

In researching into the life and times of this John McCance things are somewhat complicated by the fact that there were for three generations of McCances named John, none of whom seems to have used any other name.

"John 1" was born in 1711 and died in 1786, "John 2" was born in 1744 and died in 1811, "John 3" (to die John McCance M.P., my great-great-great grandfather) was born in 1772 and died in 1835.

Thus from 1772 until 1786 all three were alive though of course "John 3" could not have been in business!

However "John 1" was actively engaged in the linen trade and also established himself pretty firmly both in the Dunmurry area and also in County Down at Clifden, later to be known as Knocknagoney; now, in 1981, an hotel, in the neighbourhood of Holywood.

He took several leases from the Donegal estate and was certainly a freeholder in Co. Down and, almost certainly, a voter in Belfast as he took the chair at a meeting of voters in the Donegall Arms in Belfast on May 10th 1776.

His freehold property, including Clifden, was left to his eldest son David on his death.

His daughter Mary married the Rev. James Stoupe; of whom I can trace practically nothing except that he was a Presbyterian Minister in Dunmurry, that he probably also had interests in the Linen trade and that he lived at Glenville, a house now pulled down, which was on the right hand side of the road leading from Suffolk village to the Glen Road.

An impression of a stamp in a book of McCance linen Stamps, now in the Belfast Public Records Office, is clearly marked "James Stoupe" and whether this stamp referred to the "Rev. James Stoupe" I just cannot be sure. However, I do know that his family did bleach linen at Glenville at this time.

Their family, (i.e. that of Mary, (née McCance), and the Rev. James Stoupe): consisted of one son, christened John McCance Stoupe and three daughters, one of whom died in infancy, neither of the other two marrying.

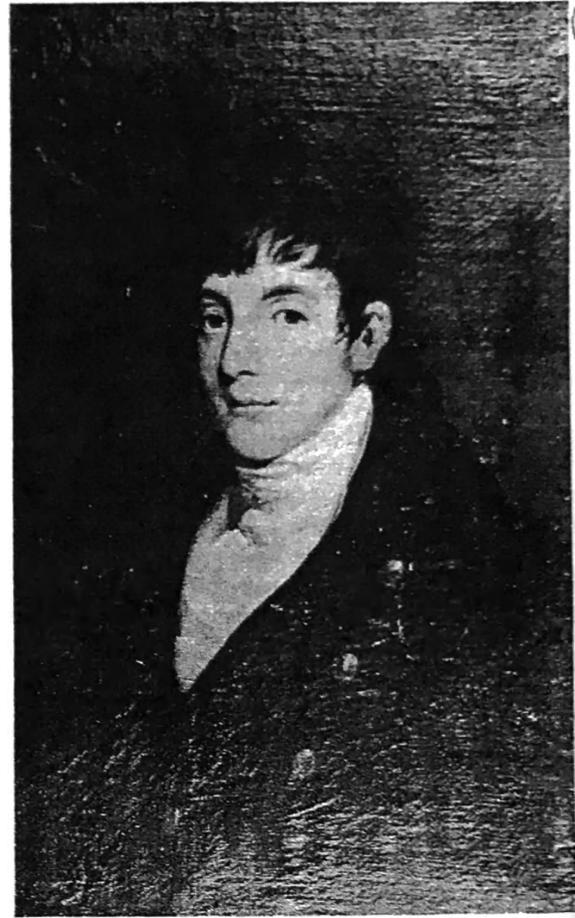
John McCance Stoupe married his first cousin; also named Mary, a sister of our "John 3 M.P." and they had only one daughter who died in infancy and no other children.

"John 2" and his brother William, both younger sons of "John 1",

"ROOTS"

By
R. F. McCANCE

The History of an Outstanding Ulster Family



*John Russell of Newforge
Precise date of portrait is not known*

were evidently left reasonably well off by their father on his death and were apparently well able to look after themselves.

William continued with his father's business in the Linen trade at Ballycullo where his house, Suffolk House, was situated, (and near where "The Twinbrook Housing estate is now sited).

His brother John 2, however, seems to have had no interests in William's affairs. We know that he lived nearby at Farmhill, situated on Blacks Road, and I have not been able to make out how he made his living. Quite possibly he had some private means of his own and farmed his own land at Farmhill.

