Agnews in Northern Ireland

About this Report

Robert Hornbaker produced this report after his trip to Ireland in September 2002. Being a cousin of the Loofbourows via his great aunt Mollie (Barker) Loofbourrow, his report was presented at the Loofbourrow Family Reunion in July 2004 at the Crestline Lodge at Lake Gregory in the San Bernardino mountains.

The original report included black and white - photo copied - pictures. Robert provided original pictures for this version of his report so that color photos could be included in this new layout. Also, the exhibits in the original report are recreated here, including some of the artwork, photos of Lochnaw Castle, obituaries of the grand parents, and maps.

Contents:

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Report On My Trip To See The Agnews In Northern Ireland

by Robert Hornbaker

Ballynarry Townland is an area of land, like a township, where a lot of the Agnews live and farm. It is located a couple of miles northeast of Ballynure, a small town of about thirty houses, between Belfast and Larne, in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. See the map of Northern Ireland, attached as Exhibit A.

A clan map "Scotland of Old" by Sir Iain Moncreiffe and Don Pottinger, published by John Bartholomew & Son Ltd., Duncan Street, Edinburgh EH91TA Scotland, shows the land of the Agnew clan next to, and north of, the land of the Erskine clan, on the west coast of Scotland, across the North Channel from Northern Ireland. An article, in the Agnewsletter, on the Agnew clan and its Lochnaw Castle is attached as Exhibit B. These two Scottish clans produced my great grandparents, David Agnew and Jane Erskine, who had eight children.

(1) Jane, born March 17, 1848, came to the United States in 1870, and died October 10, 1902. She married James Cellars Barker on May 7, 1873. They had seven children, namely, Mrs. William C. (Lizzie) Winslow, Robert J. Barker, Mary Loofbourrow, J.W. Barker, Joe M. Barker, Mrs. Grace Nelson, and Arthur D. Barker. Wanda Barker Sheets, 3000 West Madison

Ave #402, Fairfield, IA 52556-4257, Telephone 641 209-5672, is the daughter of Arthur D. Barker. James and Jane Barker's obituaries are attached as Exhibit C. My grandfather Hornbaker's Plat Book of Van Buren County Iowa, Northwest Publishing Co., 1897, shows the James C. Barker home place, in Washington Township, sections 9 and 10, attached as Exhibit E. Just north, in section 3, are the Miller Chapel and Cemetery, where James and Jane are buried, northeast of the gate. The Chapel is long since gone.

(2) Mary, born July 3, 1852, never married, had one son, David Agnew, who had a son, William Agnew, now dead.

(3) Samuel Agnew, born May 4, 1856, died September 2, 1929. He was married twice, the first time, to Esther Blair, on August 6, 1880. She died in 1884 or 1885. They had four children: Jane, born February 20, 1881, died August 11, 1911, married Andrew Mackey; Robert, born April 25, 1882, who came to the United States; John, born August 12, 1883, died June 1, 1889, at age 6; and David Erskine, born April 29, 1884, went to United States in 1907, died June 9, 1945, in Brookline, Norfolk County, Massachusetts. Samuel Agnew married, the second time, to Mary Jane Todd, on May 27, 1887. They had eleven children: James Steel, born March 15, 1879; Martha, born March 15, 1886, died in infancy; Samuel, born February 20, 1888, died October 13, 1889; Mary Agnes, born July 29, 1889, died January 2, 1914; Martha, born November 2, 1890, died October 23, 1981, married David Boyd; John, born May 12, 1892, died June 5, 1970, married Mary Jane Finley; Annie, born December 17, 1893, died November 22, 1980, married William James Blair; Samuel, born June 25, 1896, died September 30, 1976, married Jane Clements; Edith, born May 29, 1898, died June 22, 1978, married Charles Bell; Jeannie Erskine, born December 20, 1900, died November 13, 1909; and Ewing Gilfillan, born April 11, 1902, died September 10, 1977, married Agnes Kennedy. As you can see, James Steel was born before Samuel married his mother, Mary Jane Todd, his second wife, and before he married Esther Blair, his first wife. He was raised by the childless sister of his mother, who was married to James Steel. So he took his uncle James Steel's name, but he was an Agnew.

(4) Margaret, born March 8, 1858, married John Blair.

(5) Robert Erskine, my grandfather, born January 12, 1859, or 1860, came to United States in late 1886, on the Alabama, and died March 16, 1938. He married his first wife, Elizabeth Jane McBride, in the Raloo Presbyterian Church, in Ballnarry. According to the church records, they had a daughter Jeannie, born March 2, 1886, baptized April 11, 1886. Elizabeth Jane died early in 1887, soon after they arrived in the United States, and the infant daughter died in the fall of 1887. They are buried together in the Miller Chapel Cemetery. Their tombstone is near the gate, but most of the inscription is now unreadable, after one hundred fifteen years. My grandfather married his second wife, Hester Brown, in 1897. They had five children: Robert E., Jr., called "Robbie", Samuel Brown, called "Brown", Mary Elizabeth, John Calvin, and William James, called "Willie". Mary Elizabeth Agnew Hornbaker was my mother. Robert and Hester, and their bachelor son William, are buried in the Purdom Cemetery south of Keosauqua, Iowa. Robert and Hester Agnew's obituaries are attached as Exhibit D. My grandfather Hornbaker's Plat Book shows the Robert Agnew home place, in Van Buren Township, just north of Keosauqua, in section 25, attached as Exhibit F. At his death, he also owned the so-called Indian Creek pasture, in Des Moines Township, one mile west of the junction of Highways 1 and 2, then one-half mile north, then three-quarters of a mile west to the entrance, near the cemetery.

