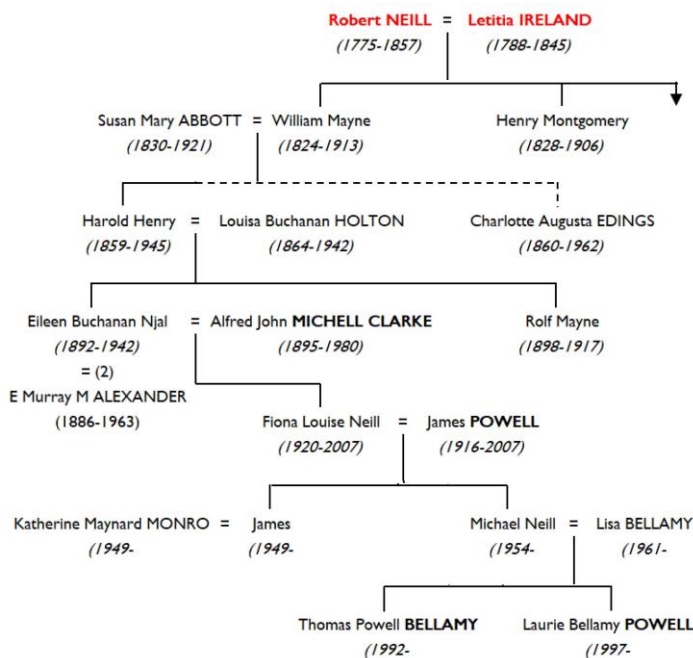


The family of

ROBERT NEILL & LETITIA IRELAND

(1775 – 26 January 1857 & 1788 – 15 July 1845)



Robert Neill was a quintessential 19th century self-made man, head of a large family that spread with distinction across the United Kingdom and the USA. The son of a baker, he trained as a silversmith, started a successful jewellery business and immersed himself in social reform, notably in the anti-slavery movement. So much social reform in the 19th century was driven by two Christian sects: the Quakers and the Unitarians. This family were Unitarians.

Robert and his wife Letitia, née Ireland, had five surviving sons and four

daughters. Two sons carried on their father's jewellery business in Belfast. Another, my great-great-grandfather, was a cotton merchant who married the daughter of the novelist Thomas Love Peacock and led a cultured life in New York and London. Another son became the leading cotton crop expert in America. All four daughters emigrated to America, and three of them married Americans. The lives of all the members of this remarkable family are recounted here.

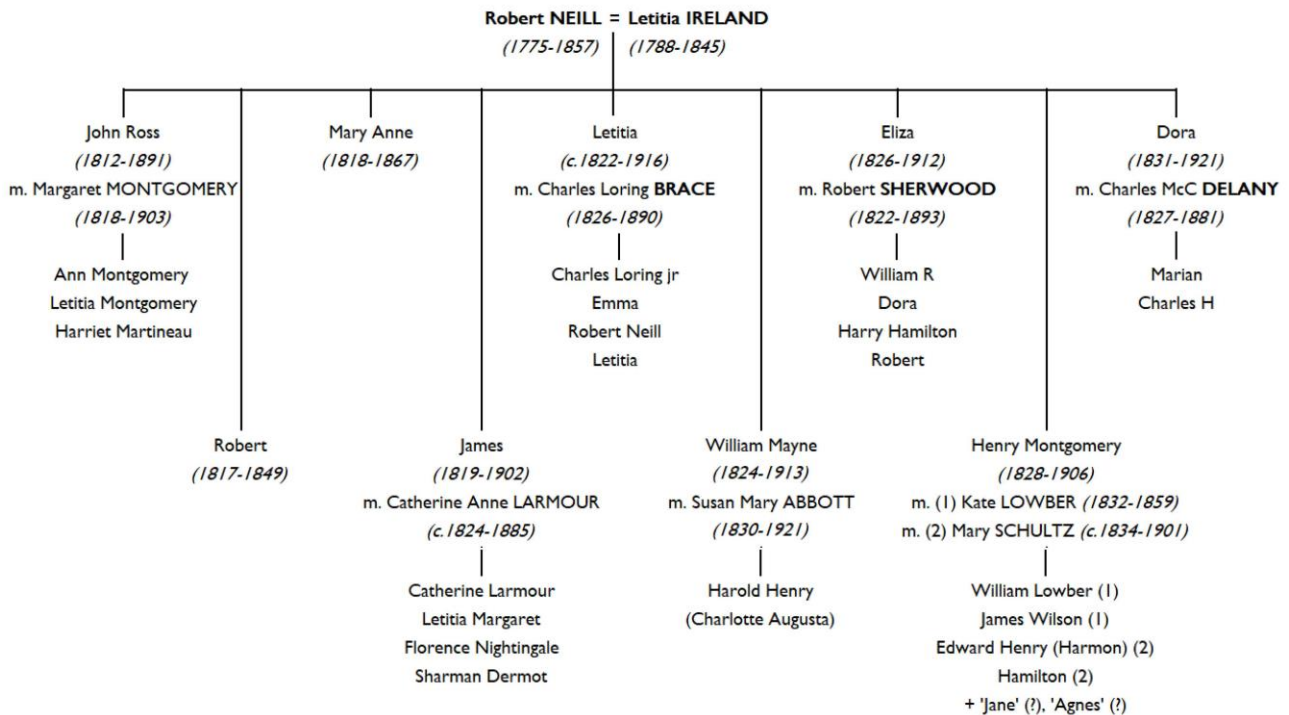
A preliminary caveat

It is a perilous undertaking to research the Neills of Belfast. Ireland does not lack for Neills (or O'Neills) and different families are easily confused. To make matters worse, almost all public records for the whole of Ireland were destroyed during the Irish Civil War in June 1922.

Many documents on the internet confuse two Neill families in Belfast in the early 19th century, probably because a substantial file lodged in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland makes the same mistake.¹ Both fathers were named Robert Neill. One (my ancestor) was a jeweller and silversmith. The other was a tobacco merchant. The two families may have been related, but they were not the same.

¹ Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), document D/3000/169/1, PTE 84/2008

The disentanglement of this knotted skein has been helped by family correspondence that establishes Mary Anne, James, Letitia, William, Eliza, Henry and Dora Neill as siblings, and by reliable public sources that establish John Ross and James as siblings, and John Ross, Robert, Letitia and William as the children of Robert Neill the jeweller. As a result, the family tree that appears below is correct, despite what other sources may say.



Robert Neill (1775-1857) and Letitia Ireland (1788-1845)

The first reference to Robert is a baptismal record for the Rosemary Street 3rd Presbyterian Church, Belfast. It reads: '29 October 1775 Robert Neill son of Ross Neil Baker'.² It is presumed that Ross Neil[l] was a baker, not that he was named Baker. Ross was reported as being present at a seat holders meeting of the Belfast 2nd Presbyterian Church on 28 April 1792.³ Also present were John and Robert Ireland, who may have been related to Letitia. Ross died in Belfast on 3 March 1826.⁴ Nothing else about him is known, but his first name suggests that the family may have originated in Scotland.



Dr Drummond

The next reference to Robert is to his marriage on 5 November 1811: 'Married on Tuesday Evening by the Rev Doctor Drummond, Mr Robert Neill to Miss Letitia Ireland, both of this

² Records of Rosemary Street 3rd Presbyterian Church, Belfast, MIC1P/7/1

³ Records of 2nd Presbyterian Church, Belfast, CR4/9/A1

⁴ *Belfast News-Letter* index

town.⁵ (William Hamilton Drummond was a leading Irish non-subscribing Presbyterian minister and Unitarian Christian theologian.) Nothing has been discovered about Letitia or her family, although her son William visited Ireland relatives in both Germany and Philadelphia.



*Gasworks
clock, Belfast*

Robert trained as a silversmith. 'He served his apprenticeship with Job Rider at the Shambles (Corn Market), starting business in September 1803 in High Street, next door to the old market-house. He was for some time a partner with Henry L. Gardner, and removed to No. 25 later [in fact, no. 23].⁶ The business developed into a successful firm of jewellers, watchmakers and opticians. Under the subsequent management of Robert's son James, and then of James's son Sharman, it manufactured several public clocks in the north of Ireland. The present Belfast jewellers, Sharman D Neill Ltd, have no connection with the family.

Robert and Letitia had nine surviving children, whose lives are described in this paper. They were: John Ross (born 1812), Robert (1817), Mary Anne (1818), James (1819), Letitia (c.1822), William Mayne (1824), Eliza (1826), Henry Montgomery (1828), and Dora (1831). Some of the gaps (especially between 1812 and 1817) suggest that there may have been other children who did not survive infancy. John Ross's death notice on 9 December 1891 states that 'he was married age 80 years and a retired jeweller'.⁷ If this record is literally true, John Ross would have been born before, or very shortly after, Robert and Letitia were married. It seems more likely that he was born in 1812 and died in his 80th year.

In 1854, Robert resided at 2 Albion Place, Belfast. He died in Holywood in 1857, where he may have been living with his son James.⁸ Holywood is about five miles from Belfast, on the Irish Sea, and became a fashionable home for the Belfast middle classes once the railway link had opened in 1848. Letitia predeceased him by 12 years. A headstone in the Clifton Street Cemetery, Belfast, records the deaths of both of them: 'Sacred To the memory of Robert Neill of Belfast died 27th Jan'y 1857 Aged 82 and of his Wife Letitia Neill died 15th July 1845 Aged 57.'⁹

DEATHS.
January 26, at Holywood, Mr. Robert Neill, aged 82 years. His remains will be removed, for interment at the New Burying-ground, Belfast, on to-morrow (Wednesday) morning, at nine o'clock.



Clifton St Cemetery

⁵ *Belfast News-Letter*, 11 November 1811

⁶ *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, volume 8

⁷ General Register Office of Northern Ireland (GRONI), Ref D/1891/201/1024/21/197

⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, 27 January 1857

⁹ Clifton Street Cemetery, Belfast, Lot E 18-19 NEILL; Find A Grave. (The broken headstone now appears to have been removed.)

grain of truth. The grain is that the abiding concerns of Unitarians are humanist rather than theological. It is arguably the most tolerant, most liberal Christian sect. Other Christians would not regard Unitarians as Christian at all, since they do not believe in the divinity of Christ or the Trinity. Most Unitarians would regard members of the Roman Catholic or Anglican churches as, at best, highly deluded Christians.

Robert would, on the one hand, have regarded the Roman Catholic church in Ireland as an enemy of Christian principles, through (he would have thought) its self-glorification and its denial of freedom of conscience. In that sense he was a thoroughgoing Protestant. On the other hand, precisely because of his belief in freedom of conscience, he could support the Catholic church where it accorded with his own conscience.

Individuals with whom he was in known sympathy supported the then Pope in his condemnation of slavery in 1846. In 1837, Robert was the signatory to a petition calling for a review of the management of the Belfast Poor House, to which he was a subscriber. At the subsequent meeting, it was resolved: 'That it is the opinion of this meeting, that the Resolution adopted by the Committee of the Poor-House, on the 30th July last, directing the continued use of the Catechisms of the Established and Presbyterian Churches, ... refusing to admit the Roman Catholic catechism on the same footing, is a violation of equal justice.'¹⁰

Such a subtlety of attitude would become lost as the 19th century grew older and, in the 20th century, it was obliterated altogether. Robert saw himself as an Irishman. He was happy to celebrate St Patrick's Day. He believed in a united Ireland. But he believed in its unity under the British crown, not under Irish independence. He believed that because he also believed, not without reason at the time, that an independent Ireland would mean a Roman Catholic theocracy, medieval in its instincts and inimical to a free-thinker like himself.

