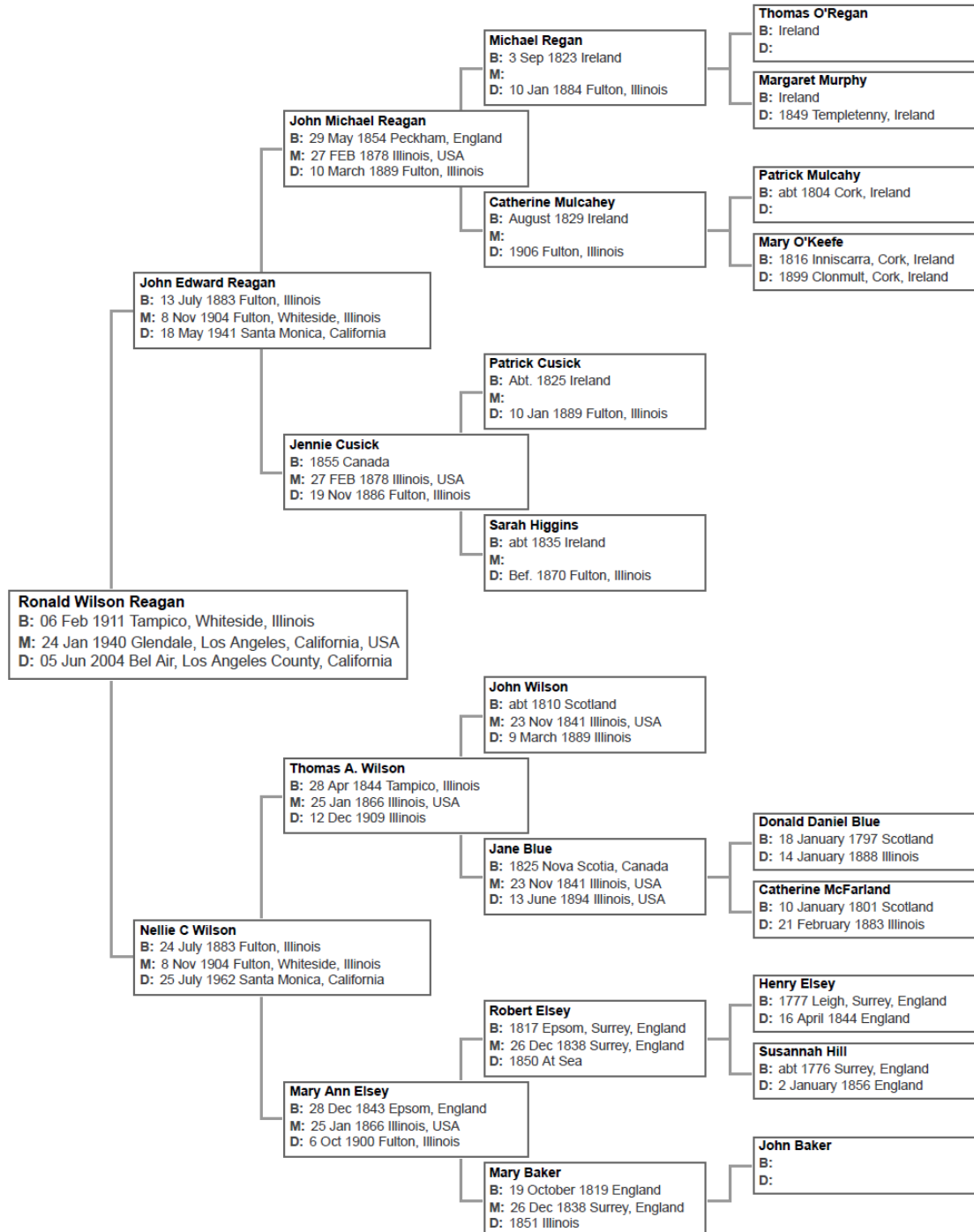


Ronald Wilson Reagan was born on February 6, 1911 in Tampico, Illinois to John Edward Reagan and Nellie Clyde Wilson. This report will cover the genealogy of Ronald Wilson Reagan by looking at each of the main branches of his family tree.



Paternal Grandfather – John Michael Reagan - The Reagan Lineage

Michael Regan

Michael Regan, the great-grandfather of Ronald Reagan, was born in 1823 in Ballyporeen, Ireland to Thomas Regan (aka O'Regan) and Margaret Murphy. Ballyporeen was a small village located on the main road between Dublin and Cork. A survey in 1837 listed the total population as 113 houses and 513 people.



