

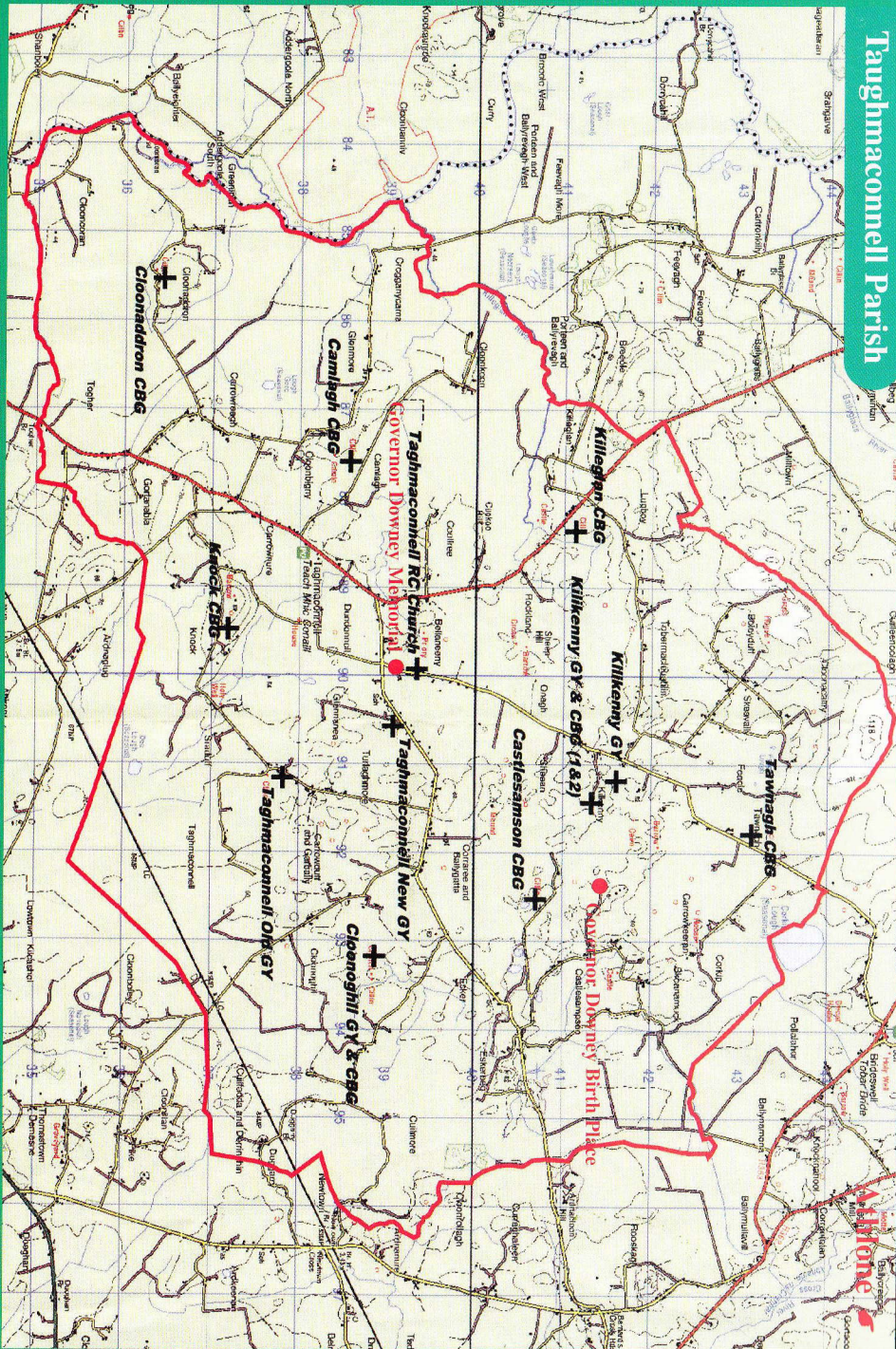
Governor John G. Downey



A South Roscommon Native

Taughmaconnell Heritage and Historical Society Publication

Taughmaconnell Parish



CITY OF
Downey

Proclamation



JOHN GATELY DOWNEY

WHEREAS: John Gately Downey, born June 24, 1827, in Castlesampson, Taughmaconnell Parish, County Roscommon, Ireland, to Denis Downey and Bridget Gately, arrived in Los Angeles, California, in 1850; and

WHEREAS: he achieved the American Dream, arriving as a new emigrant and becoming a gold prospector, the first pharmacist in the City of Angels, founder of its first bank, Farmers and Merchants Bank, a rancher, a real estate developer, a councilman and a county supervisor; and

WHEREAS: he was appointed as a United States Treasury Distribution Agent, collector for the Port of San Pedro and Lighthouse Superintendent and was elected as State Representative, Lieutenant Governor and Governor of the State of California, all by the time he was thirty-two years old; and

WHEREAS: he created the first major development known as the Downey Block in Los Angeles and its location remains at the very heart of the city, and the City of Downey, California, was named in his honor, as his land company owned the land, which was subdivided to create the town in the 1870's.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mario A. Guerra, Mayor of the City of Downey, California, on behalf of the Downey City Council and the citizens of Downey, do hereby commend and honor John Gately Downey for his many accomplishments that to this day still benefit the residents of Downey.