Of all Robert's activities, it was the fight against slavery that seems to have engaged him the most. Apart from the campaign to end it in the British colonies, he lent his support to the movement in America, principally by acting as host to visiting abolitionist lecturers. 'He was a strong anti-slavery man, and numbered amongst his American friends, William Lloyd Garrison, Henry C. Wright, and Frederick Douglass, who had all been his guests.'¹¹ These three all visited Belfast in October 1846. But the



Frederick
Douglass

W. L. Garrison

Henry Wright

¹⁰ *Belfast News-Letter*, 10 January 1837

¹¹ C. L. Brace, *The life of Charles Loring Brace, chiefly told in his own letters*, edited, and with commentary, by his daughter Emma Brace (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York: 1894), pp. 89-90; see also S. O'Connor, *Orphan Trains* (University of Chicago Press: 2001), p. 50 and W. Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin: A Biography* (New York: State University Press, 1978), p. 12

American visitor who was to have the greatest impact on Robert Neill and his family was Charles Loring Brace, the pioneer of child adoption, who married Robert and Letitia's second daughter, also Letitia. It is to Brace – writing to one of his sons – that we owe the only known remarks on Robert's wife:¹²

You must remember that you get from the Neill women a disinterestedness beyond compare, sincerity, and a wonderful devotion to ideal things, such as friendship, religion, music, art, poetry, and the like, besides sweetness, patience, and love. The best has all come from your grandmother (Neill) [Letitia Ireland]. The Neill women are unselfish in the highest degree usually. You may bless God evermore for your mother; few are like unto her.

In now describing what is known of the lives of Robert and Letitia's children, it makes more sense to the narrative partially to depart from their order of seniority.

John Ross Neill (1812-1891)

John Ross was the eldest child of Robert and Letitia, and one of the less adventurous. As far as is known, he remained in Ireland all his life. He worked as a jeweller, first in Londonderry, then in Belfast, initially with his father, later in partnership with his brother James, and finally on his own account.

He was born in 1812. From 1817 to 1825, he was a pupil at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, listed as the son of Robert Neill, High Street, Belfast.¹³ This is curious as the RBAI was principally for pupils in their mid-teens or older. However, since it had been founded only in 1814, perhaps its early admissions were broader in age than they later became. His father, Robert, later served as a manager of the RBAI.¹⁴



Rev. Henry Montgomery

John Ross Neill married Margaret Montgomery on 29 September 1841.¹⁵ She was the daughter of Alexander Montgomery of Killead, and the niece of Rev. Henry Montgomery, sometime Moderator of the General Synod of Ulster, and the man for whom John Ross's younger brother was named. John Ross could have been taught by Henry Montgomery, who in 1817 'took a professorship in the Belfast Academical Institution, where he taught a considerable number of the Protestant middle-class youth of Ireland.'¹⁶

¹² Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, p. 435

¹³ RBAI School Albums (SCH524/1A/1 1814–1826)

¹⁴ *Belfast News-Letter*, 22 June 1853

¹⁵ PRONI, document D/3000/169/1, p. 4

¹⁶ A. Webb, *A Compendium of Irish Biography*, (M. H. Gill & Son, Dublin: 1878), p. 587

John Ross and Margaret had three daughters: Ann Montgomery (married name Hollis), Letitia Montgomery (born 1 February 1846; married Rev. Thomas Dunkerly, later the Unitarian Minister in Comber) and Harriet Martineau (born 1 July 1854), named for the prominent English social theorist and feminist (and Unitarian). In 1872, Harriet married Charles Menzies Holland, a civil engineer who designed several railways in Northern Ireland and Wales. The family settled near Wrexham.¹⁷

For some years, John Ross appears to have lived above the family shops in the High Street and College Street South. A little later, he was living at 78 High Street, Belfast, where Harriet was born in 1854. By 1860, he had moved to Holywood, where his younger brother James was already living, and where his father had died. John Ross built a house there called Willesden, at 43 Church Street (now Church Road) and lived there until 1874. He then moved to a house called Beechcroft in Holywood.¹⁸ Later, he and Margaret lived with their daughter, Letitia, and her husband Thomas Dunkerly in Comber.¹⁹

John Ross's working life as a jeweller started in Londonderry, where he is shown as having a shop in 1839.²⁰ By 1849, when he was about 37, he was in partnership with his father and younger brother James in the jewellery business at 23 High Street, Belfast, and at 7 College Street South, Belfast. On 1 February that year, Robert retired (aged 74). The partnership of Robert Neill & Sons was dissolved and John Ross and James continued trading from the same addresses under a new partnership, John R and James Neill.²¹ In 1857:²²

Neill Brothers, 23, High Street, Belfast beg to announce that one of their firm has just returned from London and the Manufacturing Towns, with a superb assortment of everything New and Fashionable in Gold & Silver watches, Jewellery, Silver and Electro-Plate, all of the first class; together with Parisian Drawing-Room clocks, fans and other fancy goods which will be sold at unprecedentedly low prices.

On 23 December 1861, the Neills established new premises at 6-8 Donegall Place, in addition to the High Street premises. The College Street South shop is no longer mentioned and has presumably been closed. However, only two years later, their partnership was dissolved. This



¹⁷ PRONI, document D3000/169/1, PTE 84/2008. This document is the source for all the facts of John Ross Neill's life, unless separately referenced.

¹⁸ Griffith's Valuation, 1848-1864

¹⁹ GRONI, Ref, D/1891/201/1024/21/197

²⁰ New Directory of the City of Londonderry, 1839

²¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 2 February 1849

²² *Belfast Mercury*, 19 October 1857

was announced on 19 December 1863: 'Dissolution of Partnership. Notice of partnership between John Ross Neill and James Neill as Watchmakers, Jewellers, Silversmith, Opticians and Nautical Instrument makers, at 23 High Street and No. 6, Donegall Place, Belfast under the firm and style of Neill Brothers has been this day dissolved by Mutual Consent.'

Nothing survives that explains this abrupt turn of events, but a certain amount of confusion seems to have surrounded it. In the same announcement, it was stated that: 'All debts due by and to the late firm will be paid and received by the said James Neill who will from this date continue to carry on said business at the above mentioned places on his own account, under the firm of Neill & Company.' However, two months later, on 22 February 1864, another announcement states: 'The Clearance Sale of Watches, Plate, Jewellery etc etc. is now going on in consequence of the dissolution of partnership of the late firm of Neill Brothers and will shortly be discontinued, after which the establishment, 23, High Street will be carried on by John Ross Neill and that at 8 Donegall Place by James Neill and Company, each on his own account and the interests of the two concerns will be entirely disconnected.' And this is what appears to have happened. One can speculate endlessly on the causes and motivations, but no evidence survives.

However, there is a later implication of a falling-out between John Ross and James. In consecutive advertisements in the *Belfast News-Letter* of 13 December 1871, James Neill advertises his own independent shop at 14 Donegall Place, but John Ross advertises himself under the name of Neill Brothers. He describes himself as 'Senior Partner of the above long-established Firm' (although that firm is now dissolved) and informs the public that 'he continues the Business in the same central Premises'.²³ It sounds as if John Ross is pulling rank and trying to convince people that the two shops are the same business and that he has the main branch. Perhaps James is being conspicuously more successful.

John Ross continued his business in the High Street until 1881, ten years before he died. An announcement on 9 November 1881 stated that: 'The property of John Ross Neill, High Street, watchmaker, Goldsmith and Jewellery stock will be sold by auction and the sale will be continued from day to day till all be sold.'

Away from his business, he continued his father's commitment to the abolitionist cause. In 1846, William Garrison wrote in a letter: 'On Friday morning, we [probably Garrison and Frederick Douglass] shall go to Belfast, and address a public meeting that evening, if our friends are disposed to appoint one. I have just written to our friend John R. Neill, to this effect.'²⁴

²³ *Belfast News-Letter*, 13 December 1871

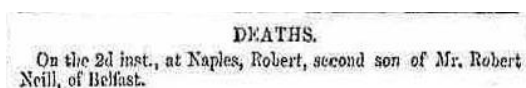
²⁴ *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, Volume III: No Union with the Slaveholders* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 428, 25 September 1846

Otherwise, John Ross is mentioned as a Trustee of the Belfast Permanent Building and Investment Society²⁵ and an agent for the United Kingdom Temperance Institution. He was elected (with two votes!) as an Assessor of St George's Ward, Belfast.²⁶ On 9 November 1882, he 'Attended Lecture on Mesmerism by Dr. Spencer Hall, ... the subject being Seven Years Investigation of Mesmerism and its kindred Phenomena, who cured Harriet Martineau [for whom his youngest daughter was named].' Towards the end of his life, he attended meetings of the Unitarian Sunday School Conference, the Ulster Unitarian Christian Association and the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society.

John Ross Neill died on 9 December 1891 at Milecross, Newtownards, four days after the death of his eldest daughter at the same address.²⁷ They were buried together in Belfast City Cemetery, in a grave belonging to A. M. Carlisle. His widow, Margaret, died on 4 May 1903, also in Newtownards, at the age of 85.²⁸

Robert Neill (junior) (1817-1849)

Robert's is the shortest entry in this description of Robert and Letitia's children. All that is known about



him is the announcement of his death²⁹ and that he was buried in his parents' grave in Belfast, with this part of the inscription: 'and of their Son Robert Neill died at Naples 2nd July 1849 Aged 32.'³⁰

There is no record of any marriage or children; no record of Robert having any connection with the family business. And no explanation as to why he was in Naples. This was not a family prone to ostentatious travel. Perhaps he had a business, with interests in Naples. Or perhaps his early death there might have been from tuberculosis, which led many people in Britain to seek a milder climate. Illness might also account for his lack of recorded activity.

James Neill (1819-1902)

James, the third son of Robert and Letitia, was born in Belfast on 16 November 1819 and baptised at the 2nd Presbyterian Church on 5 December.³¹ He may have started his career as a jeweller as early as 15, because a street directory for 1835 shows a James Neill, jeweller, at 20

²⁵ *Belfast News-Letter*, 1 September 1852

²⁶ *Belfast News-Letter*, 17 February 1862

²⁷ GRONI Ref D/1891/201/1024/21/197

²⁸ GRONI Ref D/1903/197/1024/12/64

²⁹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 29 July 1845

³⁰ Clifton Street Cemetery, Belfast, Lot E 18-19 NEILL

³¹ Records of the 2nd Presbyterian Church, Belfast, CR4/9/A1

Crown Entry – perhaps a studio.³² It seems that he then worked at the family's shop in Londonderry, as had his brother John Ross. That was the address given when he married in 1846. The Londonderry street directories show a firm of Neills & Minniece, watchmakers, jewellers and opticians, in Shipquay Street.³³ Perhaps both brothers worked in the Londonderry shop until soon before their father's retirement in 1849.



James's life as a retail jeweller from then until 1863 is recounted under the entry for his older brother, John Ross Neill. After their partnership was dissolved, James continued the business on his own account at 6-8 and later 14 Donegall Place, Belfast. 'On Saturday, New Years Day [1870], the employes [sic] of the establishment of Messrs. James Neill & Co, Jeweller, Donegall Place were entertained at dinner in Thompson's Hotel by Mr. J. Neill, who, with his son Mr. Lamour [sic, presumably an error for Sharman] Neill was present. The chair was ably chaired by Mr. Neill's manager, Mr. Lee; and the vice chair by Mr. Adams. The dinner had also reference to recent extensive alterations. The proceedings were of a very gratifying character.'³⁴

By January 1884, aged 64, James was preparing for retirement. 'Respecting the advertisements which have recently appeared in these columns as to the stock of Messrs. James Neill and Son, Jewellers Donegall Place, we beg to say there are some high class class, both in jewelry and plate, still remaining unsold, which must be disposed of previous to offering the remainder of the general stock in one lot, inspection of which is invited by the nobility and gentry of Belfast and District.'³⁵

On 28 May 1884, James does retire:³⁶

I beg to intimate to my friends and the public I have now retired from the Watch, Jewelry Optical Business, with which I have so long been connected in Belfast For the kind patronage which has been extended to the late firm of James Neill & Son, I beg to express my most sincere and grateful thanks. My son Mr. S. D. Neill, having received very gratifying encouragement from many of the



Sharman Neill watch

³² Matier's Belfast Directory 1835-1836

³³ Belfast and Province of Ulster Directory, 1852

³⁴ *Belfast News-Letter*, 4 January 1870

³⁵ *Belfast News-Letter*, 2 January 1884

³⁶ *Belfast News-Letter*, 28 May 1884



*Sharman Neill Shop,
36-38 Donegall Place*

supporters of the late firm, to commence business on his own account, has decided on doing so, and for this purpose has taken suitable premises on Donegall Place. I feel sure that their confidence in him will not be mis-placed and that he will prove worthy of a share of public patronage, James Neill.

