

## JOHN DORCY, CIVIL WAR SOLDIER AND MARY ELLEN CARROLL

John D'Orsay of County Tipperary, North Riding, Barony of Lower Ormond, Parish of Kilbarron, Townland of Lisquilabeen - how your descendants would love to talk to you! We want so badly to get the complete story - how, why and when you left Ireland. Is Bridget Casey your mother? What happened to your mother and your father? Is Mary Hogan your sister and little Bridget Hogan your niece? And what of Sally and your brothers? How did you and your family survive the famine? We have so many questions! We know some of the story, but so much is unknown or uncertain.

That John Dorcy (Dorsay, D'Orsay, etc.), killed in the final battle of the Civil War at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, is an ancestor of the Dorcy clan of Skagit and Whatcom County, Washington is not in doubt; however there are many unanswered questions or at least scant proof about his beginnings and his arrival in the United States.

Although we are certain he was born in Ireland, the first record of him that is clearly our John is of his marriage to Mary Ellen Carroll on 19 June 1856 in Kenockee, (near Emmett), St. Clair County, Michigan. The marriage record shows they were married by a justice of the peace and her name is Mary *Carl*. The baptismal record of two of John's children, James and William (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel parish records, Emmett, MI), and John's enlistment papers in the Union Army confirm that they were living in St. Clair County. The purchase and sale of a certain piece of land give us a little more knowledge of their activities in St. Clair County. The Civil War pension record gives us more information about John's family after his death; and his service record and the history of the 1st Michigan Cavalry provide a view of his activities during the war, as do his letters to his wife, Mary, written while he was serving in the Army. (See appendix A)

Much of the rest of our conclusions are conjecture based on historic evidence as found in the records of the area at that time. Our research has not pinpointed with any certainty the exact time or circumstances of his arrival in the United States, although the record of a John Darcey, 18, male laborer from Ireland who arrived in New York 25 May 1850 on the ship Isaac Webb is a possibility. The federal census records of 1850 and 1860, along with land records, give us our best clues. The following represents our best-guess theory of John Dorcy's arrival here in the U.S.

The 1850 census of St. Clair County, taken Sept. 20th, lists a James Dowsey (read Dorcy), 35, and Elizabeth, 30. Four children are listed with them - John 17, born in Ireland, Patrick 11 born in Canada, Jeremiah 9 born in Canada, and Michael 6 born in Michigan.

We believe John at age 17 may be too old to be their son, since Elizabeth would have been 13 when John was born. This census does not give relationships such as son or daughter, so we can not be sure of John's relationship to James. It could be a nephew-uncle relationship, or perhaps they were brothers. We believe this John to be John Dorcy, Jr., the Civil War soldier.

The 1860 census of this same area, St. Clair County, shows John D'Orsay age 55, with Patrick (21), William (18), Timothy (14), Michael (12), Mary (27), and Bridget

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Hogan (9 months) - all born in Ireland. We believe these to be John, Jr.'s father and siblings. We think Mary is a sister married to Patrick Hogan in 1859 in Tipperary. Their marriage and the birth of their child, Bridget, are in the parish record of Terryglass and Kilbarron. The record names the townland of Lisquilbeen as their residence. Because of the baby's age and the fact she was born in Ireland, we suspect that the whole family came that spring to Michigan from Ireland. Patrick Hogan is not listed in the census, so he may be away working in the logging camps that were employing many of the Irish. No wife is shown for John, Sr., either.

Also in the 1860 census record for this area is John D'Orsay (29), Mary (23), Sarah M. (3) and John (1). Certainly this is our ancestor, the Civil War soldier; and little John, age 1, is John Carroll Dorcy, father of Sarah, James, John, William T. and Edward, all of whom lived and reared their families in the Northwest. In the next dwelling in the census, which means they lived next door, is James, now 48, Elizabeth (45), and their three children Patrick, Jeremiah and Michael, the same family shown in the 1850 census.

John D'Orsay, Sr., disappears after the 1860 census from any records we can find, except that John, Jr., in a letter to Mary Ellen in February 1864 says "Give my respects to father....". John also relates that he received a letter from his father in August 1864; so John, Sr., was still in Michigan at that time. We assume, as family tradition tells us, that John, Sr., returned to Ireland, but we have not been able to find a death record for him there.

The following are land transactions that we think are significant concerning 80 acres of land described as - W1/2 NW1/4 S15 T7N R15E in St. Clair County:

In 1854 James Dorcey bought the 80 acres from Walter Chase and wife, deed recorded 31 Mar 1854, \$100.