There is a record of a renewal of a lease of 1753 which refers to "Farm Lands at Dunmurry". At the same date there is also a renewal of a lease of 33 acres of farm lands to a John Charley of Ballynaffinaghy (i.e. Finaghy). This John Charley's daughter Jane, (b. 1744 d. 1818) was to marry "John 2". They had just two children, a boy named John; (whom I have referred to as "John 3" and who was to die John McCance M.P. born, as mentioned, in 1772) and a girl, Mary, (b. 1778 d. 1854) who as mentioned, was to

marry John McCance Stoupe, her first cousin who lived at Glenville.

Mary married John McCance Stoupe in 1799 when both of them were 21 years old.

In that same year her brother John, (John 3) then aged 27, married Maria Finlay, who was the daughter of a Linen Draper of Carrickfergus named William whose father was another William Finlay M.D. a doctor who practised at Carrickfergus. John and Maria lived at Roselands on the Falls road; perhaps half a mile nearer Belfast than Upper Falls Church and where the Falls Road Tram used to run to within living memory — at that time a part of the countryside.

The cousins formed a partnership, McCance and Stoupe and there are frequent references to them in the records of The Linen Board and other publications.

It must be assumed that John before this, his first marriage, had, since he left school, been associated with his Uncle William at Ballycullo. Quite probably he met Maria's father at a sale of brown (unbleached) linen at Carrickfergus. When the cousins formed their own partnership in 1799 they presumably bleached their own

th at the Stoupe Bleachgreen at Glenville but, almost certainly, John McCance's uncle William would also have bleached some for them at this bleachgreen at Suffolk (Ballycullo).

This bleachgreen (or linen bleaching factory) consisted of works and beetling mills at a site very near where Kilwee* bleaching works used to stand until 1960 now; (as mentioned in the case of Suffolk house), where Twinbrook housing estate stands; then in the country. (Incidentally there appear to have been two quite insignificant small waterfalls in the stream hereabouts which may have given the name, "The Falls" to the whole district).

William also seems to have had lapping rooms, for examining bleached linen cloth and folding and stamping it, in Suffolk House itself.

An account book of this William McCance, now in the Belfast Public Record Office, shows that, presumably through his agent, or through linen drapers, he bought webs of many different classes and qualities of linen from as far afield as Cookstown, Money more, Stewartstown, Dungannon, Magherafelt, Maghera and Ahoghill

*Note: Kilwee means either "The yellow Church" or "The Church with the burying place" being, like the majority of names of Irish townlands, derived from the Gaelic or Irish language. There certainly was a burial ground there in olden times as well as a church and, when making a "Mill Pond" or as they were more commonly known, a dam or reservoir for the linen bleaching works, a holy water font from this old church was dug up.

For a long time this font remained at Suffolk House but, when my great aunt moved in 1926-1927, it was presented to the Belfast Museum by my father.

Later, with the permission of the Museum and Belfast Corporation, Mr. William Magee of Lynda Cottage, Upper Dunmurry Lane, then Manager of Kilwee Bleachworks; suggested that the font might more fittingly be returned to a church in the diocese of Derriaghy from whence it had come.

My father fully agreed with this suggestion and it is now once again being used as a holy water font in St. Ann's Church, situated near where Blacks Road joins the Lisburn Road.

and this book, which shows a copy of each transaction made in this side of his business, also shows cloth bought for "McCance and Stoupe" as well as for himself.

The years covered by this interesting book are 1805-1807. There is another account book of William McCance, this time showing duplicate invoices and shipping bills of lading: (also in the Belfast Public Record Office); for the years 1796-1797 inclusive and frequent notes on the bottom of such invoices stating "Copy to John McCance" show pretty conclusively that, at this date, before going into partnership with his cousin and brother-in-law, John McCance Stoupe, in 1799, some form of association between uncle and nephew existed.

These invoices and bills of Lading all copied carefully into the book show the names of the various customers to whom they then sold their bleached and finished linen cloth. His customers seem to have been principally in the cities of London, Liverpool and Bristol and Belfast itself. To each of these cities he could ship directly.

One bill of lading copied into this book reads as follows. *20th June 1797* "Shipped on board the Minerva, owner Henry Haslett, Master Joshua James, bound for Bristol with finished linen goods for Messrs. Parsons and Hurlles.

They are to pay freight charges for the goods at eight shillings and four pence and additional charges of two shillings and six pence (Insurance)?

Another earlier example is of great interest.

To Mr. William McMichael, Belfast Jan. 7th 1797.

"Sir,

Above is invoice of a box of linen shipped for you in the Liverpool packet, Thos. Geoff the Master, to the order of Iver McIver to sail for Liverpool 1st fair wind, it is said.