(Copious further information on the progress of the business under Sharman Dermot Neill's ownership is given in the PRONI document.³⁷)

However, it is not James's business career that is of primary family interest, nor even James himself, but rather his wife Kate. Because Kate appears to have been the catalyst for my great-great-grandfather William meeting his wife Susan.

James married Catherine Ann Larmour of Bonny Glen, Donegal, on 15 December 1846. 'On the 15th inst., at Inver Church, MR. JAMES NEILL, of Londonderry, to CATHERINE ANNE, second daughter of ROBERT LARMOUR, ESQ., Bonny Glen, Donegal.'³⁸

Bonny Glen was an estate in the Inver parish. The main house seems to have been owned by a Murray Babington at that time, so possibly the Larmours occupied another house on the estate. No further information about the Larmour family has been discovered, other than that Kate had an Aunt Ursula, a relative called Ellen and another relative (possibly a brother) who died in 1859.³⁹



Bonny Glen, Donegal

It is strange that Kate and Susan came to meet in the first place. Susan was the younger by about five years. At the time of Kate's marriage in 1846, Susan was 16 and had no known connection to Ireland. Yet, by 1859, Kate was Susan's 'dearest friend in the world'.⁴⁰ The indications are that William met Susan in London in September 1858 upon Kate's introduction, and that Susan was at that time planning to start a new life in Ireland. She had left friends in London 'under an impression that you were going to settle down in Belfast.'⁴¹ The context makes it clear that this remark had nothing to do with William, of whose existence they were unaware. Susan was certainly planning to visit Kate then, and may well have been going to live with her and James in Hollywood.

³⁷ PRONI, document D3000/169/1, PTE 84/2008

³⁸ Donegal Genealogy Resources website, Birth, Marriage & Death Notices, Inver, Co Donegal, 1824 to 1856 [accessed 4 March 2022]

³⁹ Letters of William Neill (held by the author)

⁴⁰ Letters of William Neill

⁴¹ Letter from Robert Bell to Susan Abbott, 15 October 1858 (held by the author)

It seems probable that Susan first met Kate in London. On 12 October 1858, William writes to Susan 'I shall expect you & Kate to be ready to come then or to follow me a day or two later for London',⁴² which suggests that Kate already has connections there. Later letters written by William from New York contain instructions for Susan to tell Kate of meetings he has had with abolitionists and other social reformers, clearly expecting Kate to be interested in more than a casual way. One letter reveals that Kate has met Eliza Lee Cabot Follen, the American writer and abolitionist. Follen appears to have visited London several times in the 1850s, writing a letter to William Lloyd Garrison from there in 1850.⁴³

Given Susan's involvement (along with Mary Ellen Meredith) in progressive social issues in London after 1852 (see *The Early Life of Susan Mary Abbott*), it may well have been some aspect of social reform that brought Kate and Susan together. It is also worth noting an advertisement by a Miss Larmour (clearly related to Kate, since she used James Neill's shop as her address), who 'after a residence of some years in France and Germany' is establishing herself as a language teacher in Paris, where Susan spent some time in the late 1850s.⁴⁴

Kate was the only Neill to be a witness to William and Susan's marriage,⁴⁵ and the only one to be a godparent to their son Harold,⁴⁶ despite the fact that she was not a Neill by blood. It was to James and Kate's home in Holywood that Susan returned from New York in September 1859, to give birth to Harold in November. It was Kate who looked after Susan in those long and difficult months, her husband still in America.



Oranmore, Craigavad

James and Kate lived in at least three different houses in or near Holywood over the years. Initially, they were at 107 High Street,⁴⁷ which is probably where Susan stayed with them and where Harold was born. By 1878, they were at Oranmore, on Station Road, Craigavad.⁴⁸ By 1901, the widower James was at 4 Martello Terrace, Victoria Road, although that house may have been owned by his son Sharman, with whom he was then living.⁴⁹

⁴² Letters of William Neill

⁴³ Manuscript, Boston Public Library, Rare Books Department, Anti-Slavery Collection

⁴⁴ *Belfast News-Letter*, 16 October 1862

⁴⁵ Marriage certificate, General Register Office, MXE 921282

⁴⁶ Letters of William Neill

⁴⁷ Griffith's Valuation, 1848-1864

⁴⁸ PRONI, document D3000/169/1, PTE 84/2008

⁴⁹ National Archives of Ireland, 1901 Census

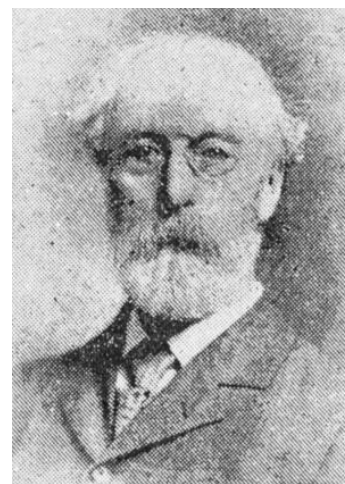
James and Kate had four children: Catherine Larmour, Letitia Margaret, Florence Nightingale and Sharman Dermot. Sharman lost both his sons in the First World War. If there are any remaining descendants of this line of the Neill family, they will be through Sharman's three daughters.

Kate died on 24 April 1885, aged 60. James survived her by 17 years, dying on 22 April 1902, aged 82. They are buried together in the Holywood graveyard, with their daughter Florence.⁵⁰

Henry Montgomery Neill (1828-1906)

Henry was the youngest of the five Neill sons, the most successful, and the first cause of the family emigration to America. His life, and those of his families, are covered in three separate articles. This piece details only the bare facts.

Henry's early life is entirely undocumented. There are no birth, baptism or education records; no mentions in newspapers until 1849. Given the destruction of most Irish records in 1922, that is not altogether surprising, but at least something has survived on most of his siblings.



Henry Neill

The first certain thing known about Henry is that he left for America in 1847, arriving a few days after his 19th birthday.⁵¹ Apart from regular visits back to Britain, he was to stay there until his death in 1906, although he remained a British citizen. Over those 60 years, he established such a reputation (accompanied by much controversy) that, in its obituary of him, the *New York Times* described him as reputedly 'the greatest cotton crop estimate expert in the world'.⁵² In the 1850s, together with his brother William, he established the firm of Neill Brothers & Co in both the UK and the US, one function of which was a circular that reported the state of the US cotton market to British merchants and mill owners. After William's return to Britain in 1860, Henry ran the American end of the business and William the British end.

The partnership had to withstand the devastating consequences of the American Civil War for the cotton trade – a period that coincided with other devastations in Henry's private life. But, from the nadir of 1865, the business, and Henry's reputation, grew over the succeeding decades until, by the 1890s, Henry was the undisputed master of his trade.⁵³

⁵⁰ Find a Grave: Holywood Churchyard, Co. Down

⁵¹ New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists, 30 November 1847

⁵² *New York Times*, 13 September 1906

⁵³ J. Pietruska, 'Cotton Guessers': Crop Forecasters and the Rationalizing of Uncertainty in American Cotton Markets, 1890-1905', in H. Berghoff and others (ed.), *The Rise of Marketing and Market Research*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 53



*New York
Cotton Exchange*

Standing amid this late-century whirlwind of commodity speculation and government and private crop forecasts was 'resident alien' Henry Neill ... Neill, who also worked as a cotton trader, was one of the earliest members of the New York Cotton Exchange and also a member of the cotton exchange in New Orleans, from where he exerted considerable influence on spot and futures markets in New Orleans, New York, and Liverpool. Newspapers hailed Neill as 'the greatest cotton crop estimate expert in the world,' 'the leading statistician of the South,' [and] 'the accepted authority on cotton'.

Henry was no stranger to controversy. Just before the civil war, he was nearly expelled from Louisiana for his abolitionist sentiments.⁵⁴ During the civil war, he had one father-in-law who was an undercover agent for the Union, and another who was an undercover agent for the Confederacy. Henry himself was arrested by a Union gunboat off Charleston in May 1862, trying to run the blockade.⁵⁵ Even at the time of his greatest fame, the 1890s, while the *New York Times* extolled his expertise, the Southern press ripped him to shreds.

Henry mostly lived, and was based, in New Orleans, although he spent his early years in America in Mobile, Alabama. He was married twice: first to Catherine (Kate) Lowber (née Schultz), the adopted daughter of Daniel C and Mary Lowber of New Orleans and, secondly, after her death in 1859, to her cousin Mary Lowber Schultz, of Fishkill Landing, NY. There were two sons from his first marriage (William Lowber and James Wilson) and one surviving son from his second (Henry Harmon). He may also have had two illegitimate daughters, and possibly other illegitimate children as well.



Fishkill Landing, New York

Henry was killed in a streetcar accident in New Orleans in 1906. His extraordinary life is documented more fully in three other pieces: *William and Henry Neill trading as Neill Bros & Co*, *Henry Neill & the American Civil War* and *The life and families of Henry Montgomery Neill*.

William Mayne Neill (1824-1913)

William was my great-great-grandfather, and my reason for wanting to research his family. He wrote copious letters, many of which have survived. Along with records and newspaper reports from Belfast and elsewhere, those letters are the principal source of information for the Neill family. Almost all the letters were written to William's wife, Susan. Of the few others,

⁵⁴ *War of the Rebellion*, Series 2, Vol. 2, Section 1, p. 587-88, W. Neill to W. Seward

⁵⁵ *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 17 June 1862

only one exists from before the time he met and married her. After his marriage, he and Susan lived together in New York for nine months, so no letters were written to her in that period. It is only when William is in America later, without Susan, that the flow of letters begins.



William Neill

William's business career from 1854 to 1866 is covered in the article *William and Henry Neill trading as Neill Bros & Co.* A separate article is planned on his later life, particularly after his marriage to Susan Mary Abbott in 1858, when he was 34. This piece will concentrate on aspects of his life before then, which was quite eventful enough. Here, the surviving letters are referenced only in as far as they concern William's siblings.

It is clear from the letters, but also from his early life, that William was an unusual man: energetic, passionate, entrepreneurial, principled, emotionally expressive (although perhaps not emotionally self-aware), courageous, impulsive and sometimes lacking in judgment. Susan may have had a steadying influence on him in due course, and it was much needed.

William was born on 12 March 1824. Like his brother John Ross (and possibly his other brothers too, although no records survive), William attended the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, from August 1832 to 1836,⁵⁶ leaving with a Certificate in Classical Exercises.⁵⁷



Royal Belfast Academical Institution

By 1846, when he was 22, William already had his own business. A newspaper advertisement shows him offering Indian corn and meal for sale from premises at 33 Chichester Street, Belfast.⁵⁸ By the following year, he was at 22 Skipper Street, Belfast. Other advertisements show him offering American hams and pork,⁵⁹ and he is elsewhere described as a 'General Merchant'. Although this business had no connection with the family jewellery business, it was run under its auspices, perhaps to give William some financial protection, and perhaps to enable him to benefit from its reputation. But it was not long before William hit financial difficulties.

