

# Origin of the Species; or, Whatever Happened to Good Old What's His Name?

*Tom Wolfe, 1975*

This sketch is merely an attempt to outline the descendants of Maurice and Sarah Wolfe and is not an attempt to trace the entire Wolfe or McAndrew lineage. If the writer digresses here or there and the reader should happen to learn something, he should savor this knowledge like a fine wine, lobster, or, at today's prices, hamburger. The writer leaves to others the task of tracing the lineage of Grandfather Maurice Wolfe's nine brothers and sisters. The early information on the Wolfes was found in *Wolfe's History of Clinton County*, edited by Patrick B. Wolfe (1911), which can be found in the Davenport Public Library. Most quotations used here will be from that work. The writer refuses to claim the responsibility for any errors of commission or omission. It's always easier that way. He does insist, however, that the reader not take anything written below too seriously. Certainly, no attempt has been made to embarrass anyone. The intent has been merely to put some life into something that might otherwise be about as exciting as outlining a declarative sentence for an English grammar class.

The writer's great grandfather, John R. Wolfe, was born in County Kerry, Ireland in 1824, the son of Richard Wolfe. He received an "excellent education," which no doubt gave him pinko ideas because he helped organize the "Young Ireland" Party, an obviously leftist group, while supposedly studying. He left Ireland in 1846 or 1848 (no doubt chased out for advocating political radicalism but barely possibly because the potato famine was in full swing that year). His ship took him to Ottawa, Illinois (which is impressive since the nearest ocean is about 1500 miles away). He farmed in Ottawa until 1854 when the irresistible lure of little Lost Nation forced him to once again pack his bags. (One can only speculate as to whether he was active in radical Illinois politics and was forced to skedaddle again.)

At any rate, move to Lost Nation he did, where he farmed successfully until his death in 1885. He was a Catholic, an "active worker in the Church," an opponent of that peculiar institution known as slavery, and a man who was not interested in politics. (At least that's what he said, but he probably knew the police were watching, having been run out of two different areas already.)

About John's wife we have little information beyond the fact that her family was apparently given to drink. Her name was Honora Buckley, a member of a family "prominent in the church and at the bar." Her brother Michael was either active in the Belfast bar or hung around one a great deal. Honora Buckley Wolfe died three years after her husband, in 1888.

John and Honora had ten children. They were James, a farmer near Lost Nation; Patrick, a DeWitt and Clinton lawyer and judge; Johanna, who became Sister Scholastica of the Order of Sisters of Mercy at Sioux City; John, a Melrose farmer;

Maurice, a Lost Nation farmer (and grandfather of the writer); Margaret, the wife of Dr. D. Langan (Lanigan? Lanagan?) of Clinton; Katherine, wife of Judge T.D. Fitzgerald of Montana and Clinton (he was once a Montana politician who doubtlessly was chased from that state for advocating seditious extremism like his father-in-law); Richard, a DeWitt lawyer; and two children who died in infancy.

It should be noted here that a Horse Thief Protection Society was formed in the Delmar area in 1859-60. The motivation for the Society is unknown to the writer, but in a land heavily populated with English and Germans, as well as with the Irish, it must have been distressing indeed to see so much evidence of what Sir Walter Raleigh unflatteringly called the "Wilde Irish" so dangerously near them. Prudence alone would have dictated such a move.

The attitude of Delmar's English and Germans was not unique. William Thomas was an Englishman who wrote in 1552 that "the wild Irish, as unreasonable beasts, lived without any knowledge of God or good manners...." Fifteen years later, another Englishman wrote the queen:

I cannot find that they make any conscience of sin, and I doubt whether they christen their children or no; for neither find I place where it should be done, nor any person able to instruct them in the rules of a Christian; or if they were taught I see no grace in them to follow it; and when they die I cannot see they make any account of the world to come.

(These quotations did *not* come from Wolfe's History.)

Patrick Wolfe, second son of John and Honora, adopts a slightly different attitude towards the "Wild Irishe." Picture a choir of angels with trumpets blaring as he makes the following introduction of his older brother.