Mario A. Guerra

Dn. Mario A. Guerra
Mayor

Chairman's Address

Michael Moore 31-10-16

Every community derives inspiration by looking and taking pride in the deeds of one of its most successful fore-father's. The Taughmaconnell community is fortunate in having one such man Governor John G. Downey. From an early age I was aware from my grandfather of this great man that had left Castlesampson to become Governor of California.

One field separates our two farms from where Governor Downey was born, and the ruins of the house are still there to be seen. There is a field called Sean Ruadh's on our farm where the Governors uncle lived. Over the last number of years Taughmaconnell Heritage and Historical Society have been working towards honouring this great man in his native parish with various ideas being discussed on what would be the most appropriate way of honouring him. The committee decided on erecting a monument displaying a bronze bust in his memory in Taughmaconnell village.

Due to the success of our last publication Taughmaconnell A History we had some funds available and with the various grants that were allocated it enabled us to go ahead with this project. We have also decided to compile a commemoration booklet to read about his great achievements and those of his family.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow editorial committee members who helped in the compilation of this booklet; Ollie Moore, Tim Farrell, Val Keogh, Liam Keogh and the officers elected at our last AGM; Joint Presidents: Fr. Sean Neylon, Pat Spellman, Pat Creavin and committee members Tim O'Connell and Michael John Foley.

Acknowledgements

The committee wish to give thanks to the following people for their assistance in compiling this booklet and the erection of the bronze bust to Governor John G. Downey. Roscommon County Council.

Minister Michael Finneran for the allocation of grant aid from The Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government.

Sculptor Mark Rode for his excellent craftsmanship on the bust.

Mr. Albert Siggins of the Turlough Park Museum and Folk Life Castlebar.

Mr. James Ganly, President of Roscommon Historical and Archaeological Society.

FAS, for their work on preparing the site on which the monument is to be erected.

Dn. Mario A. Guerra Mayor of City of Downey

John G. Vincent President and CEO Downey Historical Society

Office of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger State of California

Mr. Gene O'Sullivan for all his time and information on Governor Downey and his family.

Mr. Val Keogh for the use of his house in compiling this booklet.

BIOGRAPHY OF GOVERNOR JOHN G. DOWNEY.

John Gately Downey (1827-1894) was born June 24, in Castlesampson, Taughmaconnell parish, County Roscommon, Ireland, to Denis Downey and Bridget Gately.

Castlesampson.

Castlesampson (one word) is in South County Roscommon, is not a castle or a town. It's a town-land. The closest town is Athlone, which is about eight miles to the East. Castlesampson is in Taughmaconnell parish.

Denis Downey and Bridget Gately Downey.

Governor Downey's father was a Denis Downey but, according to his son he was known as "Honest Jack". John G. is probably confused here as the area in this time was completely Irish speaking, and besides Denis had a brother who was known as Sean Ruadh Downey. Before she married Denis Downey, Bridget Gately was married to a gentleman named John Martin. Mr. Martin died leaving her with two young daughters (Mary and Winifred).

She married Denis Downey and together they had four children, two boys (John and Patrick) and two girls, (Eleanor and Anna).



*Birthplace of Governor John G. Downey
Castlesampson, Taughmaconnell (Taken 1982)*

All of John's siblings would later join him in California. His brother Patrick died in 1861. His sisters Anna and Eleanor married well and were very active socially in San Francisco.

The house where Governor John G. Downey was born was that of his grandfather in Castlesampson, Taughmaconnell. Governor Downey himself stated "the material from which the house was built was cut stone, and that the barn was built of the same material." Both buildings still stand though now unroofed, and it is clear that they were both built of undressed stone and mortar but there are a few dressed stones in the buildings, including one in the chimney breast. These probably came from the ruins of a 15th – 16th century tower house that once belonged to the Keogh family.

1841

At the age of fourteen years he emigrated to America to join his two stepsisters.

Stepsisters

When John arrived in Maryland to join his stepsisters, they enrolled him in a Latin School in Charles County, Maryland, taught by John F Corcoran, in preparation for entry into the priesthood. John stayed in this school for about one year.

His stepsisters were Mary and Winifred Martin.

1843-1846

Apprenticed to John Callan, a druggist in Washington D. C.

1846-49

Went to Cincinnati where he was a partner with John Darling in a drugstore there.

1849

Moves briefly to Vicksburg, where he was connected in business with Oliver Woodman - a drugstore owner before coming to California to join the "gold rush".