The first trouble came in November 1848, when he appears in a court list. Francis William Lelland, Edward Atkinson and others were seeking damages against him for non-fulfilment of

⁵⁶ RBAI School Albums (SCH524/1A/1 1814–1826)

⁵⁷ *Belfast News-Letter*, 28 June 1836

⁵⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, 26 June 1846

⁵⁹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 25 February 1847 and 10 September 1847

a charter party.⁶⁰ (The 'father' of William's future wife, Susan, had a law partnership with an Edward Atkinson. This is probably a coincidence.) The following month, an Alexander Dickson is distancing himself from William: 'The subscriber intimates, that, by the completion of certain Contracts, he, on the First day of Oct., 1847, ceased to have any interest in the business carried on in Skipper-street, Belfast, by Messrs. Robert Neill & Sons, and Mr. William Mayne Neill, Importers of Indian corn and General Merchants.'⁶¹

Worse was to follow. In December 1851, by now 'for many years' a corn merchant in Liverpool,⁶² William was up before the Bankruptcy Court in London.⁶³

This was the meeting for choice of assignees in the case of William Mayne Neill, merchant, of Liverpool. The bankrupt had been connected in business with Spencer Ashlin, corn-factor, of Eastcheap, also a bankrupt. His debts are stated at £21,924 on his own account, and £28,881 on account of the partnership; the assets in both estates are estimated at about £3,000. Debts to the amount of £2,868 were proved, and Mr. O. T. Williams, of London Street, gentleman, was chosen trade assignee.

BANKRUPT COURT.—LONDON, Dec. 12.

[Before Mr. Commissioner Goulburn.]

In re Neill.

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At today's values, William's combined debts would have been close to £5 million – a huge sum for a 27-year-old. It would appear that a large part of his problems stemmed from his association with Ashlin. At any rate, William's bankruptcy was annulled in July 1854, when he managed to settle with his creditors and 'emerge without a stain on his character'.⁶⁴

A combination of circumstances then brought about a major change in William's life. Continuing business difficulties, culminating in his bankruptcy, may have predisposed him anyway to making a fresh start in a fresh place. His younger brother, Henry, was now established in the cotton trade in America, and their sister Eliza was with him. William visited America at the end of 1850 and presumably met Henry then and perhaps discussed a business partnership.⁶⁵ On top of that, in 1850, their sister Letitia had met the young American clergyman and social reformer, Charles Loring Brace. In 1854 they married in Belfast and Letitia left Ireland to live in America. There was a gravitational pull from America.

⁶⁰ *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, Dublin, 27 November 1848

⁶¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 15 December 1848

⁶² *Liverpool Albion*, 15 December 1851

⁶³ *London Gazette*, December 1851

⁶⁴ *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 July 1854

⁶⁵ New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists, 2 September 1850



E. L. Godkin

Finally, William's friendship with E L (Edwin) Godkin, the Irish-born American journalist and newspaper editor (later founder of *The Nation* and editor-in-chief of the *New York Evening Post*) may have influenced him. Godkin left Belfast in 1851 to study law in London, where he shared rooms with William in Richmond-upon-Thames for the summer.⁶⁶ At this point an undischarged bankrupt, it is hard to believe that William did not discuss plans for the future with Edwin, and hard to believe that those plans did not involve America. (Later, in 1856, it was William who suggested to Godkin that he should emigrate to America.⁶⁷)

William returned to America in November 1854, a few months after the annulment of his bankruptcy, and soon after the arrival there of his sister Letitia and her new husband.⁶⁸ He was accompanied by H. W. Treffry, who was to become a director of Neill Bros in Mobile and New Orleans.⁶⁹ He and Henry then founded the firm of Neill Brothers & Co, cotton and general commission merchants of New York, Mobile, and New Orleans.

William quickly forged a social life in America, as well as building his business. Most of his early contacts were provided by Charles Loring Brace and his friend Fred Olmsted, the designer of Central Park, New York. 'After he migrated to the United States, he found in Brace and Frederick Law Olmsted unselfish patrons.'⁷⁰ William's friendships in New York and Massachusetts will be covered in more detail in a future article.



F. L. Olmsted

Very faithfully yours
Henry W. Longfellow

Wm. M. Neill Esq

His acquaintances included the poet Henry Longfellow, who wrote to him on 18 January 1855 from Cambridge, Mass.: 'I owe you many thanks for your hospitable invitation ... I am sorry to say I cannot accept, as I very rarely go out from home, and never without my infantry.'⁷¹

Many of the friends and contacts mentioned in William's later letters to Susan must have come into his life during these four years in New York before meeting her.

By the time he leaves America in late July 1858, on what proves to be a life-changing business-trip-cum-holiday to Europe, he has bought a house on 23rd Street, New York, his business seems to be flourishing, and he has a wide circle of friends, most of them involved in either the creative arts or social reform. He has come a long way from the British bankruptcy courts.

⁶⁶ Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin*, p. 12

⁶⁷ W. Armstrong, *The Gilded Age Letters of E. L. Godkin* (State University of New York Press: 1974), p. 3

⁶⁸ New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists, 27 November 1854

⁶⁹ *New Orleans Crescent*, 2 March 1860

⁷⁰ Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin*, p. 12

⁷¹ Henry Longfellow to W. M. Neill, 18 January 1855

But he has not found a wife, and his first love letter to Susan provides an explanation:⁷²

I have met in my varied career hosts of delightful girls but year after year disappointed my friends by half loving and half criticising my favourites among them, and not wholly loving any. Thus I have sauntered along – even to the verge of old bachelor-hood till I had begun to fear that an excess of personal vanity, an excess of love of beauty to charm the eye while the reason sought something more solid and almost incompatible with it, or an excess of caution would prevent my ever risking the exchange of my precious self even for the most fascinating whom I could hope to win.

The best indication of the state of William's heart on the eve of his meeting Susan comes from a long letter to America, started on 15 September 1858 on a steamer from Stockholm to Stettin.⁷³ It was written to 'my dear friend Mary'. This was Mary Schultz, later the wife of his brother Henry, and William's housekeeper in New York. Much of the letter is a travelogue of his visit to Scandinavia, Germany and the Baltic, starting in Bergen in August. This part of the journey seems mainly to have been for pleasure. The letter contains a description (with illustration, right) of the Donati Comet.



Then there are the women he has met ... 'I only saw one lady from Bergen to Christiansand and the sight of a petticoat became quite an excitement.' In Christiansand, he attends 'a dinner party at which alas, while there were over twenty gentlemen, there were only two ladies!'. However, he then meets again a 'most charming person, a young baroness, whom I had met four years before on the Rhine, and conceived a violent attachment for.'

The reason why this violent attachment never led to anything is immediately explained: '[It was] kept in check mainly by the fact of her being on her wedding trip.' Had he been deterred by this? Not entirely. 'I had lost her address & there being two or three barons of the same name in different parts of Sweden I found the chance of discovering her infinitely too small & had about given it up. But now comes an extraordinary piece of luck ...' He meets her again on the canal journey from Gothenburg to Stockholm, and four years have not diminished his ardour. He sees her family in Stockholm and is invited by her father 'out to his country place', which sadly time does not permit.

We are not finished with the women. 'Thence down to Schleswig to visit the delightful friend I made on the Rigi last year, Madame Macquardsur[?], of whom I have told you previously. She lives at Heidelberg but was visiting at her mother in law in Schleswig. I do think she and the baroness are two of the most lovely women that walk the earth & first heroines of romance. A good writer of such would attempt to describe them to you which I shall not. Alas they are both delicate with a tendency to consumption. I very much fear the Baroness will not last on

⁷² Letters of William Neill

⁷³ Letters of William Neill

this earth more than two or three years & indeed her exquisite purity & earnestness fit her better for another sphere ... One or both of them will come to Manchester to visit us if this telegraph allows us to tear our selves away from our dear America.'

The letter concludes with an admission that William has not written recently to his sisters, and with a request to Mary to forward 'the second third & fourth sheets of this' to them. So why does he not want Mary to forward the first sheet? The only things on it that he might want to conceal from his sisters (or from anyone) are the fulsome compliments he pays to Mary herself. '... Thoughts of you, and pleasant grateful sweet thoughts they are, are present with me in these distant parts ...' The letter is signed: 'Your own W. M. Neill.'

One mystery is how this letter ended up in the family's possession at all. It is one of the few to have done so that was not written either to himself or to Susan. Perhaps William had his eye on Mary as a possible wife. It seems likely that, failing to post the letter immediately upon his arrival in London (c. 24 September 1858), he then met Susan and decided not to send it at all, but to keep it – as he also kept his first, unposted, letter of proposal to Susan.

So, by September 1858, William was settled in New York, apparently successful in both his business and his social life and, from the sound of it, romantically frustrated. His father had died a year earlier. Given that background, and his own impetuosity, his whirlwind courtship of Susan Mary Abbott comes as less of a surprise.

That story is recounted in more detail in *The early life of Susan Mary Abbott*. William and Susan met on 30 September 1858. On 9 October, they were engaged. On 22 November, they were married at All Souls, Langham Place, London.⁷⁴ By the end of the year they were living, man and wife, virtual strangers, in New York.



All Souls, Langham Place

Mary Anne Neill (1818-1867)

As we have seen, the Neill sons ended up being pulled in two directions. John Ross and James felt the tug from their father, following him into the family business in Belfast. William and Henry felt the tug from America. All four daughters went with the tug from America. Mary Anne, Letitia, Eliza and Dora spent most or all of their adult lives there.

Mary Anne was the eldest daughter of Robert and Letitia. She was born on 23 June 1818 and baptised at the Belfast 2nd Presbyterian Church on 23 August of that year.⁷⁵ The next probable sighting of her was forty years later, on 15 September 1858, when William – writing from Europe to Mary Schultz in America, where he was then resident – asks Mary to forward his

⁷⁴ Marriage certificate, General Register Office, MXE 921282

⁷⁵ Records of 2nd Presbyterian Church, Belfast, CR4/9/A1

letter to 'the girls' (perm any or all from Mary Anne, Eliza and Dora), to whom he has not written recently.⁷⁶ Mary Anne already appears to be living in America in 1858, and she does not leave it. The inference from William's letters is that all those three sisters help him and/or Henry and/or Letitia in some capacity. It is likely that the business, and the Braces, also funded them in America, because none of them seemed to be working.

Of the three sisters, Mary Anne was the one most closely connected to the Braces, less so to the Neills. She appears to have played a significant part in helping to raise the Brace children. However, at least for a time, she shared William's house in New York. After he and Susan had decided to return to England, when William was alone in New York, selling the house and winding up affairs, there are a number of references to Mary Anne in his letters home: 'I wrote Mary Anne a long letter for the California steamer' (6 December 1859); 'My greatest perplexity is about the sale of house & furniture with neither of us or Mary Anne or Dora or Charles here. I must get Letitia to take some interest' (18 December 1859); 'Poor Mary Anne is greatly cut up about our leaving N York. How I wish she & Dora could live near us. We must try to effect it some day if D settles into old maidenhood' (22 January 1860).⁷⁷

Interpreting what one can into these few lines, Mary Anne seems at this point to be in California, probably with her sister Eliza and recently born nephew in San Francisco. But she is due to return, because she will miss William and Susan in New York. It is Dora, not Mary Anne, who may 'settle into old maidenhood', despite the fact that Mary Anne was the elder by thirteen years. This perhaps suggests that 'old maidenhood' was already assumed for Mary Anne, or that she was unlikely ever to 'live near us' because she would remain in America with the Braces, or both.

The last significant role of Mary Anne was as the probable facilitator of William and Susan's adoption of Charlotte in May 1867. Her role in this is discussed in another piece, *The early life of Charlotte Augusta Edings*. Soon after, on 18 July 1867, she died. At the time, she was caring for the Brace children in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, while Charles Loring Brace was on an extended recuperation from illness in California, accompanied by his wife Letitia. The family was united in grief:⁷⁸

(Emma Brace, daughter): While health was coming back to him [Charles], he and Mrs. Brace were overtaken by a terrible sorrow in the death of the sister, Miss Mary Anne Neill, who was faithfully caring for their children in their absence. She was infinitely dear to them both, and the fear that death had come in their service made it a doubly cruel blow. His wife started for New York at once, leaving Mr. Brace to finish his prescribed rest cure alone.

