

Bernard McKenna New York City
To Father Henry Conwell Dungannon Co. Tyrone
15th September 1811.

Ever dear and most respected friend,

After a long absence of fourteen years I have had the great satisfaction of receiving a letter from you and not I am sure without much astonishment on my first perceiving your signature which has excited various thoughts of the many sociable and jovial hours we have reciprocally spent together and now had almost terminated in a total oblivion. But I hope my long silence has not occasioned you being offended at me or any suspicion that I have disregarded you. If I was to offer a reason in excuse for it it would be an invented one or it has never been known to myself. But I was contented to know that my heart was always possessed of much affection towards you. I believe I may candidly say that there was no bounds to it. It has been observed to me by a certain person at the time of an indulgence in Dungannon that he perceived your regard for me was much declined he said he saw me salute you and that you took very little notice of it the time I perfectly recollect but however I intended to let it pass unnoticed considering that you may have had a reason wherefore I concluded that if you had a reason it must have been a very important one knowing you to be a gentleman of too much good sense to take notice of trifles. Now if there may be anything of this I sincerely request that you may communicate it to me in your next that I may have the satisfaction of knowing it. It never came within my recollection anyway that that I have said or done that would offend a single head of your head for as I have already observed to you that I have born an unlimited affection for you. I could not forbear this much to you on this head.

Permit me here to trouble you with a sketch of some events which have occurred to me since the time of my emigration from home. On the 7th of May 1797 I set out from Aughnacloy, on the 8th I sorrowfully took my leave of you and on the evening of that day I arrived at a small village about three miles of Derry almost exhausted with fatigue of travelling and want subsistence. The yeomen made such a stir through the different villages that I found it impracticable for me to make my delay without being detected. Therefore continuing and was obliged to dispense with a small drink of milk and a small glass of spirits except water which often proved very scant and on my arrival in the village had much difficulty in obtaining quarters for the great commotion there of the times after regailing myself that night next morning set off for the city and after my arrival I agreed for a passage and moved down to Moville where I impatiently lay until the 7th day of June when I took my departure for the

United States of America and after being some weeks out we boarded a French schooner after two hours chase salutes from their guns we were obliged to come to and after about the space of an hour we were restored to liberty and on the 15th of August we arrived in New Caste here we arrived in the blessed shores of America a land of peace and plenty and as this day may be called the garden spot of the world a happy asylum for the world a happy asylum for the banished children of oppression .Now after spending a recovery of some days I concluded once more to xxxx the Delaware river for New York where I arrived on the 12th Sept . having spent a few days here but not finding it suitable to my purpose I crossed the East river for Long Island and after a journey of thirty two miles I met with some encouragement to teach a school in a very respectable neighbourhood. (it being the 24th Sept) and soon got myself ingratiated into the good grace of the people .But soon after my commencement in the school I found it highly requist that I should improve my education particularly in the following subjects (which I have been entirely deficient in) Viz English grammer, Book-keeping, Geography, Navigation with several arithmetical authors (including several abstruse problems) which I have been unqualified in. Having then no other alternative than to have recourse to a close studies and supplied myself with varieties of authors on the subject for the better attainment of this arduous task however I began my studies and gave myself up entirely to a recluse life appropriating every hour (when absent from school) to the business. In the summer season I frequently retired to the woods here I spent time in solitude and in close retirement as long as the temperature of the weather permitted, in the winter I shut myself in the school house where I have spent whole nights still continuing marriage state. I had purchased a farm about two miles from my last residence upon which I built an engine house and after making some arrangements on the place I brought home my wife here we spent some in the bonds of affection and seemingly had gained the warm friendship of our neighbouring Quakers who shewed upon all occasions a remarkable friendship and attachment to us with frequent invitations to their meetings which we always declined so we continued for near the space of five years when my wife fell into consumption which terminated her existence. But now behold what succeeds a sense of trouble most doleful, sometime before her decease she requested that I should send for the priest. I wrote to Dr. Byrn to New York about 39 miles from us who immediately attended and after discharging his duty he told me he had never visited so great a Christian her brother previous to this had sent her a letter of admonition the Dr on seeing it wished very much that there should be an answer sent. However she answered the letter much to the astonishment of the Dr who seen a copy of it afterwards. But the Quakers

