

## History

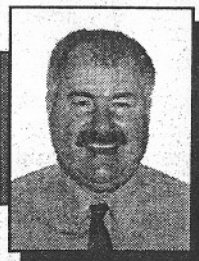
# Carroll family has fascinating history

Part One of Four

Donna Ramsey of Rifle, Colo., has traced her family tree to Willimantic. A search into the Willimantic census, city directories, probate records and vital statistics reveals a fascinating story of American immigration and emigration. Four generations ago, Donna's ancestors, an Irish family named Carroll, struggled to make a living in a number of small Pennsylvania coal-mining towns. This life continued for almost 20 years until a job opportunity opened up in the Willimantic cotton thread mills in 1874.

The Carroll family history begins in the Pennsylvania coal fields before the Civil War, where Irish immigrants Joseph and Margaret Carroll were raising a family. Donna Ramsey's great-great-grandfather, Joseph Carroll, was born in Ireland sometime around 1828. He died of consumption in Willimantic on Nov. 10, 1882. Joseph's wife, Margaret (Leary) Carroll, was born in Ireland around 1832. She died at 32 Spruce St., Willimantic on June 22, 1897.

It is difficult to trace the lives of the majority of 19th century working-class immigrants. However, the death certificates of Joseph and Margaret's eight chil-



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dren enable us to retrace the Carrolls' job-seeking travels across Pennsylvania as Joe pursued a wage in the state's coal-mining regions. The precise birthplace of the Carrolls' eldest and youngest daughters, Ellen and Mary, are unknown, but sons Frank and James were born respectively in Pittston in 1854, and in Philadelphia in 1858. Their daughters Margaret, Sarah, Eliza and Julia were born respectively in Scranton in 1855, in Carbondale in 1859, in Scranton in 1859, and in Wilkes-Barre in 1863.

The Pennsylvania Carrolls arrived in Willimantic around 1875. There were Carrolls living in the city at this time, so it may be assumed that they informed Joe and Margaret of vacancies in the local cotton mills.

Between 1875 and 1882, Margaret Carroll resided at 92 New Village, located in the mill housing complex opposite the Willimantic Linen's Co. Mill No. 2. This "new village" of mill housing was built in 1864 and named Iverton in honor of Lawson Ives, a founder of the Willimantic Linen Co. It consists of housing on Lower Main Street, Ives Street, Pine Street, Beech Street and Linden Street. The Carroll mill house was also known as 92 Iverton. Only mill employees lived here, paying a percentage of their salaries for rent.

Margaret Carroll revealed typical Irish-American upward mobility when on April 30, 1882, she purchased 32 Spruce St. from Lincoln and Boss, Willimantic lumber dealers. On Feb. 18, 1889, she also purchased a larger house at 41 Prospect St. from the



*This small house on Spruce Street was built in the 1870s and became the Carroll family's first step beyond tenement and worker housing.*

estate of farmer Eli Hewitt, who is remembered in the name of the Willimantic street that connects Prospect Street and Lewiston Avenue. Joseph Carroll had parted company with his wife and children shortly after the family had settled in Willimantic. Margaret Carroll raised her large family in the Iverton mill house, and in the Prospect and Spruce Street houses, paid for from savings made by the rent paid by her working children.

*Next week: The Willimantic lives of Joseph and Margaret's Carroll's eight children.*

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