⁷⁶ Letters of William Neill

⁷⁷ Letters of William Neill

⁷⁸ Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, pp. 288-90

(Charles Loring Brace to Dora Neill): 'My dear Dora: ... I recall all her last words and looks, and I know she is not sorry to die. 'To live so that in dying one does not cease to be loved,' is the great problem which she has solved ... Yesterday H.'s [Henry's?] telegram came like a thunderbolt on us, and plunged us in the deep waters of sorrow.

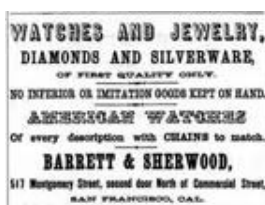
(Charles Loring Brace to Miss G Schuyler): 'To-day I bade good-by to Mrs. Brace, and our journey was brought to a gloomy turn by the terrible news from Hastings. We do not grieve for her who is gone so much. She always lived in the light of the Unseen, and in the service of love ... But the loss of this life to her sisters and brothers and us all is immense, as she bore the burdens of so many, and took so many on her heart. She was like a mother to my wife, and no one can ever love her so much.

Eliza Neill (1826-1912)

Eliza was born in Belfast on 24 November 1826.⁷⁹ Nothing else is known about her early life, but – from information on later census returns – she first went to America in either 1849 or 1851.⁸⁰ It is clear from family letters that several of the US-based siblings returned often to Britain, but trans-Atlantic passenger information is incomplete and there were many Neills making the journey (and many Eliza Neills), so it is impossible to pinpoint her arrival or subsequent comings and goings. It is also impossible to know, for any of the Neill siblings, whether their early voyages to America were intended as emigration or as visits.

It seems more likely that she first travelled to America in 1851. Her brother, Henry, who went there in 1847, appears to have returned to Belfast from 1849-51. He probably returned in 1851, and Eliza may have gone with him, not least because she then seems to have been living with Henry in Mobile, possibly to keep house for him, until 1855.

If so, she travelled elsewhere in her early years in the country. She was in Boston in February 1853, and in New York in June.⁸¹ Since, of her siblings, only Henry was in America then, she may have travelled with him, or independently. Then, on 31 January 1855, Eliza was married in Mobile. (The marriage date appears to conflict with Emma Brace's statement that: 'In January, 1855, Mr. Brace writes to his sister-in-law in Ireland, Miss Eliza Neill.'⁸²)



Her husband was Robert Sherwood, also from Ireland, and also a jeweller, like her father:⁸³

⁷⁹ Find a Grave: Cypress Lawn Memorial Park, San Mateo County, California, USA

⁸⁰ US Federal Census, 1900 and 1910

⁸¹ *The Liberator*, Boston, 11 February 1853; 1 June: date and place on book inscription

⁸² Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, p. 199

⁸³ Witherell's, Art & Antiques from the American West (no longer available online)

Robert Sherwood came to San Francisco in 1850 and began working in the mines of Calaveras County. Barrett & Sherwood began advertising, in 1852, as watchmakers, manufacturers and importers of watches and jewelry as well as diamonds. They claimed to have a constant supply from London, Paris and New York trying to appeal to the elegant tastes of this young city.

It is possible that Eliza met Robert in California, or further east, but perhaps more likely that they had already known each other in Ireland. The beneficiary of Robert's Irish will was an Edward Minniece.⁸⁴ Two of Eliza's brothers had worked in the jewellery firm of Neills & Minniece in Londonderry.

Eliza and Robert had four children, all named after members of Eliza's family: William (born 1856), Dora (1857), Henry (Harry) (1859) and Robert (1865).⁸⁵ So you would think that she had her hands full at the time of William's letters home from 1859-60. Far from it.

The Sherwoods were living in San Francisco, where their son Harry was born on 10 September 1859.⁸⁶ Eliza travels to Alabama to see Henry almost immediately afterwards. On 18 October, William writes that 'Eliza the minx is off to Mobile'.⁸⁷ How did she travel, considering that there were no railways in San Francisco, and the journey time by boat would have taken about seven weeks?

Less than three months later, on 3 January 1860, William writes: '[Eliza] has left the Lees after a fearful row they treating her shamefully. Henry has got her another situation.'⁸⁸ What situation, and where? If Henry was involved, Eliza must surely still have been in Mobile, and therefore presumably living in his house. So it must have been a work situation, unlikely though that seems. Yet, in December 1859, William 'wrote Mary Anne a long letter for the California steamer', and it is hard to think what Mary Anne was doing in California if not visiting her sister. There is no mention of Robert in any of this.

This is a real mystery, not least because the dates that underpin it are based on solid evidence. One must consider the possibility that either Robert Sherwood was absent from San Francisco for a protracted time, perhaps connected with his business, or that the early years of Robert and Eliza's marriage were rocky and disrupted. It is conceivable that Mary Anne was in California, not to visit Eliza, but to care for her other children in Eliza's (and/or Robert's) absence. William's letters from New York in 1859-60 imply that Eliza spent a good deal of time there, with or without her children.

⁸⁴ National Archives of Ireland, Calendars of Wills and Administrations, 1858-1922

⁸⁵ US Federal Census, various years

⁸⁶ Find A Grave: Chapel of the Chimes cemetery, Oakland, California, USA

⁸⁷ Letters of William Neill

⁸⁸ Letters of William Neill

In any event, by 1 June 1860, Eliza and Robert were certainly together in San Francisco, where they remained.⁸⁹ In 1867, Charles and Letitia Brace visited them there, during Charles's recuperation from illness. 'They went direct to a sister of Mrs. Brace, whose home was in an exquisite valley about twenty miles from San Francisco ... The crowning experience comes in a grand trip to the Yosemite to which he and Mrs. Brace are generously invited by their brother, Mr. Sherwood.'⁹⁰ Letitia was probably with Eliza when they heard of Mary Anne's death.

By the time of the 1880 census, Robert no longer described himself as a jeweller, but as president of a mining company. He was said to be 'the inventor of the art of manufacturing quartz rock jewelry.'⁹¹ In May 1876, he had been named as an executor of William's will. He died in 1893, leaving an estate valued at more than \$32 million in today's money. While his mining and jewellery activities will have accounted for part of this sum, more than three-quarters came from his property portfolio.⁹²



Sherwood family house, San Francisco

After his death, Eliza and her children continued the property business, not without controversy. She formed the Sherwood Estate Company in San Francisco, with herself and her four children as directors and with a capitalisation of \$1 million.⁹³ When Harry Sherwood's business failed (at almost exactly the same time as his father's death), his creditors believed that its assets had been fraudulently transferred to the family company. The chief creditor sued all five Sherwoods for 'fraud, conspiracy and a lot of other things'.⁹⁴ Eighteen months later, they were still being pursued through the courts. No record has been found of how the case was resolved.

After the failure of his business, Harry Hamilton Sherwood had a highly successful career:⁹⁵

[He] was an 1882 graduate of Harvard University. He was a dry goods merchant/wine importer and the owner/president of Sherwood & Sherwood, later Sherwood & Co. of San Francisco, California. [He] and his brother William R. Sherwood began life as grocers and became importers around 1886. Their liquor operations were based at 212-214 Market St. with additional warehouses at 15-17 Pine. They operated until Prohibition. In 1909,

⁸⁹ US Federal Census, various years

⁹⁰ Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, p. 287

⁹¹ Witherell's, Art & Antiques from the American West (no longer available online)

⁹² *San Francisco Examiner*, 29 September 1994

⁹³ *The Record-Union*, Sacramento, 25 December 1893

⁹⁴ *San Francisco Examiner*, 24 October 1894

⁹⁵ Find A Grave: Chapel of the Chimes, Oakland, California, USA, description of career provided

[Harry] founded the San Francisco Tourist and Convention League, now the San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau and he served as its first president.

In 1910, Eliza was living with her daughter Dora Chapman in San Francisco.⁹⁶ She died on 30 May 1912.⁹⁷ In a codicil to her will, dated 2 September 1911, 'it is my wish and expectation that my residuary legatees ... shall pay semi-annually to my brother William M Neill ... the sum of 100 pounds sterling [about £12,500 today].'⁹⁸ The reasons for this unusual bequest will be considered in a future article.

Dora Neill (1831-1921)

Dora was the youngest of the Neill children, born in Belfast in December 1831.⁹⁹ She probably first came to America in 1857.¹⁰⁰ For the next ten years or more, she travelled constantly, staying with different siblings in America and also returning to Europe.

In September 1858, in his letter to Mary Schultz, William writes: 'I presume you went [to Vermont] in August with Dora & the Braces.'¹⁰¹ In February 1859, Dora was in Boston.¹⁰² In June/July that year (and probably sooner), she was helping to look after Henry's two young children in Mobile at around the time that his wife died (12 June 1859). The difficulties she encountered then became known to William in November 1859. This long extract from one of his letters to Susan sheds a great deal of light on the family:¹⁰³

I have a delightfully satisfactory letter from Dora. Poor girl she had written Henry a letter which he only got on board ship after sailing with us for England in July telling him her griefs Mather remonstrating with him on the subject of Mrs M and to this she received a cruelly unjust & unfeeling reply – such a reply that Letitia was greatly opposed to her going to the South with him any more – and as I understand L she went partly because she can't afford to live elsewhere.

I heard but little of it till she was gone – when poor Letitia poured herself out in her weak sensitive state on the subject in a very distressing manner as to what Dora had to stand. I wrote Dora accordingly a long letter of advice as to her management of Hy – to draw him off from Mrs M as much as she can of love & sympathy consulting his tastes making herself a companion to him on the various subjects he has an interest in and above all making herself a mother to the children – that Hy was the devoted servant of any woman who was

⁹⁶ US Federal Census, 1910

⁹⁷ California Death Index, 1905-1939

⁹⁸ California, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1850-1953

⁹⁹ San Francisco Area, California, U.S., Funeral Home Records, 1850-1931

¹⁰⁰ US Federal Census, 1910

¹⁰¹ Letters of William Neill

¹⁰² *The Liberator*, 11 February 1859

¹⁰³ Letters of William Neill

wrapped up in & dependent upon him for her happiness and that if she rivalled Mrs M in these respects she with her more pure & refined nature would beat her rival out of the field – but that she must never lecture Hy on the subject – leave him to find out the right & wrong of it for himself – as he is sure to do ultimately. & at any rate that this course would continue & cement the brotherly & sisterly love between them which any direct interference on her part would only break up – for Henry has I am sorry to say shewn for the last year or two owing no doubt to his wife's & Mrs M's influence but little of his old love for his sister.

In October 1859, Dora is in New York with William, but says she cannot be long away from Letitia. Despite this, a few days later she left with Henry for Savannah and Mobile, from where she wrote William the letter quoted above.

Putting together stray bits of information, mostly from William's letters, Dora spent the years 1857-62 partly with William in New York, partly with Letitia at Hastings-on-Hudson (18 miles north of Manhattan) and partly with Henry in Mobile. She was also in Boston again, in August 1861 and February 1862.¹⁰⁴ At some point, she may have been sharing a house with a woman called Saider in New York, who appears to have worked intermittently for William and Susan. However, from William's letters, she does not appear to have had security of tenure at any of these places.

