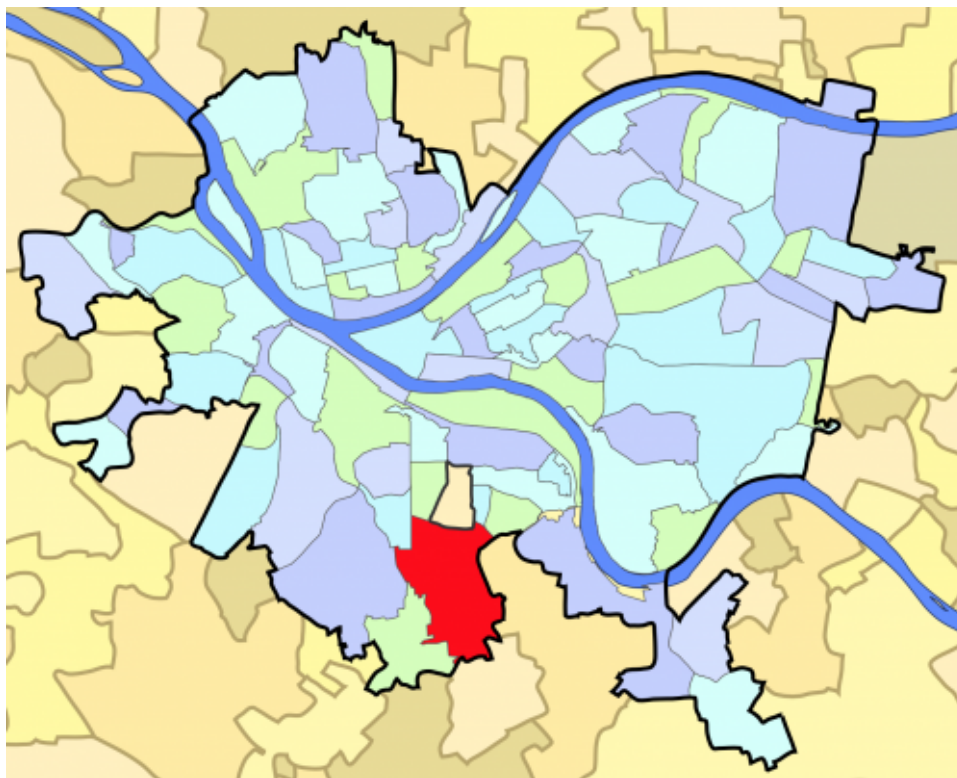


Tuesday's Tip: Finding Information about Dr. John H. O'Brien of Pennsylvania



Carrick (in red), suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh is built around the confluence of three rivers- the Allegheny River in the northeast and the Monongahela River in the southeast flow to form the Ohio River in the northwest portion of this map. Via Wikipedia, courtesy Tom Murphy VII, public domain.

[Helbling Family](#) *(Click for Family Tree)*

Tuesday's Tip: Follow your Genealogical Muse.

Today started with a genealogical plan to work on Ancestry.com to download GEDCOMs and upload the new Family Tree Software before tomorrow's midnight deadline for changes in the sync

process. One hour, then on to the real life things- that was the goal. Serendipitous things happened instead, however, and the urge to follow my Genealogical Muse took over. I am so glad I followed...

My computer breadcrumb trail has been lost now in all the items I have seen (I know, 'History' should show it but it does not always with some pay-wall and other sites), but I somehow ended up with a death certificate on my screen. Knowing that Dr. John H. O'Brien was born at Carrick-on-Suir in Tipperary, Ireland, made the new-to-me fact that his son Charles Anthony O'Brien, Sr. was born in Carrick, Pennsylvania a curious one. Was that a mistake? Charles A. O'Brien, Jr., his son, had completed the death certificate for his father- did he 'misremember' his father's birthplace as his grandfather's? But it did say "Carrick, Penna." instead of Carrick, Ireland, and Charles Jr. did get other information correct about the parents of his father.

Hmmm, so of course the G. Muse required that I look up Carrick, PA.



Carrick, Pennsylvania. Wikimedia Commons, CC0-public domain. (Click to enlarge.)

And wow! There on the Wikipedia page was:

In 1853, Dr. John H. O'Brien received permission from the U. S. Postal Service to establish a post office in the area; for his hard work he was given the honor of naming it, and he chose "Carrick" after his home town, Carrick-on-Suir, Ireland.

Oh my, that would be OUR Dr. John H. O'Brien!

Of course, being Wikipedia, a check for accuracy was in order. But it checked out (or else has been copied to many other websites)- see links below. Since the Carrick-Overbrook Historical Society has the same story on their website, I tend to think it is most probably correct. (No success in following the USPS lead- seems there should be a record of a request somewhere.)

So they lived in Carrick, PA in 1853, since he named it and their son was born there that same year. Wanting a Post Office there would suggest that they had been there a while and planned to stay, since he went to all the trouble of an official paperwork request. We will need to focus on that area for further study, especially since we do not have details of the birthplaces of their other children beyond "Pennsylvania."



1888 Wigman House in Carrick, Pennsylvania. Built the year after John O'Brien died, he may have lived in a similar house built earlier. Via Wikimedia Commons, public domain. (Click to enlarge.)

Dr. O'Brien must have longed for his home in Ireland even after being in the US for over 20 years. Pittsburgh did have a river like where he grew up- actually three of them. Carrick-on-Suir is only 10 feet above sea level, and Pittsburgh, being situated in a large river valley, would have had a similar topographic feel. Both have mountains around, so the area in 1853 must have seemed a bit like home to John. Giving it the name of his home would have made it feel moreso.

The Genealogical Muse helped me strike gold today! It has been hard to find much information on John and Jane (Neel) O'Brien in the early years, and this was a surprising and great find.

So remember our Tuesday Tip and follow the Genealogical Muse when you can. And make sure to check out children and siblings- what you find may be just as wonderful!

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. Death certificate of Charles A. O'Brien, Sr., Commonwealth of PA File No. 97596, Registered No. 546, Pennsylvania Death Certificates 1906-1964, (1928), Ancestry.com.
2. Carrick Wikipedia article—[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carrick_\(Pittsburgh\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carrick_(Pittsburgh))
3. Carrick-Overbrook Historical Society—<http://www.carrick-overbrook.org/carrick>
4. "Pittsburgh Neighborhoods: Carrick" includes modern day photos— <http://pittsburghbeautiful.com/2017/02/01/pittsburgh-neighborhoods-history-of-carrick/>
5. "How 65 Pittsburgh Neighborhoods Got Their Names"— see #11.
<http://mentalfloss.com/article/65575/how-65-pittsburgh-neighborhoods-got-their-names>

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