Image 1. Ballyporeen in April 2017

It is believed that Michael was the youngest of eight children. Baptismal records for two of the older siblings, Nicholas and Elena, have been identified. And both of these siblings were baptized in St. Mary's Catholic Church in Clogheen, which is located about 4.5 miles due east of Ballyporeen. Therefore, it is likely, although not confirmed, that Michael was also baptized at this same church.



Image 2. St. Mary's Catholic Church, Clogheen, Cork, Ireland

Ronald W Reagan visited Ballyporeen on June 3, 1984, while he was President of the United States. During the time of his visit, there stood a pub in Ballyporeen named "The Ronald Reagan Pub."

However, the pub closed in 2004 and the signage from the pub was moved to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California.



Image 3. President Ronald W Reagan speaking in Ballyporeen on June 3, 1984

In 1849, Michael's mother, Margaret, died and was buried in Tipperary. It is believed that Michael's father, died a few years later in 1852. And sometime between those two dates, it appears that Michael decided to leave Ireland and move to the big city of London.

Catherine Mulcahey

Meanwhile, Catherine Mulcahey, great-grandmother of Ronald, was born in August of 1829 to parents, Patrick Mulcahy and Mary O'Keefe. Both of her parents were from Ireland, and although it is certain that Catherine was also born there, the exact town of her birth is less clear. There are some records that indicate that she was born in County Tipperary, the same as her future husband. However, both her parents had grown up in nearby County Cork. And it is equally speculated that she was born there. But since no birth records for Catherine have been located, it is impossible to say with certainty which location is accurate. Nevertheless, sometime before 1852, Catherine moved to London, where she would soon meet Michael Reagan.

Michael and Catherine

Michael and Catherine met in London and in 1852 they had a child together, Thomas Reagan. In October of that same year, they got married at St George's Cathedral in Southwark, London. It is unclear from the records whether Catherine was still pregnant at the time of the wedding or if their son, Thomas, had already been born.

St George's Cathedral had just opened in 1848, only four years before their wedding. And in 1852, it had become the first Roman Catholic cathedral in London since the Reformation. It could seat nearly 3,000 people and, at that time, it was considered the most important Catholic Church in England. So, this was certainly a grand venue for the wedding of Michael and Catherine.

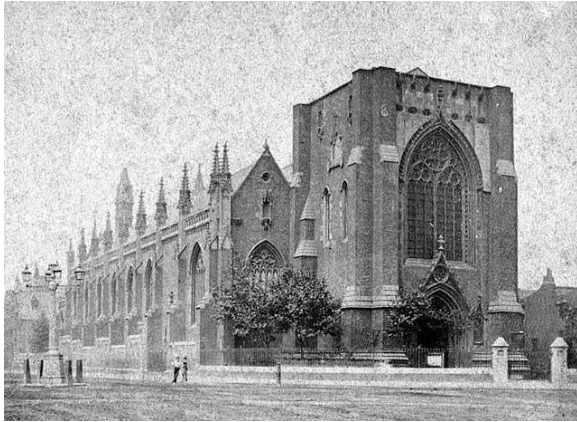


Image 4. St George's Cathedral

While living in London, Michael and Catherine had two more children – John Michael (grandfather of Ronald) and Margaret. And, in late 1857, the family departed from Liverpool for the United States of America. After the difficult journey across the Atlantic, they arrived at Ellis Island in New York City on November 28 aboard the ship *Joseph Gillchrist*. However, they did not remain in New York City long and, instead, made the challenging trek towards the farmlands of Illinois.

The Reagans settled in Fairhaven, Illinois, a small rural town located near the border of Iowa. In Fairhaven, Michael began working as a farmer and he and Catherine added two more children to their family – William and Mary. Additionally, Michael's two older brothers, Nicholas and John, followed him over to the United States to work for their younger brother as farmhands.

There are a few additional details that we know from census records. According to the records, Michael could neither read nor write. And his son, William, was crippled or bedridden. We also know that in 1860 their estate in Fairhaven was valued at \$1,270 (the equivalent of approximately \$39,000 in 2020). And by 1870, it had grown to \$3,850 (approximately \$75,000 in 2020). While this was still a modest amount, it demonstrated that Michael and his two older brothers were successfully growing the farm.

Paternal Grandmother – Jennie Cusick - The Cusick Lineage

Jennie Cusick

Jennie Cusick, the paternal grandmother of Ronald Reagan, was born in Canada in 1855 to Patrick Cusick and Sarah Higgins. Although she was born in Canada, much like the Reagans, her parents also originally emigrated from Ireland. Unfortunately, the records for the Cusick lineage are difficult to find. And, therefore, we are unable at this time to determine exactly where in Ireland her parents were born.

