

Update to “Sorting out the Various Sparks Families of Early Bytown”

By Doris Grierson Hope, July 2015

This update to my article on the Sparks’ families of early Bytown which was printed in OGS Bulletin of October 2007 provides information since uncovered on their Sparks’ ancestors in Ireland. At that time, I tried to sort out the various Georges, Abrahams, Fredericks who came to our area in the early 1800s. Now there is a problem in sorting out the Georges, the Abrahams, the Nicholases who lived in Ireland previous to their emigration to Canada.

The published lineage of the Sparks family indicates that Nicholas Sparks because of military service had received land in Darragh (townland of Dranagh) in 1720 through the Duke of Marlborough. It also indicates this Nicholas had at least two descendants, brothers named Samuel and Nicholas the younger. Samuel’s son Abraham, who was born and died in Darragh (1776-1856), had a son George, born in 1801, who moved to Gloucester township in the early 1820s. This George of Gloucester is said to be a cousin of Nicholas of Sparks Street in to-day’s Ottawa. The published lineage also tells that the grandfather of Nicholas of Bytown was Nicholas, Samuel’s younger brother.

However, family history from Bytown tells that the father of Nicholas Sparks, born c. 1791 (born 1801 according to Militia Records of 1828) of Sparks Street, Bytown, was George Sparks of Ballylusk (Sparks Family Letter, published OBN Vol. 17, #2. 1984 by Naomi Haydon). Family records also indicate that the oldest brother of Nicholas of Bytown was Abraham, (born in 1783 according to 1861 census, Wellington Ward, Bytown), who married Frances Dixon and who came to Canada about 1854, after the death of his father. Three of their children Mary, George and Margaret were baptized in 1833, 1836 and 1840 respectively in Ardamine Parish, Courtown, Ireland.

The first quick scanning search for instruments in the Land Registry office in Dublin pertaining to Sparks’ holdings in the Townland of Darragh (Dranagh) yielded the information that a “Toole to Sparks” transaction (#249879) had occurred, probably after 1750, but its contents were not read. Another instrument, #277818, dated in September, 1790, in the same Land records office showed that 95 acres of this townland was sold by Abraham and George Sparks to a Mr. Lett. The Tithe Applotment Book for 1825 shows that an Abraham Sparks in Dranagh still held 63 acres at that time. This townland of Dranagh lies in the Parish of Kilcormick, and we are told that in the Irish Uprising in 1798 “every Protestant house in the parish of Kilcormick was reduced to ashes” (Wm. Hamilton Maxwell, “History of the Irish Rebellion”, 1854, p. 87). After this uprising an Abraham Sparks of Dranagh was paid £40 by the British Government for losses sustained during that uprising, losses for “a horse, crop of corn, profit of cows, cloaths and potatoes”. Church and other records for the Dranagh area are difficult to find.

I visited the townlands of both Ballylusk and Dranagh in Ireland (12 miles distant from each other), but only one family in the Dranagh area did remember the name of Sparks as having lived there. She indicated that there was an old graveyard in the vicinity, now deserted, in which some of the family might have been buried. However, the graveyard was so overgrown that I found nothing there.

My cousin, Donald Sparks, had visited this area of Wexford County earlier, and had found the records of Abraham and Frances Dixon in the parish of Ardamine, in Courtown. I have also visited this

church, and took note that Abraham was the first Sparks attached to this church. A church at Killena (closer to Ballylusk than was Courtown) to which the family might have been attached, had existed, but that church had been demolished about 1975 and then the parish was joined with the parish of Ballycanew. (Booklet entitled "Some further notes on Ardamine and Killena by Madden and Parker, 1987). My cousin also found from the Tithe Applotment books (Tab 31/29) that Abraham Sparks in 1832 held 14 acres in Coolookbeg, a small area next to Townland of Ballylusk.

On my first visit to this area I spent some time in the Land records office in Dublin, and I did find some pertinent details relating to both Ballylusk and Dranagh. The most important instrument of these, Number 226475, dated Aug. 26, 1780, linked a George Sparks of Drana to his brother, Nicholas of Ballylusk. Nicholas Sparks of Ballylusk had died intestate without issue, and his older brother George, his heir-at-law, had come into full possession of Ballylusk and that he was fulfilling a previous agreement made with the late Nicholas that 22 of the 44 acres of Ballylusk would be devolved to Nicholas's nephew, George Sparkes of Ballylusk.