This may be what prompted her return to Britain in June 1862, when she accompanied Henry back after his arrest as a blockade-runner.¹⁰⁵ She stayed for several years, probably until 1870. In autumn 1863, she was in Ireland, and was visited by the Unitarian clergyman and author, Moncure Daniel Conway:¹⁰⁶



*Moncure Daniel
Conway*

The week preceding the arrival of my family was passed in the north of Ireland in response to an invitation from the Neills of Belfast. I had met Miss Dora Neill when we were both visiting Theodore Weld's school at Eagleswood, N.J. She and her sister Mrs Sherwood [so Eliza was back in Ireland now too] took me on an excursion which included the Giant's Causeway, and I became well posted in Irish customs and in the peculiar demerits of the low-backed ear.

Eighteen months later, Dora was living with William and Susan in London. Charles Loring Brace writes to her on 17 March 1865: 'I don't know what you will all say when you hear that our society are going to send me out to London to the International Reformatory Union in

¹⁰⁴ *The Liberator*, 16 August 1861 and 14 February 1862

¹⁰⁵ *Liverpool Daily Post*, 27 June 1862

¹⁰⁶ *Autobiography: Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway, Vol. 1* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin, 1904), p. 387

May, leaving here the last of April (say 29th) ... The only unpleasant point is leaving wife and family here with [Mary Anne].'¹⁰⁷

By 17 October 1865 (and until late January 1866 at the earliest), Dora was with William's wife Susan and son Harold in Paris, while William was in New York. On 14 January 1866, William writes to Susan:¹⁰⁸

I had some talk with Saider about going over this spring but not knowing certainly about whether we shd be in our house or not or how I shd feel in money matters I did not press it. Now however I feel inclined to have her & doubt not you would be very glad and that it wd be a new lease of life to Dora – so I shall try to get her to come. But what about poor Dora when we come out to New York? Will she come too & stand the winter knocking about – or will she go somewhere with Saider (who talks of spending a year in Germany) till our return next summer, or go to Holywood? But then it wd be a great loss to us not to have Saider in New York while we are there. Still we shd abandon her rather than drag Dora across the Atlantic & perhaps not get her back for a good while.

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED
KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND. IN
PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.



Mrs. W. M. Neill, Belsize Lodge, Hampstead, N.W.
Dora Neill. ditto

After the visit to Paris, Dora went back to London and lived for a further time with William and Susan at Belsize Lodge, Hampstead. In June 1866, Dora – along with Susan – was one of the signatories to the Kensington Society's women's suffrage petition, regarded by many as the first significant event of the suffragette movement.¹⁰⁹

William has already written (January 1860), anticipating that Dora will settle into 'old maidenhood'. Before that, and before his marriage, he envisaged living in 'a quiet English country house with my sister my horses & dogs & books.'¹¹⁰ He does not specify which sister, but Dora seems the most likely candidate.

By 1866, aged 35, perhaps Dora herself felt she might 'settle into old maidenhood', and perhaps William and Susan were looking forward to having her live with them indefinitely. If so, it did not happen. Within four years, Dora was married to Charles McCarthy Delany, an Irishman and Attorney at Law. They were married on 28 July 1870 at Forest Hill, Crystal Springs, San Francisco.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, p. 266

¹⁰⁸ Letters of William Neill

¹⁰⁹ Petition of the Kensington Society to the Commons of the United Kingdom, June 1866, archive of Girton College, Cambridge

¹¹⁰ Letters of William Neill

¹¹¹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 26 August 1870

Dora was shown staying with Eliza on the 1870 census, two months before her marriage. At the 1880 census, she and Charles were living in San Francisco

MARRIAGES.
July 28, at Forest Hill, Crystal Springs, San Francisco, Charles McCarthy Delaney, Esq., San Francisco, to Dora, youngest daughter of the late Robert Neill, Esq., Belfast.

with two children – Marian, born about 1873, and Charles H, born about 1875.¹¹² Thereafter the family remained in San Francisco. Charles was a witness to William's will, made in San Francisco on 19 May 1876. They were living then at 519 Montgomery Street.

Charles died in 1881, so Dora had only eleven years of married life. After his death, one may presume that Eliza stepped in to support her, and also to introduce her to the world of real estate. Adjacent reports in a local newspaper show Robert Sherwood and Dora Delany both selling property lots. Dora's lot was worth nearly \$300,000 at today's values. Towards the end of her life, she was living with her two children and a grand-daughter. She died on 28 August 1921, the last of the Neill siblings.¹¹³

Dora was adored, not surprisingly given how much of her life she had devoted to her siblings and their families. William was fond of all his sisters, but perhaps of Dora especially, as Susan seems to have been also. So was Charles Loring Brace, who shared William's habit of writing ecstatically to women who were not his wife. On 20 September 1858, he wrote to Dora:¹¹⁴

Do you know, dear, ever since our pleasant time with so many warm hearts, I find myself loving everybody better, and I half think nobody (except [Letitia]) ever softened my bear's heart so much as your sweet self. You represent youth and hope to me, and my sister, and perhaps I love you most because I think I see lighted in your soul one fire that shall never go out, – that kindled on the altar of duty. Do you remember (to myself I would say, will you ever forget?) that starlit talk on the rock in the lake? That seemed to me (I suppose I idealized it) a kind of spiritual union which may last into Eternity ... But what a sentimental love-letter I have fallen into! We have so much to tell you and [Mary Anne] when we meet.

And this beautiful passage, in a later letter from Charles Brace, written on 17 January 1875:¹¹⁵

My dear Dora: I hope you never measure our affection here by our correspondence. We all hold you ever near the heart, and wish we could see more of you. There are so many things I should like to speak on with you. But letters are nothing. We move steadily on in the old path ... Life settling itself and gathering its garments for the grand departure, friends slipping away into the unseen, old age coming visibly on many, fires of youth cooling, and the drift of age towards doubt and denial more clear and sometimes depressing, and yet hope, freshness, and spring still.

¹¹² US Federal Census, 1870 and 1880

¹¹³ California Death Index, 1905-1939

¹¹⁴ Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, p. 225

¹¹⁵ Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, p. 343

Letitia Neill (c.1822-1916)

Considering the fame of her husband, remarkably little public information exists about Letitia. As with most of her siblings, birth and baptism records do not survive. The extrapolated year of birth from different US censuses varies wildly. However, her marriage announcement establishes Letitia as the second daughter of Robert Neill, which means she must have been born between 1819 and 1825. It is reasonable to take an approximate birth year of 1822, for which there are two census confirmations.¹¹⁶

August 21. at the Meeting-house of the First Presbyterian Congregation, Belfast. by the Rev. Henry Montgomery, LL.D., Charles Loring Brace, Esq., New York, to Letitia, second daughter of Robert Neill, Esq., Albion Place, Belfast.

The first (and only) public record of her in Belfast is for her marriage in 1854: 'August 21, at the Meeting-house of the First Presbyterian Congregation, Belfast, by the Rev. Henry Montgomery, LL.D., Charles Loring Brace, Esq., New York, to Letitia, second daughter of Robert Neill, Esq., Albion Place, Belfast.'¹¹⁷

Since a great deal of information exists on Charles Loring Brace, there is no point in repeating much of it here, but a brief summary will help to provide a context for Letitia's life. Brace was born on 19 June 1826 in Litchfield, CN, the son of a teacher, John Brace, who taught Harriet Beecher Stowe, the abolitionist and author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Then:¹¹⁸

In 1853, Brace, a 26 year old Congregational minister, concerned with the growing number of 'homeless' children he saw wandering the streets of New York, joined together with other 'reformers' and founded the Children's Aid Society, where the children were cared for and taught life skills. He and others conceived the Orphan Trains which took children from the streets to homes across the US. From 1854 to 1929, orphan trains from New York 'placed out' 150,000 to 200,000 destitute children, mainly to homes in the farming communities of the Midwest.



Charles Loring Brace

One of the trustees of the Society was Theodore Roosevelt senior, the father of the President. In many ways, the Children's Aid Society foreshadowed in America what Dr Thomas Barnardo later did in Britain.

Letitia met Charles in the spring of 1850. As their daughter Emma wrote:¹¹⁹

Before going to the continent, the three companions [Brace and Fred & John Olmsted] went to Ireland, to continue the walking trip which had been so great a pleasure to them all. They were supplied with letters of introduction to the family of Mr. Robert Neill of Belfast, who had always welcomed Americans with peculiar friendliness. He was a strong

¹¹⁶ New York State Census, 1905; US Federal Census, 1910

¹¹⁷ *Belfast News-Letter*, 25 August 1854; *New York Evening Post*, 16 September 1854

¹¹⁸ PRONI, document D3000/169/1, PTE 84/2008

¹¹⁹ Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, pp. 89-90

anti-slavery man, and numbered amongst his American friends, William Lloyd Garrison, Henry C. Wright, and Frederick Douglass, who had all been his guests. The young men were heartily welcomed with true Irish hospitality, and warm friendships were soon formed. Writing during the coming winter to Miss Letitia Neill, who afterwards became his wife, Charles said: 'How much have you all done for me! I know I much need softening and changing. Such friendliness and kindness has been very delightful to me. And you, dear, trustful friend, how much I hope for a happy and useful future to you. Not, either, happy, but one which shall best fit you for the progress in the life beyond. God aid you, and may we both become more spiritual and nearer Him in our lives. You can have a noble future. It is to be seen whether you will.

After a lengthy visit to Europe (which included imprisonment in Hungary), Charles next saw Letitia in October 1851. In Emma Brace's words:¹²⁰

[Charles] was not freed from the espionage of the gendarme until he reached Trieste, whence he travelled to Rome, and then back to England, where he was hospitably entertained in Liverpool by his friends, Mr. William Neill and Miss Letitia. 'Mr William Neill here heard of my stress,' he writes on October 17th, to his friend, John Olmsted, 'and like a trump sent me a ten-pound note which gave me a new coat ... and vest ..., and sent me here at once ... I live at the Neills', and board in a delightful coffee-house, and appear like a gentleman once more. All the while with Miss Letitia (no danger), delightful sisterly friendship, and walks and talks.'

The 'sisterly friendship' continued by correspondence for nearly three more years, at a distance of several thousand miles. By 1854, Charles had made up his mind:¹²¹

In June 1854 Brace set sail from New York to tour of [sic] British ragged schools and visit the young woman who had been for him, and for whom he had been, primarily a fantasy spun over three years of correspondence ... After what their daughter, Emma, would later describe as a 'short engagement,' they were married in Belfast on August 21, 1854, by a clergyman who worried that this daughter of the respected Neill family did not know what she was getting into by marrying an obscure Yank.

The young couple, after a trip to the Giant's Causeway, sailed, early in September, for Boston, where they were welcomed by his relatives, Mr. Charles G. Loring's family, and Dr. and Mrs. Asa Gray. Mrs. Gray had, in the meantime, furnished their home for them in New York. Mrs. Brace entered at once into the work of the Children's Aid Society, visiting one of the schools, and teaching. Her sympathy in all her husband's efforts to lessen the suffering in the great, growing city was assured, for she had thrown herself heart and soul into the Ragged School work in Belfast, and came to America with a deep sense of consecration to the work to which his life was already dedicated. The buoyant temperament she brought from the quiet life in the old country was a vast aid to him. Discouragement was not within the possibilities of her comprehension, and in her hopeful and trusting manner of taking

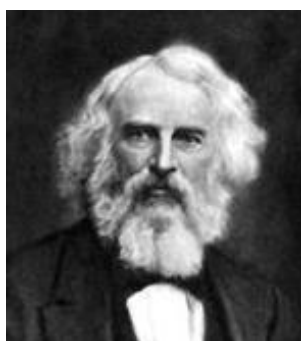
¹²⁰ Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, pp. 145-46

¹²¹ O'Connor, *Orphan Trains*, p. 116

whatever came, lay, in large degree, the secret of his courage during the years to come, as well as of her own. Her readiness to accept at once all the duties and interests in this new, full life, is shown in a very characteristic story. On the day of their arrival in New York, while her trunks were being unpacked, the husband came in, saying, 'Well, dear, I think we had better go now and see the Fourth Ward School.' Perfectly ready, off she went, to the profound astonishment of his friends.

