



## **LIFE STORY OF JAMES HENRY O'DRISCOLL**

Born in 1819 in Baltimore, Ireland

Died July, 1868, in Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa

Written by Denise O'Driscoll his great great-granddaughter

James Henry, was baptized in Bandon, on March 7, 1819, and was married first, to Teresa Marie O'Hea, at St. Patrick's Church, in Cork Ireland, on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1840. He was 21 years old. We do not know much from those days, and are still researching, but this marriage was not a long one.

Through letters found with cousins, and saved by my grandmother Irene O'Driscoll, we came to an understanding of what was going on in the family of James, and why they moved from place to place. One letter talks of how there was no work in Ireland, so some of the family moved to South Africa to work in the Diamond Fields.

The father of James, a rather well-to-do farmer in Ireland who had four sons. When the sons were in their late teens, he called them all together. To the oldest son, he gave all his possessions and property. To the other three sons he gave nothing, and sent them out into the world on their own. One son, James, immigrated to South Africa. Rachel was born in England by some accounts, but the Knight family lived in Bandon, Ireland, before immigrating to South Africa.

It has been suggested to me by an Irish friend, in Baltimore, that the name James Henry would suggest that he was part English as well. I have not tracked down his parents yet. He did marry Rachel, in about 1844 in Humansdorp, Cape Province, South Africa. Rachel's parents, John and Jane Miller Knight had immigrated Earlier from England (although they may have lived in Bandon, Ireland).

The British began occupation of the Cape Colony in South Africa about 1795, and beginning about 1820, immigrants began arriving from Ireland, England and Scotland. They were referred to as the British Settlers. Since the Dutch had been there since early 1652, they were none too pleased with the arrival of the British Settlers and they began migrating to the interior of the country.

At that time, England was having difficulty in producing enough food for her large population; and its parliament voted in 1819, partly to relieve poverty in destressed England, and partly to increase the number of white inhabitants on the Eastern Frontier of the South African Colony....to assist immigration to South Africa. Stories of the fertility of the country and the ease of making a livelihood were greatly exaggerated, and great was the rush to secure passage to the "happy land". It is little wonder that a young boy like James O'Driscoll would be inclined to sail to this country to find a new home and seek his fortune.

They had a large family, six children, and my great grandfather was the oldest of them. Attached see the names and birth and death dates of all of James and Rachel's children. John O'Driscoll, Cornelius Francis Jeffrey O'Driscoll, Mary O'Driscoll, Ann O'Driscoll, James O'Driscoll and Henry Richard Aloysius O'Driscoll.

It is rumored that he was killed by natives, the Kaffirs, a native tribe, who resented the settlers on their land. There is an account of the Massacre that took place, at the stockade, built by the British settlers, but one home was spared, the home of Martha Knight Smith, the sister of Rachel O'Driscoll. John O'Driscoll and James Knight were staying at the Smith's house and were safe. The full story of this event is in John O'Driscoll's life story. It was later called "The Kaffir Massacre" and many settlers died that day. James Henry O'Driscoll, was not there, because he died in 1868, in Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa.

James had married into a good family and his wife's sister, Martha Knight Smith, had a wonderful large home, and they were generous to all, having many visitors. Even though Rachel O'Driscoll's sister had eight children of her own, she adopted John O'Driscoll and after the Massacre, they had to leave their large, paradise home by the sea, with orchard and gardens. The ship that left was the last one that left for the USA and it must have all been paid for by the Smith's and Knight's, for the passage and then journey by wagon with Oxen across the United States.

James Henry O'Driscoll's ancestors flourished in South America and in the USA. And we honor his struggles and accomplishments here in his story.

Sources: Letters from O'Driscoll cousins in South Africa and the US, preserved by my cousins, and my grandmother Irene O'Driscoll family genealogy left by Irene O'Driscoll with detailed family history records.

Ancestry.com, and the life Story written about John O'Driscoll's life, James son. By LuJeane W. Maxwell