

Ipswich, UK  
Train station

24 September 1999  
Idling for Bury St. Edmunds

Today, I took another step on the journey to find out. Took the train out of Bury to London. 23£ round-trip. A gray and wet morning. This is not Germany. Here, the trains *may* run on time. From Bury to Ipswich the sky rained down the entire route. Ipswich to Liverpool Street, more of the same.

Switching to the Jubilee line, I noticed less the weather and more so the pounding of my heart growing as we rocked side-to-side, in-and-out of daylight, closer and closer to W. Hempstead. Arriving at graffiti marred Hempstead Station, the sky began to brighten. Ascending the stairs, by the time I reached street level, the sun was radiant. Everything sparkling, tree limbs decked in diamond tears.

The wet streets glistened in the afternoon sun, steam rising from blacktop. Taking a left I departed the station like something in me knew the way. My heart skipped in excitement from the streets I walked. The same streets they'd once walked and saw the sunlight glisten and felt the heavy weight of the air. Every crack in the sidewalk once witnessed their step and each tree shading me along the way had once shaded them.

I crossed over and headed down Gascony. I came out on Kingsgate (NW6), and stood still in front of a doorway. They'd once walked through that door carrying my infant father in their arms. Sixty-three years ago. They'd stopped in England so my grandmother, Anna Joyce, could give birth and then head to America.

I stood solemnly in that doorway – sifting on it all: how I came to be passed through that doorway. They were married near Clonbur, Ireland, their son was born here. It was not that I felt connected, like to a home or something. I'm not

searching for that. That been gone.

I'm looking for the odds of my existence through *their* journey that brought them and me to that corner. I cannot say how long I have waited to stand where they brought the baby home. The name on the doorbell erased all fantasy of possibility. They'd departed for America a long time ago.

I made my way back to the station, waving goodbye. Did I visit a ghost today, or did I find a piece of myself? It doesn't matter. No one will know the lengths I have gone to fill in the void of who I am. An orphan heart's quest for belonging burns deep. We are all searching for something. Each on journeys to different places that answer the longing for homecoming. I come from no one. I am simply searching for myself.

If I did chase a ghost today, than I am that ghost. My father never stood at the corner of 76 Kingsgate Road to see where he was born. Through my eyes he has now seen. In that moment time ceased, we became one. Not father. Not son. Just a stream of consciousness passing through a moment of existence and nonexistence. Would that someday someone might do such for me. Where but everywhere could anyone find me.

I think this thing I do, tracing my family's roots in Ireland and here, is a powerful drive in us humans. Like salmon struggling upstream to spawn. An instinct that draws us to a home we have no memory of.

For me, home is *in* the longing and what it answers is where I belong. Part heart. Part place. All parts soul. I don't feel any less like an orphan inside. But I am proud of my valiant forebearers for surviving the 1840s famine that I might have this life of longing and words.