This Deed of Lease #226475 (Aug. 6, 1780) reads: "George Sparkes, Eldest Brother and Heir-at-law to Nicholas Sparks, late of Ballyluske, deceased, of the one part, and his Nephew, George Sparkes of Ballyluske of the other part....Reciting that the said George Sparkes, Eldest Brother and heir-at-law to the said Nicholas Sparkes, late of Ballylusk, did demise grant... set unto his said nephew the one equal half of that part of the Town and lands of Ballylusk aforesaid lately held by the said Nicholas Sparkes Dece'd, Which he the said George Sparkes, the eldest became entitled to by the death of his said Brother Nicholas Sparkes pursuant to an agreement theretofore concluded upon by the said Nicholas Sparkes in his lifetime between the said Nicholas Sparkes in his lifetime and the said George Sparkes the youngest his nephew and since agreed to be fulfilled and performed and executed by the said George Sparkes the Eldest above mentioned...."

By another Instrument # 265915, dated Dec. 20, 1780, we learn that a George Sparks (#2) of Drana (who by his father's death had become the leaseholder of Ballylusk) leased 22 acres of the land to George Sparks, then occupying it, and the other 22 to a James Barrington of Garrynew, a townland next to Ballylusk. From this instrument we know that the land of Ballylusk was occupied by a George, who was not the son of George of Drana but the son of another brother of Nicholas - a George whom we have yet to find,

By another Instrument #265910 dated 20 Dec. 1787, George Sparks #2 of Dranagh deeded the whole 44 acres of Ballylusk to George then of Ballylusk, noting the 22 acres was already occupied by the said George Sparks and other 22 by James Barrington of Garrynew. This instrument also holds the land for the life of Mary Morris (nee Bolton) widow of James Morris, late of the town of Wexford.

I also visited the Townland of Ballylusk and spoke with a Mr. Wheland whose forefathers had bought the Ballylusk land from a George Sparks about 1813. His grandfather had married a Bolton from Ballylusk and he had grown up there. He showed me a survey map of the townland, a map which showed its subdivision into 2 lots of 22 acres each. After Mr. Wheland's purchase of the leasehold on this property, he had built a new house there in which he lived until about 1995 when he retired. He also told me that during the Irish Uprising in 1798, Father O'Grady had thrown muskets into a hole dug on the Sparks property. The British Government reimbursed George Sparks of "Lusk" £25 for losses sustained

during this Uprising, for a “mare....and tackling, corn, cloaths, bridle and saddle” (A List of Persons with Losses, 1798”, for County of Wexford, p. 12)

Many of the atrocities occurring during the Uprising of 1798 centred on this area of Wexford County. Besides Abraham Sparks of Dranagh and George Sparks of Lusk, two other Sparkses were reimbursed by the British Government for losses; both of the Townland of Tincurry, one, Ann Sparks, Sr., for “loss of cattle and bacon, the other, another Ann, a widow, for loss of “horses, provisions, profit of cows, crops and cloaths”. They claimed £23 and £46 respectively. They are the mother and the widow of the Roger Sparks who was murdered by the rebels at Vinegar Hill during the Uprising. (See Musgrave. #622, p. 376; also Burials, 1775-1801, Parish of Ferns, Kilbride & Clone)

The close relationship of the Sparks’ families living on Dranagh, Ballylusk and Tincurry becomes obvious with the discovery from a 1776 list of Protestant Parishioners of an Abraham Sparks living on the Townland of Tincurry in the Barony of Scarawalsh. Abraham Sparks (b.1706-1716 -d. 1785), and Ann Sparks (b.1721- d.1813), both buried Clone Cemetery, and 7 Sparks children (3 male and 4 female), all born between 1746 and 1776, lived on the townland of Tincurry. The 3 male Sparks children were George (b.1745-1755). Roger (b.1755-1765) and Michl (Nicholas), (b.1755-1765). The four daughters: Mary (married William Hawkins), Margaret (married William Little), Catherine, and Elizabeth (married Robert Swain) were all born 1755-1775.

