

Manhattan Mystery

Notes on the paternity of Éamon de Valera

Kate Coll's Narrative

Kate Coll walked through the porticoed entrance of the New York Nursery and Child's Hospital on 13th of October 1882, presumably between the hours of 11am and 1 pm, as required by its strict house rules.¹ She came with a convincing narrative: one that would satisfy the institution, registering authorities and perhaps even her own connections. Later this narrative would provide implausible explanations for a son keen to get to the bottom of his father's identity.²

The narrative was a novel one, devoid of any trace of victimhood. The father of Kate Coll's child was her husband, Vivion De Valera.³ He had been born in Seville, Spain.⁴ He came to America as a child.⁵ He was about 28 years of age when they met in 1880, or at least he said he was. He was a nobleman, an artist, a sculptor before turning to book keeping and then music due to an eye injury from a marble chip.

Regarding his family, Vivion's father was called Juan Ricardo De Valero, or Antonio De Valero according to another version. His mother was called Amelia Costa or DaCosta. He had a sister, Charlotte (known as Lotte) and a brother, Leon, who both died young. Later Kate Coll went back on this and said that Vivion was an only child.⁶

Vivion's ill-health formed a major part of the narrative, specifically lung trouble. While illness was a convenient way to explain Vivion's suspicious absences at important times, the lung disease referenced throughout the story is perhaps too specific to be an invention. According to Coll, it was Vivion's father who advised him to seek a dry climate out west for the benefit of his lungs.⁷ Kate said that his father often stayed at an apartment on 26th or 27th Street, Manhattan, between Broadway and Fifth Avenue.⁸

Kate Coll maintained that she first encountered Vivion (or indeed Vivian) at the Brooklyn City home of Frank and Martha Giraud, where she worked as a domestic.⁹ De Valera's biographer, David McCullagh, repeats the theory that Vivion, described as a family friend of the Girauds, was visiting

¹28th Annual Report of the Nursery and Children's Hospital, March 1, 1882, accessed at <https://archive.org/details/nurserychildshos1875nurs/page/n309/mode/2up>, Dec 2023.

²UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers, P150/188. Letter dated May 31, 1943, from Éamon de Valera to Father Thomas Wheelwright.

³ Early sources also cite the surname as De Valero and the given name as Vivian. Later the name evolved into Vivion de Valera and then Vivion Juan de Valera.

⁴ Terry de Valera, *A Memoir*, page 158. Currach Press, 2005.

⁵ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers, P150/228. Genealogical notes compiled by de Valera based on his mother's recollections.

⁶David McCullagh, *De Valera*, Volume 1, Rise 1882-1932, page 13. Gill Books, 2017.

⁷ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers, P150/228. Genealogical notes compiled by de Valera based on his mother's recollections.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹David McCullagh, *De Valera*, Volume 1, Rise 1882-1932, page 7. Gill Books, 2017.

Frank's sister, Lillian Giraud, when he first encountered Kate Coll.¹⁰ This is also what de Valera himself believed based on his mother's recollections.¹¹ An alternative explanation is that Vivion called to give music lessons to the Giraud children, Edgar (17) and Ella (4).

Then there are the random details provided by Kate Coll like the fact that Vivion's feet were so small that he could wear her shoes : a detail that de Valera's biographer Ronan Fanning describes as a "baffling nugget"¹² until you consider that it cleverly paints a picture that the couple shared a close domestic life.

Something about his personality was revealed too. Always playing a trick or a joke and a terrific mimic. Loved drawing, charades. Wrote poetry. A gifted musician, especially on the mandolin, and was fluent in many languages which he had learned in Europe: English, German, French and Spanish. Why Spanish would be included on this long list is strange as it would have been his native tongue. Was this a slip on Kate Coll's part?

Kate Coll declared that the couple were married at **St Patrick's Church, Jersey City**, on **September 19, 1881**. Then in November 1881, they took an apartment together in midtown Manhattan at **61 East 41st Street**.

No 61 East 41st Street

This building appears to have been newly done up two years before in 1879, with features such as marble halls, speaking tubes and door openers. The rent was \$25 a week.¹³ This would have represented approximately 5 or 6 weeks of Kate Coll's salary as a domestic.

In the 1880 census of 61 East 41st Street¹⁴, which was a brick building, eight families made up of 24 persons were living at the address. This included two large Irish families, the Lynches and the Quinns. The Lynches were headed by Susan Lynch, a widow. The second Irish family consisted of Ann and Peter Quinn, a tailor, and their young family of five. There was a Hungarian family living there also which included 49 year-old **George Tatzreiter** (died 1909), an unmarried cabinet maker and a permanent resident in the building over many years. There was a young stock broker, Louis Ballott, and his wife, Helen, living there too. None of the families resident in the building employed live-in staff.

Later in 1882, 61 East 41st Street was home to a French language professor, **Charles P. Du Croquet**, who had emigrated to America from England in 1880, having taught at an academy in Guildford, Surrey, for a number of years. Du Croquet (1848-1932) wrote several French language books and became an American citizen in 1894. He advertised as a French tutor from his home on 41st Street during the early 1880s.¹⁵ By October 1882, 61 East 41st Street was also the residence of **Jennie Crager Abrahams**, the woman who recommended Kate Coll to the Children's Nursery and Lying-in Hospital in October 1882.

Directories for New York City show that the occupants of Number 61 East 41st Street changed frequently, with the exception of George Tatzreiter. Not only was there a large collection of artists and musicians coming and going, but two former members of the **Oneida Religious Commune**

¹⁰ Ibid, page 7.

¹¹ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers, P150/228. Genealogical notes compiled by de Valera. His notes recorded that his father met Kate Coll at the Girauds' Brooklyn home while he was visiting Lily Giraud.

¹² Ronan Fanning, *Eamon de Valera: A Will to Power*, page 4

¹³ *New York Daily Herald*, 05 October 1879 page 15.

¹⁴ United States Census, 1880, FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/>

¹⁵ *The New York Times*, 20 Nov 1884, page 7.

were also resident at this address during the early 1880s. The commune disbanded officially in 1881.

New York Directory entries for 1881. ¹⁶Persons listed with an address at 61 East 41st Street

- Edward A Lynch, clerk. (Son of Susan Lynch. Listed in 1880 census. 25 years of age in 1881.)
- Samuel Lynch, clerk. (Son of Susan Lynch. Listed in 1880 census. 21 years of age in 1881.)
- George S. McKay, physician.
- Theodore R. Noyes (1841-1903), baths. (Medical doctor. Son of the founder of the Utopian Oneida religious community, Theophilus John Noyes.)
- Peter Quinn, tailor, 38 West 30th, house 61 East 41st Street. (Also listed in 1880 census.)
- George Tatzreiter, cabinet maker. (Also listed in 1880 census.)
- Edgar Whitson, starter.
- Thomas Jolly, artist.

New York Directory entries for 1882. ¹⁷Persons listed with an address at 61 East 41st Street

James H. Ballard. (Could not be identified.)

Julius G. Bierck, (1860-1925), music, 5 Union Square, house 61 East 41st St.

Alexander Fitzsimmons, clerk.

Harley A. Hamilton (1861-1933, musician. Former member of the Oneida religious Community. Violinist and conductor. Subsequently conductor of the Los Angeles Women's Orchestra and LA Symphony Orchestra.)

Daniel W. Leeson, actor.

Susan Lynch, widow.

Mary A. Marshall, sewing.

William Metcalfe, janitor.

Frances Strong, dressmaker.

George Tatzreiter, cabinetmaker.

Solomon Abrahams, segars, 48 East 42nd, house 61 East 41st.

New York Directory entries for 1883-1884. ¹⁸Persons listed with an address at 61 East 41st Street

- Francis Staple (could not be identified)
- Eugene Staubsent, janitor.
- George Tatzreiter, cabinet maker.
- Solomon Abrahams, segars.

Heading West

Regarding the final stages of Vivion's illness, Kate Coll maintained that he left her to travel to **Denver, Colorado**, on **30th of June 1884**, an unusually precise date in her otherwise vague back story. This date must have had unusual significance for Coll. The story continues that he died in approximately November 1884, in either Denver, Santa Fé or Minneapolis (the geographical outlier of the three.) About this time too Kate put what was left of his things into cold storage with a Mrs Reilly (identity unknown) on Lexington Ave, Manhattan.

Kate Coll's story also features the unbelievable detail that, despite her being his lawful wife and living in the age of the telegraph among other communication tools, she did not receive news of

¹⁶ Trow's New York City Directory, 1881.

¹⁷ Trows New York City Directory , 1882.

¹⁸ Trow's New York City Directory, 1883-1884.

Vivion's death until six months after it occurred. She added that the bearer of the news was Vivion's friend, the only slightly less mysterious **Fred Hamilton**, (unidentified but see appendix at the end of this report for possible candidates). Fred Hamilton crops up a number of times in the narrative. He was the same friend who was apparently witness to the couple's marriage in Greenville, Jersey City, in September 1881, along with Kate's friend, Lily or Elizabeth Brady. (Could not be identified.)

By the time Kate Coll had received the bad news, her little son had already been dispatched to Limerick under the care of of Kate's younger brother, Edward Coll. (April 1885.) Was the dating of Vivion's death in Kate's story to November 1884 done to justify why she had already taken this unusual step. If so, an alternative death date after April 1885 should not be ruled out.

Clues from photographs of Vivion de Valera

De Valera's photograph of his father, Vivion,¹⁹ which he kept on his desk throughout his long career, shows a young man with a slight widow's peak, a shock of dark curly hair, a slender neck, sideburns, small but prominent ears and a petit handlebar moustache, waxed at the ends, evoking a touch of artistry. He is wearing a bow tie around the neck with the collar up. The lapels of his jacket are narrow. The fashion indicates that the portrait, likely a carte de visite, or its successor a cabinet card, dates from the 1870s. This portrait is archived in the de Valera papers at UCD.²⁰ No doubt the contents of the reverse side of the card giving details of the studio where the photograph was taken would have provided vital clues. But no such evidence was ever forthcoming.

Also included in this archive is another, less-well known image reputed to be of Vivion de Valera. It is a photograph enclosed in a tiny locket that was likely worn by Kate Coll. It shows a young man with face turned to the side, wearing a top hat and an unusual white ruff collar. The image is tiny and of such poor quality that it is hard to make out the subject's features.²¹ But the clothes suggest a performer's costume or, at a stretch, a uniform of some sort (carriage driver/coachman?) Assuming that Kate Coll was the source of the photographs, these faces are the only real trace of this enigmatic individual's identity, but is it beyond doubt that they are of the same person?



Portrait of Vivion de Valera from the 1870s. Reproduced by kind permission of UCD-OFM Partnership, the Éamon de Valera papers, P150/168.



Miniature photograph of Vivion de Valera enclosed in a tiny glass pendant. Reproduced by kind permission of UCD-OFM Partnership, the Éamon de Valera papers , P150/169.

¹⁹Vivion is also spelled Vivian on de Valera's original baptismal record and is the spelling preferred by early biographers of de Valera.

²⁰ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers. P150,168.

²¹ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers. P150,169.

The New York Nursery and Child's Hospital

When Kate Coll entered the New York Nursery and Child's Hospital, Lexington Avenue, on the 13th of October,²² her home address was the same as the woman who referred her to the hospital, **Jennie Crager Abrahams**.²³ Abrahams was of an age with Coll : a young woman in her mid twenties and already the mother of three children under the age of five. Her youngest was a baby of only a few months old.

