

A letter from John Shea, Garrangrena (Borrisoleigh), Tipperary,Ireland to his brother Timothy Shea in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, Australia – 1864

The letter is as written.

..... denotes unreadable/paper missing, where it has been folded.

Garrangrena 13th February 1864

Dearly beloved brother,

Your loving and welcome letter of 23rd November has arrived by last mail to which I now reply, hoping this may find you yours Mrs and family brother Stephen and family and all other friends in the enjoyment of good health as it leaves me and my numerous family and all friends and Neighbours in at present – thanks be to God for his kind mercies to us all.

Dear brother. I have not recd a letter from you over two years and the last I received I replied to it by same hand – James Shea is in a delicate state of health at home with his father he never told me he recd a letter from you

Dear Tedy. I have to inform you that Tom Egan and family are in good health and Paddy Egan is in England as ..big.. as a ..proctor... and corresponds regularly with his brother

read on - (end of 1st page)

Dear Timothy. I am sorry for the calamities your suffering in the Colony regarding yr stock and crops – the distemper on horned cattle is not so fatal with us as formerly but it is still very prevalent on the swine and the blight on the potato crop never fell more fatally than last season tho it did not commence until late in August but in sharp..... and warm land early tilled they escaped better than in our neighbourhood.

Dear Timothy I have to inform you that your son and naimesake is a good boy for his age and his eight sisters equally so – all fair and well looking and the fact is that it is not an easy task to sup-port such a family now in Ireland on a small farm and a light capital.

so my dear brother as we chanced to talk on the subject may I presume on re-questioning that you and your brother will have the kindness to pay the passage of two of them and when once done you may see yourself safe in so doing

end of second page

Dear Timothy. I have that we and all Europe are suffer..... sorely for the last three years by mi..... of a war that is going on between the Northern & Southern States of America and now there is another war commencing in Europe between Denmark & Germany will not long as Denmark is no at all able to meet Germany unless the English take part with the Danes - but I think they will not interfere further than by way of settlement.

Dear Timothy I have never heard a word of brother Edmond since your Emigration but as to the girls theye all dead may the lord have mercy on their souls – but I have to inform you that Thomas Shea junior died in Borris and after that his brother paid their mothers passage they were all in great splendor and in possession of great wealth up to the commencement of the war – they got an account of sister Margarets illness and visited her but

she soon after died – they also attended her interment – twelve months ago Neddy sent me this account of them.

end of 3rd page

..... Timothy I have to inform you of the and practice now carried on in Irelandatch to be had for a young woman now lifean from L150 to L300 we have had 7 weddings in the parish this Shrovetide at the average no talk of 60 – 80 or 100 at all – the middling run of farmers that cannot come up to thatall depending onn that one to two of the eldest

either boys or girls and then to let them haul the rest one by one or in pairs as the case may answer – Now I am getting up to a round age and not so strong to get through hardship and nothing would give me greater spirit than to imitate the rest of my neighbours as I see that it is out of my power to settle them in life at home and indeed if you had got one or two of them out I presume you need not be as ..harm..... ..of.... ..mother.. Margaret is 18 Catherine 17 – I a.....

limiting you as to the time whenever it may answer for a year the only thing I fear is that a stop may be put to the assisted Emigration All friends and neighbours are well and desire to send you their best respects. My Mrs Margaret Catherine Ellen Bridget and Stephen and all the little ones and last of all Patrick Butler all join me in the warmest love to you to your Mrs and little ones and Im in Your ..win... loving and affectionate brother.

John Shea

Some comments below, by Kerrie, who donated this wonderful letter:

“I love the letter, especially the way John addresses Timothy at the start of each paragraph. They had been apart about nine years here but the reference to neighbours and family is like he has been for a holiday and is just catching up.

The only two paragraphs where he is not addressed by name is where he is chiding him at the start for not having written for two years and then where he asks if he could send for two of his oldest children to take the strain off John.

For a Catholic family they were obviously well educated, apart from a few grammatical errors the writing is beautifully scripted.

The letter was found about 16 years ago in the effects of a deceased relative, hidden away and well cared for, for nearly 130 years.

When Timothy arrived in Australia or the Colony as it was then, he married in about 1858 from memory as a ‘Bachelor with no children’ - after reading the letter we presume a widower with 9 children. It’s a shame none of the girls ever came out.

So feel free to print the letter, it is as written with for bits I can’t read or where the paper has disintergrated.”

Kerrie Shea
Australia, 2006