James and Elizabeth Dorcy sold to John Dorsey, the same 80 acres, and the deed was recorded the same date, \$120.

In May, 1858, 40 acres of the same land are sold by John Dorcey and wife, Mary, to Porter Plaisted for \$175.

Also in May, 1858, the other 40 acres are sold by John and Mary Dorsey to Mary Cooley for \$175.

The dates shown are when the deeds were recorded and are not necessarily the same as when possession was taken. It was not uncommon to delay recording of the deed until a later date - perhaps only recording it when it was to be sold again.

We have found no further land transactions concerning John and Mary Ellen.

Based on the above information in the census and land records, our theory of when and how John Dorcy, Jr., came to the United States is as follows: We think that James Dorcy, named in the 1850 and 1860 census and in the land records, is probably an uncle who came first to Canada, then between 1841 and 1844 moved to Michigan. Our estimate of the time of the move is based on the birthplaces and ages of James's children as shown in the 1850 census.

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We think it is possible that James was corresponding with the Darcy family back in Ireland and that he wrote and invited his nephew, John, to join him in Michigan. John and his family had just survived the Irish potato famine of the mid 1840's, and many Irish were emigrating. We further suspect that the first two land transactions noted above were an attempt to set John up with a farm shortly after his arrival.

The significant fact is that the records show that a piece of land was bought by John Dorcy and then the same land was sold by John Dorcy and Mary after their marriage. That would seem to show that it was John, Jr., who was the first to arrive and buy land, not John, Sr., as has long been thought.

Why John and Mary sold the land in 1858, only two years after their marriage, is unknown. Is it possible they were financing the rest of the family's trip over to America? Also the 1860 census record shows that John and Mary Ellen have real estate valued at \$100 and that John is a farm laborer. So they probably bought property again, but we found no record of it. On the other hand, John, Sr., does not own real estate in the 1860 census. Our theory says that he has only recently arrived in 1860. One supporting fact is that of the marriage of Mary Darcy to Patrick Hogan and the birth of Bridget Hogan in Lisquilabreen parish records. Mary and little Bridget, only nine months old, must certainly be new arrivals to the U.S., since little Bridget was born in Ireland. Of course we can't be sure about the rest of John, Sr.'s, family. Perhaps they, too, are recent arrivals.

An 1859 landowner's map of St. Clair County shows who owns each piece of land. It also lists some of the people with their occupations in a list at the side of the map. John Dorsey is listed in section 10 in Kenockee township as a lumberman, although the 1860 census lists him as a farm laborer. Section 10 is adjacent to the property that he sold in 1858.

Although we have been researching records concerning the John Dorcy family for many years, we believe that more persistent efforts will yield even more of the answers to the origins of this family.

The following page shows the four children of John and Mary Ellen. For two of the children, Sarah and James, we have very little information. The histories of the other two, John and William, are in separate chapters.

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John and Mary Ellen's children were:

### Sarah Maria Dorcy



**Sarah Maria Dorcy  
about 1880**

Sarah was born in 1857 in St. Clair County, MI. She married a man named John Kenny and they are listed in the 1880 census in St. Clair County, Riley Township, with two children, Patrick D., age 3, and John W., age 11 months. A letter dated 10 Feb. 1885 has survived which Sarah wrote to her brother, probably William Dorcy in Mason County, Michigan. She mentions her two children, Johnny and Pat, and the horses of which they are so very proud. She also sends her love to the William Carroll family. She is said to have died at age 30 from arsenic poisoning when she applied starch to her face or ate it to make her face fashionably white. Nothing more is known of Sarah Maria (Dorcy) Kenny's family at this time.

