I've written this with several different groups of readers in mind: 1) my siblings; 2) my descendants who in future may want to continue the research; 3) DNA matches with whom I share research and who may be experienced genealogists but are not familiar with the structure of my family; and 4) viewers of my website (if it is posted there). DNA is complicated and I have included details that may aid future DNA-knowledgeable researchers but may be confusing to others!

Eileen Maloney Condon – June 2026

Our MOLONEY/MALONEY origins in County Clare, Ireland

Research Goal

To locate the birthplace of my great-grandfather **JOHN MOLONEY**, knowing only that he was born "near Ennis, County Clare" (1905 obituary) on 24 May 1819 (tombstone, Mount St. Patrick, Ontario, Canada). I've been able to identify the origins for all my other Irish ancestors, and travelling to these locales has been a very meaningful experience for me. Identifying John's origins would be extremely satisfying.

John arrived in Canada some time in the early 1840s. Over the years, many unsuccessful searches have been made (not only by me but also by professional researchers in County Clare) but John's parentage and exact birthplace have not been determined. Two known brothers (born 1815 and 1824) also emigrated. One of them (Patrick) married in Ireland in Barefield, a few miles northeast of Ennis. Names of parents, birthplaces, and residences were not recorded; however, it was usual at that time for a couple to be married in the bride's parish.

Incidentally, the surname is still spelled MOLONEY in Ireland, and the name is extremely common in County Clare. My great-grandfather John could write and he signed "Moloney". When my grandfather Patrick applied to become an American citizen in 1883, he also signed "Moloney". It was only in later years that the spelling evolved to "Maloney".

Irish Research

The land system in Ireland is quite different from any in North America. The largest jurisdiction is the County, which is subdivided into Civil Parishes, which are further subdivided into Townlands. Townlands vary widely in size and shape. County Clare has 2,265 Townlands in its 81 Civil Parishes. Without having clues as to an Irish ancestor's birthplace, it can be very difficult to identify the townland. When an Irish immigrant was asked by officials in his new country for a place of origin, he usually just said "Ireland", especially if he could neither read nor write.

Ireland has a dearth of existing written records—especially for the Catholic population. The earliest church records usually don't begin until the 1830s or 1840s and have not survived for many parishes. Catholics were not included in Civil Registration until 1864, and early census records were destroyed in the 1922 Four Courts fire in Dublin. Only censuses for 1901, 1911 and 1926 are available for research. Once written sources have been thoroughly searched for a pre-famine immigrant ancestor, most researchers are left with a "brick wall".

However, in the last few years, the popularity of DNA testing has been a gamechanger for this type of research. The science is constantly evolving and advances and improvements are on-going. The more individuals who test, the more the results will be refined and become more specific. Combined with reliable and thorough traditional genealogical research, DNA is providing new hope for breaking down long-standing "brick walls".

About DNA

There are three types of DNA:

Autosomal (most common test) – This is the test that provides ethnicity information; results are given in shared centiMorgans (cMs) and can reliably indicate a common ancestor only back to 3X or 4X great-grandparents. For most of us with Irish-Catholic ancestors, we are searching for a common ancestor many generations back—beyond the capabilities of autosomal DNA to determine.

The range of shared DNA for:

Siblings (common parents)	1613-3488 cMs	(average 2613)
1st cousins (common grandparents)	396-1397 cMs	(average 866)
2nd cousins (common great-grandparents)	41-592 cMs	(average 229)
3rd cousins (common 2X great-grandparents)	0-234 cMs	(average 73)
4th cousins (common 3X great-grandparents)	0-139 cMs	(average 35)
5th cousins (common 4X great-grandparents)	0-117 cMs	(average 25)
6th cousins (common 5X great-grandparents)	0-71 cMs	(average 18)

Besides evidence of the above relationships, any amount of shared DNA can indicate several other relationships: half-cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins once removed, grandparent, great-grandparent, etc. Most conclusions of relationships based on autosomal DNA are "educated guesses" at best and require the relevant genealogical research in written records to better interpret DNA results.

