

# THE STORY OF THOMAS PAUL HOBAN

Written by Jim and Grace Rickard. While some is speculation, all is based on good evidence, family memories and records.



Six HOBAN brothers and sisters in Kent, near Seattle, in 1905, with Thomas Paul on right. Another brother, John (left), did not come to the US.

**GROWING UP IN IRELAND** - Patrick Hoban was a farmer who lived in one of a group of houses known as Lisbane in the rolling hills around the town of Ballyhaunis, County Mayo in Western Ireland. He and his wife Bridget Bones Hoban leased about 12 acres of land that was part of the large estate of Lord Viscount Dillon. They raised a family of 4 boys and 3 girls in the 1840's and 50's, during the difficult years of the "potato famine".

The potato blight destroyed the food crops for several years. 1847 was the worst year, for even though the blight was weaker, few tubers remained from previous years to plant, and starvation increased. There was no true famine, as there was plenty of grain, beef, butter and milk, but it was all destined for English mouths. The hunger, and in some cases starvation, had a profound effect on Irish politics<sup>[i]</sup>.

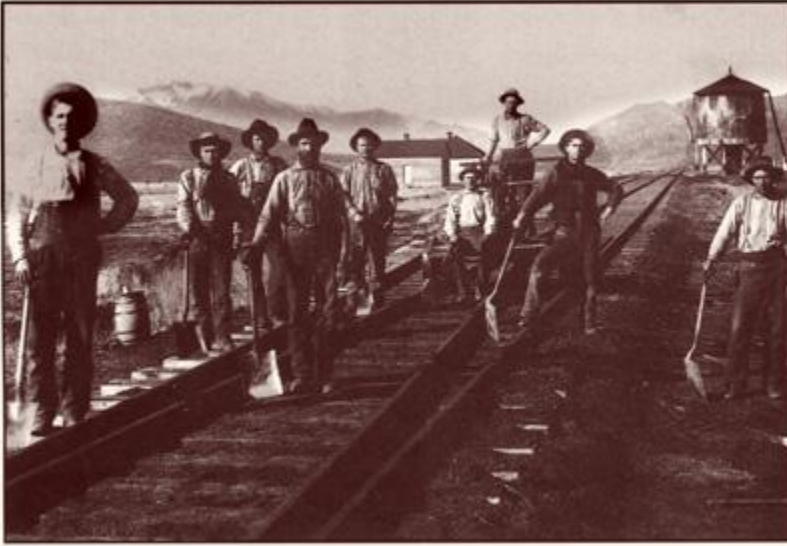
The earliest immigration we know by the Hobans from Lisbane occurred during the 1860's when four of the children migrated to the United States, settled and raised their families, mostly in Minnesota. Many of their descendents still live in the Minneapolis area.

Only two boys from this family stayed in Ireland<sup>[ii]</sup>. One was Thomas Hoban, who married Eleanor Sloyne in 1867 and raised a family of seven children at the family home in Lisbane. While their children were growing up, there was a movement calling for Home Rule for Ireland, which the Hobans no doubt supported. The rise and downfall of its leader, Charles Stewart Parnell<sup>[iii]</sup>, left the Hobans, along with many other Irish, bitter against the English<sup>[iv]</sup>. It is possible that some family members were jailed around this time because of their anti-British activities.

**EMIGRATION** - Tom and Eleanor stayed on the family farm, but all seven of their children tried life in the United States during the 1890's, going first to Minneapolis where their aunts and uncles were. Five moved on west, settling in the Seattle/Kent area. Two returned to Ireland. Some of their descendents still live near the family farm, while others moved to Dublin and other areas of Ireland; as well as New York, Chicago and Texas.

The Hobans usually took passage from Queenstown, Ireland, on the trans-Atlantic passenger ships. They always traveled in the company of relatives and friends from Ballyhaunis -- groups of young, single Irish folk seeking jobs as housekeepers, railroad men and laborers. They settled in Irish neighborhoods and maintained their national identity all their lives. Many returned at least once to visit their families in the Old Country.

**WORKED FOR THE RAILWAYS** - Thomas Paul Hoban, one of Tom and Eleanor's sons, made the journey in 1893, and began his lifetime career of working for the railroads.



Tom's retirement papers show that he was employed by the railroads from 1894 until 1938, mostly as a foreman. He began working for the Northern Pacific Railway as soon as he arrived in 1894 in Minneapolis. From 1896 to 1899, he apparently worked stints in Minnesota and North Dakota. The turn of the century finds him returning to Ballyhaunis for a summer visit, then bringing younger sister Delia back to Minneapolis. By November of that year, he was in Richland, North Dakota, where he became an American citizen.

In 1901 he was hired as a Section

Foreman for the continuing maintenance required on the dramatic **Everett & Monte Cristo Railroad**. It had been built in 1892—1893 to transport gold and silver ore from mines at Monte Cristo deep in the Cascade Mountains to a new smelter at Everett, WA. Much of the railroad was built on wooden cribbing at the edge of what the eastern experts referred to as a "trout stream." When the November floods swelled the "trout stream" into a thundering torrent of whitewater, the railroad was wiped out. The effort to maintain the rail line required yearly battles to repair damage from rockslides and fall flooding in the canyon. After the turn of the century, the railway underwent a transition from ore transport to logging. But throughout its operation, the railway was famous as a scenic excursion to view the wild beauty of the canyon and the mountains beyond<sup>[v]</sup>.