What we do know, is that sometime between 1855 and 1860, the Cusicks moved from Canada to Fulton, Illinois. Fulton was a border town with Iowa; located on the Mississippi River. It was located about 20 miles from Fairhaven, where the Reagan's were arriving around the same time. Once the Cusicks arrived in Illinois, Jennie's father began working as a day laborer and her mother got a job as a

housekeeper. The Cusicks had only \$25 to their names, but that did not stop them from growing their family. And, in 1858, they welcomed a second daughter, named Sarah.

Tragically, sometime over the next decade, it appears that Jennie's mother and younger sister both died. And by the 1870 Census, only Patrick and Jennie are still shown living. Over a decade after arriving in the United States, Patrick was still working as a day laborer, but was now also a single father. And, unfortunately, the estate had only grown to \$200 (\$3,900 in 2020). It was clear that Patrick and his daughter were struggling.

Jennie and John

Jennie Cusick met John Michael Reagan in the 1870s and they got married in Fulton in the winter of 1878. John took a job as a grain elevator operator and they bought a place in town. They wasted no time getting started on a family. And, in July 1879, they welcomed their first daughter, Catherine "Katy" Reagan. Over the next six years, they had three more children, including John Edward (Ronald's father) in 1883. However, the fall of that year marked the beginning of a very dark period for the family.

In October 1883, John's youngest brother, William, died from tuberculosis. Only three months later, his father, Michael, died as well. And, then a few years later, Jennie died from tuberculosis, leaving John alone to take care of their four young children.

Unfortunately, for John and his children, things only got worse. A little more than two years after Jennie's death, John died from tuberculosis as well. The four children, who were still all under the age of 10, had lost both of their parents and their grandfather to illness in a short period of time. So, their recently widowed grandmother, Catherine Reagan, moved to Fulton to take care of the children.



Image 5. Fulton Historic District (photo taken 2015)

Maternal Grandfather – Thomas A Wilson - The Wilson Lineage

Donald Blue and Catherine McFarland

Donald Daniel Blue and Catherine McFarland were both born in Scotland around the turn of the 17th century.

Sometime in their early to mid-twenties, Donald and Catherine met and moved to Nova Scotia, Canada; although not necessarily in that order. In Nova Scotia, they had their first child together, a daughter they named Jane. And, over the next fifteen years, they added another five children to their before packing up and moving to Morrison, Illinois.

By the end of the 1850's, Morrison would be named the county seat of Whiteside County and become a stopping point for the Union Pacific Railroad. However, when the Blues arrived, it was only first being settled.



Image 6. Morrison, Illinois in 1800s

In the spring of 1841, their oldest daughter, Jane, had a child with John Wilson, a farmer from the nearby town of Clyde, located about halfway between Morrison and Fairhaven. John was born in Scotland, like Jane's parents, but was approximately 15 years older than Jane, who was only 16 at the time. He had immigrated to the United States sometime before 1840 and purchased a plot of farmland in Clyde. Given Jane's relatively young age and the fact that the couple was not married, this was not likely a planned pregnancy.

John and Jane

However, about six months after the birth of their daughter, John Wilson and Jane Blue got married. And a few years later, they had their second child – a boy named Thomas (Ronald's grandfather). Before the end of the decade, they would go on to add another four children to their family. However, in 1859, tragedy struck.

According to *Portrait and biographical album of Whiteside County, Illinois*, originally published in 1885, Jane's three brothers – Alexander, Daniel and Charles – left for Pike's Peak, Colorado in search of gold in 1859. When they neared the Rocky Mountains, a "terrific snow storm" hit. The storm lasted for five days during which time the brothers ran out of food and Alexander and Charles became disabled from pain, likely due to frostbite combined with their pre-existing rheumatism.

After the snowstorm ended, the brothers attempted to continue but they were lost, injured and starving. Even with Daniel carrying Alexander, they were unable to make progress towards the mountains.

Alexander was the first to die. And Daniel and Charles resorted to cannibalism in an attempt to remain alive. As per Daniel's account, "we restrained as long as we could, but we yielded at last, for it was our last resort for hope of preservation."

Charles soon died as well and Daniel became "demented through suffering and grief and wandered aimlessly about." He was eventually discovered by Native Americans near Big Sandy River, Colorado. They took him to Denver where he was provided medical attention. When he was well enough, he returned to Illinois to become a farmer and got married in 1860. This event, no doubt, had significant impact on Jane and the rest of the family. Thomas, Ronald's grandfather, was 15 years old when this event involving his uncles occurred.