(6) Martha, born April 4, 1864, married David Getty, and lived in Belfast.

(7) John, born July 12, 1866.

(8) David, born April 12, 1868, went to the United States, died in 1950.

Martha Agnew, born November 2, 1890, died October 23, 1981, married David Boyd, who died August 20, 1939. They had a daughter Margaret, born May 22, 1926, who married James Gilmour "Gil" Banford. He died November 25, 1980. The David Boyds also had a son Sam Boyd, who is 72, and retired, after working for the United Nations for seventeen years in Kenya and Tanzania. His address is 17 Newlands Ave., Bexhill en Sea, East Sussex TN39 4HA, Tele. 01424-210495. Margaret has two sons, Tom and Sam Banford, who are civil engineers working for the government of Northern Ireland.

I first met Margaret in about 1984, when she stopped in Los Angeles on an around-the-world trip. I took off two days to show her Disneyland and Los Angeles. Since then she has asked me several times to visit the Agnews in Northern Ireland. I finally made it.

Samuel Agnew's son, John, born May 12, 1892, died June 5, 1970, had one son John.

Samuel Agnew's son, Samuel, born June 25, 1896, died September 30, 1976, married Jane Clements, who

died September 3, 1987. They had six children: Mary Jane (Maimie) Hanna, Samuel, a life-long bachelor, Agnes (Nance) Wallace, Martha Rankin, Wilhelmena (Willa) and Edith Annie (Anne). Maimie is married to William James Hanna, a retired potato farmer, and has a son Jacob.

Edith Agnew, born May 29, 1898, died June 22, 1978, married Charles Bell. They had six children: Ella, Samuel, Charles, Edith, Mattie and Raymond.

With this background, here is a report of my trip to see the Agnews in Northern Ireland.

On Saturday, September 21, 2002, Margaret and her son Tom met me at the Belfast Harbour airport and drove me back to Kilkeel, where they live, in County Down, on the Irish Sea, at the border of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. See the map. Margaret's address is 17 Newcastle Road, Kilkeel, Newry, County Down, Northern Ireland, BT34 4AP, Telephone 011 44 28417 62532. Kilkeel is a fishing town, with a seven foot tide. Tom is an avid lobster fisherman, and I regret not having had the time to go out in his wee boat, as he called it.

On Sunday morning, September 22, 2002, Tom drove Margaret and me from Kilkeel to Maimie and William James Hanna's farm, a couple of miles northeast of Ballynure, in Ballynarry, where we had dinner at noon with Maimie, William James, Maimie's brother Samuel, and her sisters, Nance and Martha. On the way, we stopped at my grandfather Agnew's school shown below.

I also took this photo of the road past the school.

After the dinner, I took this picture of five Agnew cousins. They are, from left to right: Nance, who plays the organ at the Raloo Presbyterian Church, Samuel, Maimie, and Martha, all the siblings, and Margaret Banford, their first cousin. The Hanna's main farmhouse, where their son Jacob now lives, is in the background. We had dinner at the Hanna's retirement home next door.

L-R: Nance, Samuel, Maimie, Martha & Margaret Banford

Before leaving the Hanna's farm, I also took this photo looking northeast toward Larne. <*above*>

From the Hanna's farm, Samuel Agnew drove his three sisters, Margaret and me, in his Suzuki SUV, to the Raloo Presbyterian Church shown below.

I went to church there, on Sunday, September 22, 2002, sat in the Agnew pew, between Margaret and William James, where my grandfather Agnew sat one hundred sixteen years ago. I listened to Nance play the organ, and to the sermon of the Rev. Brian McMillen on Preparing The Way, Mark 1:1-8. After church, I met John Agnew, in his 80s, and suffering from the shingles, and other Agnews I can't remember. Also met David McBride, probably a descendant of relatives of my grandfather Agnew's first wife, although I talked to him only briefly, and I didn't ask about that. Then, we walked to the nearby Raloo churchyard, and I took this photo of Samuel Agnew's tombstone.

I also took a close-up of the front of Samuel's tombstone with the Raloo church in the background, which shows he is not alone. With him are sons John, born August 12, 1883, died June 1, 1889, Samuel, born February 20, 1888, died October 13, 1889, daughters Jenny Erskine, born December 20, 1900, died November 13, 1909, aged 8 years, and Mary Agnes Wilson, born July 29, 1889, died January 2, 1914, aged 24 years, his second wife, Mary Jane Agnew, died July 25, 1945, aged 93 years, their son Samuel, born June 25, 1896, died September 30, 1976, aged 30 years, and his wife Jane (Nettie), died September 3, 1987, aged 89 years.