There is a French Fleet on our Coasts. You will no doubt Insure.

I have drawn a bill this day in favour of John M. Stoupe, (Presumably John McCance Stoupe then aged about nineteen), Messrs. McMichael & Baker, London — 21 days sight to be placed to your acct. £151.15 which at 8 per cent is the amount of the last box of linen sent to you.

I am sincerely,

Your obt. Servt.,

William McCance.

(Copy to John McCance).

This entry reminds us that Great Britain was at War with France just eight years after the French Revolution and that a French fleet of thirty-five French ships, their decks crowded with French Republican soldiers had sailed into Bantry Bay in County Cork on 21st December 1796 at the call of the United Irishmen, putting all Ireland, and Great Britain itself, into very real peril. Had the United Irishmen risen with this French Army to help them the rising might have had a very different ending.

However a series of very strong gales and wintry weather, all blowing from the North scattered this French Armada with their brilliant young Commander General Hoche and Wolfe Tone who sailed with them.

Eventually the last ships of this French Fleet had to cut their cables and run for France where they eventually safely returned much battered by the bitter weather and almost continuous gales and snow.

As there were only some 400 men of the Bantry Militia indifferently armed and disciplined, had the weather moderated at all the French could have landed their army virtually unopposed.

Wolfe Tone rightly remarked that England had not had such an escape since the days of the Spanish Armada.

When the shipment of William's was made the whole country must still have been in a state of considerable uncertainty lest the French were to return or attempt a landing anywhere else in Ireland. It is even quite possible that the news that the French had been prevented from landing by appalling weather had not then been confirmed in Belfast.

However for William McCance business apparently continued as usual, and indeed the Rebellion of 1798 when it did come seems not to have disturbed the peace of Dunmurry in the least and for all engaged in the linen trade there, whatever their sympathies, business continued as usual.

John McCance's partnership with his first cousin and brother-in-law John McCance Stoupe was to last for twenty years until the early death of John McCance Stoupe in 1819 brought it to a close.

His wife, John McCance's sister Mary, subsequently married again. She married a Doctor Park and went with him to live in Hampstead.

In the year 1801 when he, as previously mentioned, became a magistrate John began to take more and more of an interest in public affairs but his linen business must have continued to prosper.

His eldest son William was born in 1801 and that same year his first wife, Maria died.

John continued to live at Roselands and within the year he married a Jane Russell. This second marriage was childless and I cannot discover where this Jane Russell came from. Russell was a fairly common name in Belfast but it is quite likely that she may have been a Russell of Edenderry, into which family, in the course of time, his eldest son William was destined to marry.

In 1810 his uncle William died at Suffolk and in his Will amongst other bequests he left his bleachgreen and all his silver and furniture to young William but, before he received it to John McCance and John Stoupe for fifteen years and subsequently to John McCance for life.

The following year John's father (our John 2) died at Farmhill where his mother, Jane continued to live until her death in 1818. On his father's death, John McCance moved to Suffolk. He must by now have become very well-to-do with what he inherited from his father and uncle and with what he was making in the linen trade in partnership with John McCance Stoupe.

In the following year John's second wife Jane died on March 30th and, on April 27th the year after (1813), John married a Sarah Law by whom he was to have seven sons and three daughters.

(Six years later John McCance Stoupe was to die and all the family linen interests would then have passed to John McCance).

Sarah Law was the only daughter of a James Law of Banbridge and a Sarah Crawford whose first cousin married a William Hayes of Hillmount, Banbridge, another Linen bleacher.

In 1821 John McCance joined the private bank of Montgomery Orr and Sloan; as previously mentioned; and, three years later, when his Merchant bank was incorporated to form the Northern Bank, while refusing to join the board, he became, as mentioned, the permanent chairman of the shareholders committee.

John had already made "handsome improvements" to Suffolk house when he moved there in 1811 following the death of his uncle and father, and in 1824 he took a long lease of both the Suffolk and Glenville estates and again enlarged Suffolk House.

His eldest son William married Isabella Russell, a daughter of John Russell of Newforge, whose father was a "merchant" in Edenderry — and his wife Catherine Helen (nee Holmes), in this same year, living for three years at Fermhill; his grandfather's house, before he himself moved to Glenville with his wife, presumably when John McCance Stoupe's widow Mary married Dr. Park, her second husband.

