

William Small's Origins

William Small's obituaries in the *Winona Daily Republican* and the *St. Charles Union* don't list his parents' names; they say only that "he was born in Ireland, we believe – at least he was of Irish parentage." Census records, his death record in the Winona County courthouse and his biography in the 1883 *History of Winona County, Minnesota* also list Ireland as his birthplace, while the county history book is the only source that specifically mentions Tipperary as his birthplace – significant, since contributors paid a fee to have their biographies included in county histories.

Civil War-era land records for Quincy Township, Olmsted County, Minnesota (where William Small settled in 1858, according to the 1883 *History of Winona County, Minnesota*) contain no references to William Small, but there are several references to two James Smalls and to a Patrick Small. Ruby (Small) Harcey (1903-1990), William's granddaughter, stated that the "other Smalls" in the St. Charles area – the children of the younger James Small – were "cousins;" while she couldn't say that they were *first* cousins of William Small's children Charles, Minnie and Lillie, she suspected that they were. James Small's daughter Blanche (1874-1951) concluded her autograph in Charles Small's autograph album with the words, "Your loving Cousin Blanche Small;" invitations to the weddings of James Small's children survive in Charles and Ida (Peterson) Small's papers; and Charles and Ida owned an enlarged copy of James Small's family portrait. This paper link certainly hints at a blood link.

James Small (1853-1916) and Patrick Small were sons of Irish immigrants James and Bridget (Powers) Small (1810-1894). Bridget, a daughter of John and Catherine Powers, lived with her son James in her old age and died at his home in Quincy Township, Olmsted County, Minnesota. If Ruby (Small) Harcey's assumption is true, then James Small (the elder) and Bridget (Powers) Small were William's parents.

Unfortunately, William died very young in 1888, six years before Bridget (Powers) Small died and twenty-eight years before Bridget's son James died, so there are no obituaries that might have listed William as a survivor in their family.

Ruby (Small) Harcey further stated that William Small's 1866 marriage to Sophia Talbot, an Episcopalian, estranged him from the Irish Catholic "other Smalls" (who, as the story goes, viewed William's death by lightning as his punishment for abandoning Catholicism). This estrangement might explain why James and William's grandchildren were vague about their familial connection.

So far, no official record has surfaced indicating that James Small and William Small were related.