Arriving in San Francisco, he immediately found his way to the gold fields around Nevada City in the Sierra Nevada foothills. After a short try at prospecting he concluded that this work was not to his liking.

John Downey returned to San Francisco where he found gainful employment with a wholesale druggist, Henry Johnson and Company, on Dupont Street. (Dupont Street has since been renamed and is known to-day as Grant Avenue. Grant Avenue is the main thoroughfare through to-day's Chinatown).

There were no banks as we know them to-day in San Francisco at that time. Money lenders served that function. This was a perfectly respectable pursuit and John Downey became involved in that business. Over a relatively short period he accumulated a nest egg of about six thousand dollars.

1850

Always on the outlook for opportunity, John got word that a sailing ship had docked in the harbour with a cargo of pharmaceutical compounds. He also learned that the ships captain was anxious to offload this cargo quickly and was willing to sell his cargo at a discount. John Downey purchased the entire cargo pharmaceutical compounds in San Francisco and took delivery at port San Pedro, to-day's Los Angeles Harbour. Arriving in Port San Pedro, he rented a horse drawn wagon to haul his merchandise to Pueblo Diablo (the devils village) as it was known then – later to become Los Angeles.

Opened a Drugstore with **Dr. J. P. McFarland** – theirs was the only drugstore between San Francisco and Mexico. They had no competition and their business thrived. McFarland was from the South as were many of the residents of the area. He was involved in local politics and served the area as a representative at the state level. It was he who got Downey interested in politics.

1851

Becomes an American Citizen.

1852

John Downey married Maria Guirado the daughter of Don Rafael Guirado, a Spanish Don of Sonora, Mexico. He was 25 years old, she was fifteen. Since many of his drugstore customers came up from Mexico, it is likely that he met his bride while she accompanied her father to his store. She is described as being stunningly beautiful. They had no children.

1852

August, 16, Jim Savage was shot and killed by Walter H. Harvey. (In 1858, Harvey married Eleanor Downey and was the father to John Downey Harvey – the main beneficiary of John Downey's estate).

1852-56

John Downey serves as a Los Angeles Council man and later County Supervisor. This was his first elected political office.

1853

Member of first Volunteer police force in Los Angeles.

1854

In November of 1854, just five years after arriving in California, in partnership with Don Benito Wilson, William Stanford and Phineas Banning, purchased a large part of Ranch De San Pedro, for the purpose of laying out a new city and harbour. This property strategically fronted on San Pedro Harbour, (Los Angeles Harbour to-day).



Maria Downey 1837-1883

1855

September, 5th, John Downey is elected Assembly man to represent Los Angeles in the California State Legislature.

1856

Helped the Irish Sisters of Charity become established in Los Angeles, and contributed to building their first hospital.

Partner in the Los Angeles Oil Company.

Partner in the Pioneer Oil Company.

Appointed Collector Port of San Pedro by President James Buchanan.

Appointed Superintendent of Lighthouses by President James Buchanan.

Appointed U S Treasury Agent for Southern California by President Buchanan.

May, 22nd

John Downey's sisters, Annie and Eleanor and brother Patrick arrive in California.

1858

Serves as Los Angeles County Supervisor.

Sister - Eleanor marries Walter Harvey.

1859

Along with drugstore partner James P. McFarland, he purchased Santa Gertrude Rancho (17,602) acres).

Elected Lieutenant Governor of California.

1860

John G. Downey becomes the Governor of California (1860-62) at the early age of 32 years. His wife is still the youngest first lady of the State of California.

Sworn in as the Seventh Governor of California on January 14, and the first ever governor from Southern California. He was also the first foreign-born governor of the State. This distinction he held up until 2003, when Austrian Arnold Schwarzenegger, was elected to the governors office in a recall election.

This was a unique time for the Irish in California. The first foreign-born mayor of a major American city was Frank McCoppin from Longford, when he was elected mayor of San Francisco. The founder and first police chief of the San Francisco police department was Malachi Fallon from Athlone. John G. Downey was Governor of the state. Jasper O'Farrell from Longford, surveyed and laid out the city of San Francisco. All in all the Irish midlands were well represented during that period.

Inaugural Address
JOHN DOWNEY
7th Governor, Lecompton Democrat
(1860-1862)
Presented: January, 14, 1860.

GENTLEMEN OF THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY:- In entering upon the discharge of the responsible duties of the office of Chief Magistrate of the State, which have devolved upon me under the provisions of the Constitution, in consequence of the resignation of the Governor, I am painfully conscious of the want of that experience which is so necessary to a proper administration of the affairs of the Executive Department of the Government.

I should indeed hesitate to take upon myself the discharge of these duties, did I not rely with confidence upon your appreciation of the difficulties of my position, and your indulgent judgement upon my acts.

I can only give to you, gentlemen, and through you to the people of the State, the assurance, that the affairs of the government shall be administered with a rigid and just economy, and to the best of my abilities, with a due regard to the varied interests of the State.