It isn't certain how Kate Coll was acquainted with Jennie Abrahams. Was she simply living at the same address on 41st Street or was she working for Abrahams in some way given that she had three young children? Jennie's husband, Samuel (or Solomon) Abrahams, a Prussian-born immigrant, operated a cigar store on nearby 42nd Street opposite Grand Central Station (Number 48).²⁴ But there is no evidence from their census returns that the Abrahams ever hired live-in staff.

Éamon de Valera was born at this institution on the 14/10/1882. His given name was left blank in the records at first.²⁵ That year Kate Coll was one of 224 mothers who gave birth at the institution, which had a mortality rate of 25%.²⁶ Few women would choose to have their babies at the New York Nursery and Child's Hospital if they had any alternative. Kate Coll's decision to do so speaks volumes about the desperate predicament she must have been in. It suggests she was on her own in the matter and not being supported in any way.

Founded in 1854 by sculptor and philanthropist Mary Ann Delafield Dubois, the hospital had an all-female management board composed of many New York socialites such as Alice Vanderbilt and Caroline Astor.²⁷ Indeed the institution's annual charity ball, held in February at the Music Academy opposite Tammany Hall, was one of the top social events among the favoured '400'.

But the contrast between the lives of the 'applicants' as the mothers were termed, and the rich Gilded Age matrons who managed the institution, could not have been greater. And while the management was broadly sympathetic to the mothers, its annual reports show that at best they were regarded as 'unfortunates' who had been 'taken advantage of'.²⁸

Although the institution had a non-denominational and charitable ethos, it also came with strict conditions for the said 'applicants'. For instance, rules for the lying-in wards included the following:

applicant must present a certificate of *former* good character; must be clean and free from disease; must nurse a child while in the Institution in addition to her own; must nurse 2 children if her baby died; must nurse 2 infants for 3 months if unable to pay for board.

²² Joseph M. Silinonte, 'De Valera's Background', *The Irish Times*, 18 Jun, 1999, page 15.

²³ Referred to hospital by Mrs Jennie Crager Abrahams, 61 East 41st Street, Manhattan, according to the late genealogist, Joseph Silinonte, who worked for many years on de Valera's case. This is also mentioned in David McCullagh's biography, *De Valera*, Volume 1, Rise 1882-1932, Gill Books, 2017.

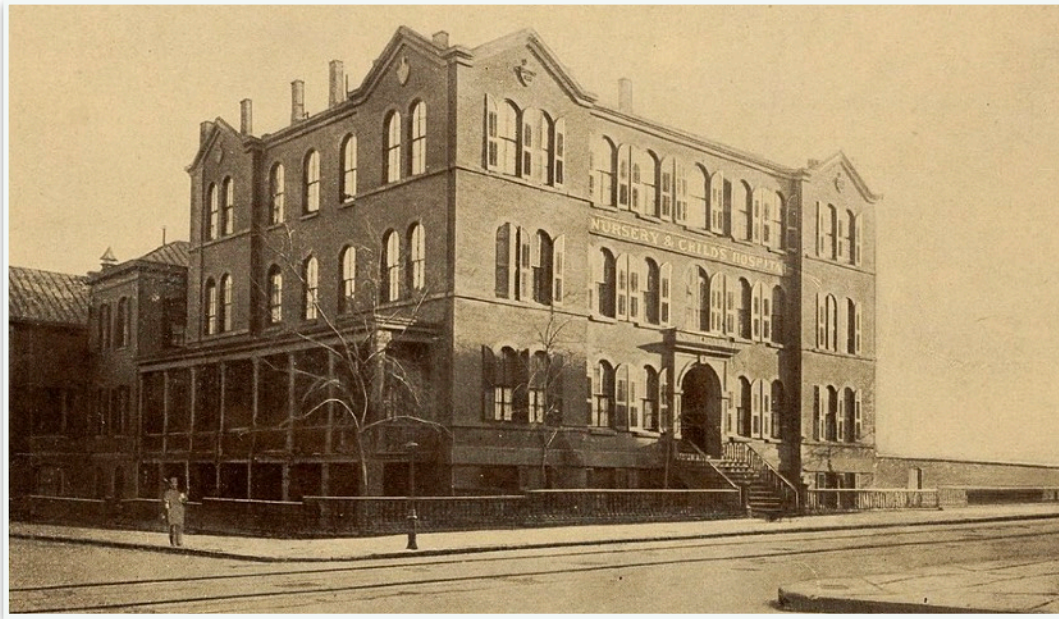
²⁴ New York City directory, 1881/82, Trow City Publishers 1881, The New York Public Library, Digital Collections, accessed at: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/cd2711f0-6d33-0134-8099-00505686a51c/book#page/21/mode/2up>.

²⁵ Joseph M. Silinonte, 'De Valera's Background', *The Irish Times*, 18 Jun, 1999, page 15.

²⁶ 29th Annual Report of the Nursery and Children's Hospital, March 1, 1883, accessed at <https://archive.org/details/nurserychildshos1875nurs/page/n309/mode/2up>, Dec 2023.

²⁷ 29th Annual Report of the Nursery and Children's Hospital, March 1, 1883, accessed at <https://archive.org/details/nurserychildshos1875nurs/page/n309/mode/2up>, Dec 2023.

²⁸ *Ibid*, accessed Dec 2023.



New York Nursery and Child's Hospital, Lexington Avenue, in the 19th century, where Éamon de Valera was born on October 14th 1882.

If an applicant was able to pay \$25, she was allowed to leave the hospital on her own terms, provided the house doctor agreed. Otherwise she had to stay for 3 months.²⁹ It isn't known whether Kate Coll was in a position to pay her way out with this fee, but if she was it would have represented five or six solid weeks of her wages.³⁰ This may explain the unusually long period of time between de Valera's birth in October and his baptism at a Manhattan church the following December.

In 1882 the secretary of the Institution noted that there were more Roman Catholic applicants than any other denomination, because it gave what their own institutions did not provide.³¹ One of the hospital's services was to provide day care for the babies of wet nurses or working mothers. This also came with tough conditions, since the mother could only visit the baby once a fortnight.³² The hospital also provided training courses for nurse maids and laundresses. There was an assumption that the applicants would not be returning to where they came from after giving birth, and so it was thought essential that suitable training was available to equip them for a fresh start.

Did Kate Coll avail of any of these training opportunities while at the hospital? It is noteworthy that she found employment several times as a nursemaid in subsequent years with the families of New York medical physicians, including a Dr Hogan³³ and later the prominent New York gynaecologist, Dr Benjamin Franklin Dawson³⁴.

²⁹ 28th Annual Report of the Nursery and Children's Hospital, March 1, 1882, accessed at <https://archive.org/details/nurserychildshos1875nurs/page/n309/mode/2up>, Dec 2023.

³⁰ David M. Katzman, *Seven days a week : women and domestic service in industrializing America*, page 312, Urbana, University of Illinois Press.

³¹ 28th Annual Report of the Nursery and Children's Hospital, March 1, 1882, page 13-14, accessed at <https://archive.org/details/nurserychildshos1875nurs/page/n309/mode/2up>, Dec 2023.

³² Ibid, page 37.

³³ Possibly Dr. Edward J. Hogan of Madison Street, which is adjacent to Henry Street, Manhattan.

³⁴ Dr Dawson Fifth Avenue (Benjamin Frederick Dawson. 1844-1888.) Specialised in obstetrics. In 1886 his address was 18 East 34th Street, the same address that Charles Wheelwright gave when seeking naturalisation in 1894.

A month after his birth, on the 10th of November 1882, de Valera's name was registered as **George De Valero** by one of the resident doctors at the hospital, 27 year-old Charles Pemberton Murray.³⁵ Why was Kate Coll still resident there a month after giving birth? In an unsigned affidavit from 1931, a year before her death, she explained this by stating that she was ill and that she mistakenly named her son, George.³⁶ The baby was subsequently baptised as Edward on the 3rd of December at the **Church of St. Agnes, 141 East 43rd Street**, the nearest chapel to Kate Coll's address at **61 East 41st Street**.

Widhood and Re-marriage

One notable feature of Kate Coll's life in 1880s New York, both before and after the birth of her son, is the scarcity of primary records relating to her time there, except for the 1880 census. For instance she was never listed in city directories in her own right so there is no evidence that she used the name de Valero(a) after marriage or after the death of her husband, except in the record of her marriage to Charles Wheelwright in May 1888. The couple were married in **St. Francis Xavier Church, 46 West 16th Street**, Manhattan³⁷, which indicates that the bride was still living in Manhattan at this time.

It is known that she returned on a visit to Limerick in 1887. Yet tellingly shipping records show that she didn't use her married name for the voyage back or forth either.³⁸ Her younger sister, Hannah, 'Hannie', went to America in 1886 and found work in Massachusetts.

Regrettably, no census, either federal or state, was conducted for New York in 1885 and it wasn't until 1892 that the next reliable surviving census was taken, a full 12 years after 1880. However, unlike the case of Brooklyn, the 1892 census returns for Manhattan did not survive. Despite this there is evidence that the Wheelwrights spent the first years of their married life in Manhattan as their two children were born there and city directories listing Charles Wheelwright also confirm this.

How did Kate Coll meet her second husband, Charles Wheelwright, an Englishman who had emigrated to America in August 1882 and worked as an ostler and a coachman in Manhattan?³⁹ Charles Wheelwright applied for American citizenship in 1894⁴⁰ His witness was Edward Moloney, driver, of 22 East 34th Street. The address he gave was 18 East 34th Street, which interestingly is the same address that **Dr. Benjamin F. Dawson** used when he wrote a letter to the newspapers in 1887. This address was located behind 5th Avenue.⁴¹ Did Charles Wheelwright

³⁵ Dr Charles Pemberton Murray MD (1855-1890). Native New Yorker. Completed some of his medical training in Great Malvern, England, as well as at Princeton University. Spent 18 months of his relatively short career working in the New York Nursery and Child's Hospital. Moved to San Francisco for the good of his health where he died young of consumption in 1890. (*Los Angeles Evening Express*, 5 May 1890.)

³⁶ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers, P150/528.

³⁷ New York Roman Catholic Parish Marriages, St Francis Xavier, Manhattan, New York, United States , Marriage of Charles Wheelwright and Catherine de Valera ors Coll, 07/05/1888.

³⁸ Ancestry.com. New York Port, Ship Images, 1851-1891 [database online]. Provo, Utah: MyFamily.com, Inc., 2004. Catherine Coll, aboard the ship, *Furnessia*, arriving 5/09/1887.

³⁹ Trows New York City Directory, 1890, "United States City and Business Directories, ca. 1749 - ca. 1990", , FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6ZBT-RD5B> : Sun Dec 17 03:30:19 UTC 2023), Entry for Charles E Wheelwright, 1890. The year this directory is compiled he was living at 18 west 18th Street.

⁴⁰ Ancestry.com. New York, U.S., State and Federal Naturalization Records, 1794-1943 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.

⁴¹Letter to Paul C. Greening by Dr B.F. Dawson, dated July 1, 1886, regarding his selection as consulting surgeon at the Woman's Hospital, Brooklyn, *The Brooklyn Citizen*, 22 Jun 1889, Page 2.

meet Kate Coll at Dr Dawson's ?If so, the couple may have ended up in the eye of a domestic storm shortly before their marriage. ⁴²

The other known address associated with Charles Wheelwright in the early years of the couple's marriage was **18 West 18th Street**. This street was known for its concentration of private livery stables built by wealthy New Yorkers in the 1860s German style of two-storey curved arch facades and with accommodation for families upstairs. ⁴³

A Musical Brooklyn family

The best source for Kate Coll's life in New York around the time she met de Valera's father is undoubtedly the 1880 US federal census. This census shows her living with Frank and Martha Giraud at **98 Lawrence Street**, a brick house ⁴⁴ in downtown Brooklyn City, near City Hall and bustling Fulton Street with its many stores.



