

*ANDREW MAGENNIS (1849-
1918)*
BY SALLY CUNNINGHAM

Andrew Magennis was born 1849 the son of Nathaniel and Elizabeth Magennis (nee Lindsay). He had one brother called Alexander and a sister Rebecca. His father Nathaniel was employed in the Post office and in 1859 was appointed sub-postmaster in Mountjoy near Omagh in Co. Tyrone.

In 1849, the year Andrew was born, Ireland was in the grip of famine, brought about by blight affecting the potato crop which the majority of the people relied upon. As a direct consequence of the famine, Ireland's population fell from almost 8.4 million in 1844 to 6.6 million by 1851. About one million people died and perhaps two million more eventually emigrated from the country, mostly to Canada and America.

When Andrew was sixteen he joined the Post Office as a letter carrier in the Omagh area, and shortly thereafter moved to work in Belfast as a sorting clerk. Around this time, he met his wife Sarah Gilliland and they married in Sinclair Seamans Church in 1869. They lived in Earl Street, an area known as Sailortown which was on the waterfront of the River Lagan (then used as a sewer). Over 5,000 people packed into small cobblestoned streets of terraced houses between the river and York Street. Many of the men worked in the docks or went to sea.¹ The women looked after large families and worked in the many linen mills. Due to redevelopment and new roads etc. not much of this area remains; today the church is still there and is now a listed building.

During that time many changes took place in Ireland, with a rural population moving to live in cities where work was available. Belfast grew at a rate faster than any town in the British Isles and was made a city in 1888. New institutions were being formed and factories, such as the Belfast Ropeworks, opened. However, the linen industry dominated and from the 19th century many large mills were set up in the city. It must have been a very different experience for Andrew having moved from a rural area to what would have been a large city.

Andrew and Sarah went on to have four children, three girls and one boy. The eldest Eleanor Jane was born in 1871, and Emily in 1873. Emily unfortunately died age thirty-seven from Pulmonary tuberculosis, leaving two children. Nathaniel Magennis was born in 1874. He emigrated to America and married Ella Gillette. Nathaniel died there in 1928 of a cerebral haemorrhage. The fourth child was Elizabeth Lindsay who was born 1884. She worked for the Post Office as a clerk. They probably went to school in Sailortown; St Joseph's School stood on Earl Street where they lived, however as they were Presbyterians, they may have

¹ Past", *Sailortown Regeneration*. [Link](#).

attended Mariners Public Elementary School which was in Nelson Street. Both of these are now gone due to redevelopment.

Between 1880 and 1901 the Magennis Family moved to live at 5 Camden Street, this area was quite removed from the docklands where they had previously lived. Andrew had been promoted several times from letter carrier to clerk, to inspector of letter Carriers, ending up as superintendent. This probably allowed the family to move to a part of the city that was not so crowded and away from the river, where poor housing and disease was rife among the inhabitants.

Andrew's brother Alexander also worked in the Post Office in Belfast as a letter carrier, it appears that his wife and six children continued to live in Co. Tyrone. Alexander died age forty in 1894. His daughter Elizabeth Ellen Magennis, born in 1884, also worked for the Post Office in Omagh as a rural letter carrier.

Andrew Magennis died in 1918 from myocardial degeneration (heart disease). He was seventy-one years of age and had retired from the Post Office in 1901 due to ill health. He was granted a pension of £130 a year on retirement age fifty-four. When he died he left £877.1.10 in his will.

The Magennis Family had an ongoing connection with the Post Office from the time Nathaniel was appointed in the 1840s right through to his grandchildren in the 1900s. This was a time of great change in Ireland and also in the Post Office.