By 1824 John McCance obviously, on account of his other activities both sporting and as a magistrate and now in banking, an ambitious man and a very definite social climber, must have been well known and was a property owner of quite some standing. All of Colin Glen;

(previously known as the Rumbling Glen) was now part of his Suffolk estate. Bleaching was now all carried out at Glenville and William could have looked after most of the day to day running of the business while his father became more and more concerned with public affairs.

Undoubtedly he had now become something of a figure in the county and also in Belfast — probably by now he hunted his own pack of hounds and was a life member of the Maze racecourse.

Suffolk House with all its renovations and additions was evidently something of a feature in the neighbourhood as it is referred to in a manual by Philip Dickson Hardy M.R.I.A. published in Dublin 1830 under the title of "The Northern Tourist and Strangers' Guide to the North and Northwest of Ireland". The relevant extract from this work reads as follows:

The Country in this direction and along the foot and side of the mountain presents a scene of the



Photographic copy of an Impression of "Drum Church on the River Lagan" (St. Patrick's Church, Drumbeg), made by "Mack's Studio, Ballymoney". (In my possession). There is no date on the Impression, but I believe it to date from 1825-1850 prot. (Just possibly earlier). There is shown; just across the River Lagan and below the Church; a building which I believe to be a linen beetling mill which will have been driven by a water wheel (note the sluice gate beyond mill building). The mill race will have come from the River Lagan which flows under the bridge. This probably belonged to a family named Maxwell.

most pleasing and gratifying description; numerous extensive bleach greens with the houses and finely planted demesnes of the wealthy proprietors—

The Green of John Sinclair first presents itself, and, a little further on, that of William McCance, Esq. — On the right hand side of the road stands the private residence of the latter gentleman, an elegant though plain building (Presumably Glenville): and a little further on is seen the neat and comfortable house of Mathew Charley Esq., (Woodbourne, now 1981 destroyed by the IRA, the site being occupied by the army).

In ascending the hill to the left appears the magnificent mansion of John McCance Esq. of Suffolk, the most splendid perhaps belonging to any man of business in the kingdom: (now, 1981, burnt out, the hill levelled and the house pulled down to accommodate the road through to the Poleglass housing estate); while a short distance higher up towards the Black Mountain lies the far famed Colin Glen by some esteemed nearly equal to the Dargle in Co. Wicklow".

(That part of the glen below the Glen road stands now, 1981, with the trees all cut down, part of it used as a refuse dump. — The "Upper Glen", above the Glen road (some 38 acres) is preserved for the National Trust and shows a little of its old beauty, but for how long!

John McCance also had a house in Belfast; I believe now, 1981, the Water Office in Donegall Square just opposite to the City Hall, at the top of Chichester Street, which he left to his sister with an annuity after his death.

About this time also, Proctor did the series of plates of residences near Belfast which include Suffolk and Newforge, the home of the Russells, William's wife's family.

My great aunt used to have copies of both these and, the complete series of prints appeared in a volume entitled "Belfast Scenery" (a copy of which is to be found in the Belfast Public Record Office).

A few years earlier in 1821 John McCance appears as signatory of a new lease with a William Tennant and a Valentine Whitla; the three of them being, as far as I can make out, the three original Trustees of the Belfast Botanical and Horticultural Society.

The lease of this land from the Marquise of Donegall is for 999

years and is to exclude specifically "Friars Bush Graveyard", (just beyond the Ulster Museum), and supersedes one to a "Seedsman named Bullen". This lease is in the Belfast Public Record Office. £320. 0s. 0d. was paid "by way of a fine" for this long lease. The annual rent payable by the Society following this payment was £9. 4s. 7½d. with "HERIOT" of £1.

High Sherrif of Down in 1825 and of Antrim in 1827, as previously mentioned, John McCance was also a member of the County Antrim Grand Jury in March 1833.

In early 1835 with Belfast rapidly growing in importance, the city and districts around it being really the only part of all Ireland to undergo the mixed blessing of The Industrial revolution, there was a parliamentary election in Belfast.

Just three years had passed since the final passing of Grey's reform bill in 1832.

With many of the larger towns returning two members to Parliament and the abolition of many "rotten boroughs", I am not sure if Belfast at this date, returned one or two members to Parliament at Westminster but I believe that it was still only one and that this election in 1835 was a by-election.

John McCance stood, presumably as a Liberal Unionist, against Lord Arthur Chichester who presumably represented the Tory party opposed to reform.

It is not often remembered that Great Britain came close to civil war when William IV asked the Tory Duke of Wellington to try to form a government in May 1832. However, after a week, the King recalled Grey and the bill was passed against fierce Tory opposition.

