that Tad's family may have been closely related to us.

Tad and Chip have known each other for years, and they have speculated that one of the ancestors was married twice with Tad's family coming through one wife, and Chip's family coming through a child of the other wife.

Since we can definitely trace our ancestors to Gortnadullagh, south of Kenmare, and three of the other close DNA matches trace their families to the Tralee area in northern Kerry, the question can be raised how the likely relatives had moved so far apart.

One possible answer relates to the extent of the land holdings of the Marquis of Lansdowne. The Marquis owned essentially all of the land around Kenmare, but his estate spread to Dunkerron, Iveragh, and Clanmaurice baronies. In total, he owned 97,000 acres of land in Kerry. If a renter failed to pay his rent, died, or became incapacitated, the land agent would try to find someone else to rent the land. He would generally look to his best tenants to see if they wanted to move to better land. A younger son might leave home to start his own farm. It is possible that all our close DNA matches might have lived on one of Lansdowne's properties in the 1700's, and then moved to different areas of Kerry as land became available.

Tad and Chip have the most common values for each of the 37 DNA markers of all the participants in the O'Shea yDNA project. It is possible that they have the DNA of the first Séaghda, the 7th century King of Iveragh, and that it has gone on without mutation for the past 1400 years in their branches of the family.

The yDNA project may never be able to positively link all the branches of the O'Shea family because of the lack of early records, but it has brought kinship to close to a hundred cousins. It has been interesting to see the diversity in location of the various members and it has been interesting to see the broad backgrounds of our cousins. Maybe someone can invent a time machine, so we can go back and meet the ancestors.....