Frank Giraud (or Girard), from about 1876-8. One-time blacksmith, 'black-face' Hooley minstrel, vaudeville comedian, long-time stage manager for Tony Pastor and prominent member of the Elk Fraternity.

Getting to Manhattan still involved a 25 minute-long ferry ride from Fulton Street as the Brooklyn Bridge was not yet completed. In 1880 the street was occupied by a mixture of middle class families: composers, store owners, book keepers, physicians, musicians and court officers. Several families on the street retained one servant, usually an Irish woman. Although the Girauds were comfortable, they were certainly not high society or even rich. Nor were they French, as had been stated a number of times. ⁴⁵ They also didn't have 98 Lawrence Street to themselves. Mary and Henry Wilshere, an English-born miller, and their 7 children occupied an apartment in the same building too.

According to the census, Kate Coll was the only servant in the household so she was likely the maid of all work. If her situation was typical, her working day would have been 12 hours long, six days a week, living in. She would therefore have been somewhat detached from the wider Irish community, including members of her extended family who had already crossed to America. It begs the question how she had the time or opportunity to meet any visitors to the house.

It is impossible to know what the Giraud family were like to work for. But one thing that would have distinguished them was that they were heavily involved in the world of vaudeville, thanks to Frank Giraud's job as a professional variety actor, singer and stage manager for an important figure in that world, **Tony Pastor**. In May of 1880, a few weeks before the census, Frank Girard was appearing nightly on the stage of the Brooklyn Park Theatre

⁴² In 1887, the newspapers reported Dawson's estranged wife tried to abduct her own children from the Westminster Hotel, Manhattan, but was intercepted by the children's nurse maid. (Was this Kate Coll?) The origin of the trouble between the couple appeared to have been money. The same year Dr Dawson was selling his assets (yachts etc.) and putting an ad of recommendation in the newspapers looking for a situation on behalf of his coachman. He died in 1888.

⁴³ Christopher Gray, 'Where Charming Buildings Housed Horses', *New York Times*, Jan 27., 2008.

⁴⁴ United States Census, 1880, FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/> Entry is for Francis Girand (sic) and Martha Girand (sic), 98 Lawrence Street, Brooklyn, 1880.

⁴⁵ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers, P150/228. Typed report entitled, My parents my birth and my arrival in Ireland.

with Pastor's travelling tour. ⁴⁶ And one thing that the Giraud family are known to have had in their home was a piano ! ⁴⁷

Kate Coll was already an experienced domestic servant having worked in that capacity in Ireland for a number of years before emigrating in 1879. However, having to work this job in New York's searing summer heat and freezing winters must have been a different prospect. Undoubtedly Kate would have interacted most with the lady of the house, **Martha Ann Quackenbush**, who was of New York Dutch settler ancestry and was the daughter of a New York carman called Cornelius Quackenbush. Unlike her husband Frank, who was a Lutheran, she was a member of the Ebenezer 'Old School' Baptist Church, Manhattan. ⁴⁸

Twenty years before, in the 1860 state census, Frank Giraud, then a journeyman blacksmith, was staying with the Quackenbush family at their New York home. ⁴⁹ Martha and Frank went on to marry shortly afterwards on April 30th, 1860, when they were 18 and 20 years of age respectively. ⁵⁰

At the time the census was taken in 1880, the couple had two children - Ella (aged 4) and Edgar (aged 17). Both children were to follow their father on to the stage : Ella in an amateur capacity as an actor, singer and instrumentalist; and Edgar (or Eddie) in a professional way as a baritone, comic actor and later theatre manager of several New York venues, including the Gotham Theatre. (For more biographical notes on these Girard siblings, see appendix at the end of this essay.)

Francis (Frank) Giraud was Brooklyn born and bred, the son of a cooper and some-time cigar dealer, Francis Sayre Giraud . ⁵¹ He lived in Brooklyn all his life except during the Civil War years when he served in the navy. He became a Hooley's 'black face' minstrel after the war and started to use the surname Girard as a stage name, possibly because it was easier to pronounce and spell.

Girard achieved notoriety as one of only 17 passengers out of a total of almost 300 to survive a deadly ship wreck, when *The Evening Star*, on its way to New Orleans on October 3rd, 1866, sank in high seas. Girard was left with a serious leg injury after the tragedy, which plagued him for the rest of his life. ⁵²

On stage, Girard formed long partnerships with many Irish performers, notably **Billy Barry** (1850-1898) and **Charley Worley** (1842-1892). A talented singer, Frank Girard had a noticeable cleft chin and a brawny, thick-set build⁵³as befitted someone who juggled cannon balls on stage.

Frank Girard had a little sister, Lillian or Lillie, who lived at his Brooklyn home in the 1880s. She was 22 years old at the time of the 1880 census and therefore was closest in age to Kate Coll (23). One interesting feature of the 1880 census is column 2, which denotes families in order of

⁴⁶ *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 04, 1880, Page 1.

⁴⁷*The Real Estate Record*, Mar 29, 1884, page 330. Record shows that Frank Giraud had his piano insured with J.A. Simonson (otherwise J.A. Herman.)

⁴⁸ Obituary of Martha A. Girard , *The Weekly Chat*, 16th Aug 1911,

⁴⁹Ancestry.com.1860 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch.

⁵⁰ *New York Herald*, May 1, 1860.

⁵¹ Francis S. Giraud. Born New York 1812. Cooper . Also cigar dealer . Later Clerk. Died 348 Sackett Street, Brooklyn 14/01/1879. Although the Girauds were sometimes described as French, they had in fact been living in America for generations.

⁵² Charles Edward Ellis, *An authentic history of the Benevolent and protective order of Elks* page 155, published by author, 1910.

⁵³ *New York Dispatch*, 16/11/1884, page 5.

visitation.⁵⁴ In this column, Lillie Giraud and Kate Coll were given a different number to the rest of the household, suggesting they were enumerated together but separately from the others. This raises the possibility, therefore, that Kate may have been specifically engaged by the family as some sort of useful companion to Lillie, who appeared to suffer serious health problems and may already have been an invalid at this early stage in life.⁵⁵ If so, this would explain how Kate Coll came to meet the mysterious 'Vivion de Valera'. In his family history notes from the 1930s, de Valera expressed the vain hope that Lillie Giraud might now be a married woman and that she would 'know more about father than anyone living'.⁵⁶ In reality Lillian Giraud was long dead, having taken ill while shopping at Brooklyn's Fulton Street in 1883.⁵⁷ She was only 25 years of age.

Of course Vivian de Valero would not have been the only potential visitor calling on Lillie Giraud. It is likely that many from the world of vaudeville would have stopped by also. There was also her sister, Maria Giraud, and brother, George Giraud⁵⁸. They too may have been frequent visitors. Maria was a music teacher and in 1879 she married John H. Evans, a Brooklyn weigh master. Kate Coll knew this as the notes in de Valera's archive regarding his mother's recollections mentioned that Lillie's sister was a Mrs Evans.⁵⁹

In 1882, the Girauds had moved from Lawrence Street to nearby 443 Gold Street, Brooklyn. It may be a revealing point that Coll certainly knew this too⁶⁰ as it would imply that her contact with the Giraud family lasted well into the year that she gave birth to Éamon de Valera.

Absence of Evidence

Six years of research by four genealogists failed to find any trace of a person called Vivion de Valera or variants of that name and surname in relevant American primary sources.⁶¹ In particular, the late genealogist, Joseph Silinonte, a Brooklyn native, conducted a great deal of research on the subject. Sources here would have included city and trade directories, birth records, death records, cemetery records, immigration records, newspaper references. To this day the only reference to a person of this name is to be found indirectly courtesy of de Valera's New York birth and baptism records.

In his article about the mystery of de Valera's father, genealogist Sean J Murphy, surveyed the location distribution of the (de) Valera/Valero surname and its variations (e.g. Valerio/Valera) within United States boundaries in the 1880s. Although New Mexico featured prominently in the survey, the surname was never used in conjunction with the forename, Vivion, which indeed is not a forename associated with Spanish or Hispanic populations at all, but with the French. (St Vivian

⁵⁴"United States Census, 1880", FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZ8N-8X1> : Thu Oct 05 06:34:55 UTC 2023), Entry for Francis Girand (sic) and Martha Girand (sic), 98 Lawrence Street, Brooklyn, 1880.

⁵⁵In January 1883, Lillian Giraud, then aged 25, took ill and died while shopping at 209 Fulton Street (site of the Wechsler and Abraham store). The cause of death was apoplexy brought on by Bright's disease. By that time the Girauds had moved to nearby 443 Gold Street, Brooklyn. Occupation on death cert- Composer. Lillian Giraud was buried at Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn.

⁵⁶ 'Notes which I took in Conversation with Mother', UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers. P150/228.

⁵⁷ Death notice of Lillie R Giraud, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 14 Jan 1883.

⁵⁸ George G. Giraud died aged 19 or 20 in 1870, *The Port Chester Journal*, Sep 15, 1870, Page 2.

⁵⁹ 'Notes which I took in Conversation with Mother', UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera papers. P150/228.

⁶⁰ Ibid. There are several references to the Girauds living at Gold street, Brooklyn, in Kate Coll's account of her life in the early 1880s.

⁶¹ David McCullagh, *De Valera Volume 1: Rise (1882-1932)*, page 10.

was a 5th Century French saint). The author speculated that New Mexico may have been a home place for de Valera's father and not just a sought-after location for healthier air.⁶²

As de Valera's recent biographer, David McCullagh, rightly points out, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. However, the lack of any trace of a person with this name to this day would tend to give weight to the theory that whoever de Valera's father was, his name was not Vivion (Vivian) de Valera or any of its variants. But if the name was Coll's invention, who or what could have been the inspiration for this unusual pseudonym? There is more than a touch of the theatrical about it.

1881 was the year that New York State re-imposed registration of marriages after some decades of haphazard record-keeping. But as recent biographies of de Valera reiterate, no evidence of Kate Coll's 1881 marriage to Vivian de Valero was ever found, despite years of research. De Valera's half brother, Father Tom Wheelwright, made numerous enquiries on de Valera's behalf among relevant clergy and potential parishes, but nothing turned up.⁶³ For this researcher, the most realistic explanation for this lacuna is that no marriage could take place because the groom was already married.

The 19th of September 1881, the date identified by Coll as her marriage date, was a Monday. It was also significant in another way because it was the day that President James Garfield died, following injuries he received from an assassin's bullet the previous July. By a strange coincidence, James Garfield's assassin, Charles J. Giteau, was a disaffected member of the Oneida Commune, two of whose members were living at 61 East 41st Street at around the same time as Kate Coll.

The Hennessys

One other curious coincidence in this case is that one of de Valera's godparents in his baptism of December 1882, John Hennessy, had the same surname as the parish priest who allegedly married Kate and Vivian in September 1881.⁶⁴ This was Father Patrick J. Hennessy, the main driving force behind the building of the imposing St. Patrick's Church at Bramhall Avenue, Jersey City. Father Hennessy was a Limerick man who was born in 1834.⁶⁵ In 1848, 15 year-old Patrick J. Hennessy along with his parents, Garret and Hanora and his seven siblings, fled the Great Famine aboard the ship, *Christianna*.⁶⁶

Greenville, New Jersey, was the most rural part of Jersey City. According to her own story, Kate Coll worked there for a family called the Armstrongs after leaving the Girauds of Brooklyn. She claimed that this is why she was married in that parish.⁶⁷ She recollected that the church was near Bayview Cemetery.⁶⁸ Was Kate Coll really working and living in Jersey City at the time of her union with Vivion in September 1881, or did she choose Father Hennessy's parish because he could be relied on to vouch for her if questions were asked?