The general policy which I propose to pursue is plainly and admirably indicated in the Inaugural Address of Governor Latham, and I hope that I shall be able so to discharge the trusts I have this day assumed as to receive your approbation, and that of our common constituency.

1860

March 2, signed bill that makes Sacramento the permanent capital of California.

In 1860, the Supervisors of the City of Sacramento deeded to the State of California, the tract of land bounded by L and N, 10th and 12th Streets, and the Legislature appropriated \$500,000 for the erection of the Capital Building.

April 16th, Bullhead Bill Vetoed By vetoing the Bulkhead Bill Governor Downey prevented a band of corrupt businessmen from looting the treasury and stealing from San Francisco her waterfront.

April 13,

The first Pony Express rider from St. Joseph, Missouri, reaches Sacramento.

The First Pony Express from St. Joseph, Missouri brought a message of congratulation from President Buchanan to Governor Downey of California, which was first telegraphed to the Missouri River town. It also brought one or two official government communications, some New York, Chicago, and St. Louis newspapers, a few bank drafts, and some business letters addressed to banks and commercial houses in San Francisco – about eighty-five pieces of mail in all.

November 6th 1860, Abraham Lincoln is elected president.

December 20th, South Carolina secedes from the Union. The civil war between the states was now inevitable.

1861

May 15,

Oversaw the laying of the corner stone for the State Capital Building in Sacramento.

March 4th, Abraham Lincoln is inaugurated as President of the United States.

His only brother, Patrick Downey, dies.

April 12

The American Civil War Begins (1861-65).

CONVENTIONAL wisdom holds that the Civil War started at Fort Sumter, S. C., on April 12-13, 1861, when provisional confederate forces drove out the federal garrison. California was not a Republican state in 1860, both the California state Senate and the state Assembly were decidedly Democrat. Moreover, John Downey was a Democrat. The governor, though, was a staunch Union man and he was able to stop the Pro-southern Democrats from winning control of his party.

Birth of California's Wine Industry

Col Agoston Haraszthy, a Hungarian immigrant to the US who settled in Sonoma, California, was asked by Calif. Governor John Downey to go to Europe and to find sample cuttings of the best European varieties of grapes. Haraszthy's methodology, personality and perseverance earned him the name of Father of California Wines. Downey's foresight put the power and prestige of the State behind this most important California industry.

Article by John Downey for the overland Monthly for June 1874

"If California is not at present, indeed, the favourite grape-growing country of the world, it is destined, certainly, to attain that rank".

July 15

A street fracas occurred on in San Francisco between Gov. Downey, John Middleton, and Myles D. Sweeney over his veto of the Bullhead Bill. Downey, evidently not amused by the other gentleman's comments, punches Middleton on the forehead knocking him to the ground. Calmer heads prevail and order was quickly restored.

July 1861, the War Department requested that California's Governor Downey raise a force of volunteers.

July 1861, Raised five regiments of infantry and six companies of cavalry for the Union forces in the Civil War.

October

First ever cross continent telegraphic message sent by Governor Downey to President Lincoln.

December 20.

Appointed John A Sutter as Major General, 5th Division, of the California State Militia.

Brother-in-law Walter H Harvey dies.

1862

Leland Stanford elected governor of California.

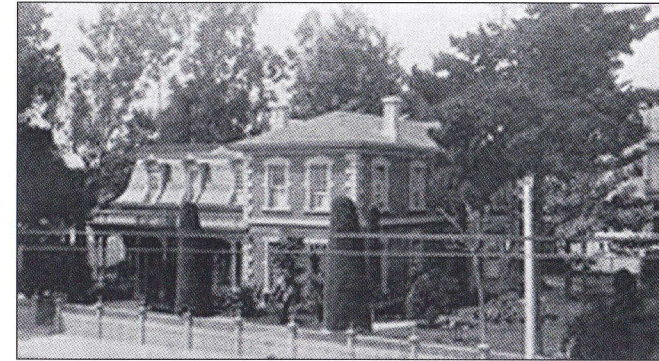
Sister Anna marries San Francisco industrialist Peter Donahue.

1863

Re-nominated by the democrats but defeated in his attempt to be re-elected Governor by Low.

1864

Builds a brick residence on Main Street between Third and Fourth Street, It was the first house in L. A. with a ballroom.



Elected as a delegate to the national convention of the National Union Party.

Nominated from the first district as their congressional candidate by the Democratic Party, but declined to accept the nomination.

1865

Partners with Phineas Banning in the development of Pioneer Oil Company, the first oil company in California.

Begins subdividing his Santa Gertrudes Rancho.

April 9th, Civil War ends.

April 15th, Abraham Lincoln dies.

1866-67

Elected Los Angeles Supervisor.

1868

Entered Banking business with James Heyworth.

His Los Angeles Water Co. drills the first artesian wells in Compton which later becomes the Los. Angeles Water Department.

1869

Along with Phineas Banning organized and financed the San Pedro Railroad.