The Emerald Isle, far famed in song and story, has furnished a large number of enterprising and high-minded citizens to the U.S., and they have even been most welcome, for we have no better class of citizens. They are, almost without exception, industrious, and they are loyal to do their full duty as citizens in whatever community they cast their lot. Among this large class the name of James B. Wolfe, whose long, strenuous, and interesting career has resulted in much good to himself, his family, and to his friends and neighbors, for his example has ever been exemplary and his influence salutary.

James B. Wolfe was born in Ireland in 1843, arriving in Chicago in 1847 or '48. He was a farmer and a businessman, "and he laid by a competence for his declining years." (How's that for phrasing?) He was a Democrat but not active in public affairs except at the local level, having been school director for twenty years. We are assured that he and Anna O'Connor Wolfe, daughter of Jeremiah O'Connor, were faithful members of the Catholic Church.

James and Anna Wolfe had seven children. They were John O.C.; Jerry, a veterinary surgeon in Grand Mound; Mary; Nora; James; Walter; and Anna. We are assured that "there are no more worthy or highly honored people in Clinton County than the Wolfes."

One of James' children, Jerry, was born in 1875. He became a Catholic at birth, a Democrat shortly after, the champion foot racer in the state of Iowa for a time, a veterinarian and Grand Mound fire chief. He married Mary Wiley of Chicago in 1909. As of 1911, they had only one child.

Judge Patrick B. Wolfe, second eldest of John and Honora's clan was born in 1848 and married Margaret Connole in 1878. They had three children: John L., a lawyer (eventually in partnership with the judge); Mary; and a third child who died in infancy.

That brings us to the end of our digressions into various other lines of the John R. Wolfe clan. Were the writer at all knowledgeable on the subject, he might have continued, but perhaps someone else can do this. There apparently exists somewhere some written material along this line, although it would need updating.

We must now rein sharply inward and direct our attention to the immediate Wolfe line, that of MAURICE and SARAH WOLFE. Maurice, fifth living child of John and Honora Wolfe, was the first of that family born in Lost Nation. The writer knows little about him, but it can be assumed he became a Catholic and a Democrat at approximately the same time. It is possible, however, that he inherited some of his father's Marxist revolutionary ideas although there is no record of political insurrection in Lost Nation or Toronto during his lifetime. It is well known in Lost Nation, though, that Grandfather Maurice attended his agrarian pursuits in spurts which he called "five year plans." His favorite tools were the hammer and sickle.

Sometime in the 1890s, Maurice met Sarah McAndrew, probably at a party rally, found her to be a twin soul, ideologically speaking, and married her.

Sarah McAndrew, daughter of Phil McAndrew of Toronto (or Lost Nation?), was born about 1866. Whether Sarah supported the Bolsheviks as ardently as did her husband during the revolution of 1917 is not a matter of public record. What is known is that she bore five children, all boys. They were Raymond, Phillip, John, Melvin, and James. Sarah died at the age of 56 in 1922, followed five years later by her husband, the "Old Comrade."

RAYMOND WOLFE, the eldest son of Maurice and Sarah and the writer's father, was born in 1896. He joined the Navy in World War I. He caught no Germans, but he did catch the flu. In 1925 he caught Gladys McGinn of Petersville. (She was only twenty-two at the time, but that didn't stop her from continually telling her own children that no one with a grain of sense married under thirty. To gently remind her of her own age in 1925 only brought about a foot stomping and the response, "That was different.")

Ray and Gladys farmed in Lost Nation and later in Delmar, where they were that town's only Irishmen (almost) and were proclaimed honorary members of the Horst

Thief Protection Society. They had four children: Sara, Mary, Margety, and Thomas. Ray died in 1941, one month short of his 45<sup>th</sup> birthday. Gladys lived on until 1966, dying at the age of 63.