Maternal Grandmother – Mary Ann Elsey - The Elsey Lineage

Henry Elsey and Susannah Hill

Henry Elsey (2nd great-grandfather of Ronald) was born in 1777 in Leigh, Surrey, England. Susannah Hill (2nd great-grandmother) was born in 1776 a few miles up the road in Epsom, Surrey, England. Based on the available records, they likely got married sometime before 1805 and lived in Epsom.

Epsom, England was a wealthy spa town famous for its mineral waters. Epsom Salts are named after the town. The town is also famous for the Epsom Downs Racecourse.

Henry and Susannah had their first child, a girl named Mary Ann, in 1805. Mary Ann was baptized at St Martin Church in Epsom. The church dates back to 1450 and held a prominent place in the town in the early 1800s. All of Henry and Susannah's children would be baptized at this church.

Between 1805 and 1817, we are aware of three more children for Henry and Susannah – Henry (born 1806), Rebecca (born 1813), and Robert (born 1817). Although it is possible that these are the only children that they had, the seven year gap between Henry and Rebecca would have been unusual for the time. So, it's entirely possible that we are missing records of births/baptisms for additional children.



Image 7. St Martin Church (Epsom) and Epsom Clock Tower (built 1847)

Mary Baker

Mary Baker (great-grandmother of Ronald) was born on October 19, 1819 in Surrey, England. From her marriage record, we know that her father's name was John Baker. However, we do not know the name of her mother or any additional details about her parents.

Robert and Mary

On December 26, 1838 (the day after Christmas), Robert Eley, the youngest son of Henry and Susannah, married Mary Baker at St Mark Parish in Kennington, Surrey, England. St Mark was an Anglican church built in 1824 and was still relatively new at the time of the wedding.

Robert and Mary welcomed their first son, George, in 1839. Much like his father, he was baptized at St. Martin Church in Epsom. Carrying on the Eley tradition, all of the Robert and Mary's children would be baptized at St. Martin.

Between 1839 and 1846, Robert and Mary had three more children – Peter, Mary Ann (Ronald's grandmother, born in 1843), and Sarah.

Meanwhile, in April of 1844, Robert's father, Henry, died and was buried back in his birthplace of Leigh. Then, three years later, disease entered the home of Robert's brother, Henry. And the entire family died with the exception of his Henry's son, Henry Jr.

Robert and Mary decided to leave England for the United States. It's possible that this was to escape the disease that had taken his brother. Along with their four children, they took their orphaned nephew, Henry Jr, with them. They departed on the ship, *Danube*, headed for New York City and were scheduled to arrive on August 30, 1847. Unfortunately, they were not able to completely avoid disease and Robert died on the voyage.



Image 8. St. Mark Parish, Kennington, England

Mary arrived to the United States as a widow with five children in her care. She buried her husband in Rome, NY on their way to Illinois. The family made it to western Illinois intact. However, Mary died four



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years later, leaving the children orphaned. Mary was buried in Cordova, Illinois, less than 20 miles south of Fulton.

It's not clear what happened to the five children during the 1850s. However, by the 1860 Census, three of the children, George, Mary Ann and Sarah, were living with a Mary Wesley and two Baker children in Clyde, the same township where the Wilson's had their farm.

Thomas and Mary

Thomas Wilson and Mary Ann Elsey almost certainly met after Mary Ann and her siblings moved to Clyde, sometime following their mother's death. They got married in Whiteside County on January 25, 1866. And they purchased their own farm in Clyde.

They got started immediately on a family and welcomed their first child, Emily Gertrude, on November 12, 1867. Their first son, named John after his grandfather, arrived two years later. According to the 1870 US Census, the value of their estate was \$1,000 (about \$20,000 today) and they had one laborer working on their farm.

Records indicate that Thomas enlisted in the US Army on April 29, 1868. However, the Civil War had already ended by then and most of the fighting in the United States was occurring farther out west. There is no indication that he ever fought or even at what rank he may have served.

Between 1870 and 1883, Thomas and Mary had five more children – Jennie, Alexander, George, Mary, and finally Nellie (Ronald's mother, born in 1883).

Over the next several years, the Wilson family lost some key family members. In 1889, Thomas's father died. His mother, Jane, died five years later. However, the most significant death for Thomas and his children came on October 6, 1900, when Mary Ann died at the early age of 56. Ronald's mother, Nellie, was only 17 years old at the time at the time of her mother's death.

