

Dinnins/Dennins/Dennings/Dinneens

Bridget Flanagan was a Dennin, and at least some of the relatives they joined in Elizabethport were Dennins.

John Flannagin	38	M
Bridget Flannagin	38	F
Shanna Flannagin	15	F
Michael Flannagin	11	M
Thomas Flannagin	7	M
John Flannagin	4	M
Matthew Flannagin	1	M
Thomas Dinnin	26	M
Eliza Dinnin	28	F
John Dinnin	8	M

Detail from the 1850 census - Elizabethtown, Essex Co., New Jersey

There are many Dinnins, Dennins, Dennings, and Dineens in the Elizabeth and Newark church records in the 1830s and 40s. Both Thomas Dinnin and Matthew Dinnin were heads of households in Elizabeth in 1840 (when only heads of households were recorded by name). John Flanagan was not shown on the 1840 census. It is possible that the Flanagans were living with relatives in 1840 and would not have been recorded by name. In 1850, Thomas Dinnin and William Dennin were

neighbors of the "Flannagins." Flanagans and Dennins were

godparents to one another's children and witnesses at one another's marriages. Other names of families close to the Flanagans include Sullivan, Malone, and Farrell.

Matthew Dinnin	1
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1840

Genealogy "how-to's" sometimes mention "chain migration," the process by which later immigrants settled in locations where their

relatives were already established. Often the first emigrant sent money home to help pay for other family members' passage. Perhaps this happened with the Dennins. It seems likely that one or more of the Dennins was Bridget's brother - particularly William Dennin, whose parents's names were Thomas and Bridget, according to the St. Mary's of the Assumption Cemetery records. Bridget's death certificate identifies her parents as also being Thomas and Bridget Dennin of Ireland.

William Dinnin	31	M	Carpenter
Mary Dinnin	25	F	

1850

Indeed, an old Irish naming pattern strongly suggests that Matthew, Bridget, Thomas

and William were all siblings. The pattern was this: the first son was named after the father's father, the second after the mother's father, the third after the father and the fourth after the father's oldest brother.

Consider the names of the children of these individuals, listed in birth order, oldest first, as follows:

- The children of Bridget Dennin and John Flanagan: Joanna (1834), Michael (1838), Thomas (1843), John (1845), Margaret (1848), and Matthew (1849).
- Children of Matthew Dineen and Mary Higgins: Thomas (1839) and Matthew (1840).
- Children of William Dennin and Mary Baldwin: Mary (1844), Thomas (1845), Andrew (1847), Margaret (1840), Jane (1851), Ellen (1854), Ann (1856), William (1858), Matthew (1861), James (1862).
- Children of Thomas Dennin and Elizabeth Malone: John (1842), Mary (1846), Thomas (1847), Matthew (1850), Elizabeth (1851), Margaret (1854), Ellen (1862).

D	William Dennin	411
	Mary A	34

1860

Matthew and William both named their oldest sons Thomas, presumably after their father.

Thomas "Dinnin" did not name his oldest son Thomas (unless he had a son who died, born before his son John). His father's name was probably Thomas, nevertheless. Elizabeth Malone's father may have been named John, the name they gave their oldest son. If they had deferred the name Thomas to the position following the mother's father's name (because Thomas was his own name and the son named after him would carry on the name), then the second son would have been named Thomas after both the child's father and his grandfather.

Bridget's oldest son was named Michael, the name of John Flanagan's father, and her second son was named Thomas, in the traditional place for the mother's father's name. Matthew's second son was Matthew, and there is no record of any other children. William named his second son Andrew, a name found in the Baldwin family.

William named his third son after himself, and, as noted above, Thomas named his second son after himself (and perhaps his father). Both William and Thomas named the next son (the place for the father's oldest brother's name) Matthew. Interestingly, Bridget named her fourth son Matthew. Had they all (including the parents back in Ireland) been following this naming pattern, the names of the children suggest the following conclusions: the four Elizabethtown "Dennins" were siblings, their father's name was Thomas, Matthew was the oldest brother, and Thomas was the third.

Further evidence suggesting a family relationship among Bridget, William, Thomas and Matthew can be found in the records of St. John's, St. Mary's and St. Patrick's churches:

- Bridget Dinneen (Flanagan), on July 5, 1837, was a marriage witness at the wedding of Matthew Dinneen and Mary Higgins
- William Dinneen, on Oct 21, 1838, became the godfather of Michael Flanagan, son of Bridet Dinneen and John Flanagan

- Elizabeth Malone (Dennin), Thomas' wife, on Feb. 24, 1839, became the godmother of Thomas Dinneen, son of Matthew Dinnen and Mary Higgins, and on Apr. 1, 1849, became the godmother of Matthew Flanagan, son of Bridget & John.
- John Flanagan, Bridget's husband, on Mar. 5, 1846, became the godfather of Mary Denning, oldest daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Denning.
- Joanna Flanagan, Bridget's daughter, on Oct 17, 1847, became the godmother of Thomas Denning, son of Thomas & Eliza.
- Michael Lanigan, Joanna's husband, on June 14, 1856, became the godfather of Ann Dennin, daughter of William and Mary
- Ellen Dennin, daughter of William and Mary, on Aug. 22, 1869, became the godmother of Mary Flanagan, granddaughter of Bridget & John

Fixed name spellings were apparently not so important in those days - in various records, John Flanagan's name is spelled "Flannagan," "Flanigan," "Flannigan," "Flannagin," and "Flangan." Bridget was called "Dineen" in the earliest records - those at St. John's (Newark), "Denning" in the records from St. Mary of the Assumption, and "Dennin," in the more recent records of St. Patrick's. Johanna was written down as Joanna about half the time. Perhaps this is because the immigrants themselves were illiterate and those who recorded their names in the various records spelled them however they thought the names ought to be spelled.

John Dennin, a descendent of Thomas Dennin, confirms that the earliest spelling was Dinneen - he has his ancestor's naturalization papers with that spelling. "O'Dinneen" means "one who has dark brown hair and eyes." Historically, the O'Dinneens are said to have been hereditary bards and historians for the O'Sullivans and the MacCarthys in County Cork, and, indeed, according to James Britten Stokes, a descendent of William Dennin, the word in his family is that the Elizabethtown Dinneens had come from County Cork.



~ Mary Lanigan Regan
October 2008



*I've heard whisper of a country
That lies far beyond the sea,
Where rich and poor stand equal
In the light of freedom's day.
Oh, Erin! Must we leave you,
Driven by the tyrant's hand?
Must we ask a mother's welcome
From a strange but happy land?*



--Lesser known verses of *The Wearing of the Green*,
a street ballad dating to the Irish rebellion of 1798