Margaret said the "old ones" are not buried in Raloo, but in a churchyard near Ballynure that I didn't see. The "old ones" include David Agnew and Jane Erskine, who are buried in unmarked graves there. Margaret thinks their tombstones have been destroyed.

Sam then drove us, over a rough, unused, grassy lane, to the now abandoned house of David Agnew and Jane Erskine, shown below, where my grandfather Agnew was raised. We went into the house, and looked around. It was eerie. I was the first person from the United States with Agnew blood to return there since my grandfather Agnew left, in 1886, one hundred sixteen years ago. The last people to live there were William Agnew, the grandson of Mary, born July 3, 1852, and his wife, who now lives in Carrickfergus. See the map. She still owns the house, and farm, and rents it to Samuel Agnew. She also has the Agnew family bible that was the source of the dates of births and deaths in my grandfather's family. Incidentally, the bible shows my grandfather Agnew was born January 12, 1860, whereas his obituary and tombstone shows January 12, 1859.

Margaret sent me her notes from land records, in Belfast, for Ballynarry, in the Parish of Ballynure, which shows David Agnew was the occupier of 27 acres in Ballynarry, in 1861. His landlord was Conway L. Dobbs. Since my grandfather Agnew was born in 1860, in Ayrshire Scotland, this would indicate the David Agnew moved to Ballynarry in 1860, or 1861, when my grandfather Agnew was one, or two, years old. Strangely, Jane Agnew Barker's obituary states she was born in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, in 1848. So either the David Agnew family moved from County Antrim to Ayrshire, and back, or Jane's birthplace was in Ayrshire.

Sam then drove us to his nearby farm where I took the following picture of the Northern Ireland countryside.

After that, Sam took us back to the Hanna's farm, where Tom had stayed, and he then drove Margaret and me back to Kilkeel. On the way, we stopped to see Mattie, in Ballynure, who is in her 80s, and in failing health.

On Monday, September 23, 2002, Sam Benford, Margaret's other son, took us through the Mourne Mountains near Kilkeel, up to Belfast to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, then back down along the east coast to Strangford, where we crossed on a ferry, to Newcastle, where Sam lives, with his wife, and daughter Samantha, and finally to Kilkeel.

On Tuesday, September 24, 2002, Tom, who works in Belfast, took me to Dunmurray, on the outskirts of Belfast, where I hired a taxi for a quick tour of Belfast, before going to Belfast Harbor airport to return to London. In Belfast, I saw the City Hall, and Stormont, the seat of the government of Northern Ireland, and took the following photo on Newtownards Road, the scene of much fighting between the Protestants and Catholics.

A second photo [below], also taken on Newtownards Road, is a picture of the headquarters of the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), with the words:

FOR AS LONG AS ONE HUNDRED OF US REMAIN ALIVE WE SHALL NEVER IN ANYWAY CONSENT TO SUBMIT TO THE IRISH FOR ITS NOT FOR GLORY HONOUR OR RICHES WE FIGHT BUT FOR FREEDOM ALONE WHICH NO MAN LOSES BUT WITH HIS LIFE. U.D.A./U.F.F.

William James Hanna, and his son, Jacob, are Orangemen who vow never to join the Republic of Ireland, but Margaret's son Tom said it was only a matter to time. Probably a long time. See the Reuters article in the December 20, 2002 Los Angeles Times, attached as Exhibit G.

After returning to London, I took the train, on September 27, 2002, from Charing Cross station to Battle, in East Sussex, near Hastings, where I had lunch with Margaret's brother Sam Boyd, shown here.

Sam Boyd

So I have now closed the circle, by returning, after one hundred sixteen years, to the place where my grandfather Agnew lived, before he left, in 1886, but not to the place where he was born, in Ayrshire Scotland. Ayrshire is a county, and I still don't know the place, in Ayrshire, where he was born, or I would have gone there.

Finally, here are Greetings From Ireland.