John Edward Reagan and Nellie Clyde Wilson

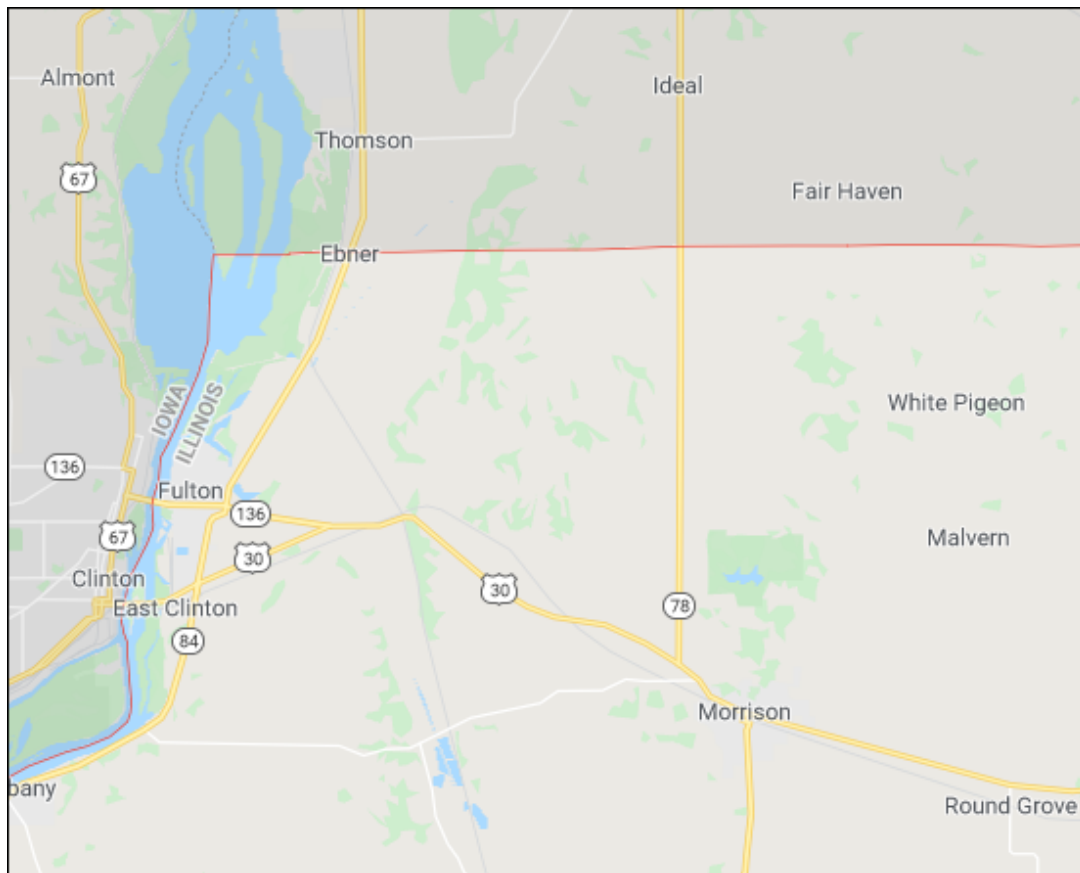
By 1900, 17-year old John Edward Reagan had lost both his parents and had moved to the very small town of Inland, Iowa, located halfway between Iowa City and Dubuque, to live with his Uncle Orson and Aunt Maggie, where he worked in his uncle's dry goods store as a salesman. His Aunt Maggie was the younger sister of his late father. In the meantime, his siblings remained in Fulton, living with their grandmother, Catherine, and his oldest sister's new husband.

However, his grandmother soon began suffering from worsening health. And so Uncle Orson and Aunt Maggie, along with John, decided to move back to Fulton in order to help out. Uncle Orson purchased a dry goods store in Fulton and continued to employ John as a store clerk.

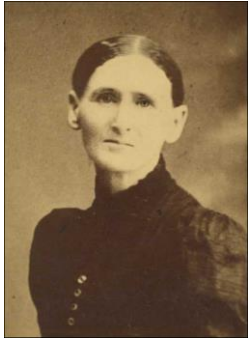
John must have met Nellie during those years working as a store clerk in Fulton. However, it's very likely that the two families knew each other for years before that, since they both had farms for decades in Whiteside County.

John Edward Reagan and Nellie Clyde Wilson married on November 8, 1904 in Fulton, Illinois. They would eventually have two sons – Cornelius John Reagan (born 1909) and Ronald Wilson Reagan (born February 6, 1911). Ronald Reagan, the descendent of Irish, Scottish and English immigrants, would go on to become the 40th President of the United States of America.

Additional Images



Map of Whiteside County, IL (courtesy of Google maps)



Mary Ann Elsey (1843 – 1900)



John Edward Reagan (1883 – 1941)



Nellie Clyde Wilson (1883 – 1962)



Ronald Wilson Reagan (1911 – 2004)