**SETTLED IN KENT** - Finally he moved to Kent, where his brother Patrick C. had built a fine house and was raising his family. PC always kept a boat in the front yard near the steps as the Kent Valley used to flood. Tom purchased a house at 310 Third Avenue South that he lived in until 1922.

Tom was always close to his brother Patrick C. Pat was well respected in his position as railroad supervisor. He lived right next to the railroad in Kent. On the day of his funeral in 1952, the coffin was placed in the parlor but to do that, the family had to remove a window casing. The train actually stopped for two minutes as a tribute to him.

Getting back to Tom, from 1902 until 1907 he worked for the railroad, then was off for a year. It was during 1908 that he returned to Ireland and married Mary Ellen Waldron at the Began church.

There are two differing family stories of how they met. One is that they were friends before Tom left Ireland, and that she stayed in Ireland, but they corresponded by mail. But according to another story, Tom ran into Mary in the U. S., where she had come to work as a nanny or housemaid in New York or Boston. She also had become a citizen. Then the two of them went back to Ballyhaunis where they married before returning to Kent.

Nell, a teenage sister of Mary Ellen, came with them and also settled in the Seattle area. They were among 26 people in their teens and 20's from Ballyhaunis who made the voyage on that same ship, the Imperator.

Tom returned to work for the railroad and his wife Mary bore four children from 1909 to 1912. Tragically, she died of "Child Bed Fever" within a month of the birth of her fourth child. The children were raised by an order of Irish Catholic Brothers for the next few years while Tom worked.

In 1920 Tom took his four children back to Ballyhaunis for three months, and returned with Annie Waldron, who was 10 years younger than her sister Mary Ellen. Annie dutifully helped raise her nephews and niece, and spent the rest of her life living only three houses distant from Tom. Eventually she married John Goldsberry, but never had children of her own.

Tom was off work for six months in 1921, and may have returned to Ballyhaunis due to the death of his father earlier that year.

**REMEMBERING "TPH" BY GRANDDAUGHTER MARGARET (HOBAN) MOORE** - Grandfather retired in 1939. He never really healed from the loss of Mary Ellen because he probably felt responsible. Aunt Annie (Waldron) was a huge help to Tom and he was always very good to her, but it was not a love relationship. Aunt Annie suffered from Glaucoma and eventually lost her sight. She was in a nursing home for some time.

Being a farmer TPH always kept a garden. There was an empty lot behind his house on 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue and he had permission to use the property. He LOVED his garden. In a booklet of his that I have, on one page he writes, "beans done good" in one particular year

He would come to visit us on Wednesdays in the 1950's & 1960's as Blessed Sacrament School held Bingo night at which Thomas Anthony (my dad) was the caller. On those evenings in the summer and fall months TPH would bring us bags of vegetables that he carried on the bus. My poor dad had to eat all those huge zucchinis! TPH also had a garden at John's house.

Another thing TPH loved to do was the crossword puzzle. The Seattle Times ran a weekly contest with a \$1000 prize and he tried EVERY week to win. He loved doing those puzzles. TPH truly enjoyed his pipe. I rarely saw him take a drink of liquor unless it was at a wake. He did enjoy a beer once in a while. TPH had to have his upper teeth pulled so his food was always on the soft side. The dentures never fit. TPH could speak Irish as well as English.

TPH did some maintenance work at St. Joseph's Church, as the house was only two blocks away. He was very loyal about attending Mass.

As a parent he did what good parents do -- he opened his home to his daughter Helen and her three children due to difficult circumstances. But it must have been difficult for TPH to share his home. Helen was always grateful. She took very good care of TPH.

He died in Seattle in 1962 a few days shy of his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday.

[i] <http://wwwvms.utexas.edu/~jdana/history/towwii.html>

[ii] Richard Ripley lists two additional brothers, Michael and James. Since Gramps did not mention them and there is no indication of their descendents, they have been omitted in this history writeup.

[iii] Ireland was hit with a partial famine in 1878. The National Land League was begun in Mayo the next year by Charles Stewart Parnell, a protestant landlord, and soon became hugely popular, extending to the whole of Ireland. The long-term aim of the League was that tenant farmers would own the land. The Land League taught the Irish farmers to stand on their own feet and assert their rights. Parnell wished to combine agrarian and political concerns together within the Home Rule Movement This marked a turning point in British relations with Ireland, as for the first time a major political party had committed itself to granting at least a measure of self-government to Ireland.

Parnell became the accepted leader of the Irish nationalist movement during the years 1880-1882. He was referred to as the "Uncrowned King of Ireland". His achievements were real and lasting. He brought Home Rule from being a faint hope to the forefront of national politics. This was a vital factor that helped future reforms to get underway.

Parnell was discredited a few years later by both a false accusation of complicity in political murders and by his own tragic love affair. He had fallen in love with a married woman.

Irishmen are kind to the memory of Parnell. He sinned and he was punished. No other man was more dearly beloved by the Irish Catholic people than this Protestant. The people of Ireland were all Parnellite at heart. But in Ireland, at least, there is a greater force, which sometimes becomes powerful. It is truth.

<http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/people/parnell.htm> <http://web.cs.mun.ca/~david12/papers/parnell.html>  
[http://www.ireland.org/irl\\_hist/hist48.htm](http://www.ireland.org/irl_hist/hist48.htm)

[iv] Conversation with Bill Mallow, 8/2001

[v] Source: [www.robecanyon.org](http://www.robecanyon.org)