Mitochondrial DNA (MtDNA) – This traces a person's direct maternal line back through his or her mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, etc. This type of DNA test is not as well-known and there are significantly fewer testers. It is not relevant in this case as my maternal line is not Irish. I have had this test done but have not yet had any useful matches. My mtDNA Haplogroup is **N2b1a2m1;** the MtDNA my siblings and I have inherited from our mother is identical.

Y-DNA – As females do not have Y-DNA, only males can have this test and it traces the direct line back through father, grandfather, great-grandfather, etc. It is more well-known than Mitochondrial as it is the test required to prove paternity. The results are not given in centiMorgans, but individuals are assigned a Haplogroup.[1] All males who have the same Haplogroup descend from a common ancestor, although it can be several hundred years back. Y-DNA remains the same through many generations. Rarely, mutations/variants can occur resulting in the formation of a new Haplogroup.

Y-DNA is very helpful if the individuals in the Haplogroup have posted a family tree that extends back a few generations and can be verified. It is even better if their Irish ancestors stayed in Ireland and can be found in existing Irish records, or if they emigrated, that they recorded their parents and birthplaces somewhere!

Tests for each type of DNA are available from several different companies, although most only offer Autosomal testing. Currently, only one company (FamilyTreeDNA) offers the other two.

The best Y-DNA test available currently is called the "Big-Y" and that is the one that my brother Pat has done. He was assigned Haplogroup R-BY204725 which evolved from R-DC127 about the year 1400 AD. In addition to Pat, there are currently three other men in this haplogroup—who all share the same ancestor.

William James Gleeson	posted a small tree
David John Maloney	no tree
Barry C.C. Dickerson	no tree

[1] A Haplogroup is a genetic population group sharing a common ancestor on a direct line going back thousands of years into prehistory. Haplogroups can be either paternal (Y-DNA) or maternal (MtDNA). Only males inherit Y-DNA, but MtDNA is inherited by both males and females.

I have corresponded with William "Bill" Gleeson, an experienced genealogist living in Kansas City. He has done excellent research and has collaborated with other Gleesons. He has a female Moloney ancestor, but not a male Moloney. In order to be a Y-DNA match and in this Haplogroup, the common ancestor must be male. However, the Gleeson Project (on FamilyDNA) has concluded that, at some time in the past, a Gleeson woman gave birth to an illegitimate son who had a Moloney father but used the Gleeson surname—as did his descendants. Bill's Gleeson and Moloney ancestors originate in **Reanagishagh Townland, Kilmaley Parish**, County Clare; this parish is a few miles west of Ennis.

David John Maloney did not post a tree, but he immediately replied to my e-mail and referred me to his sister who has done extensive and excellent genealogy. David's 2X great-grandfather (Patrick Maloney) immigrated to the USA before 1857 but unfortunately, the family has not found any record that provides his place of origin in Ireland. However, since he is in the same Haplogroup as Bill and Pat, all three share the same male ancestor sometime in the past.

Barry Dickerson did not reply to my e-mail, has no tree on FamilyTreeDNA, and I have not found his ancestry on any of the other genetic genealogical sites.

One DNA match suggesting a possible place of origin is not enough to be accepted as proof. However, among my own Autosomal matches were two who also could be traced back to **Reanagishagh Townland**, and two that connected to other townlands in the same area.

It must be remembered that Autosomal DNA can be inherited from several ancestral lines, whereas Y-DNA is from only one (the direct paternal line). We all have 2 parents, 4 grandparents, 8 great-grandparents, 16 2X great-grandparents, 32 3X great-grandparents, 64 4X great-grandparents, etc. In my case, I can exclude half of them (my maternal ancestors). I can also exclude some other paternal lines-- the Barrys and Curtins (County Cork), and Moriartys and Brennans (County Kerry). This leaves only one ancestor (great-grandfather John Moloney) with County Clare roots. Thus, my County Clare DNA is inherited from any of:

			Relationship if connected at this level		
Parent	1	William Maloney (1914-2008)	siblings	Avg:	2613 cMs
Grandparent	1	Patrick Maloney (1860-1924)	1st cousins		866 cMs
Great-grandparent	1	John Moloney (1819-1905)	2nd cousins		229 cMs
2X Great-grandparents	2	John's parents (<1800)	3rd cousins		73 cMs
3X Great-grandparents	4	John's grandparents	4th cousins		35 cMs
4X Great-grandparents	8	John's great-grandparents	5th cousins		25 cMs
5X Great-grandparents	16	John's 2X great-grandparents	6th cousins		18 cMs

Relevant DNA matches

My autosomal match Mary (Meere) Cunningham shares **17.4 cM** with me. Her line:

Mary Meere (c1954 County Clare -)
Mother Susan Moloney (1923 **Reanagishagh** – 2008 Ennis)
Grandfather Daniel Moloney (1868 **Reanagishagh** – 1954 Kilmurry Parish, County Clare)
Great Grandfather Timothy Moloney (1830 **Reanagishagh** – 1905 **Reanagishagh**)
2X Great-GF James Moloney (c1800 County Clare – 1880 Reanagishagh) md c1825 Margaret Neylon

My autosomal match Orlaith (Hogan) Daffy shares **11.16 cM** with me. Her line:

Orlaith Hogan (c1967 -
Father Peter Hogan (1941 England – 2020 County Cork) shares **12.0 cM** with me
Grandmother Margaret Moloney (1909 Inagh Parish, Clare – 1960 England)
Great-Grandfather Thomas Moloney (1862 – 1928 Inagh Parish, Clare)
2X Great Grandfather Thomas Moloney (c1832-1892 Inagh Parish, Clare)
3X Great GF James Moloney (c1800 County Clare – 1880 Reanagishagh) md c1825 Margaret Neylon

Pat's Y-DNA match William James Gleeson Haplogroup **R-BY204725**. His line:

William Gleeson (c1953 –
Father James Gleeson (1912 Kansas – 1996 Kansas)
Grandfather Matthew Gleeson (1876 Kilmurry Parish – 1955 Kansas)
Great-Grandmother Bridget Moloney (1838 **Reanagishagh** – 1919 Kilfearagh Parish)
2X Great GF James Moloney (c1800 County Clare – 1880 Reanagishagh) md c8125 Margaret Neylon

My autosomal match Monica (Nolan) McMahon shares **13.4 cM** with me. Her line:

Monica Nolan (c1964 -)
Father Sean Nolan (1927-1995)
Grandmother Catherine Moloney 1882 Kilmurry Parish – 1962 Ennis)
Great Grandfather John Moloney (c1847 Kilmurry Parish – 1879 Kilmurry Parish)
2X Great Grandfather Sinon Moloney (c1817 – 1877 Kilmurry Parish)

My autosomal match Thomas M. King **10.cM** with me. His line

Thomas King (1938 New York – 2023 Maryland)
Mother Catherine Boyle (1903 County Clare – 1961 New York)
Grandmother Bridget Moloney (1865 Kilmurry Parish – 1931 Kilmurry)
Great-Grandfather James Moloney (c1818 Clare – 1884 Kilmurry Parish)
2 X Great-Grandfather Patrick Moloney (c1790 Kilmurry Parish -) md c1817 Mary Keane (c1788-1882

Pat's Y-DNA match David John Maloney Haplogroup **R-BY204725**. His line

David John Maloney (c1962 –
Father Mark Maloney (1938 Minnesota – 1960 Minnesota
Grandfather Thomas Maloney (1889 Michigan – 1973 Minnesota)
Great-Grandfather Dennis Maloney (1857 Quebec – 1941 Michigan)
2X Great-Grandfather Patrick Maloney (c 1836 Ireland – 1908 Michigan)

We inherit 50% of our DNA from our fathers and 50% from our mothers. However, each child receives a different 50% from each. The autosomal matches (to me) mentioned above may or may not be matches to all my siblings, and they will have matches that I do not.