Charles and Letitia had six children, two of whom died in infancy. The survivors were: Charles Loring junior (born 2 June 1855), Emma (born 5 October 1859), Robert (born 3 October 1861) and Letitia (born 19 October 1864).¹²² The Brace family home was at Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, upstream from New York on the river. They also maintained a house or apartment in St Mark's Place, New York, where Charles's work was principally based.¹²³

Letitia's life must have been filled chiefly with raising her family (with plenty of help from Mary Anne, and sometimes from Dora), and with supporting Charles in his work. Her health was not good, especially after childbirth, as William's letters home to Susan reveal. William disclosed that 'Letitia lost 34 lbs. in the first two years she was in the country.' Charles's



Henry Longfellow



Henry Ward Beecher

health was not good either. But the Braces probably had an active social life. Charles knew almost all the New England cultural and abolitionist elite, many of whom he introduced to William. Amongst his friends were Henry Longfellow, Washington Irving, the radical Republican Charles Sumner and the Beecher (Stowe) family. He also saw occasionally, and corresponded with, John Stuart Mill.

As Charles's reputation spread, he was increasingly invited to meetings overseas, especially in Britain. As the family grew up, Letitia was increasingly free to accompany him. It is worth quoting at some length from his letters home during these visits. They shed interesting light on the fraternity of progressive thought on both sides of the Atlantic. In London, the Braces stayed often (perhaps always) with William and Susan in Hampstead, and many of the people they met there were probably friends or acquaintances of theirs:¹²⁴

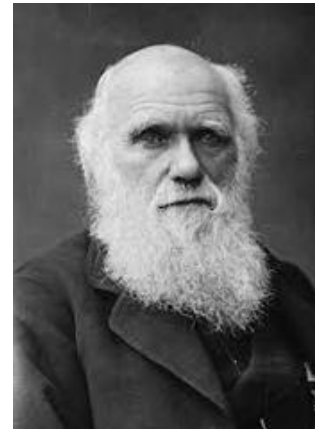
(Summer 1865, without Letitia): He sailed early in May, and went to the beautiful home of his brother-in-law on Hampstead Heath.' The letters list those he has met in England: Sir Charles & Lady Lyell, Russell Scott, Henry Crabb Robinson, Lord Kinnauld, Lord Brougham and Mary Carpenter. Another letter reports the reaction to Lincoln's assassination: 'The mourning for Lincoln was something unheard of. Almost as deep as in America. You heard of the man cast out of the Liverpool Exchange, because he applauded the assassination?'

¹²² www.hughesheritage.org/genealogy_reports/gen_rpt_brace.pdf (no longer available online)

¹²³ Letters of William Neill

¹²⁴ Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, pp. 268-74, 317-22, 377-80

(June/July 1872, with Letitia): I am at Mr. Darwin's with Mrs. Brace for the night ... We had a lively talk on the instincts of dogs.' 'You will like to know what L. and I have been doing ... Among the pleasant events was a most interesting lunch at Miss Cobbe's [Frances Power Cobbe] ... We first met at a sermon of Martineau's [probably James Martineau] ... We saw the Lyells twice. Mr. Lyulph Stanley gave me a splendid dinner at his mother's [the guests including five peers and Dickie Doyle, the illustrator for Punch and Conan Doyle's uncle] ... Our most interesting dinner was at Mr. Forster's [William Forster], Minister of Education ... He picked me up seven years ago, because his wife (Dr. Arnold's daughter) read my books. Very kindly he had asked Tom Hughes [author of Tom Brown's Schooldays], Lefevre [George Shaw-Lefevre], and Mundella [A J Mundella] to meet us ... Among other pleasant places, a dinner at Dean of St. Paul's [Richard Church] and at Mr. Russell Guernsey's [Gurney, in fact: a Conservative MP married to a member of the Kensington Society], and a very pleasant dinner at home [which must surely refer to Belsize Lodge] with 'Spectator' men and Mrs. Dr. Garrett Anderson, etc., etc. ... I go to the Continent and L. to Ireland, after some visiting.



Charles Darwin

(Summer 1882, with Letitia): Mr. and Mrs. Brace made in London their first stopping-place, and were at once swallowed in the vortex of society and philanthropy, as they had been in former visits ... Among the many pleasures they enjoyed, was a dinner with the Hon. John Morley, who had once visited them in their little home at Hastings. 'You know what a brilliant time we had in London. We came at a very exciting time in public affairs, and happened to be thrown in with leading men in Parliament a great deal, so that we were in the centre of English life. Your 'Aunt' [Letitia], being so well up in English and European affairs, could take full part in it all, and we were most warmly received by all.' [Thence they go to the Rhine and Switzerland.] After three weeks in the Engadine, Mrs. Brace made a trip with a brother [William, probably] in Italy, while Mr. Brace repeated his delightful experience of ten years before in Hungary. In September they met in England, and after several visits in rural parts, they returned home in October.

More visits to Europe followed, but these were concerned with Charles's health. He seems to have suffered something close to a breakdown in 1857. He was suffering from Bright's disease. According to his biographer:¹²⁵

It was not until the winter of 1881-82, when he was fifty-six, that he once again became so ill that he had to take time off from his work ... After a summer in London and a visit to a sanitarium at Saint Moritz, he felt fully restored to his normal vigor and fitness. By 1886, ... he needed another summer in Europe. He and Letitia spent June in London and went on to the Alps for three months of hiking and recuperation ... In May 1888, Letitia and Brace went abroad again, to England and Germany, with an extended stay at Marienbad ... [O]nce again this trip failed to restore him.

¹²⁵ O'Connor, *Orphan Trains*, p. 285

On 29 April 1889, just over a year before his death, Charles writes to Letitia: 'I often think of what a happy life we have had together, and how much good you have done me ... I love you more than ever!'¹²⁶ He died in St Moritz, on another recuperative journey, on 11 August 1890, where he was buried three days later.

Letitia has not been found on the 1900 census. In 1910, she was living on her own in Manhattan ward 18, New York. In 1915, she was with her son Robert and his wife at 223 East 17th Street, New York.¹²⁷ She died the following year.¹²⁸

Concluding thoughts

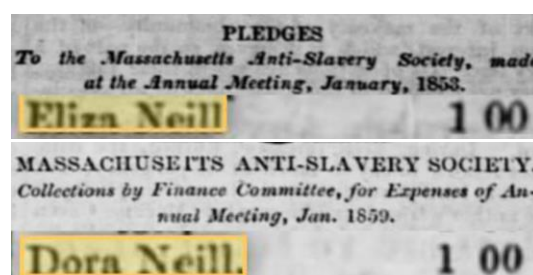
This has been a long piece, yet in many respects it only scratches the surface of this remarkable family. More information may come to light over time. Despite having discovered so much, it is sad that I have photographs only of William and Henry. However, there is a good chance that descendants will exist of John Ross, James, Letitia, Henry, Eliza and Dora. If one or more of those can be traced, perhaps this deficiency – and others – can be overcome.

Robert Neill and Letitia Ireland must have been extraordinary people. Their own circumstances were modest and provincial, yet they produced a family almost all of whom were adventurous, enterprising and – in different ways – successful. All of them – except Robert junior, who died young, and Mary Anne, who did not marry – will have left estates on their deaths beyond the imaginings of their parents.

But that would not have mattered greatly to Robert and Letitia. More importantly, they inculcated in their children a strong sense of family and of social conscience.

It will already be clear from this piece that most, perhaps all, of the Neill siblings stayed in touch with other and were part of each other's lives, despite the thousands of miles that often separated them, and despite the fact that – as children in Belfast – they were of very different ages. There is much more evidence of continued contact between them than is reported here. All of them except Dora chose names for their own children that were also the names of their siblings or parents.

Their commitment to social reform never wavered. Letitia, through her husband, devoted her life to it, and it is probable that, in their company, Mary Anne did too. William, together with Susan, continued to be involved throughout his adult life. So, it would appear, did John Ross, and probably James as well,

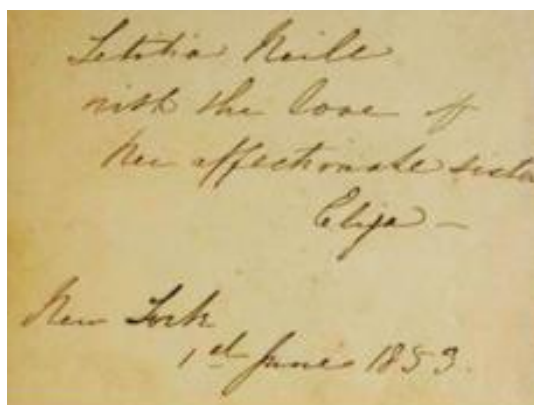


¹²⁶ Brace, *Life of Charles Loring Brace*, p. 462

¹²⁷ New York State Census, 1915

¹²⁸ New York, Extracted Death Index, 1862-1948

together with his wife Kate. Henry was nearly expelled from Louisiana in 1859 for his abolitionist views. Eliza and Dora both attended meetings of the Anti-Slavery Society in Boston and gave money to the cause. Dora was a signatory to the Kensington Petition and, late in life, was on the executive committee of the Pioneer Kindergarten in San Francisco.¹²⁹



ABOLITIONIST FAMILY'S COPY OF AN ANTHOLOGY
CONTAINING FREDERICK DOUGLASS'S
ONLY WORK OF FICTION
Autographs for Freedom

Perhaps nothing better captures this spirit than the flyleaf of a copy of Frederick Douglass's book, *The Heroic Slave*, on which Eliza has written: 'Letitia Neill, with the love of her affectionate sister Eliza, New York, 1st June 1859.'

All the Neill children would have been in Belfast when Frederick Douglass visited their family, and spoke at meetings, in 1846 and 1847. Aged between 15 and 34, it is likely that they all met him.

Jim Powell, 14 March 2022

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Janet Abernethy, of Ulster Ancestree, for helping to disentangle the Irish roots and to unearth the Irish source material, and to Professor Nicholas Joukovsky, Penn State University, whose research on Susan Abbott pointed me in other fruitful Neill directions.

A summary of the timelines of Robert and Letitia's children now follows:

1812	John Ross	Belfast	Birth
1817	John Ross	Belfast	Pupil at RBAI (to 1825)
1841 Sep 20	John Ross	Belfast	Marriage to Margaret Montgomery
1842	John Ross	Belfast	Birth of daughter, Ann Montgomery
1843	John Ross	Belfast	Living at 7 College Street South
1846 Feb 1	John Ross	Belfast	Birth of daughter, Letitia Montgomery
1846 Sep 26	John Ross	Belfast	Letter from William Garrison
1854 Jul 1	John Ross	Belfast	Birth of daughter, Harriet Martineau
1860	John Ross	Hollywood	Moves to 43 Church St

