

James Hayes

Son of the Irishman Michael Hayes



Good day to you all. I'm James Hayes – better known as Jim Hayes. Today I want to tell you about my family, especially my father, Michael Hayes.

My father was one of several Irishmen and their families to settle in Westphalia. He arrived here in 1854. You see, for my father and perhaps for all the early Irish, America was like finding the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. This was because in Ireland, the farmer worked as a tenant farmer with many restrictions and not much room for advancement. If you have heard Ireland's potato famine of the 1840s, you should know that many thousands of people left Ireland for America during that time.

Michael Hayes, my father, was born in County Cork, Ireland in 1815, the son of Patrick Hayes and Katherine Catery. He told us later that he worked for many years to earn enough money for his passage to America. Finally, at the age of 39, he had the money, so it was time to say good-bye to his family and friends and set sail for America. And why did he come to Westphalia – a German, Catholic Settlement? To tell you the truth, I really don't know. We believe he was following the other Irish who had come here – families like Peter Murtha, and the Lawless and Moriarty families. Or maybe he heard that with a few dollars a man could buy a farm.

This is what my father did. He bought land in southeast Westphalia Township in Section 26 – neighboring the Sandor and the Gruber farms. I was born on that farm and so were my six sisters. My father said that it was his good fortune to find a pretty young girls to marry. She was Margaret Kraemer, the daughter of Matt Kraemer and Helen Minich. When they were married in July 1856, my mother was 16 years old and my father was 41. Father Godez was the priest who celebrated their marriage in the Catholic Church, which was then known as St. Peter.

I had many sisters! Helena, my oldest sister was born in 1857. She married Edward Manning. I see here today descendants of my sister Katherine; she married Innocent – everyone called him Inno – Trierweiler. Sadly, my sister Maria died when she was only 5 months old. I'm very proud to say that my sister Mary Margaret joined the Sisters of Christian Charity and took the name of Sister Deodata. She served the order as a music

teacher in schools in the eastern states. My sisters Elizabeth and Anna were twins. When Elizabeth was 5 years old, she and her sister were out in the fields playing. She saw a plant that looked good to eat. She pulled it up and ate the root. The plant was poisonous and our sweet little Elizabeth died. Anna had a short life too; she was 22 years old when she died. She and her twin, Anna, are buried here with our mother. And yes, my dear mother was 57 years old when she died and my father was only 50 at the time of his death.

And, what did I do? I stayed on the farm. I never found a pretty girl to marry. I lived to the ripe old age of 84 years. My name will not appear in the history books, but when I look back on my years, I must say the Hayes home was a happy home – one full of music and laughter. You may remember my nephew, Tony Trierweiler. He as a good musician and a good actor – our own Jimmy Durante – in the plays put on by Fr. Gutha in the St. Mary's Opera House. My niece Elizabeth Trierweiler Schneider, was a music teacher and she along with her sister Margaret wrote the book *St. Mary's Centennial – 1836-1936*.

But there is one last story to tell. It's the story of this tree – standing like a silent sentinel over the graves of the Hayes Family for more than 100 years – this majestic Camperdown Elm. Who planted this tree? If this tree could talk, it might tell its story and solve an age-old mystery. Like my father, this tree is not native to the American soil. The original Camperdown tree was found growing at the Camperdown House – the estate of the Earl of Camperdown in Scotland. It grew from a freak seedling of a Scotch Elm, but was unable to reproduce itself. When reproduced commercially, it is grafted to a young Siberian Elm. And, like my father, Michael Hayes, this tree too came from across the sea to plant its roots firmly in the soil of Westphalia. I'll leave you now with an Irish Blessing:

***May the road rise up to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May sunshine warm you face,
And the rain fall softly upon your fields.
And, until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.***