Fact Sheet: Andrew Magennis

Pensioner Details
<i>Pensioner name:</i> Andrew Magennis
<i>Person ID:</i> IR1009
<i>Your name:</i> Sally Cunningham
<i>U3A group:</i> Belfast
Part One: Birth and Family
1: When and where was your pensioner born?
Andrew Magennis was born in 1849 near to Omagh in the county of Tyrone.
2: Who were your pensioners' parents? Record any details you can find out about them here (e.g. occupation, religious affiliation, whether they could read or write)
Andrew Magennis's father was Nathaniel Magennis and he was born in 1825. He died on the 1st of October 1887 of Chronic Bronchitis. At the time of his death, he was living at Gortnacreagh a townland close to the town of Omagh in Co Tyrone. Nathaniel Magennis's wife was Elizabeth Lindsay she was born in 1828 and died in 1904 from Hemiplegia Exhaustion. Nathaniel Magennis was a Sub Postmaster appointed on the 29th of October 1859 to Mountjoy in the County of Tyrone. On his death certificate he is listed as Postmaster. Although I have no information on his literacy, as a Postmaster he would have had to be able to read and write. Although I have no information on his religion Nathaniel Magennis's son Andrew Magennis was married in a Presbyterian church and on the Irish Census same church is given.
3: Did your pensioner have any siblings? What were their names, and how old were they in relation to your pensioner? Use this space to record anything else you have found out about them (e.g. occupation)
I found two siblings for Andrew Magennis, Alexander Magennis and Rebecca Magennis . <ul style="list-style-type: none">Alexander Magennis Born 1855 near Omagh he died age 39 in 1894

In 1878 he was appointed to the Post Office as a letter Carrier working in Belfast. In 1984 he is listed as a Postman.

His married Mary Magennis (nee Cahoon) in 1878 in Omagh, and they had six children:

1. Eleanor Jane Magennis born 1871
 2. William Magennis born 1879 at Lislemnaghan Co Tyrone
 3. Andrew Magennis born 1881 lived in Tattracinaghty Mountjoy Forest West, Co Tyrone. Worked as an agricultural labourer in 1911.
 4. Elizabeth Ellen Magennis born 1884 she worked for the Post Office as a Rural Letter Carrier in Omagh.
 5. Nathaniel Magennis born 1888 was a L Corporal in the Royal Enniskillen Fusiliers, Labour Corps
 6. Emily Magennis born 1891
- **Rebecca Magennis**

Was the sister of Andrew Magennis she was born in 1867 and died in 1904.

Part Two: Marriage and children

1: Did your pensioner marry? What was their spouse's name, and when and where did they marry them? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about their spouse (e.g. when/where they were born, their occupation)

Andrew Magennis married **Sarah Jane Gilliland** on the 14th of March 1869 in Sinclair Seamans Presbyterian Church Belfast. The church had been built shortly before that in 1857 and designed by the famous architect Charles Lanyon.

Andrew Magennis was 20 years of age and Sarah Gilliland was 18 when they married.

The family are listed as being Presbyterian. I could find no record of either them signing the Ulster Covenant in 1912. This event was against Home Rule in Ireland.

Sarah Gilliland's father was Thomas Gilliland and his occupation was shopkeeper from Co Down. He is listed as living with the family in the 1901 census. He was born in 1820 and died in 1903

2: Did your pensioner have any children? What were their names, and when they were born? Use this space to record any extra details you can find out about them (e.g. occupation, where they lived later in life)

Andrew Magennis is listed as having four children

Eleanor Jane Magennis Born 22nd of August 1871. She does not appear to have worked.

Emily McCool Magennis was born in 1873 and died on the 21st June 1910 age 37 of Pulmonary TB. She married Baptist William Gamble on the 21st June 1892. Baptist William Gamble was born in Enniskillen on the 5th February 1865 to John Gamble and Anne Jane Nixon. He died on the 4th October 1928 of a Cerebral Haemorrhage. He is listed as a retired Railway Official and left £732.8.7. in his will. Baptist Gamble was a member of the Royal Engineers. He also belonged to The Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Ireland having joined in October 1889.

Nathaniel Magennis born 1874, at that time the family lived at 29 Earl Street. On the 29th July 1892 he sailed to New York on the Ethiopia. He was married on the 20th of July 1904 in Taunton, Bristol, Massachusetts to Ella M Gillette age 36 born 1868. Nathaniel Magennis worked as a salesman in America. He died on 4th October 1928 of a Cerebral Haemorrhage.