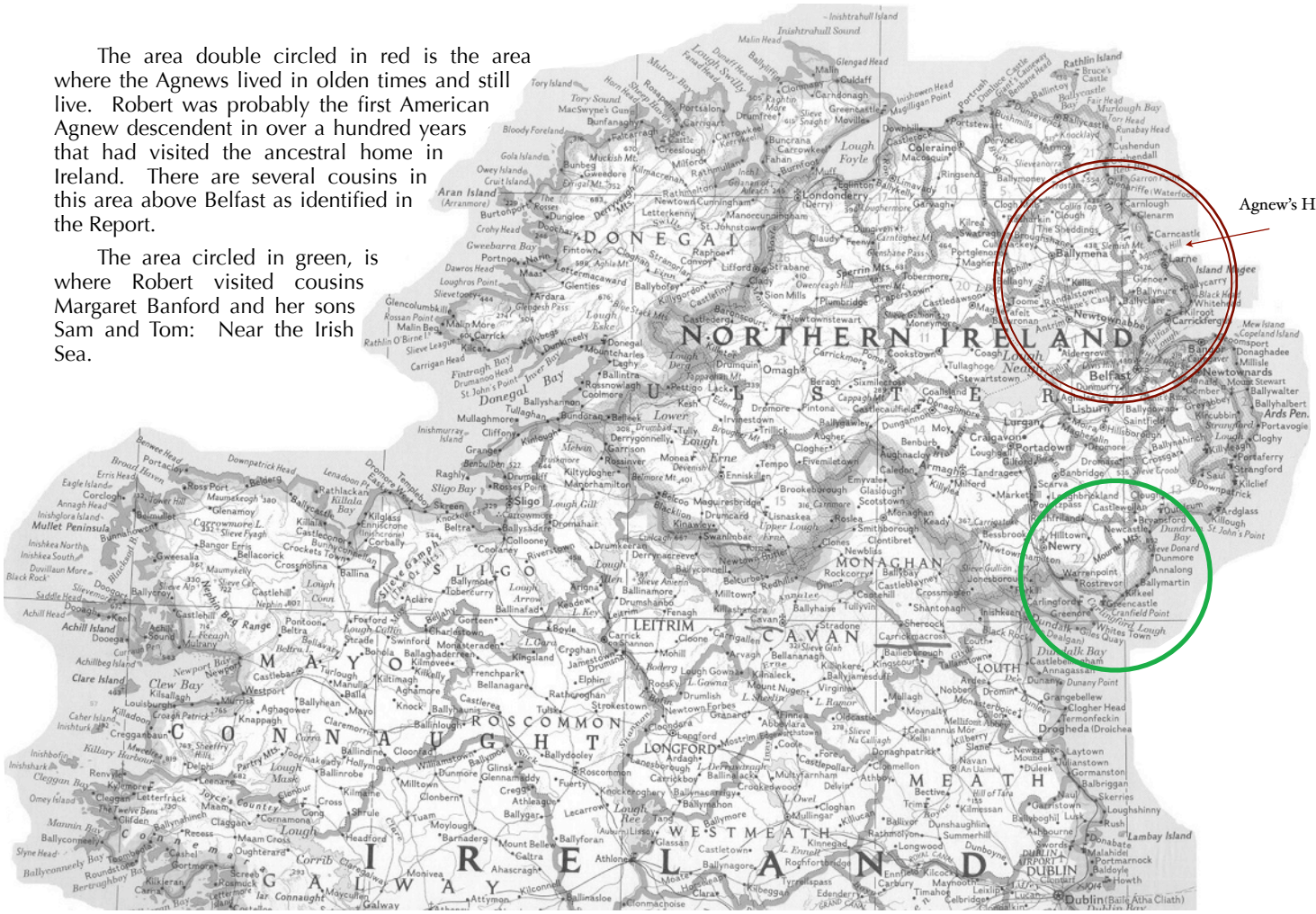
Robert* D.** Hornbaker

* *I was named after my grandfather Robert E. Agnew.*

** *D. is for David. I was also named after my grandfather David R. Hornbaker*

The area double circled in red is the area where the Agnews lived in olden times and still live. Robert was probably the first American Agnew descendent in over a hundred years that had visited the ancestral home in Ireland. There are several cousins in this area above Belfast as identified in the Report.

The area circled in green, is where Robert visited cousins Margaret Banford and her sons Sam and Tom: Near the Irish Sea.



These two Articles appeared in the Agnewsletter, published in Petaluma, CA in Winter 1992 (Vol. V, No. I). While that article contained Anna Agnew's personal photos of the castle, they were not available for this recreation of Robert's Report and so other similar photos have been substituted.

Lochnaw Castle for Sale!

Lochnaw Castle, the family seat of the Norman Agnews in southwest Scotland, is for sale. The property includes the 47 ac re loch and 250 acres of natural woodland and grass paddocks surrounding the castle. Offers over £447,000 will be considered. At the current rate of exchange, approximately $1.80 per pound, that's about $855,000.

The present owner, Miss Del Agnew from the Tasmanian branch of the Lochnaw Agnews, purchased the castle at auction in 1956. At the time she bought the castle, it had not been owned or occupied by the Agnew family for many years. Now, with the possibility that the castle may once again slip from Agnew ownership, a number of Agnews, including Sir Crispin Agnew, have voiced concern and have expressed interest in keeping the castle in the Agnew family if at all possible.

The Agnew Association is not in a position to consider purchasing the castle. However, Convener Art Agnew has authorized Stephen B. Agnew of Santa Monica, California to look into the situation on behalf of the Agnew Association and to make recommendations about what role the Association could play. Stephen has visited the castle on several occasions.

