

## The Real family

By Jane Smith

Patrick Real was five years old when his family emigrated to Australia. He was the youngest of six children of James and Ellen Real: poor Irish Catholics – tenant farmers – from Pallasgreen, Limerick. James died in quarantine. His death left his 37-year-old widow to bring up their six children, aged from four to 18, alone.

Ellen never remarried. She took her children to Ipswich and did her best to give them a good upbringing.

Her eldest son, James, was an 18-year-old farm labourer when the family emigrated. He went on to marry, settle in Ipswich, and raise seven children. He became a hotel keeper with land holdings in Ipswich and Goodna, and died at only 47.

Mary, the second child of Ellen and James, lived to the great age of 90. She was 16 when the family emigrated. The following year she married ex-convict Patrick O’Sullivan in Ipswich. Her husband had become a successful businessman and landowner; he went into politics in 1860 and served as a member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly for many years. Mary and Patrick O’Sullivan had 13 children. They were a highly successful family; Mary’s son Thomas became a Supreme Court Judge and was eventually appointed Queen’s Counsel. Another of her sons was a solicitor, and three of her grandchildren entered the legal profession. Mary was ‘of a retiring disposition’ but known for ‘large amount of unostentatious work among her fellows’ and her ‘extensive’ charities.<sup>1</sup>

Kate (or Catherine), who was 14 on her arrival in Australia, married in Ipswich and raised her family in the Darling Downs. Michael, two years her junior, was a publican, grocer and storekeeper, who went on to become a highly-respected alderman for 13 years, and Mayor of Ipswich in 1901. He was survived by nine children when he died of heart disease in 1908.

Ellen junior was eight when the family left Ireland. She was the only one of Ellen and James’s children not to marry and reproduce. Instead she moved to Sydney and became a nun. There were no half measures with the Real family; in all of their endeavours, they aimed high and commanded great respect for their ability and integrity. Ellen was professed in St Patrick’s Church in 1869. She was the first member of the order of Sisters of Mercy to take the veil in New South Wales. As Mother Mary Stanislaus, she served at St Patrick’s and St Brigid’s convent in Mosman, and was Head Superior at Monte Sant’ Angelo in North Sydney. ‘A most edifying religious,’ was Mother Mary Stanislaus, ‘possessed of extraordinary devotion to Our Lady. Her personality was magnetic, and this won her hosts of friends, particularly among the children’.<sup>2</sup>

The highest achiever of the Real family was the youngest: Patrick, who would become a successful lawyer and eventually Senior Puisne Judge. His story is told in more detail in *The tragedy of the Emigrant*.

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<sup>1</sup> (1925, Oct 2). *The Week*, p.24

<sup>2</sup> (1924, May 29). *Freeman’s Journal*, p. 23