Begins building the Downey Block in Los Angeles. It becomes the centre of retail in the fledgling city of Los Angeles and the first organized shopping centre of the West Coast.

Began acquisition of the Villa de San Jose, San Diego County.

Sister Eleanor marries Edward Martin from County Wexford.

1871

Organizes farmers and Merchants Bank.

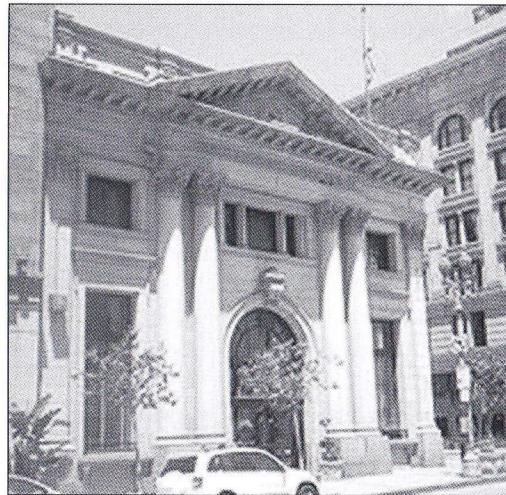
The Farmers and Merchants Bank was the first incorporated bank in Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Basin. It was founded in 1871 by John D. Downey and Isaias W. Hellman.

Downey serves as President.

March, Organized the Southern California Agricultural Society.



*Farmers and Merchant Bank
Original location in Los Angeles 1876.*



*Farmers and Merchant Bank
at 4th and Main Los Angeles 2008.*

1872

Involved in the creation of the Los Angeles Library. Sat on the board of directors of the Library for six years. Donated his personal library to help stock the libraries bookshelves.

Los Angeles Public Library

On December 5, 1872, a notice appeared in local newspapers announcing a public meeting to be held for the purpose of forming a Library Association. One paper, the Star, noted: "The absence of a place where a cultivated person may go for books of reference or standard library works has been spoken of to our injury abroad" Among the 200 who attended the meeting were California Governor John G. Downey, Judge Ignacio Sepulveda and Colonel E. M. Stanford. On December 7, the group formed the Los Angeles Library Association, which was to become the Los Angeles Public Library.

1873

Is chairman of the group that establishes the Board of Trade, later known as the Chamber of Commerce.

Oct 13, Established the City of Downey.

Modern history of Downey begins on October 13, 1873, when a 126-acre lot of Los Nietos township was filed at the Los Angeles recorders office by the Downey Land Association. The town site was called Downey, after, California civil War governor John G Downey, president of the land company.

1874

John Downey's, Downey Land and Development Company, started East Los Angeles using in his publicity such slogans as "Splendid Home sites for All".

He was a key organizer of the Los Angeles City Water Company.

John Downey in partnership with John S Griffin organized and financed the laying of iron pipe water distribution system throughout East Los Angeles.

Along with partners O.W. Childs and John M. Baldwin organized development of horse-railway in Los Angeles also known as the Main Street Line.

Los Angeles Streetcar Line.

AN ORDINANCE amendatory of and supplementary to an ordinance entitled 'An ordinance granting a franchise for street car railroad in the city of Los Angeles to John G. Downey, O. W. Childs and John M. Baldwin', approved September, 28th, 1874.

John Downey writes in The Overland Monthly for June 1874, about the cultivation of citrus and grape crops in California.

1875

Purchases Warner Ranch in San Diego County, (10 leagues .X 4428 acres per league).

1876

Presides at driving golden spike, which marked the completion of the rail line linking San Francisco with Los Angeles.

1879

Three community leaders – Ozro W. Childs, a Protestant horticulturist; former California Governor John G. Downey, an Irish-Catholic businessman; and Isaiah W. Hellman, a German-Jewish banker and philanthropist – deeded to the Board of Trustees of the nascent University of Southern California 308 acres, which were located in an area designated “West Los Angeles”, near the intersection of Vermont Avenue and Exposition Boulevard. A portion of the land, which was located within the original land grant establishing “El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles”, was to be reserved for the actual campus. Sales of the remaining lots would create an endowment to provide the seeds of financial support for the institution. More than an act of generosity, the gift of land was an expression of confidence in the future. Downey Land and Development Company oversaw the sale of the remaining lots with the proceeds going to the University endowment.

John Downey was member of the executive committee of the New Constitution Party.

Declined the nomination for governor offered by the Workingman’s Party.

1880

John Edward along with Mr. Ozro Childs and former Governor Downey persuaded the State of California to purchase 160 acres in Los Angeles to foster agriculture in the Southland. The property then known as Agriculture Park still exists for the benefit of the people to-day. It is now known as Exposition Park, home to the Coliseum and the Los Angeles County Museums.

Elected to the first board of trustees of the University of Southern California.

He was a member of committee recommending division of the State of California into two separate States.