Sara, the eldest child of Ray and Gladys, sets high standards for herself and usually accomplished her goals. Sara has inherited the very liberal communist ideas of Grandfather Maurice and Great Grandfather John R. When vexed, he will even accuse her little brother, the only begotten son of Ray and Gladys, of being a Republican or a fascist, terms she considers synonymous and uses interchangeably. Besides raising a family, she presently works at Marycrest College coordinating a group of radical leftists whose them songs are "I Am Woman" and "the Internationale." She is married to G.R. (Dick) Wissing, a Davenport lawyer with a dry wit and an inordinate interest in Clinton County happenings. (Maybe he wishes he were Irish.) They have four children: Matthew Richard, Mary Elizabeth (Beth), Katherine Constance (Kate), and John Martin.

Mary K. is best remembered for having once put a pair of children's tennis shoes inside her oven and for remembering vividly the details of her elder sister Sara's birth. Actually, Mary K.'s birth was unique enough by itself in that almost immediately after her birth was announced in the paper the nation plunged into the Great Depression. She married John Welsh, a salesman and arch conservative somewhat to the right of Louis XIV, and live in Davenport surrounded by the smell of burning rubber and old copies of the *National Review*, as well as copies of the taped telecasts of William F. Buckley. Compared with John, Pope Paul is a Protestant. John and Mary have four children: Michael Joseph, Anne Marie, Thomas James, and Mary Kathryn.

Margery Wolfe married Edmund Butler and the law firm of Butler, Butler, and Butler, Philadelphia. Ed is the one between "and" and "Philadelphia," so he can't get too cocky. Marge is best remembered for having allowed once that the crops were not doing very well. It was Christmas and there were three feet of snow on the ground at the time. Their children are named Edmund Jr., Patricia, and Thomas Brendan. (Middle names are included only when known.)

Tom married Frannie Cupp of Moline, teaches, and lives in Davenport. They have three children: Bridget Colleen, Brendan Martin, and Sara Elizabeth.

The second of Maurice and Sarah was **PHIL**, born in 1898. He married Mildred Gribbon of DeWitt forty-five years ago, in 1930. Phil and Mildred live on a farm south of Lost Nation. Over the years, Phil has pursued vigorously the task of convincing his nephews of the joys and material benefits he claims to be an integral part of husbandry, the tilling of the soil. Mildred has the distinction, among other things, of being a member of the longest, continual, single bridge club in this part of the world.

JOHN WOLFE, the third son, was born in 1901, marrying Ida Burke of DeWitt on Thanksgiving Day, 1936. John was an extremely kind man and had the richest brogue of all the Wolfes. Their farm is south of Lost Nation, near Phil's. They had two children, Marianne and Jack. John died in 1974.

Marianne Wolfe, John and Ida's first born, married Leon McGarry, and they farm near DeWitt. They have seven children: John L., Maureen, Ann Marie, Sheila, Lisa, Coleen, and Leo Patrick.

Jack Wolfe (John III) married Pierette Durioux, an Irish girl from Brooklyn, and they now live in Des Moines. Years ago this couple always struck this writer as being the nearest thing to real live intellectuals the Wolfe clan had recently produced. However, they have eight children, and one assumes that somewhere around the third or fourth child abstractions were tossed aside in favor of such basics as food, clothing, shelter, nerve pills, and lunch money for the kids. Their offspring are named Mary Lynne, John Joseph, Kevin, Katherine, Christine, Susan, Jennifer, and Sara Elizabeth.

Melvin Wolfe, the fourth son of Maurice and Sarah, was born in 1904. the nurse or midwife (or whomever helped deliver him in those days near the dawn of creation) reports that thirty minutes after his birth he said to the assembled doctor, nurses, midwives, family, and friends, "Did you hear the one about...?" The story is reported to have lasted sixteen minutes and twelve seconds by actual timing, included three delightful sub-stories, and was told in a marvelous Irish accent which has, unfortunately disappeared among third generation Wolfes.

In 1929, Melvin met and married Frances McLaughlin of Otter Creek, the most remarkable and colorful lady this writer has ever known. She gave birth to five children: Paul, Robert, Patricia, Leo (David), and Richard. Their farm is located a very short distance north of the church. Frances died in 1967, and Melvin moved into town sometime around then and son David took over.