on hearing of the Dr being come several of them came seemingly much dismayed. A few hours after the decease of my wife I sat viewing her corpse absorbed in profound grief thinking of what might be my future destiny my youngest child at this time was about 14 months old which I call Elanor and Mary Ann about three years old, after some time deploring my calamitous situation a blood vessel busted to the effusion of much blood. I immediately communicated the matter to the company and ordered a Doctor to be sent for who attended me all night, Next morning Mary Ann on perceiving my alarming situation screamed out and seized hold of me in the bed. I immediately ordered her to be taken away and sent to her aunts about a miles distance- here I took my last farewell of her (as I thought then) as it being the general opinion of many that I could not survive it at that time there were three Physicians attending me who gave a more favourable opinion of my complaint. In about two days after the internment of my wife my servant girl left me. My sister in law took away her daughter who had for some time working waiting on her aunt...here all fled and forsook me, the approach of night was a terror to me. But resigning myself with profound humility to the devine will of god looking up to him for relief whose goodness and mercies I have often I have often expiration of often expiration of one year I resigned. I have found it too fatiguing on account of the great number of Scholars I had to teach. Shortly after my arrival in the city I had received the news that there was a gentleman from New York had taken possession of my land and claiming it as his from an Indian deed which he could produce and further he cut down the valuable fruit trees of every kind for fuel he continued in this manner for the space of a year I watched my opportunity and as soon as I found him in town I put him under arrest for damages he gave 2000 dollars security for his appearance in court on the first day of May last I was obliged to take the disagreeable journey to the place of my rent I took a constable of that neighbourhood with me but he refused to let us in he had his party well fortified with unlawful weapons notwithstanding we entered the house and carried off every single article and left them in care with the constable and in nine days after he sold them in public vendure and sent me the rent so after a tedious suit I observed an order of court and a few days ago I sent the sheriff to turn him out. The person proves insolvent I am informed if so I have beat the cost. How I now remain enjoying myself in peace once more with my two little girls (which is much admired by many.) and notwithstanding the many severe trials that I have experienced the Lord has supported me and restored my health and still have procured from the year 1791 or thereabouts fortune for each of my children. Now after closing my disastrous detail I shall proceed to give you a summary of the ecclesiastical of the church with the name of each

ecclesiastical order of the church with the name of each ecclesiastick in session for the year 1791 or thereabouts until the present. Rec'd Father Whelan Rev'd Father Newgent.....who was anathematized by the bishop for acting inimical to the great government of the church. He commenced a revolution and had seduced a party for the purpose of enabling him carry his egregious views into effect. But his project being detected he was tried by the laws of his country and found guilty and after subjecting himself to the penalties inflicted by the courtv he took his flight to France.....

Rev'd Father William O'Bryan from Dublin, Rev'd Nicholas Burk, Rev'd Bartholomew Mc Maghen from Dublin Rev'd Matthew O'Bryan from Cork suspended but I am informed that he is reinstated again. Rev'd Dr Kelly from Ireland suspended and returned home, Rev'd Michael Hurley from Philadelphia Rev'd Father Sspore from France Rev'd Father Byrn from Dublin dyed at Georgetown college. T his puts and end to the Irish succession and for so far has put an and to strife shame and your blessing for myself and my children. I subscribe myself with the most profound veneration.

And fullness of esteem

Your reverence most dutiful

Humbled and obliged servant

Bernard McKenna

New York

September 15th 1811

P.S. 15/12/15

Direct your letter thus.

Bernard McKenna

Teacher Bayard St.

New York

P.S. this is my first letter to Ireland.