⁶² Sean J. Murphy, *Eamon de Valera's Father Vivion de Valera*, page 7, accessed January 2024 at Academia.edu, <https://www.academia.edu/37809302>

⁶³UCD Archives, Papers of Éamon de Valera, P150/

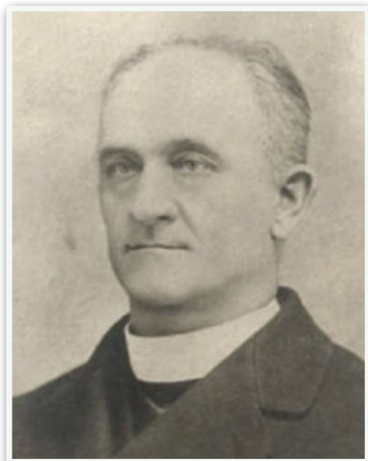
⁶⁴ Rev. Patrick J. Hennessy, of St Patrick's Church, Jersey City, was born in Limerick in 1834. Studied at Emmitsburg. Died in 1896 (*Catholic Union and Times*, 05 Mar 1896, page 1.) Keen on the temperance movement and the Irish language. Living at 452 Bramhall Ave, Jersey City, in the 1880 census.

⁶⁵ The website of the church and Father P.J. Hennessy's obituary make reference to his Limerick roots. <https://stpaasjc.org/history/>

⁶⁶ Hennessy family in the New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Immigration Lists, 1820-1850, arriving on board ship, *Christianna*, Aug 1, 1848. Accessed on [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) Mar 2024.

⁶⁷ Family called Armstrong associated with Greenville. Possibly home of Matthew Armstrong, leather merchant who lived at Washington Avenue, near Woodville Avenue.

⁶⁸ This isn't really the case. The cemetery lies about 1.5 miles from St Patrick's Church.



Father Patrick J Hennessy (1834-1896) the Limerick-born priest who was the main driving force behind the building of St Patrick's Church, Jersey City. Kate Coll claimed that her marriage to Vivion de Valera occurred at this church on 19/9/1881.

The godparents of Eamon de Valera at his baptism in Manhattan on 3rd Dec, 1882, were John Hennessy and Mary Shine. Mary Shine could not be identified. However Shine was thought to be a family name on Kate Coll's maternal side.⁶⁹ But who was John Hennessy?

In 1931, a year before the death of Kate Coll (now Wheelwright) a Patrick J. Hennessy and Catherine Daly of 76 Granite Street, Brooklyn, signed a sworn deposition that in 1882 they knew 'Catherine DeValero' as they called her, at which time she had introduced her husband, 'Vivion DeValero', to their family.⁷⁰

These individuals must have been very young to have known Kate and Vivion in the early 1880s. This was indeed the case. Further research indicated that Patrick J. Hennessy and Catherine Daly, who were brother and sister, were 13 and 9 years old respectively in 1882.⁷¹ They were the children of **John Hennessy** and **Johanna Regan**. In the 1880 census, this Irish-born couple were living at **317 Cherry Street**, Manhattan - a tough, densely-populated neighbourhood located on Manhattan's Lower East side near the East River front.⁷² The couple were long-time residents of Cherry Street until well into the 1890s. Later still John Hennessy is recorded in directories as living in Brooklyn (Berry Street).

In 1880, 39 year-old John Hennessy worked as a driver in Manhattan. Later in the 1880s his occupation was recorded as metal dealer or junkman. Living with the Hennessy family at Cherry Street in 1880 was Johanna Hennessy's mother, a **Catherine** or **Kate Regan**. (1814-1881). A person of this name was recorded as being a 'good friend' of Kate Coll in her recollections and this is almost certainly the same individual.⁷³

Evidence points to the fact that John Hennessy was resident in America from the mid 1860s. By 1870 he was living in Cherry Street with his mother, Margaret, (born 1820) and 3 siblings: Denis, Ellen and Mary.⁷⁴ In 1868, an individual of this name, living also in Cherry Street, applied for citizenship.⁷⁵ Later in 1903, John Hennessy, by this time widowed,⁷⁶ married New Yorker, Catherine Alexander. According to the marriage certificate, it was his fourth marriage.⁷⁷ He had his own iron works business at 257 South Street, Manhattan, and lived in Brooklyn from at least the time of this 1903 marriage, according to early 20th century city directories and censuses. He died in Brooklyn in February 1918.

⁶⁹ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera Papers, notes on maternal Carroll ancestry, P150/208.

⁷⁰ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera Papers. P150/184

⁷¹ United States Census, 1880, FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/>

⁷² United States Census, 1880, FamilySearch, <https://www.familysearch.org/>

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ United States Census, 1870,

⁷⁵ John Hennessy petition for Naturalisation, Oct 17, 1868. Witness James Collins, 79th Street and 3rd Avenue, New York. Ancestry.com. New York, U.S., Index to Petitions for Naturalization filed in New York City, 1792-1989 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007.

⁷⁶ An individual called Johanna Hennessy died in Manhattan in 1895.

⁷⁷ Marriage of John Hennessy and Catherine Alexander, Nov 3, 1903, accessed at <https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/search>.

The Hennessys were a large family. By the 1930s, Catherine Daly (a daughter referenced in the 1930s deposition) was a housewife and married to cab driver, Edward Daly. A son, Patrick J. Hennessy was noted as a possible member of the police force in Kate Coll's narrative, but in fact he was a metal dealer like his father. However the Hennessy's eldest surviving son, John Joseph Hennessy, born in New York in 1867 and died in 1925, was a detective with the New York police department (Manhattan, Waterfront).⁷⁸

Was there a family relationship between Father Patrick J. Hennessy of St. Patrick's Church and this Hennessy family? As stated earlier, Father Hennessy was born in Limerick. Whatever about John Hennessy's origins which could not be pinned down for certain,⁷⁹ there is ample evidence that his wife, Johanna Regan, was from Kate Coll's home place of Bruree, Limerick.⁸⁰ Indeed de Valera recorded that his mother described Johanna Hennessy (née Regan) as her godmother.⁸¹ At the very least these individuals, including Father Patrick Hennessy, were part of the wider Limerick network that would doubtless have been supportive of each other in New York, especially in a time of crisis.

Clues from other associates

A ccording to the notes that de Valera took following letters and conversations with his mother, when Kate arrived in America in 1879, she had the address of an aunt living at **145 Tillery or Tillary Street, Brooklyn**,⁸² which is located on Brooklyn Heights. This was her family contact and possible source of help for acquiring her first jobs in Brooklyn.

Directories for the time show that there was an **Ellen Carroll**, widow of **Edward Carroll**, living at 145 Tillary Street. According to her 1880 Census return, 36 year old Ellen Carroll was already a widow and living with her two teenage children, David and Annie. Carroll was Kate Coll's mother's maiden name so it is likely that this woman was her mother's sister-in-law. Research indicates that Ellen Carroll's husband, Edward, was a policeman who died aged 36 in 1873. His death cert showed that he was born in England, as indeed was Kate Coll's mother.⁸³ Intriguingly, Brooklyn directories for 1883 showed that a **Catherine Carroll**, widow, (husband's name not given) also lived at this address.⁸⁴ She could not be identified further. By 1886, Ellen Carroll had moved to **280 Jay Street**.⁸⁵

A Mrs Doyle (first name never revealed) of Grand Street, Manhattan, was entrusted by Kate to look after her baby for the first two years of his life when, as a single mother, she had to go out to earn a living.⁸⁶

The following individuals were listed in directories of the time and may be the 'Mrs Doyle' in question:

⁷⁸ *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Jan 15, 1925, page 3.

⁷⁹ According to his 1903 marriage record, his parents were John Hennessy and Margaret O'Donnell.

⁸⁰ Catholic Parish Registers at the National Library of Ireland, baptism of Joanna Regan to Patrick Regan and Catherine Curley, Parish of Bruree, Co. Limerick. 4th Oct, 1845. Accessed at <https://registers.nli.ie/>, Nov. 2023. Johanna Hennessy also had a brother in Brooklyn, Patrick Regan, a labourer. There was also another brother, John Regan, a carpenter, who ended up in Chicago and died there in 1918.

⁸¹ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera Papers. P150/228.

⁸² UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera Papers. P150/228.

⁸³ Certificate of death of Edward Carroll, Borough of Kings, 1873. Historical Vital Records, The New York City Municipal Archives, Accessed at <https://a860-historicalvitalrecords.nyc.gov/search>.

⁸⁴ Brooklyn Directory for the year ending May 1883. Available from Brooklyn Public Library at Internet Archive <https://archive.org/>.

⁸⁵ Lain's Brooklyn Directory for the year ending May 1, 1886, accessed at Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/>, May 2024.

⁸⁶ UCD Archives, Eamon de Valera Papers. P150/228.

Sarah Doyle, widow, 585 Grand Street Manhattan. (1882 Trow's New York Directory)
Betsy or Elizabeth Doyle, widow of John, 585 Grand Street. (Perhaps the same person.)
 Patrick Doyle, driver, 207(1872 Trow's),then 583 Grand Street (1879 Trow's New York Directory).
Wife Maria? Address very near the other family. Possible relationship.

Finally there are the two purported sponsors in the 1881 marriage of Kate Coll to Vivion de Valera :
Fred Hamilton and **Lilly (or Elizabeth) Brady**. Were their names changed to protect privacy? If not, accurate identification of these individuals could provide major clues as to wider connections and associations, especially in the case of Fred Hamilton who was described as Vivion's good friend if not best friend.

The Barber of Seville and the Dean of Vaudeville

It would be hard to describe the career of vaudeville artist, Frank Girard, without mentioning Tony Pastor (1833-1908): circus clown turned comic singer, turned theatre impresario. Girard was one of Tony's 'reliables' and stock company players. His fortunes were closely linked to Pastor's for many decades.



Tony (Antonio) Pastor in 1855, Levi North Circus, courtesy of Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

The flamboyant, kind-hearted, bejewelled Tony Pastor virtually wrote the blueprint for variety theatre in New York, earning him the moniker, the Dean of Vaudeville. By the 1880s his theatres had found the winning formula : clean acts, no alcohol and an environment friendly to women. Pastor always called his art form variety rather than vaudeville, thinking the latter term pretentious, though he was reputed to have popularised it.⁸⁷

Tony Pastor had Spanish ancestry, a fact that piqued this researcher's interest. He was the first-born son of Spanish immigrant, **Antonio Pastor**, and a Connecticut woman called **Cornelia Buckley**. He grew up in the Greenwich area of Manhattan's Lower West Side. **Antonio Pastor Senior**, who was born in **Seville** in about 1800, had run away to sea as a child. He worked as a cabin boy on board an American war ship for three years.⁸⁸ His flair for guitar-playing, especially his renditions of sweet Spanish airs, kept the sailors entertained and he was a great favourite on board.⁸⁹

Pastor's biographer, Armond Fields, raises the likelihood that Antonio Pastor had Sephardic Jewish heritage.⁹⁰ But by the time he arrived on the shores of America in 1823, he had converted to Catholicism. Tony Pastor himself liked to put about the myth that he was descended from gypsies.⁹¹

Settling in New York, Antonio Pastor married Cornelia Buckley from Hartford in 1826.⁹² He opened a barber shop at **55 Fulton Street**, Brooklyn, and then at **165 Greenwich Street**, Manhattan. In the 1830s and early 1840s, the New York newspapers regularly featured ads for Antonio Pastor's hair oil and tonic. The business thrived until the economic depression of the late 1830s. Pastor turned to fruit selling and confectionery. He is

⁸⁷ Robert W. Snyder, *The voice of the city : Vaudeville and popular culture in New York* page 22, Oxford University Press, 1989. Also according to Douglas Gilbert, John W. Ransome is reputed to have coined the term vaudeville, (which comes from the French, **val de ver**), having perhaps borrowed it from the Vaudeville Theatre, opened in San Antonio, Texas in 1882. (*American Vaudeville*, 1941.)