The story of one of his visits and his accompanying photographs were featured in the October 1989 issue of the Agnewsletter. He is deeply interested in the future of Lochnaw Castle, and plans a trip to Scotland to meet with the selling agent, the Lochnaw Castle caretakers with whom he has shared a long friendship, and Sir Crispin. If you have any interest in participating in the purchase of Lochnaw Castle, want more details about the sale, or if you have any ideas or suggestions about how to keep the Castle in the hands of Agnews, please contact the Agnew Association, or Stephen Agnew at 723 Palisades Beach Road, Santa Monica, CA 90402. (Agnewsletter 1992)

Springtime Views of Lochnaw Castle

In May 1991, Anna L. Agnew, daughter of member Stan Agnew of Napa, visited Lochnaw Castle with her father and sister. ...

Spring is lovely time to visit Lochnaw Castle. The banks of rhododendrons and azaleas are in bloom and the Loch Leven Brown trout are abundant in the loch.

A visit to Lochnaw Castle is even easier now that Britrail has introduced its Scotrail pass, allowing travel on trains and major ferries throughout Scotland. There is a railway station at Stranraer which is near Lochnaw Castle, so a side trip to Lochnaw Castle should be easy to add to your travel itinerary. Scottrail passes are available for 8, 15, and 22 days and range in price from $129 to $249. Passes must be purchased before leaving the United States, so check with your travel agent. (Agnewsletter 1992)

James C. Barker

James C. Barker, the son of John and Elizabeth Barker, was born near Mt. Zion, Iowa, July 12, 1844. His father died when he was three months of age.

He was married to Jane Agnew, May 7, 1873, she proceeding him in death 21 years. To this union were born seven children who survive, viz: Mrs. W. C. Winslow, Keosaugua; Robert J. Barker, Keosaugua; Mary Loofbourrow, Pomona, Cal.; J. W. Barker, Mt. Zion; Joe M. Barker, Mesa, Arizona; Mrs. Grace Nelson, and Arthur D. of Mt. Zion. There are 31 grand children and 9 great grand children.

He lived his entire life on the farm where he was born, except the last three months, when he moved to the home of his daughter, Mrs. Winslow, where he died March 15, 1924.

He united with the Presbyterian church at Mt. Zion, Iowa, when a young man, and continued his membership with this church his entire life. He was of a reserved and quiet disposition, faithful in his home duties and to his family. It might truly be said of him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of thy Lord."

Funeral services ere held Tuesday the 18th, at the Mt. Zion Presbyterian church.

Mrs. James Barker

The Funeral of Mrs. James Barker who died Friday at 2 p.m, Oct. 10, 1902, was held at Miller's Chapel Sunday at 11 a.m, the services being in charge of Rev. McElhiney of the Presbyterian church. Mrs Barker had been sick about three months. Her illness took a serious turn Sunday evening and from that time on in spite of all that could be done she sank rapidly until the end came. In this connection Mr. Barker and children wish to express their thanks to their many friends and neighbors for their help and kind sympathy during the sickness of wife and mother. Jane Agnew was born in county Antrim, Ireland, March 17, 1848, and died at her home near Mt. Zion, Iowa, Oct. 10, 1902. In 1870 she came to America, and on May 7, 1873, she was united in marriage with James C. Barker, who survives her. To them seven children were born, all of whom are living. She united with the Presbyterian church of Raloo, Ireland, when 16 years old. She ever maintained love for the church of her choice, and was always found in her Sunday school and church whenever weather and health would permit.

"Leaf by leaf the roses fall,
Drop by drop the spring runs dry.
One by one we're gathered by the wayside,
All must now to the inexorable will of God."

One face we will see no more, one more place vacant in the church here on earth, still we cannot say she is dead; only transplanted from this world of sorrow to her bright home in heaven. She had laid aside earth's crosses and is dwelling with the angels now, but we can look up to our future glorious home, already occupied by mother, and rejoice that decay and blight never fall upon this christian's home to heaven.

Robert E. Agnew, Sr.

Robert Erskine Agnew, son of David and Elizabeth Agnew, was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, January 12 1860, and departed this life March 16, 1938, aged 79 years, 2 months and 6 days.

When very young he was taken by his parents to a farm near Belfast, Ireland, where he received his early education. Later he attended Trinity College in Dublin, after which he became a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary. This position required special education. He served in this capacity in both Londonderry and in Dublin. He was a member of the Masonic Order in Ireland.

In the summer of 1886 he sailed for America and after a very stormy voyage landed at New York August 6. He lived for a short time on a farm northeast of Mt. Zion, in Van Buren county, Iowa. Later he purchased the farm north of Keosaugua where he has resided the past 45 years.

On Oct. 18, 1897, he was united in marriage to Hester Isabel Brown. To this union were born four sons: Robert E. Jr., of Donnellson, S. Brown of Winterset, John C. of Des Moines, William J., at home; and one daughter, Mary Elizabeth Hornbaker of Mt. Sterling.

He was preceded in death by his wife on Feb 23, 1918. This circumstance was very trying on him, as William was only 5, John 7 and Mary 13. However, through sickness and trouble he stood by his children and was very proud of them.