The burial of Abraham Sparks on May 3, 1775, and the burial of Ann Sparks, aged 92, in Clone Cemetery, on 12 Jan, 1814, have been located in records of Births and Baptisms for Ferns parish. These records also show the baptism of Abraham, son of Roger Sparks and his wife Ann, in 1797. As well, the burial of a George Sparks in Clone Cemetery, aged 60, is shown as Dce. 31, 1814 (indicating he would have been born about 1754) . Other family births, etc. are located there. Of particular significance was the location of the marriage in Ardamine parish of a George Sparks of Ballylusk to Mary Ellard (Elward) of Tincurry parish on Feb. 17, 1781.

Land Registry information for the Townland of Tincurry yields the following information:

(1) Instrument #100329, dated 28 Jan., 1748 recites the fact that Abraham Sparks of Tincurry granted “the fourth part of the land to an Alex Lery, this 4th part had been previously occupied by George Sparks on which he had buildings, etc. Since the George Sparks of Tincurry named on the “List of of Parishioners” above who was aged 20-30 in 1776 would have been a child in 1748, who is this George who had left Tincurry before 1748? *Where did he go and what was his relationship to Abraham?*

(2) Instrument # 108428 dated 11 Jan., 1753, from Robert Harrison of Dublin (the title holder to Tincurry lands) to Abraham Sparks of Tincurry gave Abraham Sparks the right to cut bog on Tincurry lands, to hold for the lives of Abraham, as well as for both the lives of Robert Sparks, eldest son of George Sparks of Dranagh and nephew of Abraham, and as well the life of Nicholas Sparks of Ballylusk. It seems reasonable to conclude that this George of Dranagh, the brother of Nicholas of Ballylusk (Instrument #226475) is also the brother of Abraham of Tincurry (Instrument #108428). *If so, who then was their father and on what land did he live?*

(3) Instrument # 269144, dated May 5, 1786, from John Harrison (again the Lessor of Tincurry lands) to both Ann Sparks, of Tincurry, widow and to Roger Sparks of Tincurry, farmer, granted to Ann Sparks

approximately 76 acres of Tincurry then in possession of Roger Sparks to hold for the lives of Roger Sparks, Mh'l (Nicholas?) Sparks of Tincurry, his brother and Abraham Sparks, son of George Sparks of Ballylusk, then aged 3 years and which said Abraham is nephew to the said Roger. Abraham's three sons are reaching maturity. Roger and Nicholas are still on Tincurry lands, but George is living on Ballylusk and has a son Abraham born in 1783. No doubt he is the George who received title to Ballylusk land upon the death of his Uncle Nicholas. No doubt he is also the George of Ballylusk who married Mary Ellard (Elward) of Tincurry in 1781.

Now we can also connect Abraham Sparks, born 1783, the son of George Sparks of Ballylusk, and a nephew of Roger of Tincurry, to the Abraham of Coolookbeg, born 1783, who married Frances Dixon and moved to Bytown circa 1854.

As to the ages of Nicholas Sparks and his siblings of the Bytown area, Abraham was the eldest. Census records for 1861 tell us that Abraham was born in 1783 and that Frederick was born in 1794. Census records for 1851 are less precise as to years of birth. Their 3 siblings, Nicholas, George, Roger and Elizabeth are believed to have been born from 1791-1803. The death notice of Nicholas Sparks in the Bytown Gazette of 1862 states he was age 68 (that is: born in 1794). Militia records for Bytown of 1828 show Nicholas Sparks, age 27, and Frederick Sparks, age 33. The Militia Roll of 1828 for Nepean township shows George Sparks age 23 (born 1803); but the Census record of 1851 show him born 1791.

I have adjusted my Family Tree Genealogical program to show Abraham and Ann Sparks the grandparents of, and George (Ballylusk) Sparks and Mary Ellard) the parents of, Abraham (wife Frances Dixon), Nicholas and Frederick of Bytown, George Sparks of Bells Corners, Roger of Hull, and Elizabeth (Mrs. Edmund Hurd). I also show that Abraham of Tincurry is a brother of George of Dranagh and Nicholas of Ballylusk, but their father is unknown.

Even though it is recognized that George Sparks of Gloucester township (born 1801) is a cousin of Nicholas of Sparks Street, no connection has yet been made to a Nicholas Sparks or Samuel Sparks of Darragh (Dranagh) as told in the Sparks lineage. No doubt a connection does exist, but more information on Robert, George, Abraham, and the other Sparkses living on Dranagh is needed.