### John Carroll Dorcy

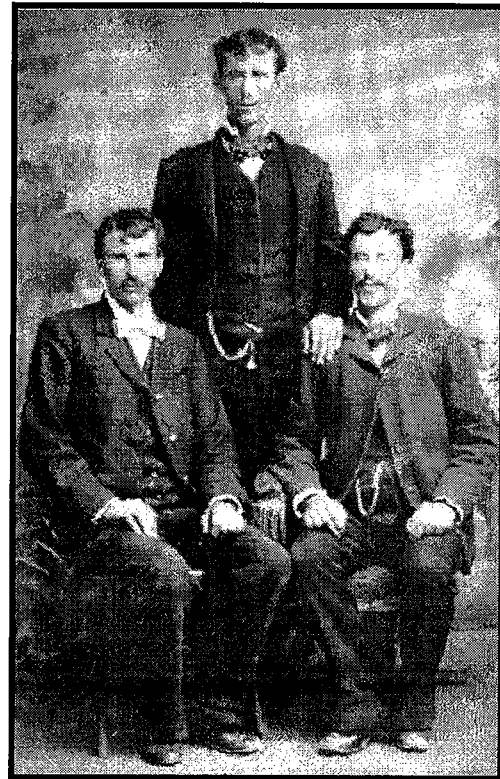
He was born in 1859 - See a separate chapter.

### James Dorcy

James was born in 30 July 1860 in St. Clair County. We have been unable to locate James in any records in Michigan and Wisconsin, so we know practically nothing about him. James wrote a letter from Washburn, Wisconsin on Nov. 16, 1905 to his mother and his brother, William, who lived at the time near Pentwater, Mich. In the letter he says "I hope you will have better luck with your children than I had with mine." We don't know what that meant. Nothing more is known of James at this time.

### William Jeremiah Dorcy

William, the last of their children, was born 29 April 1863 in St. Clair county. See a separate chapter.



**Three Dorcy brothers, John,  
James, and William**

## The Descendants of John Dorcy, Civil War Soldier

In February, 1864, at Kenockee in St. Clair County, Michigan, John Dorcy enlisted in Co. B, 1st Michigan Cavalry for a period of three years. A bounty was paid (we would call it a bonus) for enlisting and serving. His U.S. government bounty was



**John Dorcy, 1st Michigan Cavalry**

\$60 according to one paper in his service record, but \$140 on another paper. Either the bounty or the possibility of being drafted could have been the reason for enlistment; on the other hand, it may have been out of a sense of duty and patriotism for his adopted country. One story passed down in the family and related by Virginia Alice (Dorcy) Hockett is that some soldiers came along and sort of coerced him into enlisting, not allowing him an opportunity to back out. They would not even let him go by himself to fetch the cow home, instead going with him to be sure he would not run away.

His volunteer enlistment papers dated the 6th of February, 1864, state that he had blue eyes, brown hair, fair complexion, was age 32, and was 5 feet 7 1/2 inches tall. His recruiting officer, Henry Burnham, who was a neighbor, certified that he was sober when he enlisted; and another neighbor and Justice of the Peace, Duke McKenzie, signed the enlistment papers and probably wrote John's signature whereupon John made "his mark" - an X. He was mustered in at Grand Rapids on Feb 9th, only three days later and almost two hundred miles away, and he was paid one month's advance pay, \$13.

The letters from John to his wife, Mary Ellen, when he was a cavalry soldier in the Civil War have survived and have been passed down through the family. They are presently in the possession of Clara June (Dorcy) Gallamore in Roach, MO, who is a descendant of William Jeremiah Dorcy. Typewritten copies of them are in possession of several members of the family and the transcriptions are included in this book. John could not write nor read, as shown by the 1860 census and also by his enlistment papers; so these letters were written by "scribes", other soldiers who had the equipment and ability to do so. Most soldiers did not carry pen and ink and paper in those days.

Sister Mary Jean Dorcy, a Dominican nun, was probably the first of the extended Dorcy family to study the history of her grandfather, and she wrote a letter or essay which accompanied the John Dorcy letters. In it she said:

"He was at this time just 32 years old and had a wife and four young children. His wife did not want him to enlist and his sister, Sally, was loudly scornful of the whole project. "You'll just go down there and get drunk a few times, then come home and tell tall tales about what you and the boys did down there. Those poor Rebs can't put up a decent fight; there isn't any war! You should stay home with the family; Mary needs you." To which he insisted that it was a real war

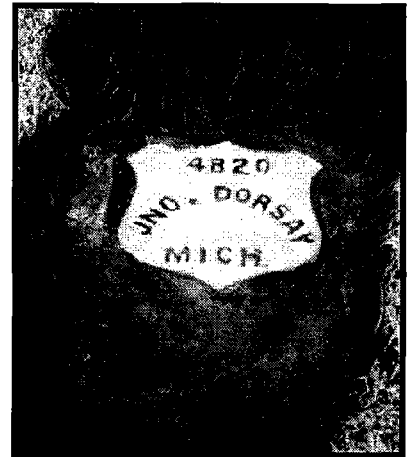
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and everyone would have to fight. The day he came to say good-bye to Sally, she was ironing. She was so angry with him that she would not even turn around. "Well then Sally, good-bye", he said. And she called saucily over her shoulder "Good-bye then Jack. Don't get shot in the back!" To her dying day Sally wept bitterly for her saucy farewell to the brother she loved."