1883

He was the founder and vice president of the Historical Society of Southern California.

Tehachapi Train Wreck Disaster.

Downey’s life was saddened by a terrible railroad accident that occurred January, 29, 1883. He and his wife were on a southbound train that had stopped at Tehachapi Station, near the summit of the Tehachapi Mountains. The locomotive was detached and was taking on water, when suddenly the train began to move down the slope, gained momentum, and at great speed plunged into a ravine below. The old-fashioned stoves and lamps set fire to the cars. More than 20 people died, and others were crushed and burned. Among those who lost their lives was Mrs. Downey. For years Downey suffered from nervous shock. He died in his home in Los Angeles about 10 years later.

During the time period 1883-1886, he suffered from ill health and spent a lot of his time with his sisters in San Francisco until he remarried.

Although he travelled around the world afterwards and eventually resumed control of his business activities his life was never the same again.

There is great irony in the fact that the accident that was to change his life so completely occurred in the Tehachapi Mountains. It was through his efforts that The Big Four (The Big Four, Collis Huntington, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker and Mark Hopkins) brought their Central Pacific Railroad to Southern California via that route).

THE LATE MRS. JOHN G. DOWNEY.

From the San Francisco Bulletin, Jan. 20.

The dreadful accident which occurred on the Southern Pacific Railroad at Tehachapi Summit last night resulted in the death of one of the most estimable ladies of Southern California, in the person of Mrs. John G. Downey. Mrs. Downey was a native Californian, belonging to one of the oldest families. She was the only native California lady who, since the admission of the State into the Union, has come prominently before the public in relation to official life. During the two years of Gov. Downey’s administration—an administration which is gratefully remembered by the people—she presided over the Executive mansion at Sacramento with rare grace and dignity. She thus became favorably known to the leading citizens of the State. Since the close of Gov. Downey’s term of office Mrs. Downey has lived in quiet retirement at their Los Angeles home, beloved by all with whom she came in social and friendly contact. She was possessed of a rare charitable disposition, and was an affectionate wife, unusually strong in her devotion to her husband, to whom her shocking and sudden death is a terrible blow. A multitude will sympathize with him in his affliction and mourn with him over her untimely death.

The New York Times

Published: February 2, 1883

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1888

Marries Rosa V Kelley.

1890

After remarrying, he seems to have spent a lot of time at his Warner ranch in San Diego County.

Rosa V. Kelley, his second wife dies.

1894

Governor Downey Dies

John Downey died at his home in Los Angeles after a slight attack of pneumonia. His original internment was at Old Calvary Cemetery in Los Angeles, but he was re-entered at Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma, California (San Francisco) when the original burial place was used as a school site.

The bulk of his estate went to his nephew, John Downey Harvey, the son of his sister, Eleanor.

Governor John G. Downey now rests next his sisters Anna (Annie) and her husband Peter Donahue as well as his sister and her husband Edward Martin. His brother Patrick is also interred there, as are other members of the Downey/Martin/Donahue families. Mr. John Downey Harvey, Governor Downey's nephew is also buried in Colma in the extended family plot.

December 16, 1886

DEATH OF MRS. ANNIE DONAHUE.

The widow of the Millionaire Railroad Builder No more

A Surprise to Her Friends Though she Had Been Ill
Over a Year.

Left a Large Estate Consisting of Real Property and Stocks - Charitable and Social
Leader.

Mrs. Annie Donahue wife of the late millionaire, Peter Donahue the iron founder and builder of the Donahue Railroad, died at 8:30 o'clock last night after an illness which had extended over a year. Nevertheless, her death was a surprise, for at different periods she so much improved that her complete recovery was anticipated. A new and handsome residence had been constructed on Pacific Avenue where she expected to dwell permanently. To this end, the furniture and fixtures of the old mansion on the north east corner of Bryant Street and Second Street had been advertise to be sold at auction tomorrow.

The funeral will take place from St. Mary's Cathedral on Tuesday, but the hour is not yet announces. Mrs. Donahue was the sister of the ex-Governor John G Downey, Mrs. Eleanor Martin of this City and Miss Winifred Martin of Baltimore and was the stepmother of Baroness Von Schroder and the late J Marvin Donahue, John Downey Harvey and Peter Walter and Andrew Martin, the later three sons of Mrs. Eleanor Martin. Mrs. Donahue was 60 years of age and a native of Roscommon Ireland. She was married to Peter Donahue in 1864. In November 1885 Mr. Donahue died leaving an estate worth millions. He had begun life as a blacksmith and acquired his wealth with remarkable rapidity. The estate consisted of the Donahue or San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad, bonds, stocks, ranches and a large amount of very valuable City property. This property was afterwards divided, J Marvin Donahue and the Baroness Von Schroeder receiving their share. A large estate worth up to the millions was left to Mrs. Donahue. She has been very charitable, giving with a free hand to churches and public institutions. She gave her half interest in the property on Montgomery Street near Sacramento formulary the offices of Donahue Railroad, to Bishop Riordan for a seminary for the education of priests. She was also one of the earliest subscribers to the Valley Railroad.