Paul, the eldest child of Melvin and Frances, married Patricia Kurtz and lives in Lawrence, Kansas. (The writer vaguely remembers, from those misty days of antiquity, a large Polish wedding in Detroit.) The two eldest of the Melvin Wolfe clan have taken the benediction, "May your tribe increase," even more seriously than the issue of John Wolfe, and that is indeed hard to do. The children of Paul and Pat are as follows: Michael, Timothy, Steven Philip, Mary, Kathleen, Margaret, Thomas, John, and Maureen (also Therese, who belongs somewhere in the middle).

Robert Wolfe, Melvin's second son, married Kathy McGuire of Streator, Illinois, lives in Davenport, has varied business pursuits, including the management of Happy Joe's Pizza places, and had at the latest roll call, nine children. They are Anne Marie, Sheila Eileen, Mary Elizabeth, Kathleen Mary, Patricia Frances, Steven Joseph, Christopher Philip, Thomas Peter, and Matthew Robert.

Patricia Wolfe, the third-born, married Eugene Higuera and lives in Simsbury, Connecticut. They have two children: Michael and Mary.

David, the fourth-born, is best known for his huge brown eyes and a voice with volume and vibrancy sufficient to rattle a raging rhinoceros. David and his wife Thora (Tori) Walshe (of Pasadena) run the family farm and teach. David has no leisure time whatsoever, and that's the way he likes it while Tori has made a

remarkable adjustment from the southern California environment to that of a Midwestern farm. Their children are Shaun Patrick, Mary Erin, and Kevin Walshe.

Richard, the youngest of the Melvin Wolfe family, lives in Bettendorf and is reputed to have once made a comfortable living by recharging the lightning rods of Midwestern farmers. He now strives mightily to ensure that collegians are sweet looking and sweet smelling, a task which has grown more challenging in recent years. His vehicle for this is his own creation, a company called Superbox. He is married to Mary Schepker of Davenport. Their two children are Richard Joseph, Jr. (Duke), and Tucker Duffy.

The youngest of Marice and Sarah was James. He was born in 1909 and promptly began enjoying himself. Life was seldom dull when he was around. In 1937, he married Alice Heath of Waterloo. Their farm was located southeast of Lost Nation. Jimmy died in 1965, and Alice soon moved into town. Their five children are Celine, James (Patrick), Sarah, Alice (Maureen), and Raymond.

Celine, the eldest, is employed by Illinois Bell in Chicago's Loop and works feverishly at the task of uniting the extended family through modern, instantaneous communication and simultaneously gouging Ma Bell. As we write our monthly telephone checks which do so much to enrich AT&T, let us silently thank brave Celine for striving so selflessly in her efforts *to get us back some of our own!* Celine is married to Daniel Wicks, a fellow employee, and they live in Lake Villa, Illinois.

Pat, the second born, married La Donne Henry from the Kansas City area. They now live near Denver (Lakewood) where Pat is doing construction work. They have two girls: Collen La Donne and Kathleen La Dawn.

Sarah married Roger McNeil of rural Calamus, and they presently are farming in that area. Their home is an active place nowadays, and one could almost gather the impression that Roger and Sarah are just a bit busy. Their children are Michael James, Kathleen Marie, Patricia Ann, and Christopher Roger.

Maureen married Henry Olsen from Council Bluffs, and they now live in Iowa City. Henry works for MRC and Maureen for ACT. (The writer has no idea what either of these sets of initials represents.) They have one child, Henry R. Olsen, II.

Ray, the youngest child of James and Alice, is now living in Denver and married a native of that city, Annette Nelson. She works for the VA, and Ray is presently doing welding work on pipelines.

In the manner just described, we find the Wolfe line extending from John R. and Honora through Maurice and Sarah brought to date. Certainly, we third generation Wolfes and McAndrews have been blessed, and we presumably don't wish to see our own children faced with any unnecessary ordeals. Let us all thank our Irish God that the youngest generations will be half so lucky as we have been.