FamilyTreeDNA has begun extracting the small amount of Y-DNA found in autosomal samples and assigning a Haplogroup to males. My brother Dennis was assigned Haplogroup R-L226 (further back on the same Ancestral Path). Because there is so little Y-DNA in autosomal samples, this is a much less refined placement than the Big-Y test provides. There was no need for Dennis to have the Big-Y test. His and Pat's Y-DNA is identical, whereas their Autosomal DNA is different. The Ancestral Path currently ending in R-BY204725 has 50 haplogroups dating back to the Stone Age and beyond. The portion that is relevant for my brothers is:

1. - R-BY204725	1400 AD	Pat
2. – R-DC127	950 AD	
3. – R-DC63	600 AD	
4. – R-FGC79628	450 AD	
5. – R-Z17669	400 AD	
6. – R-FGC5660	300 AD	
7. – R-L226	150 AD	Dennis

It is important to note that Pat's two Y-DNA matches can only be to the MOLONEY line. However, my four Autosomal matches, although they could be matches on the Y-line (Moloney), they could also be matches to any of 31 ancestral lines at the 6X Great-grandparent level, 15 ancestral lines at the 5X Great-grandparent level, 7 lines at the 4X level, etc.

Reanagishagh Townland

It is evident that one ancestral couple from **Reanagishagh**--**James and Margaret (Neylon) Moloney**--is common to several of these matches. My Great-grandfather John Moloney must be related somehow to these ancestors, albeit in a previous generation. I've researched all of **James and Margaret's** family and am confident that John and his brothers are not sons of this couple who married about 1825.

Reanagishagh Townland is in Kilmaley Parish, County Clare. It is only 1.01 miles square and contains 10 lots, as surveyed in 1855 for the country-wide "Griffiths Valuation of Tenements". (For rural areas, these surveys are still used today). At that time Lot 1 was occupied by Cornelius Gleeson (Bill's 2X great-grandfather). Adjacent to Lot 1 were Lot 7 John Moloney; Lot 8 James Moloney, and Lot 9 Margaret Moloney. Because single women could not hold land at that time, my interpretation is that Margaret may be the widow of an older Moloney (possibly the father of either or both **James** and John. An earlier land evaluation was the Tithe Applotment done in 1826. At that time, there were five occupiers in Reanagishagh including James Molony (possibly Margaret's husband) I've not been able to extend the line of Lot 7's John, and have not had matches leading back to him.

When we were in Ireland last fall, we drove on a secondary highway that passes close to Reanagishagh. It was very rugged hilly terrain—quite unlike other rural areas in Ireland. There are excellent maps available at County, Parish and Townland levels at the following website: https://www.townlands.ie

Some of the matches' ancestors listed above do not trace back to Reanagishagh, but to other nearby parishes. Just as our children and grandchildren have settled in other parts of our country—or even in other countries, the same thing happened in Ireland. Families were large and usually only the eldest son inherited his father's land; the younger sons had to relocate—or emigrate. Kilmurry and Inagh Parishes (mentioned above) are adjacent to Kilmaley Parish, and any of their townlands are probably within a five-to-ten-mile radius of **Reanagishagh**.

Conclusion

My goal was to establish a birthplace for my great-grandfather JOHN MOLONEY (1819-1905). I have not been successful. While it cannot be concluded that **Reanagashagh** is his birthplace, it can be concluded that my siblings and I are genetically related to descendants of individuals who were born there.

It is tempting to speculate that our great-grandfather could be an uncle to the two farmers in the 1855 record **(James** and John). This would make me a 5th cousin to my DNA matches and consistent with the amount of shared DNA (5th cousins average 25 cM within a range of 0-117). However, this is a theory only and cannot be proved. If the connection is a generation back, the average shared DNA for 6th cousins is 18 cM (range of 0-71). This seems more likely—but too far back to ever be proved conclusively.

For now, my "best guess" is that **Reanagishagh Townland, Kilmaley Parish** is a possibility for John's origins "near Ennis"!

MOLONYinCountyClare.docx
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