J Downey Harvey said last night that the property left by her was large. "There is the Union Foundry" he said.....

Call-Dec 10, 1896.



Burial place of Governor John G. Downey

Anna and Eleanor Downey

In 1856, Anna and Eleanor Downey arrive to California to join their brother. Eleanor marries Walter Harvey in 1858. After Major Harvey's death at Los Angeles in 1861, aged forty-eight years, she married Edward Martin who was born, 1819 in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, Ireland. Martin settled in California in 1848. Mr. Martin was the co-founder of Hibernia Savings and Loan, and First National Bank. He also had a real Estate business and a prosperous Lacquer Store. Mr. Martin became one of the wealthiest men on the West Coast. His land holding alone comprised some 800,000 acres in California and Oregon.

Eleanor was born in Castlesampson in September, 1826. She passed away on July, 6, 1928, at the age of 102 years. She rules San Francisco society where she was known as the "Czarina", for decades, and entertained three U S Presidents, William H Taft, Teddy Roosevelt and William McKinley, in her palatial home at 2040 Broadway.



Eleanor Downey Harvey Martin

1862

Anna (also known as Annie) marries San Francisco industrialist Peter Donahue. Peter was one of the remarkable Donahue brothers who among other accomplishments founded Pacific Gas and Electric Co., as well as the first iron foundry on the West Coast. Peter becomes known as the father of California industry.

The City of Anaheim (German for Anna's home) was named for Anna Downey. This bit of information came from the Bancroft Library on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley. It was from an account of his life given personally by Downey to Hubert Howe Bancroft for whom the library is named. The story goes something like this.

A group of German immigrants came to the Los Angeles basin and decided that they wanted to plant a vineyard and produce wine. They went to the local banker, John Downey, and secured a loan to get their venture underway. It takes five years for new vines to bear fruit and three years into their venture the vines were wiped out by a disease. The Germans who had by this time established a little village, which had a school and church, both provided by Downey, came to see their banker about this unfortunate turn of events. Downey being an astute businessman tried to see how to help his customers regain their footing. He had been experimenting himself with growing orange with some success. He had noticed that Padres who were among the original settlers had brought over from Spain orange trees and they thrived in the local climate. John Downey convinced the Germans to convert their vineyards into orange groves. This proved to be very successful. In fact it proved to be so successful that the county was named Orange County. In time the village grew to be a small town and the elders in the German community wanted to find a way to thank Governor Downey for his support and patronage. They went to see him and told him that they wanted to honour him in some way. Always the clever politician and diplomat, he came up with a creative solution. His younger sister Anna, had lived in this mostly German community where she taught school. John suggested that they call their town after her.

Anna died in 1896, at the age of 60.



Anna Downey Donohue

The Downey sisters and the Donahue brothers were among the principle contributors to the Catholic archdiocese of San Francisco, contributing generously to the construction of the cathedral and to various parish-building projects. When the Archbishop of San Francisco was directed to build a seminary it was to these generous benefactors that he again turned.

John Downey was equally generous in Southern California where he contributed not only to catholic charities and causes but gave generously to many other denominations as well. This was something that he was particularly proud of.

John Downey Harvey

Born in Los Angeles on April 17, 1860, J. Downey Harvey was the son of Colonel Walter and Eleanor Harvey. His uncle, John G. Downey, was the seventh governor of California, later a business partner of Alvinza Hayward, whose mansion once stood near Ninth Avenue in San Mateo.

When Downey was 10-years-old, his father, Harvey, died. With his mother, Eleanor, who had married banker Edward Martin, Downey moved to San Francisco. Dubbed "Queen" Eleanor, Downey's mom became the undisputed leader of San Francisco society for decades, and her home was known as a "fortress of respectability."

As a youngster, Downey Harvey displayed a "genius" for acquiring friends. In school, he befriended the son of Pio Pico, the last governor of Alta California, who, with his family chose to reside in Los Angeles. Harvey also knew John C. Fremont, a popular, nationally known figure, and a promoter of railroad projects in the West.

In 1883, 23-year-old Downey Harvey married Sophie Cutter; the couple raised two daughters, Anita and Genevive. Sophie Harvey loved music and a full social calendar, yet she managed to run her large household with efficiency.

Along the way, Downey collected all types of friends from artists and entertainers to business and military men. His aspiration was to become a "clubman."

By 1895, Downey, an avid sportsman, reportedly laid out Northern California's first golf course for the San Francisco Golf and Country Club and was also the founder of the San Mateo County Hunt Club.