Elizabeth Ellen Lindsay Magennis born 1884. She worked for the Post Office and in 1899 she was appointed learner in Belfast. In the 1911 Census she is working as a Post Office Clerk and living at 24 College Gardens.

Part Three: Work

1: What occupation was your pensioner recorded as doing in census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

1866 Andrew Magennis is listed as a Letter Carrier in Omagh.

1869 Andrew Magennis is listed as a Sorting Clerk with the Post Office in Belfast.

1874 Andrew Magennis is listed as a Clerk and living at 29 Earl Street.

1877 Andrew Magennis is listed as Inspector of Letter Carriers still living at 29 Earl Street.

1880 Andrew Magennis is listed as a clerk in the GPO and still living at 29 Earl Street.

1901 Andrew Magennis is listed as a Superintendent in the GPO and living at 5 Camden Street.

1911 Andrew Magennis is retired and living at 24 College Gardens. Belfast

1918 The year Andrew Magennis died his address is given as 5 Camden Street.

2: What occupations were people living with your pensioner (e.g. spouse, children, boarders) doing in the census years? Please make sure to state clearly which year you are referring to

Eleanor Jane Magennis does not appear to have worked.

Elizabeth Ellen Lindsay Magennis worked for the Post Office and in 1899 she was appointed learner in Belfast. In the 1911 Census she is working as a Post Office Clerk and living at 24 College Gardens.

Nathaniel Magennis emigrated to America in 1892 and worked there as a salesman.

Emily McCool Magennis I could find no record of work. Nothing recorded on her marriage certificate.

In the 1911 Census the Magennis Family are living at 24 College Gardens with their son-in-law Baptist William Gamble and his children. His wife Emily Gamble had died the previous year.

Part Four: Anything Else

Please use this space to record anything else you have found out about your pensioner

This is the house at 5 Camden Street where the Magennis family lived for some years. At that time, it would have been a middle-class area. In the present day the houses are mostly divided into student accommodation as it is a short distance from Queen's University.



Above: 5 Camden Street, Belfast. Source: Google Street View.

On Andrews Magennis's death certificate he is listed as living at 5 Camden Street although in the 1911 Census his address is 24 College Gardens.

In the 1911 census the two families are living at 24 College Gardens.

- Baptist William Gamble, his son William Gamble age 17 and his daughter Alice Maud Gamble age 14.
- Andrew Magennis and his wife Sarah Jane Magennis, his daughters Eleanor Jane Magennis and Elizabeth Lindsay Magennis.
- They also had a domestic servant called Sarah McKendry.

In 1911 this would have been a grand house in a suburb of Belfast, close to Queens University and Methodist College. Now it is used mostly by business and the university as offices etc.



Above: 24 College Gardens. Source: Google Street View.

When Andrew Magennis died, he left £877.1.10 in his will.

Andrew Magennis was awarded a pension of £130.

In 1849 the year Andrew Magennis was born the potato crop failed once again in Ireland and many died from cholera.

When Andrew Magennis worked in Belfast in 1869 there were 20 Livery and Posting Establishments three listed as Livery only.

Please use this space to record the sources you have used

Andrew Magennis

- 1866 Appointment to Post Office: British Postal Museum and Archive; London, England; Post Office: Staff nomination and appointment, 1831-1969; Series Number: POST 58; Reference: 85
- Andrew Magennis 1918 death:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1918/05181/4430602.pdf
- Andrew Magennis and Sarah Jane Gilliland Marriage:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1869/11407/8189038
- Andrew Magennis Census 1911 and 1901:
http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Antrim/Windsor_Ward/Camden_Street/974978/ AND
http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Antrim/Windsor_Ward/College_Gardens/168515/

Nathaniel Magennis (father)

- Nathaniel Magennis 1887 death
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1887/06197/4772202.pdf
- Nathaniel Magennis Sen. 1825 appointment to Post Office: British Postal Museum and Archive; London, England; Post Office: Staff nomination and appointment, 1831-1969; Series Number: POST 58; Reference: 81