After going unscathed through a year of heavy fighting, including The Wilderness and Cedar Creek, "27 regular engagements" by his own count, John Dorcy was to make his rendezvous with death at Appomattox.

The end of John's story occurs just as the bugles were blowing to recall the troops when Lee surrendered to Grant to end the Civil War. As a member of General Sheridan's cavalry, 1st Division lead by Brig. Gen. Thomas C. Devin, 1st Brigade lead by Col. Peter Stagg, 1st Michigan Cavalry commanded by Lt. Col. George R. Maxwell, Company B, John was part of the force that pursued Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee from Petersburg to Appomattox. There was some final fighting on the morning of April 9th at Appomattox Court House, while General Lee was making up his mind to surrender. It was during this final skirmish that John Dorcy died - family tradition says from a shot to the head while in the saddle. What a tragedy for a young family.

He was buried at Appomattox Station, the railway station about three miles from Appomattox Court House. Some time later the U.S. government recovered as many dead as possible from several of these final battlefields and interred the Union soldiers in Poplar Grove National Cemetery near Petersburg, VA where John rests today. The story of his survivors is told in other chapters in this book.



**Grave in Poplar Grove  
National Cemetery**

### **Mary Ellen (Carroll) Dorcy**

Mary was born of Irish Catholic parents in Rawdon, a few miles north of Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in 1837. The chapter about the Carroll/Powell family tells what we know of Mary Ellen's family and their origin. Mary Ellen is said to have come to Michigan at the age of 9 years, but nothing is known of her family from their time in Rawdon until Mary Ellen's marriage to John in 1856. She says in the 1900 census that her mother and father were both born in Ireland.

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Mary Ellen made application on Nov. 18, 1865, for the pension to which Civil War widows were entitled. Her application gives her age as 28, her place of residence as Emmett, her date of marriage, and lists her children - Maria (age 8), John (6), James (4), and William (2). She was granted the pension because in September of 1866 Mary Ellen made application for an increase of pension to which she was entitled due to a new law. In this application she states she is receiving \$8 per month pension. It is witnessed by her two brothers, Cornelius and Edward. At the time of her death in 1906 a final payment of \$12 was received.



**Mary Ellen (Carroll) Dorcy**

Family tradition says that Mary Ellen went to stay with her brother shortly after her husband was killed. However, the 1870 census, five years after his death, shows her with her children in Emmett. She is near her brothers, however. She is still there with her son, William, age 17, in the 1880 census. William bought land in 1884 in Riverton Township, Mason County, Michigan and married Emma Knapp in 1890 (see a separate chapter on William). Mary went to live with them at that time and lived with them the remainder of her life. She is shown as living in Riverton township as a Civil War widow in the special census of 1890 of Civil War Survivors and Widows and she is also shown living with them in Riverton in the 1900 census.

Mary Ellen was known as "a Granny Woman". That is, she was a mid-wife and even the farmers would call her if one of the animals got into trouble birthing.

In about 1905 William sold his land in Michigan and went alone to Colorado to find a place for his family and mother to live. Virginia Alice (Dorcy) Hockett, whose nickname is Puss (Gaelic for beautiful), says that William's wife, Emma (Knapp) Dorcy, was not at all well because of heart trouble and they thought the dryer, warmer climate would help. Puss also tells that her grandmother, Mary Ellen, was a very feisty lady and not too worldly. Puss goes on to relate that Emma gathered her children and mother-in-law to get on the train to join her husband in Colorado. A Red-Cap came up to Mary Ellen and started to grab her suitcases to help her. Mary Ellen thought he was trying to steal her things so she kicked him on the shins and swore at him. Her daughter-in-law, a very prim and lady-like person, was horrified.

Mary Ellen died of paralysis at their ranch at Vineland in Pueblo County, Colorado 22 May 1906, and is buried in Roselawn Cemetery there. A stone marks her grave.

The following obituary was in the Pueblo (Colorado) Star-Journal May 23, 1906:

Died: Mrs. Mary Dorcy, 68 years old, the mother of William Dorcy, died at her home in Vineland last night. The funeral was held at 1 O'clock this afternoon. Interment in Roselawn.