He leaves to mourn his passing the four above named sons and one daughter, four grandchildren: Robert, Norman and Kenneth Dean Hornbaker, and James William Agnew; one brother, David Agnew of Boston, Mass.; one sister, Miss Martha Agnew of Belfast, Ireland; Four nephews and two nieces.

He was a member of the Congregational church at Keosaugua, where he was a regular attendant for many years. He was a man of great strength of character and always stood firmly for what he believed to be right. His memory was clear and his faith unshaken to the end. In the last few days of his illness he quoted clearly from memory the classic poem, "There Is No Death."

Funeral services were held from the Congregational church at Keosaugua Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock with the Rev. Geo. J. Hunsinger of Donnellson officiating. Burial was in the Purdom cemetery at Keosaugua. Pallbearers were Robert J., Joe M., and Arthur Barker (nephews), Oscar Alvine, Evans Craig, John A. Craig, Roy Beatty and Clem Perkins, all of Keosaugua and vicinity.

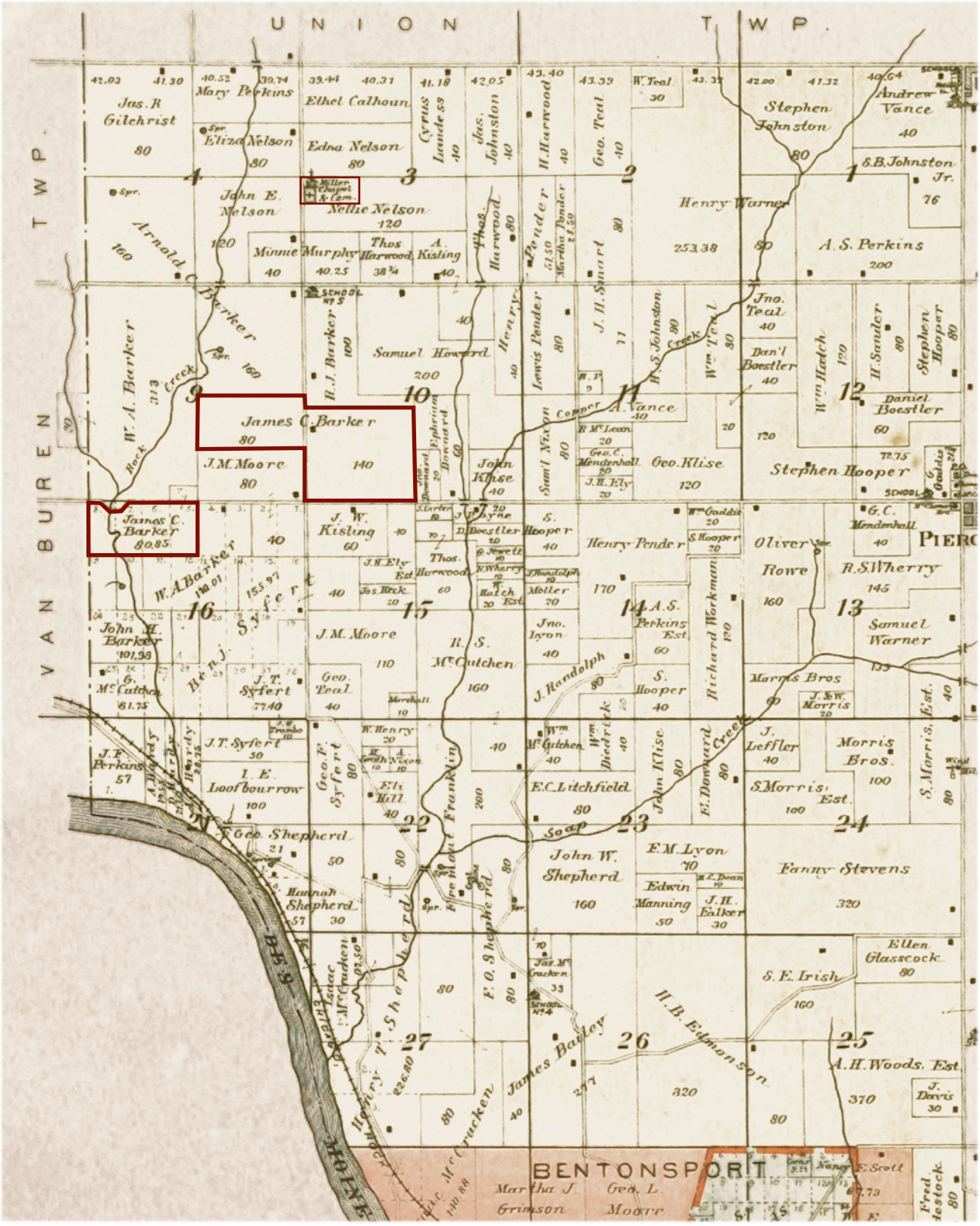
Mrs. Robert Agnew

The funeral of Mrs. Robert E. Agnew, whose death occurred t her home Saturday, February 23d, 1918, was held in the Congregational church, of which she was a beloved and valued member, Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock, being attended by her pastor C. E. Perkins. A previous brief service had been held at the home. There was a large attendance of relatives and friends. There were many beautiful flowers, gifts from members of the family and of friends. The choir of the church sang, Mrs. Miller playing. The burial was in Purdum cemetery.