Elizabeth Magennis (mother)

- 1904 death:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1904/05611/4577937.pdf

Rebecca Magennis (sister)

- 1867 birth:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1867/03485/2281277.pdf
- 1904 death:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1904/05611/4577937.pdf

Eleanor Jane Magennis (daughter)

- 1871 birth:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1882/02794/2025588.pdf

Nathaniel Magennis (son)

- 1874 death:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1874/03164/2160634.pdf
- Marriage: "Massachusetts Marriages, 1695-1910, 1921-1924", database, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FHLR-H9V : 28 July 2021>), Nathaniel Maginnis, 1904.

Baptist William Gamble (son-in-law)

- Baptist William Gamble 1892 marriage to Emily McCool Magennis:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/marriage_returns/marriages_1892/10631/5873197.pdf
- 1911 Census:
http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Antrim/Windsor_Ward/College_Gardens/168515/
- Marriage notice:
https://www.ancestry.co.uk/imageviewer/collections/2193/images/32509_260487_-03389?treeid=&personid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=TDd10872&_phstart=successSource&pld=136308576
- Baptist William Gamble Western Front Association; London, England; WWI Pension Record Cards and Ledgers; Reference: 006/0017/FOR-GAP
- The Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Ireland; Dublin, Ireland; Collection: Freemasons of Ireland Membership Registers; Volume Number: Volume V

Emily Gamble (daughter)

- 1910 death:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1910/05430/4518255.pdf

Sarah Jane Magennis (wife)

- Death Notice Belfast Newsletter 25th March 1903:
http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Antrim/Windsor_Ward/Camden_Street/974978/

Alexander Magennis (brother)

- 1894 death:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1894/05967/4696091.pdf

Mary Magennis (sister-in-law, wife of Alexander Magennis)

- 1901 census
[http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Tyrone/Mountjoy Forest West/Tattraconaghty/1746370/](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Tyrone/Mountjoy_Forest_West/Tattraconaghty/1746370/)

William Magennis (nephew, son of Alexander Magennis)

- 1879 birth:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1879/02907/2065255.pdf

Andrew Magennis (nephew, son of Alexander Magennis)

- 1882 birth:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1882/02794/2025588.pdf
- 1901 census:
[http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Tyrone/Mountjoy Forest West/Tattraconaghty/1746370/](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Tyrone/Mountjoy_Forest_West/Tattraconaghty/1746370/)

Elizabeth Ellen Magennis (niece, daughter of Alexander Magennis)

- 1884 birth:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1884/02680/1987378.pdf
- 1901 Post Office appointment: British Postal Museum and Archive; London, England; Post Office: Staff nomination and appointment, 1831-1969; Series Number: POST 58; Reference: 98

Nathaniel Magennis nephew, son of Alexander Magennis)

- Pension Card: Western Front Association; London, England; WWI Pension Record Cards and Ledgers; Reference: 148/0555/MAG-MAH

Emily Magennis (niece, daughter of Alexander Magennis)

- 1892 birth:
https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/birth_returns/births_1892/02361/1882085.pdf

Emma Magennis (niece, daughter of Alexander Magennis)

- 1901 census:
[http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Tyrone/Mountjoy Forest West/Tattraconaghty/1746370/https://www.ancestry.co.uk/discoveryui-content/view/15095884:70564?tid=&pid=&queryId=18ac878837c90929e51c8c86d23fd00d&phsrc=TDd10868&phstart=successSource](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Tyrone/Mountjoy_Forest_West/Tattraconaghty/1746370/https://www.ancestry.co.uk/discoveryui-content/view/15095884:70564?tid=&pid=&queryId=18ac878837c90929e51c8c86d23fd00d&phsrc=TDd10868&phstart=successSource)

SOURCES USED

- National Archives of Ireland census
- Irish genealogy.ie

- www.lennoxwylie.co.uk
- Ancestry.com
- Family Search
- PRONI Wills calendar
- Linen Hall Library Periodicals and newspapers
- Western Front Association
- The Grand Lodge of Ireland
- Belfast Newsletter