



***MARY BYRNE AND THE VISION AT
KNOCK***

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WHY I DID THIS PROJECT

I chose to do my project on Mary Byrne (Later known as Mary O'Connell) as she was the first of 15 to experience a major religious event in Irish history giving her a mark in the annals of history. On top of all this she is related to me (Being the Aunt of my great grandfather) so I decided I would honour her name with this short biography.




Mrs. Mary O'Connell, last surviving witness to the Apparition from whose detailed description the statues were made.



WHO IS MARY

Mary Byrne later Mary O'Connell (1850 – 19 October 1936) was an Irish woman considered to be the chief witness of the apparition at Knock, County Mayo. She was born in 1850 the eldest daughter of the three children of Dominick and Margaret Byrne (née Bourke). Byrne was one of 15 people who witnessed an unusual sight at the gable end of the church on 21 August 1879 along with her mother Margaret Beirne ages 68, her younger adult sister Margaret Beirne, her younger adult brother Dominick Beirne, her eight-year-old niece Catherine Murray, and Dominick Beirne, who was an elder cousin, Dominick's five-year-old nephew John Curry, and Patrick Beirne.



THE VISION AT KNOCK

The vision at knock occurred on the evening of Thursday, 21 August 1879. At about 8 o'clock it was raining as Mary Byrn, who was from the village, was going home with the priest's housekeeper, Mary McLoughlin. Byrne stopped suddenly when she saw the gable of the church. She claimed she saw three life-size figures. She ran home to tell her parents and soon others from the village gathered. The witnesses said they saw an apparition of Our Lady, Saint Joseph and Saint John the Evangelist at the south gable end of the Church of Saint John the Baptist. Behind them and a little to the left of Saint John was a plain altar. On the altar was a cross and a lamb, with angels. A farmer, about half a mile away from the scene, later described what he saw as a large globe of golden light above and around the gable, circular in appearance.

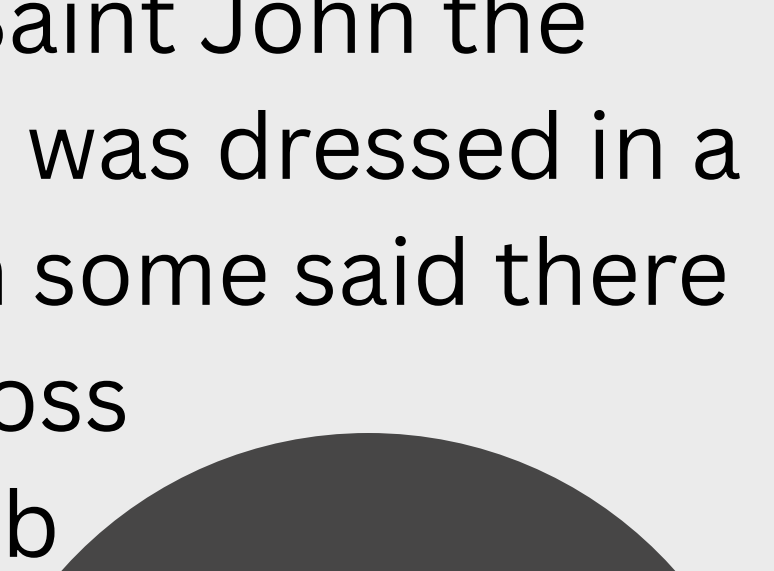




THE VISION AT KNOCK

The vision of Mary was described as standing a few feet above the ground wearing a white cloak, hanging in full folds and fastened at the neck while "deep in prayer", with her eyes raised to heaven, her hands raised to the shoulders with her palms inclined slightly to the shoulders.

Saint Joseph was described as wearing white robes and standing at the Virgin's right hand. His head was described as bent forward from the shoulders towards the Blessed Virgin. Saint John the Evangelist stood to the left of the Blessed Virgin. He was dressed in a long robe and wore a mitre. To the left of Saint John some said there was an altar with a lamb on it with a cross standing on the altar behind the lamb





MARYS LIFE

Byrne married James O'Connell on 1 July 1882. He was from a local village, Becan. The couple had five sons and a daughter. After she was widowed in 1926, Byrne lived near Knock with James, her eldest son. Byrne insisted that when she closed her eyes and opened them again, she could see the vision. She signed a sworn statement on 27 January 1936 affirming what she witnessed at Knock. She was examined as part of the second commission of inquiry into Knock in August 1936, and is reported to have impressed them with her clear recollection, stating "I am clear about everything I have said and I make this statement knowing I am going before my God."

Byrne died on 19 October 1936, and is buried beside her husband in Knock.



THE KNOCK SHRINE


The Knock shrine was built on the spot where the vision occurred, It includes a modern church building with a recreation of the Vision at Knock and can apparently hold around 10,000 people





FAMILY CONNECTION

Mary O'Connell was an aunt of my great grandfather making her my great, great grand aunt. None of my close family have met with her but Mairead Sutherland interviewed O'Connell in 2002-just before she died.



REFLECTION

I enjoyed reserching and creating this project quite a lot. I learnt a lot about my family history and the important event in irish history that was the vision at knock.



TIMELINE

Mary Byrne
is born
1850

Marries
James
O'Connell
1882

She witnesses
the vision
of Mary
1979

Mary
O'Connell
dies aged 85
1936





SOURCES

Notes written from an interview with Mairead Sutherland ne O'Connell born in 1923 written in 2002: just before she died.

<https://www.libraryireland.com/Atlas/XCII-Knock-Visions.php>

'The Vision in Marble' Written by Siobhan C. Bean Uí Cadhain. Published by the Knock Shrine Society in 1985.

Wikipedia.com