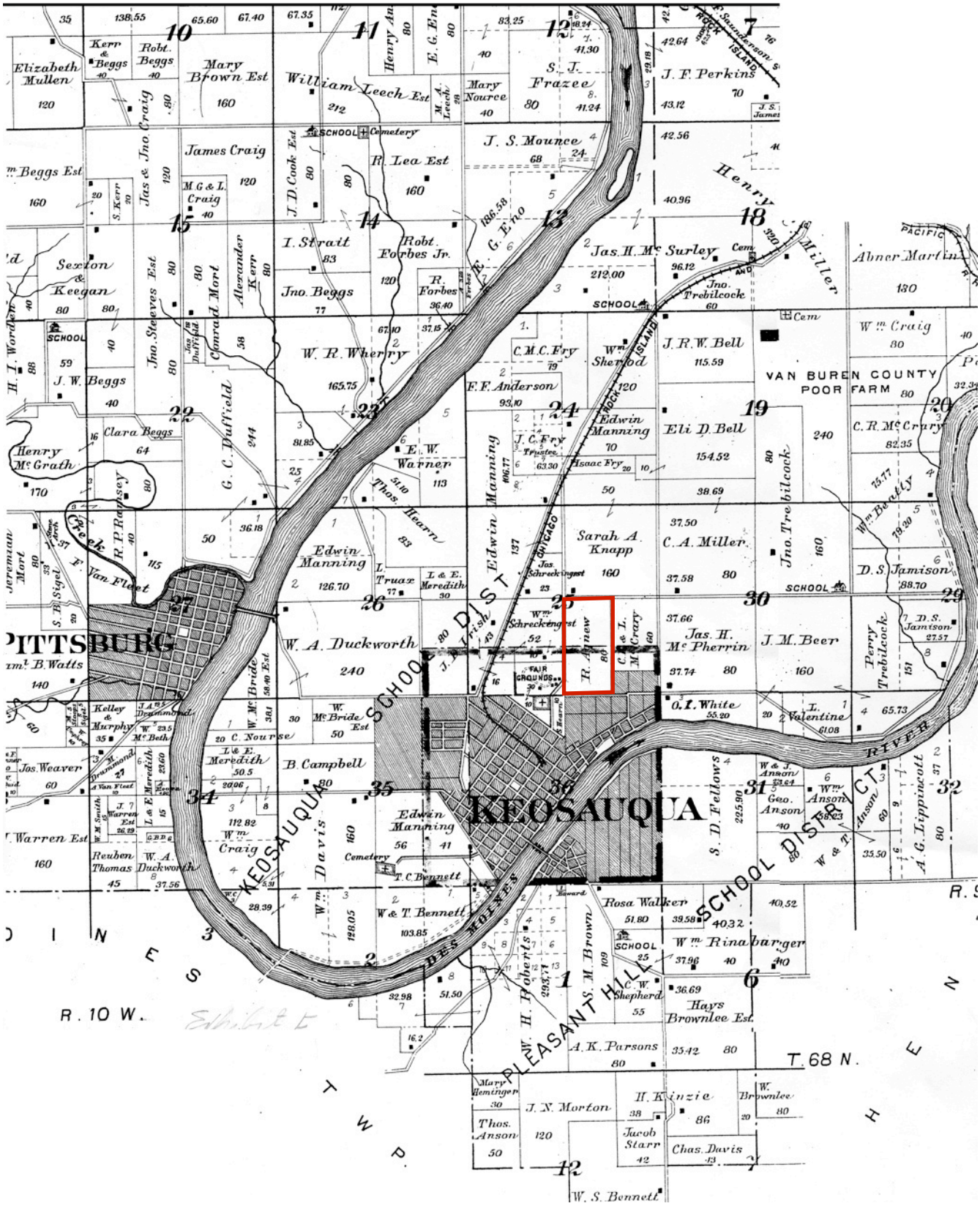
Hester Isabel Brown was born near Kilbourne, Iowa, Oct. 10, 1870. Her parents were John and Eliza Brown. She was married to Robert E. Agnew, October 18, 1897, and was the mother of 5 children, vis: Robert E. Jr., Samuel Brown, Mary Elizabeth, John Calvin and William James. Mrs. Agnew's health began failing early in the winter, and of late her decline has been very rapid. During the last week she was a great sufferer. At her death she was 47 yrs, 4 months and 13 days old. She is survived by her husband, all of her children, her father, three sisters and a brother. The mother died sixteen years ago. The sisters are Mrs. Lizzie Holden of Wikita, Okla.; Mrs. Mary Lindsay of Birmingham, Iowa; Mrs. Sarah Davis of Dover, Okla. William Brown of Kamela, Oregon, is the brother. Mr Brown left his home in Oregon last Wednesday evening, hoping to reach his sister's side before death claimed her, but he was 24 hours too late. Mrs. Agnew left numerous other less near relatives.