⁸⁸ *The San Antonio Light*, 03/10/1884.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Armond Fields, *Tony Pastor, father of vaudeville*, page 3-4. Jefferson, N.C. : McFarland, 2007.

⁹¹ Ford, James L. , *Forty-odd years in the literary shop*, page 107.

⁹² *The Long-Island Star*, 23/03/1826, page 3.

thought to have died between 1844 and 1846 but this isn't certain as he disappears from primary records at this time and it is apparent from biographies of Tony Pastor that the family were vague about his last years.⁹³

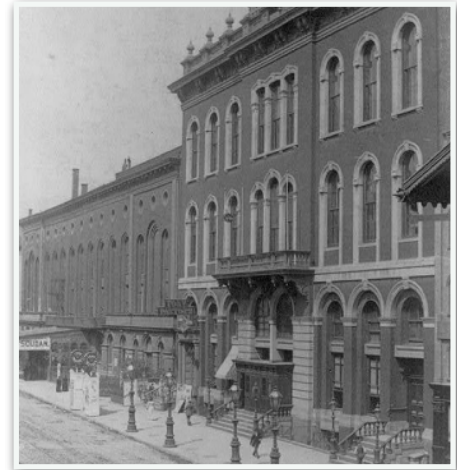
His son started life in professional show business as a teenage serenader in P.T. Barnum's old New York Museum in 1846.⁹⁴ A born performer, he trained and worked as a circus clown and ringmaster in the 1850s, before finding his *métier* during the Civil War as a composer and singer of hundreds of topical songs with a political or satirical edge. His signature tune was "Down in a Coal Mine"⁹⁵ which he continued to perform to delighted audiences even after moving into theatre management. Pastor took that leap after the war in 1865, opening his first venue in New York's Bowery Opera House. He moved his theatres progressively uptown in subsequent years. Pastor's home address for many years was 115 West 17th Street.⁹⁶

National stereotypes were standard fare on Pastor's stage and the Irish maid (Bridget/Biddy) was one of the numerous stock characters in comedy sketches and song, many of which were written by Dublin-born writer, **John F. Poole**⁹⁷ (1833-1893). Well-known performers got their first breaks at Pastor's. A notable example here was Lillian Russell. In the 1940 movie biopic of Russell (who was played by Alice Fay), actor Leo Carrillo played Tony Pastor with a thick Spanish accent.⁹⁸

From April to August each year, Pastor took his company on tour. Frank Girard was a faithful member of this travelling group and was known as a man of all parts. The company's arrival in town often kicked off with an elaborate street parade, much like with the circus.⁹⁹

Tony Pastor was a devout catholic who had a crucifix nailed to the wall of his office.¹⁰⁰ Protective of his private life, few outside his immediate circle knew that he was married until his wife, Anna, a consumptive, died in 1863. Always on the side of the 'little man', Pastor organised raffles for hams and coal at his shows once a week, which were a popular draw for audiences.¹⁰¹

A lot of this charity work was driven by Pastor's second wife, **Johanna (Josie) Foley**, whose parents were from Kerry. Charles Foley and Catherine Clifford had fled Ireland in the early years of the Famine and established a grocery shop in Hartford, Connecticut.¹⁰² Tony donated theatre proceeds to the starving of Ireland in 1880, the year of Catherine Clifford's death.



Tammany Hall, 14th Street, New York: the location of Tony Pastor's last and most successful theatre

1881 was a significant year for Pastor and by extension for

⁹³Armond Fields, *Tony Pastor, father of vaudeville*, page 10. Jefferson, N.C. : McFarland, 2007.

⁹⁴ *The New York Dispatch*, Vol XXXV, No. 46, Sep 5, 1880, page 1.

⁹⁵ Armond Fields, *Tony Pastor, Father of Vaudeville*, page 102.

⁹⁶ Trow's New York Directories.

⁹⁷ Armond Fields, *Tony Pastor, Father of Vaudeville*, page 102.

⁹⁸ *Lillian Russell*, (1940), accessed on DK Classics III, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5TpNe__rjU, Jan 2024.

⁹⁹ 'Fatal Runaway in Rochester', *The Buffalo News*, May 27, 1882, page 5.

¹⁰⁰ Parker Zellers, *Tony Pastor: dean of vaudeville stage*, 1971, Ypsilanti, Eastern Michigan University Press, page 81.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, page 49.

¹⁰²Ancestry.com. 1860 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch.

Frank Girard. In October of that year his small, revamped theatre at Tammany Hall, 14th Street, enjoyed its grand opening, featuring the stars of the summer tour. The French Twin Sisters otherwise known as the Vivian Sisters, who were character change artists and singers, were part of the bill that night, sharing the stage with Frank Girard.¹⁰³ Needless to say they were neither French, nor sisters nor called Vivian in real life.

The Spanish Students

Even the briefest examination of New York variety theatre in its palmy days shows a cosmopolitan, bohemian and diverse world with American, Irish, English, Jewish, German and Italian performers predominating. Tellingly there were not many artists of Spanish origin there, apart from the Pastors themselves. A notable exception here was a large guitar group called the **Spanish Students** who came to America in 1880 at the invitation of theatre owner, Henry Abbey. Although they were never booked at Pastor's, they did perform in Manhattan and Brooklyn for nine weeks of that year.^{104 105}

According to the newspapers, a romantic story was doing the rounds at that time that a young man identified as **E. DeValencio**, a member of the Spanish Students, had fled Spain to escape arrest for political agitation. His father, reputed to be the owner a large estate near Barcelona, had then secured a pardon for his son, allowing him to return to his native country.¹⁰⁶

The Best People on Earth

The world of variety was not the only thing that Frank Girard and Tony Pastor had in common. Both were founding members of a secret fraternal society. The *Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks* (B.P.O.E), or Elks for short, was founded by a group of theatre performers in New York in 1868 as a charitable organisation for hard-up fellow entertainers and their families.

The acknowledged founder of the fraternity was charismatic Devon-born actor, **Charles Vivian**, (1846-1880) who adopted his famous cork trick as an initiation rite. Hence founding members of the Elks were known as the *Jolly Corks*. Charles Vivian died unexpectedly of pneumonia aged 34 while on tour at Leadville, Colorado, in March 1880.

While only artists of the stage were admitted to the Elks initially, the membership soon broadened to include other professions, although this was a sore point among founding members. The fraternity was patriotic and broadly non-sectarian but it excluded women and people of colour. Prominent members in their time included **John F. Kennedy** (Boston Lodge), **Franklin D. Roosevelt** and Joe Biden's maternal great grandfather, **Edward Francis Blewitt** (1859-1926).

Frank Girard was a major evangelist for the Elks, working tirelessly to increase membership and establish chapters in other cities and towns. Tony Pastor was appointed the first Esteemed Leading Grand Knight of the organisation. Two of Pastor's brothers, Billy and Fernando (Dody) were also prominent members of the New York lodge. The only brother who didn't appear to be an Elk was the equestrian acrobat of the Pastor family, Frank (Francisco) Pastor.

¹⁰³ Armond Fields, *Tony Pastor, Father of Vaudeville*, page 112. Douglas Gilbert, *American Vaudeville*, page 114.

¹⁰⁴K. Meira Goldberg, Antoni Pizà, Eds., *The Global Reach of the Fandango in Music, Song and Dance: Spaniards, Indians, africans and Gypsies*, page 292, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.

¹⁰⁵ For further information on this group see: Felix O. Martin Sarraga, 'La Estudiantina Española Fígaro en los EE.UU. Crónica de sus giras americanas y estela según la prensa de la época', accessed at <https://www.academia.edu>, March 2024.

¹⁰⁶ *The Buffalo Courier Express*, 19 Nov 1881, page 2.

'The Faults of our brothers we write upon the sands'

There is a sense that this group of men didn't take life or themselves too seriously and were not too concerned with each others' foibles. One of their early creeds went : *The faults of our Brothers We write upon the sands, Their virtues upon Tablets of Love and Memory.*¹⁰⁷ Given their performing credentials, it is not surprising to learn that their many charity concerts and get-togethers, usually in aid of causes such as orphaned children, were of a high standard.

Having been with Pastor both as player and stage manager for over twenty years, Frank Girard appeared to strike out for himself with his own company in late 1884.¹⁰⁸ He managed the Palm Garden in New York as a variety venue.¹⁰⁹ He also went on to produce comedies such as "A Cold Day when we get Left" and "A Frosty Day in three shakes and a shiver."

It's been written that Frank Girard later moved into the real estate business where he made a good deal of money. But he never really abandoned the theatre. In his last years, he was a local agent for a real estate development called Seagate located near Coney Island.¹¹⁰ But he was also touring for 30 weeks with J.K. Emmett in his own sketch called "Fritz in a Madhouse" a year before his death¹¹¹. Girard's last address was an apartment at **1432 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn**. He died there in 1900 aged 60.



Charles Vivian (1846-1880), the English actor and singer who was the acknowledged founder of the Elk fraternity in 1868.

Frank Girard was buried at **Elk's Rest**, Evergreen Cemetery, Brooklyn, a dedicated section of the cemetery for members of the fraternity. His obituary in a 1910 publication on the history of the Elks was written by a good friend who knew him well, both professionally and personally, **Harry S. Sanderson**.¹¹²

Tony Pastor lived until 1908. His brothers, Billy and Fernando, died young in the 1870s. But the life of another brother, Francisco (Frank) Pastor, followed an interesting course. His life and career were examined in more detail.

'This Miniature Prodigy'

Frank Pastor was born in New York, November 13th, 1837, and was the second son of Antonio Pastor and Cornelia Buckley. He was the first of the Pastor brothers to be apprenticed at 7 years of age to the circus of **John J. Nathan's**, part of the well-known

¹⁰⁷ From a tablet listing the Fathers of Elkdom, Feb 16, 1868.

¹⁰⁸ *The National Police Gazette*, Oct 11, 1884, page 3.

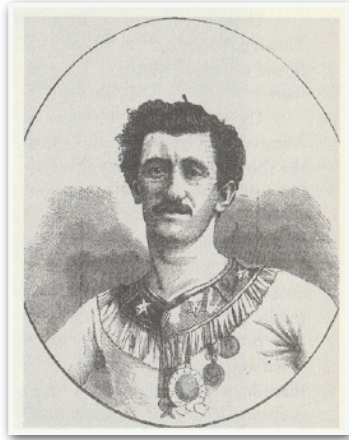
¹⁰⁹ *The National Police Gazette*, July 18, 1885, page 3.

¹¹⁰ Charles Edward Ellis, *An Authentic history of the Benevolent and protective order of Elks, 1910*, page 155. Accessed Dec 2023 at Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/>.

¹¹¹ *New York Tribune*, Nov 3, 1900, page 9. Also *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sep 03, 1899, page 20.