¹²⁹ *San Francisco Call*, 22 April 1913

1862 Feb 17	John Ross	Belfast	Elected as assessor of St George's Ward, Belfast
1863 Dec 19	John Ross	Belfast	Dissolution of partnership with James Neill
1864 Feb 22	John Ross	Belfast	Continues his father's business as sole trader
1881 Nov 9	John Ross	Belfast	Retirement and closure of business
1891 Dec 5	John Ross	Newtownards	Death of daughter, Ann Montgomery
1891 Dec 9	John Ross	Newtownards	Death
1903 May 4	John Ross	Comber, NI	Death of wife, Margaret Montgomery
1817	Robert jr	Belfast	Birth
1849 Jul 2	Robert jr	Naples	Death
1818 Jun 23	Mary Anne	Belfast	Birth
1867 Jun 22	Mary Anne	Hastings-on-Hudson	Death
1819 Nov 16	James	Belfast	Birth
1846 Dec 15	James	Inver, co, Donegal	Marriage to Catherine Larmour
1847	James	Hollywood	Moves to 107 High St
1853	James	Northern Ireland	Birth of daughter, Letitia Margaret
1857	James	Northern Ireland	Birth of son, Sharman Dermot
1863 Dec 19	James	Belfast	Dissolution of partnership with John Ross Neill
1864 Feb 22	James	Belfast	Establishment of James Neill & Co
1865 Jan 20	James	Northern Ireland	Birth of daughter, Florence Nightingale
1872	James	Northern Ireland	Birth of daughter, Catherine Larmour
1878	James	Hollywood	Moves to Oranmore, Station Road, Craigavad
1878 Mar 31	James	Northern Ireland	Death of daughter, Florence Nightingale
1884 May 28	James	Belfast	Retires from business, succeeded by Sharman
1885 Apr 24	James	Hollywood, NI	Death of wife, Catherine Anne Larmour
1902 Apr 22	James	Hollywood, NI	Death
1822	Letitia	Belfast	Birth
1850 Apr	Letitia	Belfast	Meets Charles Loring Brace, visiting her father
1854 Aug 21	Letitia	Belfast	Marriage to Charles Loring Brace
1854 Sep	Letitia	Boston	Arrives with Charles Loring
1855	Letitia	Westchester, NY	Birth of son, Charles Loring Brace jr
1856 May	Letitia	Northern Ireland	Returns with Charles Loring to visit her family
1860	Letitia	Westchester, NY	Birth of daughter, Emma Brace
1862	Letitia	Westchester, NY	Birth of son, Robert Neill Brace
1865	Letitia	Westchester, NY	Birth of daughter, Letitia Brace
1867 Jan	Letitia	San Francisco	Staying with Eliza & Robert
1870	Letitia	Westchester, NY	Living with family
1872 Jun	Letitia	Downe, Kent	Staying with Charles Darwin, with Charles Loring
1880	Letitia	Westchester, NY	Living with family
1882 Aug	Letitia	Italy	Holiday with William
1886 Jun	Letitia	London	With Charles Loring, staying with William & Susan?
1890 Aug 11	Letitia	Switzerland	Death of husband, Charles Loring Brace
1893 Feb 8	Letitia	New Orleans	Staying with Henry
1905	Letitia	Westchester, NY	Living with family
1907	Letitia	W 26th St, New York	Residence
1916 Apr 8	Letitia	New York	Death

1824 Mar 12	William	Belfast	Birth
1832	William	Belfast	Pupil at RBAI (to 1836)
1846	William	Belfast	Established in business as a corn merchant
1848 Nov	William	Belfast	In court for non-fulfilment of a charter party
1850 Aug 19	William	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1850 Sep 2	William	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1851 Jul	William	Richmond-on-Thames	Sharing flat with E L Godkin
1851 Oct 17	William	Liverpool	With Letitia and Charles Loring Brace
1851 Dec 12	William	London	Bankruptcy of corn business
1854 Jul	William	London	Discharged from bankruptcy
1854 Nov 13	William	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1854 Nov 27	William	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1855 Nov 1	William	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1855 Nov 15	William	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1858 Jul	William	New York	Leaves America for Europe
1858 Sep 30	William	London	Meets future wife, Susan Mary Abbott
1858 Oct 9	William	London	Engaged to Susan Mary Abbott
1858 Oct 12	William	Belfast & Holywood	Visiting family with Susan Mary Abbott
1858 Nov 22	William	London	Marriage to Susan Mary Abbott
1858 Dec	William	New York	Arrival with Susan
1859 Jul	William	Holywood, NI	Returns with Susan, staying with James & Kate
1859 Oct 1	William	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1859 Oct 15	William	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1859 Nov 4	William	Holywood, NI	Birth of son, Harold Henry
1860 Feb 15	William	New York	Departure
1860 Feb 27	William	Holywood, NI	Arrival
1860 Oct 13	William	St Helena Island, SC	Birth of adopted daughter, Charlotte Edings
1861 Apr 7	William	Preston, Lancashire	Family living in Avenham Tower
1861 Sep 9	William	Liverpool	WMN discusses Lowber with Alexander Schultz
1861 Sep 23	William	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1861 Oct 7	William	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1863 Aug	William	England	Named as director of three new banks (to 03/64)
1865 May	William	London, Hampstead	Charles Loring Brace a guest
1865 Oct 9	William	<i>SS China</i>	Returning to New York
1865 Dec 24	William	New Orleans	Staying with Henry
1866 Sep	William	New York	Probable return to US with Susan
1867 May	William	London	Return to England with Susan
1867 May	William		Adoption of Charlotte Augusta Edings
1870	William	London	Elizabeth Garrett's c'ttee, London School Board
1871 Apr 2	William	London, Hampstead	Family living in Belsize Lodge
1872	William	London	Gen. C'ttee, Medical Education of Women
1876	William	Liverpool	Address at 12 Gambier Terrace, Hope St
1876 May 19	William	San Francisco	Will witnessed by C Delany, R Sherwood as exec.
1881 Apr 3	William	London, Marylebone	Family living at Berkeley Mansions, Seymour St
1891 Apr 5	William	London, Marylebone	Family living at Berkeley Mansions, Seymour St
1901 Mar 31	William	Fowey, Cornwall	On holiday with Susan
1905	William	London, Marylebone	Family living at Berkeley Mansions, Seymour St
1911 Apr 2	William	London, Kensington	Living with Susan at 11a Palace Gardens Mansions
1913 Mar 18	William	London	Death

1826 Nov 24	Eliza	Belfast	Birth
1849	Eliza	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1851	Eliza	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1853 Feb 11	Eliza	Boston	Attends meeting of Anti-Slavery Society
1853 Jun 1	Eliza	New York	Signs copy of Frederick Douglass's book for Letitia
1855 Jan 31	Eliza	Mobile, Alabama	Marriage to Robert Sherwood
1856 Feb 9	Eliza	San Francisco	Birth of son, William Robert Sherwood
1857	Eliza	San Francisco	Birth of daughter, Dora Sherwood
1859 Sep 10	Eliza	San Francisco	Birth of son, Henry Hamilton Sherwood
1859 Oct 18	Eliza	New York	Staying with William
1859 Nov	Eliza	Mobile, Alabama	Staying with Henry
1860	Eliza	San Francisco	Living with family
1863 Sep	Eliza	Northern Ireland	With Dora and Moncure Daniel Conway
1865 Oct 2	Eliza	San Francisco	Birth of son, Robert Lincoln Sherwood
1870	Eliza	San Francisco	Living with family
1880	Eliza	San Francisco	Living with family
1890	Eliza	San Francisco	Living with family
1893 Mar 11	Eliza	San Francisco	Death of husband, Robert Sherwood
1893 Dec 25	Eliza	San Francisco	Forms Sherwood Estate Co
1894 Oct 24	Eliza	San Francisco	Directors of company charged with conspiracy
1900	Eliza	San Francisco	Living with family
1903 Nov 22	Eliza	San Francisco	Death of son, Robert Lincoln Sherwood
1910	Eliza	San Francisco	Living with family
1912 May 30	Eliza	San Francisco	Death
1828 Oct 23	Henry	Belfast	Birth
1847 Nov 16	Henry	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1847 Nov 30	Henry	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1847 Dec 13	Henry	New Orleans	Staying at Planters' Hotel
1849 Dec	Henry	Belfast	Partnership with father, selling corn (to 08/51)
1854 Jul 25	Henry	Highland Grove, NY	Marriage to Kate Lowber (Schultz)
1855 Nov 5	Henry	Mobile, Alabama	Birth of son, William Lowber Neill
1857 Apr 13	Henry	Mobile, Alabama	Birth of son, James Wilson Neill
1858 Feb 7	Henry	Mobile, Alabama	Visit of Barbara Bodichon
1859 Jun 12	Henry	Mobile, Alabama	Death of wife, Kate Lowber (Schultz)
1859 Jul	Henry	Liverpool	Returns to England with William and Susan
1859 Oct 1	Henry	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1859 Oct 15	Henry	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1861	Henry		Birth of daughter 'Jane', mother unknown?
1861 Jul 23	Henry	Liverpool	Lowber, father-in-law, as Confederate courier
1861 Aug	Henry	Quebec	Lowber switches ships and arrives at Fishkill
1861 Aug 23	Henry	Crestline, Ohio	Lowber arrested
1861 Aug 24	Henry	Peekskill, New York	M L Schultz exposes Lowber to W H Seward
1861 Oct 20	Henry	New York	Lowber attempts to escape from Fort Lafayette
1862 Jan 23	Henry	Liverpool	Lowber arrives from New York
1862 Apr 30	Henry	Liverpool	<i>SS Cumbria</i> leaves port, HMM and Lowber aboard
1862 May 26	Henry	Charleston, SC	<i>USS Huron</i> arrests <i>SS Cumbria</i> and its passengers
1862 Jun 12	Henry	New York	Departure for Queenstown, Ireland
1862 Jun 25	Henry	Queenstown	Arrival from New York
1863	Henry		Birth of daughter 'Agnes', mother unknown?

1863	Henry	Liverpool	Returns to England with Mary Lowber Schultz
1863 Jun 19	Henry	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1863 Jul 3	Henry	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1863 Jul 29	Henry	New York	Marriage to Mary Lowber Schultz
1864 Apr	Henry	Matlock, Derbyshire	Birth of son, (Edward) Henry Harmon Neill
1865 Jul	Henry	England	Birth of son, Hamilton Neill
1865 Sep 4	Henry	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1865 Sep 18	Henry	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1865 Oct 1	Henry	Fishkill, NY	Death of mother-in-law, Margaret Schultz
1865 Oct 22	Henry	Fishkill, NY	Death of son, Hamilton Neill
1867 Apr 30	Henry	Philadelphia	Death of father-in-law, Alexander Schultz
1878 Sep 9	Henry	Liverpool	Departure for New York
1878 Sep 23	Henry	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1891	Henry	New Orleans	Living with family at 2901 Chestnut St
1896 Jun	Henry	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1900	Henry	New Orleans	Living with family at 2901 Chestnut St
1901 Apr 7	Henry	New Orleans	Death of wife, Mary Lowber Schultz
1906 Sep 12	Henry	New Orleans	Death
1831 Dec	Dora	Belfast	Birth
1857	Dora	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1858 Aug	Dora	Vermont	With Letitia and Charles Loring Brace
1859 Feb 11	Dora	Boston	Attends meeting of Anti-Slavery Society
1859 Oct 18	Dora	New York	Staying with William
1859 Oct 22	Dora	Mobile, Alabama	Staying with Henry
1861 Aug 16	Dora	Boston	Attends meeting of Anti-Slavery Society
1862 Feb 14	Dora	Boston	Attends meeting of Anti-Slavery Society
1862 Jun 12	Dora	New York	Departure for Queenstown, Ireland
1862 Jun 25	Dora	Queenstown	Arrival from New York
1863 Sep	Dora	Northern Ireland	Visited by Moncure Daniel Conway
1865 Mar 17	Dora	London, Hampstead	With William & Susan
1865 Oct 17	Dora	Paris	With Susan and Harold (to late Jan 1866 at least)
1866 Jun 7	Dora	London	Signatory to Kensington Petition
1870	Dora	New York	Arrival from Liverpool
1870 Jul 28	Dora	Forest Hill, California	Marriage to Charles McCarthy Delany
1872	Dora	San Francisco	Birth of daughter, Marian Delany
1874	Dora	San Francisco	Birth of son, Charles H Delany
1880	Dora	San Francisco	Living with family
1881 May 26	Dora	San Francisco	Death of husband, Charles McCarthy Delany
1890	Dora	San Francisco	Living with family
1900	Dora	San Francisco	Living with family
1907 Apr 24	Dora	New York	Departure for London
1907 May 8	Dora	London	Arrival from New York
1910	Dora	San Francisco	Living with family
1920	Dora	San Francisco	Living with family
1921 Aug 28	Dora	San Francisco	Death