In her girlhood, Mrs. Agnew united with the Birmingham Presbyterian church of Birmingham, the date being 1886. She, together with Mr. Agnew, united with the Congregational church under the present pastorate, but many years ago. She was a woman of fine and gracious character and her death in middle life is sincerely lamented by all who knew her.

1897 Plat Map of Washington Twp, Van Buren County, Iowa.



1897 Plat Map of Van Buren Twp, Van Buren County, Iowa.



Key facts about Northern Ireland

Tue May 8, 2007 7:35PM BST

(Reuters) - Northern Ireland's main Protestant and Roman Catholic political parties launched a power-sharing government on Tuesday aiming to put a final end to decades of violence.

Following are some facts about Northern Ireland:

POPULATION - 1,685,000.

AREA - 5,500 sq. miles on an island shared with the bigger Republic of Ireland to the south and west.

RELIGION - 2001 census showed 53.1 percent of population Protestant and 43.8 percent Roman Catholic.

GOVERNMENT - Part of the United Kingdom. Under the 1998 Good Friday peace agreement a Protestant-Catholic power-sharing assembly was established in Belfast with limited home rule powers. Suspended in 2002 and direct rule from London resumed.

HISTORY - Northern Ireland's sectarian divisions can be traced back to the 17th Century when Protestant settlers from Scotland and England were "planted" in the northeastern part of the island to bolster the authority of the English Crown.

An abortive uprising against British rule in Dublin in 1916 paved the way for 1921's Anglo-Irish Treaty which partitioned the island, separating the mainly Protestant northeast from the overwhelmingly Catholic south and west.

Simmering sectarian tensions exploded into violence in the late 1960s, with British troops under attack from Irish Republican Army guerrillas. Militant Protestant "loyalist" groups sought to defend British rule by killing Catholics.

A low-level guerrilla war raged for the next 30 years, claiming more than 3,600 lives. The IRA called a ceasefire in 1997 and a year later the landmark Good Friday peace agreement was signed, setting up a power-sharing assembly at Stormont in Belfast. The assembly has been suspended several times amid political in-fighting and has been on ice since 2002. Power sharing restarts on Tuesday.

ECONOMY - Once a world leader in building ships -- including the Titanic -- and in rope and textile production, Northern Ireland's main industries have been in decline since the 1960s.

Heavily subsidized by Britain, the economy has recently started to benefit from inward investment by companies attracted by government incentives and a skilled workforce. But it still lags far behind the thriving Irish Republic.

London and Dublin pledged a multi-billion-pound (dollar) package to boost infrastructure and job creation over the next few years when political parties agreed to share power.

In and Out of Agnew Hands

Lochnaw Castle was granted to the Agnews in 1330 by David II of Scotland, a year after the death of his father Robert the Bruce. The castle had been used as a royal hunting lodge until it was granted to the Agnews.

With the grant from David II came the title of Constable of Lochnaw. However, in 1390 the Agnews were overcome by the Black Douglas and Lochnaw Castle was destroyed. The site of the original castle as on the largest island in the Lochnaw loch.

In 1426, the estate was restored to the Agnews and they built a new castle on the southern shores of the loch, constructed in part with materials from the original castle ruins. The Agnews were given a grant of five pounds sterling to fortify the tower of the new structure. A stone plaque on the tower, written in Latin, describes the history of the royal grant to fortify it. Further verification is in the Great Seal Register of 1426 for Wigton.

Throughout their long history at Lochnaw, the Agnews were the Hereditary Sheriffs of Wigton (later Galloway), Constables of Lochnaw and Baillies of Leswalt. They represented Wigton in parliament for long periods, as well. In 1629, during the reign of King Charles I, the 8th Sheriff, Patrick Agnew was created a Baronet of Nova Scotia. - *Published Winter 1992 Agnewsletter, Vol. V No. 1*

Census Shows Catholics' Rise in N. Ireland

Tue December 20, 2002

(Reuters) - BELFAST, Northern Ireland – Census figures, seen as a key indicator of how long British rule of Northern Ireland will last, showed Thursday that Roman Catholics are closing the population gap on Protestants.

Britain is committed to letting the province decide its own future. When Catholics finally outnumber Protestants – as the trend suggests will happen – they are widely expected to vote to reunite with southern neighbor Ireland.

But although the proportion of Catholics is higher than at any time in the 81-year history of the province, the statistics suggest there is unlikely to be a majority for constitutional change for some decades to come.

Northern Ireland's political landscape is defined by the fact that Protestants, who largely want to remain under British rule, outnumber Catholics.

The latest headline figures put the Protestant population down nearly 5 percentage points from a decade earlier, at 53.1% and the Catholic population up almost 2 percentage points, at 43.8% of the total population of 1.7 million.

Bob Osborne, professor of policy studies at the University of Ulster, said poll evidence suggested that while only a tiny proportion of Protestant's would vote for a united Ireland, a significant minority of Catholics back the status quo. (Reuters)