¹¹² Charles Edward Ellis, *An Authentic history of the Benevolent and protective order of Elks, 1910*, page 156. Accessed Dec 2023 at Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/>.

Welsh, Delavan and Nathan's outfit. ¹¹³The decision to apprentice Frank was very likely a financial one, as by the mid 1840s Cornelia Pastor was a single mother attempting to raise her family alone. By the late 1840s she was operating a porter house on the northwest corner of Broadway and Duane Street. ¹¹⁴



Drawing of circus equestrian Francisco Pastor circa 1866. The drawing appeared in the *New York Clipper* on 27 Oct. 1866. Pastor is wearing some of the medals he was awarded during his acrobatic career.



Circus manager and acrobat, John J. Nathans (~1814-1891) with three unnamed apprentices. The acrobat on the left may well be Frank Pastor but this can't be proved. Courtesy of Fred Nathan's Collection.

John J Nathans ¹¹⁵ also happened to be married to **Amelia Pastor**, (1825-1869) described as a cousin in-law of the Pastor family. ¹¹⁶ Because of Frank's contract with the circus from boyhood, Amelia Pastor and John Nathans were his de facto parents for much of his childhood. John Nathans was well known for training young apprentices in the dangerous art of trick riding and equestrian acrobatics. Other protégés included the Stickney and Kincaid Brothers and Philo Rust (an adopted son).

Frequently the equestrian acts of Nathan's Circus reenacted scenes from ancient mythology as the following fulsome excerpt from the 1840s describes:

In his scenes of Centaur and Infant Achilles he (John J. Nathan's) is assisted by Frank Pastor, a most interesting and highly gifted child. This Infant Artist, will appear on his flying courser in an act entitled Nimrod Junior, in which he will justify the remarks of the press, that for grace, beauty and courage, he is the most wonderful child in the world. This miniature prodigy will, with his yet younger and smaller Brother, William, be introduced by his instructor, J.J. Nathans, in a series of personal gymnastics. ¹¹⁷

Tony and his younger brother, Billy Pastor, were to join Nathan's outfit later on following good reports of the circus life from Frank. Never really a horseman, Tony concentrated on clowning,

¹¹³ Fred Fried Artists in Wood American Carvers of Cigar Store Indians show figures and circus wagons, Welsh, Delavan & Nathan's National Circus advertisement, page 88.

¹¹⁴ *New York Daily Herald*, Nov 02, 1847, Page 2.

¹¹⁵ John J. Nathans born Philadelphia circa 1814, died New York City 1891. Retired in 1880 and lived in Manhattan with a house at 137 East 34th Street.

¹¹⁶ Armond Fields, *Tony Pastor, father of vaudeville*, page 8. Jefferson, N.C. : McFarland, 2007.

¹¹⁷ Fred Fried Artists in Wood American Carvers of Cigar Store Indians show figures and circus wagons, Welsh, Delavan & Nathan's National Circus advertisement, page 88.

tumbling and ring master duties while Billy performed on horse-back like Frank. Billy later married the equestrian acrobat, Emma Nathans, John and Amelia Pastor's daughter. ¹¹⁸

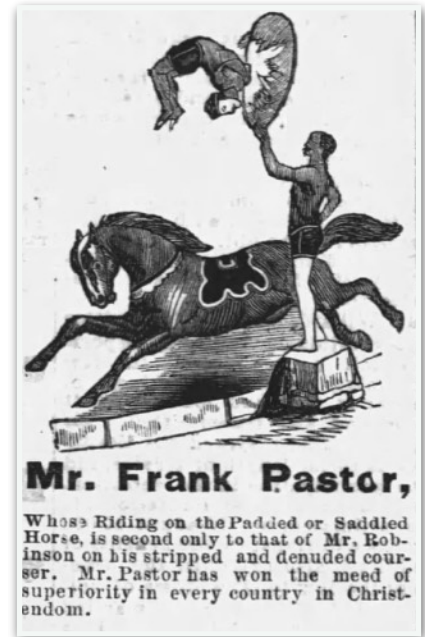
Somersaulting through 'every country in Christendom'

Frank served a long, and no doubt dangerous 10-year apprenticeship as an equestrian acrobat with Nathans, honing his skills as a child performer all over America and Canada before striking out on his own in 1856. He made his way to Europe that year where a good living was to be made by star equestrians, especially from America. His debut occurred in Ireland (Londonderry) under a partnership arrangement with Irish circus impresario, **Thomas Price** (1813-1877).¹¹⁹

British and Irish papers of the period contain numerous accounts of Frank Pastor's exploits in the ring, as he performed with virtually all of the main European circuses, including Hengler's, Astley's, Cooke's, Walle's, Footitt's and Rizarelli's. His speciality act consisted of backward and forward somersaults from a pad on a horse's back; somersaulting from one foot to the other; somersaulting through hoops, barrels and over flags, blankets or balloons. He also performed a revolving ball act.

Reviewers of Frank Pastor's act often remarked on the gracefulness of his riding and he maintained that he felt more at home on a horse's back than on the ground. ¹²⁰ One newspaper gives a revealing portrait of him in the early 1860s. 'He is a very quiet, unassuming young man, steers clear from the fatal cup, and above all is mindful of those at home, he having already sent to his mother many valuable presents'. ¹²¹

Always on the move, Pastor went on to tour a long list of countries in subsequent years - including Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Turkey, Russia, Italy, Portugal and especially France and Spain. He performed in several South American countries too, including Cuba, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay. ¹²² It was said he was particularly proud of the fact that he performed in front of Napoleon III and Amadeus, King of Spain. ¹²³ During this time he was presented with many medals of excellence which added to his prestige.



Frank Pastor in action: from the *Leavenworth Daily Commercial*, 28 April 1872.

¹¹⁸ William Harry Pastor, Billy and Emma Nathan's son, was a New York harbour pilot who died in 1911. He and his wife, Betty, had no children.

¹¹⁹ Parker Zellers, *Tony Pastor, Dean of the Vaudeville Stage*, page 10, 1971, Ypsilanti, East Michigan University Press.

¹²⁰ *The San Antonio Light*, 03/10/1884

¹²¹ *New York Clipper*, Aug 1863, page 140.

¹²² The cough medicine ad,

¹²³ *The Semi-weekly miner, Butte Monthly*, July 15, 1885.

Studied the Classical Sculptures

While touring Italy, he made a point of studying the classical equestrian sculptures with a view to imitating the riders' postures.¹²⁴ A notable highlight of his career was his many performances at the Great Exhibition in Paris in 1867. He stayed in the French capital for a number of years to act as equestrian director at the magnificent **Cirque de 'L'Impératrice** on the Champs-Élysées, which held up to 8,000 spectators.¹²⁵

During that decade also he toured Spain (again at the invitation of Thomas Price who had a permanent circus in Madrid) . While there he took the opportunity to visit his father's relatives in Seville.¹²⁶ Apparently quite a fuss was made of him there as he was reputed to be the first American to visit the city.¹²⁷

Like many circus folk of his era, Pastor was a freemason. In his case he was a brother of the Scottish St. Mungo. No.27 Lodge from at least the 1860s.¹²⁸

Journalist for the *New York Clipper*



Circus advertisement from the 19th century featuring Frank Pastor. Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Center The University of Texas at Austin.

Frank Pastor had an interesting sideline as a journalist. In the 1860s he wrote regular reviews for Frank Queen, editor of the weekly entertainment paper, the *New York Clipper*. For the interested American public, his accounts were a window into a world populated by what Thomas Frost called 'this strange race'¹²⁹ - the nomadic, classless and unorthodox who liked rubbing shoulders with royalty. Pastor was a life-long member of this 'strange race'. He could write with first-hand knowledge of the injuries and accidents, the sicknesses, the triumphs and hits, the hardships of incessant packing and travelling, and more mundane matters like audience attendances and house receipts.¹³⁰

In 1869, he returned to America for a time and toured with a travelling troupe for much of 1870. He was enumerated in the 1870 Census of New York, as he stayed with Tony and his brothers, Billy and Dody, at **521 Broome Street**, Manhattan.¹³¹ During this period he went on to form an ambitious travelling show with bareback rider, James Robinson.

¹²⁴ *The San Antonio Light*, 03/10/1884

¹²⁵ *New York Clipper*, 29/07/1911

¹²⁶ *New York Clipper*, Aug 1863, page 140

¹²⁷ *New York Clipper*, Aug 1863, page 140.

¹²⁸ *Glasgow Morning Journal* , 07/06/1865, page 2.

¹²⁹ Thomas Frost, *Circus life and circus celebrities*, preface vii, London ,1875.

¹³⁰ An example of Frank Pastor's work as a reporter can be seen in the *New York Clipper*, 28 Dec, 1912, page 11.

¹³¹ 1870 United States Federal Census, Ancestry.com.

'Blondin Never Fails'

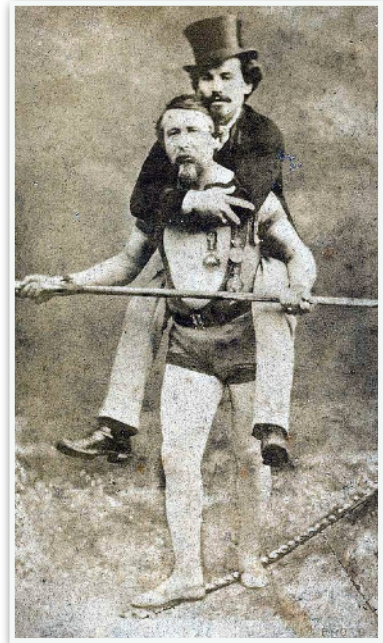
In August 1875, at All Saints St. John's Wood Church of England, London, Frank Pastor married 21 year-old **Adèle de Gravelet**, daughter of famous high wire performer, **Blondin** (Jean François Gravelet) who in 1859 became the first man to cross Niagara Falls on a tightrope. The witnesses to the marriage were Blondin himself and his manager of the time, Stefano Annoni De Parravicini (1824-1897).¹³² The couple were married for the next ten years and had no children.

Adèle de Gravelet had known many adventures on the high wire. As a 5 year-old she caused a public outcry when a blind-folded Blondin wheeled her out in a wheelbarrow 100 feet above the ground at the Crystal Palace.¹³³ While Adèle carelessly showered the horrified audience below with rose petals, Queen Victoria ordered the stunt to be stopped, prompting the Home Secretary to serve the directors of the Crystal Palace with notice to cease Adèle's involvement.¹³⁴ The Blondin family were simply baffled by these concerns but the publicity did them no harm. Frank Pastor's opinion on the subject was later summed up by the remark: 'Blondin never fails'.¹³⁵

Performed at the Rotunda Gardens

After his marriage to Adèle, Frank Pastor became Blondin's some-time treasurer and agent, although he found time to take his equestrian act to Dublin in the autumn of 1875, performing at the Rotunda Gardens with Rizareli's Cirque.¹³⁶ By now he had spent over thirty years as a circus acrobat, risking his neck during his twice a day shows. But from this time on he appeared to step back from his daredevil acts. Was this due to injury, ill-health, increasing age or perhaps the loss of a favourite, trusted horse?¹³⁷

Whatever the reason, Pastor began to diversify as a performer and even did some clowning like his brother Tony had done in the 1850s.¹³⁸ He reenacted scenes from a Spanish bullfight with Adam's Circus.¹³⁹ At a show in Aberdeen with Cooke's Circus, he performed a 'mirth-provoking ... comic spade dance' that went down well with the crowd.¹⁴⁰ By 1877 he had even



Blondin (1824-1897) carries his manager, Harry Colcord (1830-1910) on his back as he dangles 250 feet over Niagara Falls in 1859. Colcord was a Chicago-born portrait artist. Blondin performed the same stunt with Frank Pastor at the Crystal Palace in the 1870s.