## The Carroll-Powell Family

The town of Rawdon, Quebec, is about 40 miles north of Montreal. This is the birth place of Mary Ellen Carroll, wife of John Dorcy, Civil War soldier. The first settlers of the area came about 1815, when many British immigrants began arriving in Canada after the War of 1812. By 1825 seventy five per cent of the population of the Rawdon area was Irish. The Carroll name is listed among the early indexes of names in the area, but we can show no specific connection to any of them.

Mary Ellen Carroll's parents, William Carroll and Charlotte Powell, lived in Rawdon, although they were married in Montreal, Quebec, Canada in 1826. Their marriage is recorded in Notre Dame parish records in Montreal. The record lists both of their parents, and is written in French, as are most records in Quebec. The parents of William were Nicolas Carroll and Mary Grady, of Ireland. Charlotte's parents were "Edouard Powell (Irelande) and Helen Kallen". We don't know if the parenthetical reference meant Edouard was born in Ireland, or was still living there at the time of the marriage.

Since Charlotte's gravestone in Our Lady of Mt. Carmel cemetery near Emmett says "NATIVE OF LEITRIM, IRELAND", we had hoped to find a record of her parents in Ireland. Realistically, since Charlotte was born about 1796 and Catholic records were not generally kept until 1829, it is unlikely that a record of her birth will be found. Also, Leitrim is the name of two separate townlands in County Clare, where family tradition says she was born. It is also the name of a county in Ireland and the name of about twenty more townlands (similar to townships in the U.S.) in various parts of Ireland. So we will be fortunate, indeed, to find Irish records of her birth, her family, or of her husband, William.

We don't know at this time when Charlotte or William came to Canada, and we don't know if either of their parents came; however, we think it likely that at least Charlotte's parents came, since in those years it would have been unusual for a young girl to travel alone.

We also don't know where William and Charlotte Carroll lived between their time in Rawdon and Charlotte's appearance in St. Clair County 20 or 30 years later. Sister Mary Jean Dorcy says in "About the Letters", which accompanies the transcribed John Dorcy letters from the Civil War, that Mary Ellen Carroll came to Emmett, St. Clair County, Michigan at the age of nine. This, then, would be in about 1846. However, we didn't find her or her family in the records there until Mary Ellen married John Dorcy, Jr., in 1856. We have been unable to find our Carroll family in any records in Canada or in Michigan between the birth of Mary Ellen in 1837 and her marriage in 1856. Where was the family between their time in Rawdon and their arrival in St. Clair County, MI? And where is Charlotte's husband, William? He doesn't appear in any records we know of beyond the early birth records, and one of those birth records gives his name as Cornelius. He didn't buy land in St. Clair County, isn't buried with his wife as near as we can tell, isn't in the census, isn't anywhere! We feel certain that with continued

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research we will uncover his whereabouts, but as of now no further evidence of William Carroll, husband of Charlotte, has been found.

Charlotte and her boys, John, Edward, Cornelius and William are listed in the 1860 census of St. Clair County, MI. She was listed as a property owner, value \$200, born in Ireland, and can read and write. Also listed with them was Catherine Davy, 17, servant, born in Ireland. This girl was also listed in the 1850 census (ten years earlier) with Darby Davy in Perth County, Downie township, Ontario. We think it is possible that Charlotte and her family lived there in Perth County for a period of time and that Catherine Davy came to Michigan to help the family, perhaps after William's death. However, searching Perth County records has not confirmed this.

The earliest land record in St. Clair County for our Carroll family is 1851 when John Carroll, her son, bought land. Other Carrolls, perhaps relatives, bought land in the area as early as 1842.

Charlotte died in 1863 and is buried in the cemetery of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic church in St. Clair County. Also buried in the same plot and included on the stone are her son Edward who died 17 Jan 1879 and Edward's wife, Maria Hyde, who died in 1896.



**Charlotte Powell's  
Grave, St. Clair  
County, Michigan**

William and Charlotte had five children that we know of:

### **John Carroll**

John was born about 1835. Our only knowledge of him is from records of Emmett Township, St. Clair County, Michigan. He was listed with mother Charlotte in the census of 1860, age 25, born in Canada, and again in the census of 1870, age 40, farmer, with wife, Mary, age 22, and child, Ann, age 8 months, born in August. He was also named in the 1880 census, age 50 with Mary, age 30, born in Ireland, and children Ann 10, William 8 and John 6. John, Jr., died of diphtheria in 1881. John was in Emmett in 1879 per Edward Carroll's probate in St. Clair Co. John G. Carroll obtained a patent (title) to 40 acres in T7N R14E sect 24 on 24 May 1854. This is also in Emmett Twp, St. Clair Co. This last is from the book "1st Land Owners of St. Clair County, Michigan" by Michigan Genealogical Council Pub # 1, 1978.