It was a stirring time for a man who owed his wealth and position to trade or manufacturing, such as John McCance, to stand for parliament. More reforms were on the way amongst them the Municipal Corporations Act freeing "dissenters" at last to stand for office. Catholic emancipation, thanks to Daniel O'Connell, had passed in a bill of 1829.

I am not quite certain whether election to Parliament was by secret ballot in early 1835, when John McCance stood for Belfast, though I believe it was, in theory anyway.

The election contest lasted for some five days and legend even has it that the captain of a ship taking some electors to vote for Lord

Arthur Chichester held up to sailing, pleading necessary repairs to his ship, so that his passengers might not arrive in time for the election. (This is only hearsay legend but, in those days could well have been true).

Anyway John McCance was duly elected by a small majority and took his seat in Parliament in, I believe, April 1835.

It is just possible that he voted with Lord Grey's Liberal, or Whig, party helping to pass the Municipal Corporations Act but, sadly for him and for his family and friends, he was not to serve those who elected him to Westminster for long.

On 11th August 1835 he died in London and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery. He died of what was described as a "bilious fever" which was most probably typhoid.

However, some three miles from Suffolk House stands St. Patrick's Church, Drumbeg where McCances had been buried since his great-grandfather's time and where, presumably, he worshipped. (Some of his relatives may have been Presbyterians though buried in Drumbeg Church but I presume that John McCance would have been a member of the established Church of Ireland; both on account of his ambitions as a social climber, and also because I do not think that as a "dissenter" he could have stood for parliament before the passing of The Municipal Corporations Act in the summer of 1835).

Drumbeg is still a beautiful church on a small hill just on the County Down side of the Lagan and, although so near Belfast it is still virtually in the country and surrounded by green fields. There is reputed to have been a church on this site since the seventh century A.D. Incidentally, I go to church there myself.

John McCance erected the second McCance Memorial in the church yard there and his name is the last to appear on it.

The inscription to him reads as follows: "John McCance of Suffolk who erected this tablet died in London of Fever 11th August 1835 aged 63 years whilst attending his duties as M.P. for Belfast. His remains are interred in Kensal Green cemetery where a plain tomb marks his resting place, a stone bearing his name and the following text—"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God".

This John McCance certainly

have been a "character" have been liked by all whom employed. He also appears to have had many friends and acquaintances both in Belfast itself and in many parts of counties Antrim and Down.

SUFFOLK

The name Suffolk which William, John McCance's uncle seems to have given to his house and which is still the name of what was once a Suffolk village, now part of west Belfast, seems peculiar.

The book of linen stamps mentioned earlier which is now in the Belfast Record Office shows under the heading "Suffolk Hemp" a crest on "passant et regardant". This crest is very similar to that seen on the crests of the Dukes of Suffolk.

Another legend has it that Suffolk was the name given to a strain of flax.

The McCances would certainly seem to have adopted this lion as their Crest, probably in the time of our John M.P. who certainly used it on his silver.

Whilst the family was much later granted a Crest, Motto and Coat of

Arms, I am quite sure that the crest of the lion, which was the Crest eventually granted, was just taken by John McCance for his linen stamps and for his crest with which he stamped his silver.

Whilst the family was much later granted a Crest, Motto and Coat of Arms, I am quite sure that the crest of the lion, which was the Crest eventually granted, was just taken by John McCance for his linen stamps and for his crest with which he stamped his silver. Suffolk may be the name of a strain of flax but in view of the resemblance of the "McCance" Lion and that on the crest of the Dukes of Suffolk I wonder!!

A portrait of John McCance painted by a Thomas Clement Thompson R.H.A. 1780-1857 is now also in the Ulster Museum as is a portrait by an unknown artist of John Russell of Newforge, his brother-in-law.

One final note which seems to prove beyond all doubt that our John McCance M.P. was a "character" in his day is that he is traditionally thought to be "Young McCance" of the Ballad of that name though if this is true the phrase "My

father's Green" and indeed all references to my father's "anything else", must then be poetic licence for "My uncle's"; i.e. Uncle William. Such poetic licence is however quite likely true since tradition certainly has it that John McCance M.P. is indeed "Young McCance" of the Ballad.

He is also, according to tradition, the McCance mentioned in both versions of the Ballad entitled "The Antrim Hunt". This seems to be highly probable in view of his well known sporting proclivities. I append copies of these three Ballads.

Checks are in.

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