¹³² Marriage of Frank Pastor and Adèle de Gravelet Blondin, August 21, 1875. London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1938. Ancestry.com

¹³³ Ken Wilson, *Everybody's Heard of Blondin*, Page 71, Hawthorns Publications, 1997

¹³⁴ George Linnaeus Banks, *Blondin: his Life and Performances*, Google Books, page 83-84.

¹³⁵ *The San Antonio Light*, 03/10/1884.

¹³⁶ *The Irish Times*, 01/10/1875, page 6.

¹³⁷ *The San Antonio Light*, 03/10/1884. Pastor describes the loss of a favourite, well-trained horse on a boat journey in the Bay of Biscayne, causing him to risk using an unfamiliar horse in the ring for subsequent shows.

¹³⁸ *New York Clipper*, 27 October, 1866.

¹³⁹ *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, Mar 18, 1875, page 2.

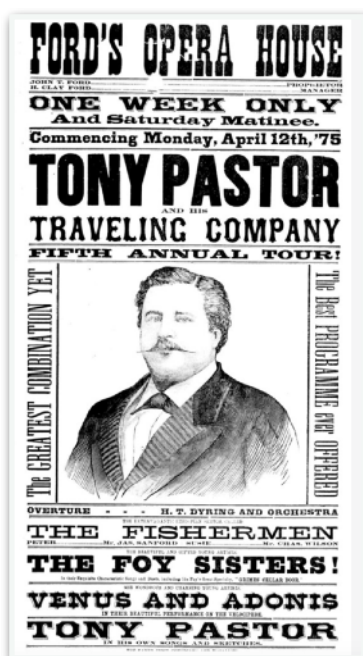
¹⁴⁰ *Aberdeen Journal, and General Advertiser for the North of Scotland*, Dec 24, 1877, page 2.

moved to the music hall scene, performing as a comic at the Prince of Wales Music Hall in Middlesboro.

By 1877 too Frank had found a new risky venture. Blondin had begun to include him in his act, carrying him on his shoulders as he crossed the high wire without a net at the Crystal Palace. Newspapers spoke of Frank Pastor's *sang froid* during these perilous piggy backs, when he could do little else but act as a dead weight. This was even as the great acrobat pretended to lose his balance and tumble to the floor, which was all part of the act. The papers also noted, unsurprisingly, that Pastor often looked unusually pale when the show was over!¹⁴¹

Fluent in many languages

Frank Pastor was undoubtedly the best travelled of the Pastor family. His constant touring, often staying in cities like Paris for years at a time, made him proficient in many languages. According to an American journalist who interviewed him in 1884, he spoke English with a slightly foreign accent.¹⁴²



1875 newspaper ad for the Travelling Company of Tony Pastor

Following the unexpected death of their younger brother, Billy, Tony Pastor invited Frank to return to America to become theatre manager at his Broadway venue. (*The Metropolitan*). Sick of the European world and longing for home, Frank was quick to take Tony up on the offer. Immigration records for 1878 show him returning with Adèle in cabin class on the ship, *Greece*, in the company of showman, Zack Coup, brother of W.C. Coup of Barnum and Bailey fame.¹⁴³ In the ship's manifest he described himself as an 'artist'. He was never to perform with the circus again.

From 1878, Frank became general manager at Tony's theatre, No. 585 and 587 Broadway, and then later at Tammany Hall on East 14th Street from 1881.¹⁴⁴ He was also superintendent of publications at the same time that Frank Girard was stage manager there.¹⁴⁵ The New York City Directory of 1881 also listed his occupation as 'cashier' and in 1884 as 'clerk'.¹⁴⁶

Although Frank Pastor had left the circus behind for good, the circus world was not done with him. The travelling show he had set up in partnership with bareback rider, **James Robinson** (real name James Michael Fitzgerald 1837-1919) had outstanding debts of \$18,000 which he was still liable to repay. It forced him to declare bankruptcy in 1878.¹⁴⁷ No doubt this dashed his chances of a comfortable retirement after decades performing dangerous stunts in front of an admiring public. It may also have made him fall back on the resources of his family again, especially Antonio.

¹⁴¹ *Norwood News and Crystal Palace Chronicle*, Oct 6, 1877, page 3.

¹⁴² *The San Antonio Light*, 03/10/1884.

¹⁴³ Ancestry.com. New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

¹⁴⁴ Parker Zellers, *Tony Pastor, Dean of the Vaudeville Stage*, page 67, 1971, Ypsilanti, East Michigan University Press.

¹⁴⁵ *N.Y. Star Almanac for 1880*, 1879, goodebooks.ie

¹⁴⁶ New York City Directory, 1880/1881. Accessed at Heath Trust, December 2023.

¹⁴⁷ *The New York Times*, 9/11/1878. Page 6.

The 1880 New York census lists Francisco Pastor's home address as **246 East 40th Street** in mid-town Manhattan. This 4-storey brownstone near Reservoir (now Bryant) Square, belonged to Cornelia Pastor, who lived there until her death in 1887.¹⁴⁸ It should be noted that this address, which was intersected by Third Avenue, was a ten minute walk from **61 East 41st Street**. Pastor continued to live there for the remainder of his time in New York.¹⁴⁹

In the early 1880s, newspapers referenced Frank Pastor's attendance at the funeral of many show business friends - dead from tuberculosis, typhus and typhoid. In August 1880 he was one of the mourners at the New York funeral of the teenage ballerina, **Leonora St. Felix**, who had been appearing on Pastor's stage when she fell fatally ill.¹⁵⁰ He subsequently attended the New York funeral of Irish variety actor, **W.H. Delehanty**, where he carried the coffin alongside **Billy Barry** and Delehanty's partner, **Thomas Hengler** (otherwise Slattery).¹⁵¹ All were members of the Elk Fraternity. He also attended the funeral of minstrel, **Charles Backus**, at Rochester, New York, in June 1883.¹⁵²

Illness and Death

By his own account, Frank Pastor pinpointed the onset of his illness as the winter 'before the assassination of President James Garfield'.¹⁵³ The nature of the illness was almost certainly early stage consumption. He was advised by New York lung specialist **Dr. Alfred Loomis**¹⁵⁴ to avail of the hot, dry climate of San Antonio, Texas.¹⁵⁵ This town, famous for its Spanish mission, **San Antonio de Valero**, was well served by a rail network from the north since 1878 via a spur from Houston and New Orleans.

Further potential insight into Frank Pastor's shattered health was derived from a cough bottle ad called '*New Life*' (previously '*Pulmona*') that Pastor endorsed through a 'letter' published in the newspapers.¹⁵⁶ The 'letter' described the history of his lung problems in detail. He said it all started as far back as 1878 when he contracted a severe cold in Paris that destroyed his rest and appetite. Although he claimed to have spent a fortune on medicines and attended some of the best physicians in the world, nothing seemed to work.¹⁵⁷

'*New life*' cough bottle was recommended to him by his good friend, **Harry S. Sanderson**, Antonio Pastor's business manager, treasurer and prominent member of the Elk fraternity. In less than a week his cough was gone and he was sleeping like a baby, as well he might given the levels of morphine and chloroform in the product. (Bizarrely, the cough bottle company ran Pastor's ad for several years after his death.)

¹⁴⁸*The Sun*, 19 Aug 1887, page 4. In her subsequent will, Cornelia Pastor bequeathed the house to Caroline Pastor Clarke, older sister of Frank and Tony who had married into a family of brewers.

¹⁴⁹ New York City Directories for 1881- 1884

¹⁵⁰ *Fort Wayne Gazette*, Aug 20, 1880.

¹⁵¹*The Pittsburgh Post*, 22 May 1880.

¹⁵² *National Republican*, 23 Jun 1883, Page 1.

¹⁵³ *The San Antonio Light*, 03/10/1884 . Garfield was shot on July 2, 1881. He died September 19, 1881, the same day that Kate Coll and Vivion de Valera were said to have been married.

¹⁵⁴ Dr Alfred L Loomis (1831-1895) of 31 West 34th Street specialised in tuberculosis and was one of the first to link climate with the fight against the disease.

¹⁵⁵ *The San Antonio Light*, 03/10/1884 .

¹⁵⁶ *The Baltimore Sun*, 05 Feb 1889, page 2. Letter from Frank Pastor dated April 3, 1883, addressed from Tony Pastor's 14th St. Theatre

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

Evidence from city directories shows that Pastor was living full time in San Antonio, Texas, by July 1884.¹⁵⁸ The press reported that he had taken rooms at Menger's Hotel on Alamo Square, and was accompanied by Adèle.¹⁵⁹ Pastor may have come to the area in previous years too, perhaps as early as 1881 or 1882, as he was advised to do by Dr Loomis. However there is no documentary proof of this. But his name ceased to appear in the papers in connection with Tony's New York theatres after the summer of 1883.

In October 1884, Frank Pastor gave an extensive interview to *The San Antonio Light* newspaper. The article provided a detailed physical description of the circus veteran a mere eight months before his death :

*"The reader will fancy a small man, rather spare built, with small hands and feet, aquiline, though by no means sharp features, coal black, luxurious, glossy hair, small black moustache, black eyes and a white complexion, and wearing neat, unostentatious clothing, and you will have Frank Pastor".*¹⁶⁰

His final address in San Antonio was a house at the south west corner of San Pedro Avenue and Evergreen, situated close to the pleasant oasis of San Pedro Springs Park.¹⁶¹ There he died aged 47 years on June 25th, 1885. Adèle accompanied her husband's body by train back to New York. On June 30th, 1885, after his funeral at St. Francis Xavier's Church in Manhattan, he was buried in the Pastor family plot, known as '*the shadowy way*', in Evergreen Cemetery, Brooklyn.¹⁶² There was less coverage of his funeral in the papers than might have been expected, except to note that many old colleagues from the circus world showed up. 'Who will be next', said circus rider **Levi North** to the group of sawdust veterans gathered.¹⁶³ They did not have long to wait. Levi North himself died a week later, having caught a cold at Pastor's graveside that proved fatal.¹⁶⁴



The Alamo (by Frank Thompson), otherwise known as the mission of San Antonio de Valero

Frank's death hit Tony Pastor particularly hard and he withdrew from public appearances and tours for an unprecedented eight weeks. No evidence could be found that Frank Pastor left a written will. But it appears that many of his possessions went to Antonio.¹⁶⁵

Three years after his death, a wistful poem appeared in the *New York Clipper*¹⁶⁶ penned by Tin Pan Alley songwriter and composer of *The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo*,

¹⁵⁸ *San Antonio Light*, 24 July 1884, page 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ 'Francisco Pastor, the world's great equestrian , in San Antonio,' *San Antonio Light*, 03/10/1884.

¹⁶¹ San Antonio Texas City Directory 1885, page 249, Ancestry.com. U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

¹⁶² Funeral was at St. Francis Xavier followed by burial at **Calvary Cemetery** according to *New York Clipper*. Funeral and attendees were not covered to any extent in the newspapers so apart from Levi North, it isn't known who attended.

¹⁶³ *The New York Times*, 08 Jul 1885, page 5.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *The Sun*, 04 Sep 1908, page 4. In Tony's 1908 will, Adèle was left the presentation medals that Frank had earned during his career.

¹⁶⁶ *New York Clipper*, 18 August 1888, page 1.