### **Edward P. Carroll**

Edward was born about 1837 in Canada. He obtained a patent (title) to 40 acres in T7N R14E sect 24 on 7 Oct. 1851. This was in Emmett Township, St. Clair County where he lived the remainder of his life. He married on 25 Aug. 1861 Maria Hyde of Emmett Twp, age 21, born in Ireland. They were wed at St. Philips church in Columbus by L. Kilroy, a Catholic Priest. They had no children as far as we can determine. According to John Dorcy's letters to John's wife, Mary, Edward got a substitute to serve for him in the Civil War. This was a common practice at that time. A man simply paid another man to serve in his place - nothing illegal or dishonorable about it as far as we know. He was listed in the 1860 census as a farm laborer and in 1870 as a farmer with real estate valued at \$1000. He was a store keeper at the time of death in 1879 and his

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probate indicated an inventory of \$364.39, household goods \$154.30, no real estate, funeral expense \$42.19. An article from the Port Huron Daily Times, 20 Jan. 1879 (price 2 cents), under Emmett correspondence reads:

"A coroners inquiry was held Saturday on the body of Edward P. Carroll, who was found dead in the rear part of his store that morning. The coroner's jury rendered a verdict of death from falling down stairs in an intoxicated condition. He fell on his face and suffocated."

He is buried with his wife and mother in a family grave in Our Lady of Mt. Carmel cemetery near Emmett.

### **Mary Ellen Carroll**

Mary Ellen was born in 1837. See the chapter about her and her husband, John Dorcy, Civil War Soldier.

### **Cornelius L. Carroll**

Cornelius was born in 1834 in Rawdon in Quebec. His birth and baptism information are from records at St. Jacques de L'Achigan, Rawdon, Montcalm, Quebec. The record says "son of Cornelius Carroll & Charlotte Powel". Naming Cornelius as father instead of William may have been a mistake by the church, or it may be that his father was William Cornelius or maybe Cornelius William.

According to a 1900 census record Cornelius entered the U.S. from Canada in 1851, presumably with the rest of the Carroll family. He lived in St. Clair County, Michigan, with his mother and brothers and was listed in the 1860 census as a farm laborer.

He enlisted in Co. A, 3rd Inf, 31 Aug. 1864 at Muskegon, age 30, and served from 1 Sep 1864 to 25 May 1866. He was made corporal on 20 Jan 1865, and he was discharged at Victoria, Texas.

Cornelius married Emily Hyde, age 26, on 26 Jan 1867, at Port Huron, St. Clair County, Michigan, by L. Kilroy, Catholic missionary. Emily was a sister of his brother Edward's wife, Maria. By 1870 Cornelius was living in Oceana County, Michigan and had two children, George and Mary. By 1880 he had moved the short distance to Mason County, Michigan. Later his sister, Mary Ellen (Carroll) Dorcy, also moved to the same area to live with her son, William Jeremiah Dorcy. In 1893 Cornelius sold 40 acres of ground to a man with a five year mortgage and the provision that the buyer

"set out, cultivate, and properly care for 500 good merchantable peach trees and maintain them"

Peaches and other fruits were becoming an important industry in Mason County at that time. He was still in Mason County in 1900. He sold some land in Ludington in Mason County in 1903 and subsequently returned to St. Clair County where he died in 1917. His wife preceded him in death in 1914. They are both buried in St. Clair County in Our Lady of Mt. Carmel cemetery with small stones marking each grave in the family plot.

### **William Carroll**

William was born in Rawdon, Quebec, Canada about 1842. His baptism record is in the St. Jacques de L'Achigan, Montcalm County. In the 1860 census of St. Clair County, Michigan, he was a farm laborer living with his mother. We have evidence that

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William served in the Civil War, but we have not verified it at this time. By 1880 he was living in Mason County, Michigan with his wife, Augusta, and children Edward and Frances. In 1900 he was still in Mason County, Michigan, and had children, Sidney, Frances, Rex and Olive. Nothing more is known about them.