Monroe (Rosey) Rosenfeld (~1854-1918).¹⁶⁷ Entitled, *A Circus Rider to his Horse*, it was dedicated to the 'memory of the late Frank Pastor'. Rosenfeld, a notorious gambler and man about town who led a gypsy existence and who had no less than three pseudonyms, must have moved in Pastor's circle to have penned such a tribute.

Frank Pastor was not Spanish nobility but to many American and European circus and variety theatre goers he was show business nobility.

Adèle de Gravelet

Adèle de Gravelet wasted no time returning to England after her husband's death, as all her blood relatives lived there. She appears in all the English censuses from 1891 to 1911, living first with Blondin and his third wife at the aptly named *Niagara House* in Ealing.¹⁶⁸ She had been left \$1000 by Cornelia Pastor in her 1887 will. And when Frank's older sister, Caroline Clark, died in 1894, she also left Adèle \$500.¹⁶⁹

The press never lost interest in Blondin even after his retirement. While playing billiards with a reporter at his home in the mid 1890s, the famous acrobat commented on a photograph of his late son-in law, Frank Pastor, hanging on the wall of the billiard room, which led to a conversation on family relations.¹⁷⁰

After Blondin's death in 1897, Adèle went to live with other relatives in the south of England, including her younger sister, Charlotte Gravelet Robiolo.¹⁷¹ Like many legendary circus and theatre performers, Blondin died with less money than might have been expected. He left Adèle £200 in his will, the repayment of a loan she had apparently advanced to him, along with a £2 weekly allowance to be administered in trust for her by her brother, Henry de Gravelet.¹⁷²

Perhaps not surprisingly, when Tony Pastor died in 1908, there was evidence that Adèle was in a hurry to have his will executed, as he too had left her \$1000.¹⁷³ She threatened legal action to force Tony's wife and executor, Josie Foley¹⁷⁴, to cease dragging her heels on the process. Tony had been in possession of the many medals that Frank had received over his long circus career and these were returned to Adèle at this time also.¹⁷⁵

Blind like her sister, Charlotte, at the end of her long and eventful life, Adèle de Gravelet Pastor died at Battersea, England in 1941, two years shy of her 90th birthday.

¹⁶⁷ Monroe H. Rosenfeld (1861-1918), went under the pseudonyms E. Heiser, F. Belasco, Monroe Roosevelt, coiner of the term Tin Pan Alley. Composer of 'I'm the Man That Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo'. (Jim Mackin, *Notable New Yorkers of Manhattan's Upper West Side*, page 142. Fordham University Press, 2021.)

¹⁶⁸ Ancestry.com. 1891 England Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Accessed January 2024.

¹⁶⁹ Will of Caroline C. Clark, 22 Jun 1894, Record of Wills, 1665-1916; Index to Wills, 1662-1923 (New York County); Author: New York. Surrogate's Court (New York County); Probate Place: New York.

¹⁷⁰ "Blondin at Home", *Pontypool Free Press*, 17/05/1895.

¹⁷¹ Ancestry.com. 1901 England Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. Accessed January 2024.

¹⁷² "Blondin's Will", *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 26 March 1897, page 14.

¹⁷³ Tony Pastor's Will, *The Sun*, 04 Sep 1908, page 4.

¹⁷⁴ *The Evening Sun*, 29 Sep 1910, page 5.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Summary

The Giraud family were steeped in the world of vaudeville. Frank Girard was often referred to as the ‘very shadow of Tony Pastor.’¹⁷⁶ They shared connections and activities, both personal and business. It is worth noting the use of the word ‘artist’ to denote performers in their world. That was their moniker of choice. It was used by Frank Girard and Frank Pastor to describe themselves. It was used by Kate Coll to describe the father of Éamon de Valera. Might that artist in question have been the diminutive, much-travelled, half-Spanish, consumptive Frank Pastor with his European ways ?

Or were the Pastors and their Spanish background just a source of inspiration for the resourceful Kate Coll ? The circumstances of Vivion de Valera’s death are strangely reminiscent of the death of the actor, Charles Vivian, founder of the Elks, aged 34 in Colorado. Then there is also the coincidence of the name Vivian itself and the predictable backwards and forwards drift of name spellings from Vivian to Vivion and from de Valero to de Valera.

Unlike his more famous brother, Tony, photographs of Frank Pastor are rare. There is a drawing of Pastor from the 1860s, which is reproduced in this article. But photographs of Frank Pastor are known to exist. For example, theatre memorabilia collector, **Evert Jansen Wendell**, (1860-1917) had Pastor’s photograph listed among his extensive collection when it went for auction shortly after his death.¹⁷⁷ Pastor’s photograph also graced the wall of Blondin’s Ealing home in London, as referenced previously.

The only member of the Pastor family with living descendants was Dolores Fuller, (1829-1894), Frank and Tony’s older sister.¹⁷⁸ The line died out among other members of the Pastor family.

If the answer to this mystery does not lie with Francisco Pastor, is it possible that it still lies in the world of vaudeville (val de ver) - that perfect setting for the “rich and complicated dialogue between sexes, classes and ethnic groups”.¹⁷⁹ A community known for its roomy exaggerations, its economy with the truth, its disregard for class distinction and its penchant for stage names and pseudonyms.

Or is the truth of this mystery less fanciful and simply to be found in Kate Coll’s Irish and very non-Spanish associations in New York? One particular puzzle is why Kate Coll chose the name, George, for her son before deciding on Edward. Also assuming his name was not changed by Kate Coll to cover her tracks, the positive identification of ‘Fred Hamilton’ may also go some way to unlocking this mystery.

While the ideas set out in this article are speculative and circumstantial at best, (and also subject to confirmation bias) it is also worth noting that the mission at San Antonio, *The Alamo*, famous shrine of liberty and synonymous with the city where Frank Pastor drew his last breath, is called **San Antonio de Valero**. Coincidence ?

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¹⁷⁶ *New York Dispatch*, 08/01/1882, page 5

¹⁷⁷ American Art Association, Artistic Literary Collections Late Evert Jansen Wendell, 1919. photographs Lot 3833. Photograph of Frank Pastor listed.

¹⁷⁸ Research would seem to indicate that the family of Dolores Pastor and Junius Fuller are the only direct branch of the family who would have living descendants. Dolores Pastor, born New York in 1829, married Junius A. Fuller at New Haven, Connecticut, in 1847, and died at her home, 419 Grand Avenue, Brooklyn in 1894. The Fullers had 2 sons who survived to adulthood, William F. And James M Fuller.

¹⁷⁹ Robert W. Snyder, *The voice of the city : Vaudeville and popular culture in New York* page 24, Oxford University Press, 1989.

Appendix 1

The Giraud Children

1. Living in the house in 98 Lawrence Street, Brooklyn, according to the 1880 census, was 17 year old Edgar Giraud, then a clerk in a dry goods store. Edgar was also known as Edward or Eddie. In 1882, *The Brooklyn Eagle* announced that Edgar Francis Giraud had found a job as a clerk at the Grand Hotel, Saratoga. His return to Brooklyn was announced in October of that year after a 3 month stint.

Like his father, Frank, Edgar went on to pursue a career in vaudeville and used the stage name, Edgar or Edward Girard. Although an actor and comedian on the stage, his strong point was singing and he had a rich baritone voice. Edgar started out in show business with the fabulously popular Lotta (Crabtree), an artist so popular that she only had to be known by her first name. Was stage manager for the Brighton Beach Music Hall.

Edgar Francis Giraud

Ors Edward Girard

Born New York 1863

Married New York to Charlotte Humphrey 28/9/1884

Died. Long Island New York November 1923 aged 60.

Had one child: Francis A Girard, actor and vaudeville comedian. Also a theatre director. Born New York in 1886. Died 1949 aged 83 after a long career in show business.

2. Ella Giraud ors Ella F. Girard

Born New York 1875.

Married in 1899 a college librarian, George H. Kean, Irish-born son of Thomas Kean & Maria Kean, saloon keepers at Brooklyn's Doughty Street.¹⁸⁰ Ella and her husband deeply involved in amateur stage performing: Ella as mezzo soprano, piano accompanist, actor and dancer. (Cortelyou Club.)

Had two sons, Earl and George, both of whom died young.

Died in Brooklyn in 1959 aged 83. Buried at Evergreen cemetery.

Appendix 2

Who was Fred Hamilton,

Vivion's best friend ?

According to Kate Coll, he lived in Brooklyn. His occupation, age and marital status were never specified.

1. A journalist called Fred J. Hamilton lived in Brooklyn City (Sackman Street) in the 1880s and 1890s. London-born Hamilton (born ~1846) was editor of the short-lived satirical comic weekly paper, *The Jester*, published in Montreal in the late 1870s.¹⁸¹ Served as secretary of the New York Press Club. Married 24 year old Bertha A Wolf in Manhattan in 1887. It was his second marriage. In 1892 Hamilton lost his life tragically on North Brother Island after contracting typhus while reporting on an outbreak in the city for his newspaper, the *Commercial Advertiser*.

2. Frederick Cowan Hamilton. Born in Kentucky in 1832, this American Civil War veteran would seem an unlikely best friend of the young, artistic Vivion de Valera, (or his father). Yet there are resonances. For instance city directories show that he dealt in marble in the 1870s. He was a machinist by profession and made metal tags and plates. Therefore he would have had cause to interact with a metal dealer such as John Hennessy of Cherry Street, Manhattan. Immigration records show that an individual fitting his description also travelled to South America, perhaps for

¹⁸⁰ 1880 US Census,

¹⁸¹ *The Canadian Spectator*, 1878, page 116.

business reasons.¹⁸² In 1857 he married Rachel Hill and had 6 children. His company was called Hamilton & Hill. He had a presence both in Manhattan and Brooklyn. His address in Brooklyn was **222 Prospect Ave**, but he had an office or manufactory at **546 W. 23rd Street, Manhattan**.

In terms of his Civil War record, he served as a private on the Union side and was attached to the 10th New York Volunteers, ending the war as a Second Lieutenant. In 1895 he was attacked with an umbrella by a young woman called Lottie Birch outside his office.¹⁸³ The woman alleged that after 12 years she had been cast aside by him for another. (Also not his wife). He was a free mason and member of the **13 Club**, an oddity committed to doing away with the superstition around the number 13. He often liked to be referred to as 'Colonel'. He died in 1905.

3. In the 1870s a Frederick Hamilton worked as a circus performer in the hippodrome of PT Barnum in New York. Possibly married to or partner of a Mary Flynn. Prop master at the Harlem Casino, New York.¹⁸⁴

4. Frederick G. Hamilton.

Doorman, 1876, living at 265 Rivington. Porter and/or waiter living at 6 York Street, New York, in early 1880s. Originally from the Republic of Haiti. Sought naturalisation in 1883. (Witness Thomas Yates, labourer).

5. Frederick Hamilton. Born Ireland 1840. Brother of Augustus Hamilton, a driver, who lived at 238 West 27th Street, between 7th and 8th Avenues. Listed as living with his brother, wife Isabella, and young family at their home in the 1870 census of New York.¹⁸⁵ Went to mine in Maryland? Married to New Jersey native, Harriet Irving. Had a son Charles (born New York 1873.) No evidence of any association with Brooklyn.

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¹⁸² Fred C Hamilton in the New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957, on steamer *North America*, 20/08/1872, arriving from the port of Brazil and Saint Thomas. Accessed at Ancestry.co.uk, March 2024.

¹⁸³ 'Thrashed by a Woman', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 06, 1899.

¹⁸⁴ *New York Clipper*, 18 December 1886.

¹⁸⁵ 1870 US Federal Census, accessed at Ancestry.co.uk, Mar, 2024.

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