In 1905 Downey Harvey was the main driving force behind the creation of the Ocean View Railway Company which would link the San Francisco peninsula's coastal area to the twin cities of San Francisco and Santa Cruz while in the process creating brand new cities. The Ocean Shore Railroad had a lifespan of less than two decades beginning in 1905 and ending in 1920. Those dates themselves are suspect since they encompass the entire life of the actual railroad from its birth as Ocean View Railway to its death as

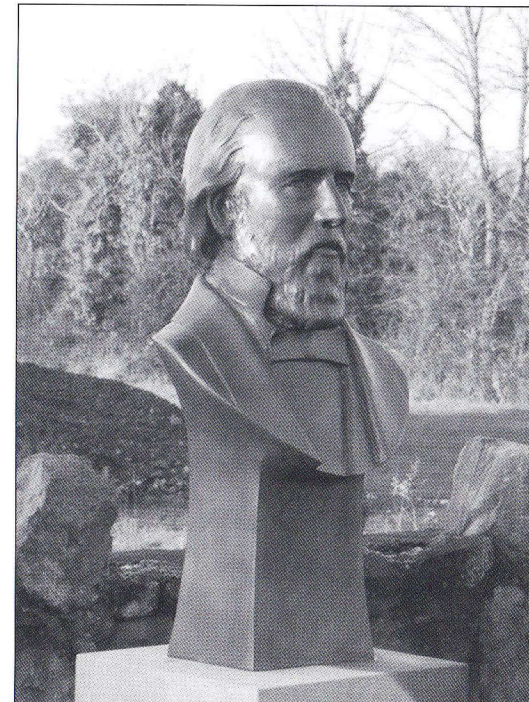
Ocean Shore Railroad. In truth it was only a working railroad for a few of those years the rest being consumed in construction, legal problems and destruction.

After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, as president of the Ocean Shore Railway, Downey Harvey convinced San Francisco's mayor to form a Committee of Fifty to provide relief for the homeless, but his own losses were beyond calculation.

Author Gertrude Atherton wrote that her friend Downey Harvey had invested the greater part of his fortune in the Coastside's scenic railway—but after the earthquake there was little interest in scenic railroads and new resorts.

The Ocean Shore limped forward but the Harveys had lost so much money in the railroad they were forced to live in a sort of retirement for a while. For the Downey Harveys, such a retirement meant living at Del Monte, the exclusive resort built by the Southern Pacific Railroad at Monterey.

J. Downey Harvey, whose affiliations included the Bohemian, Pacific Union, Olympic and San Francisco Golf Clubs, was "the most human of human beings," said a friend after his death in 1947. "He had the wisdom of a fox and honesty of a sunrise."



Memorial of Governor John G. Downey in Taughmaconnell village.

Governor Downey's Parents and Grandfathers Headstones



*Burial place of Governor John G. Downey's father and grandfather,
Taughmaconnell Old Cemetery.*

Inscriptions:

Pray for the soul of Denis Downey who died Dec. the 20th 1796 aged 62 yrs. Erected by his son Denis.

Denis Downey born 1795 died 1837. Bridget Gately his wife buried in Asyantown, Charles County, Maryland, U.S.A. Erected in loving memory by their children in California.

Downey City:

John Downey and his associates were officially assessed on the tax roll of October 23, 1873, for a parcel of land within the Rancho Santa Gertrudes. The property was called the "Tract of the Downey Land Association". This land, consisting of 96 acres, was valued at \$2,940 with improvements of \$330. It was located ten miles from the sea and ten miles from Los Angeles.

Much of the city's current development patterns were determined by the expansion of the railroad.

Although development of the new town proceeded slowly, the 1873 tract map established 16 blocks, reserving 10 acres for a railroad station. The dense vegetation had been cleared and some 300 homes in the district had been established. The town continued to grow with a courthouse, post office, schools, churches, businesses and more houses located in the downtown.

From the outset the Downey commercial district did a brisk business in the buying and selling of produce from the local farmers. Further growth in agricultural commodities came after the building of a gristmill. The area was favoured as to climate, fertility of the soil and abundant water for irrigation. Cultivated fields of small grain, corn, castor beans, mustard and young deciduous fruit trees were producing excellent yields.

Downey's strategic location was an important asset in its economic viability and growth. As early as 1889 when political factions from Santa Ana met with officials from Los Angeles County to discuss the creation of Orange County, Downey was chosen as the obvious meeting place.

By the turn-of-the-century, Downey was the undisputed centre of the business and social life of the area. Downtown now contained a Sunkist packing plant, a department store, banks, restaurants and mercantile shops. It was also the site of Downey Union High School and Downey Grammar School. In the 1920s, wooden "Victorian" and "Craftsman" buildings were gradually replaced with Downey's first masonry structures. Unfortunately, only a few of these early buildings are extant.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many Downey pioneers had achieved success in business and politics in Los Angeles County. The years 1900 1917 were perhaps the "Golden Age" of Downey. In this era a citrus cooperative was formed, the Downey Board of Trade (later renamed the Downey Chamber of Commerce) was organized and the streets were lighted with electricity.

World War I brought progress of a different sort. Local interest began to mount in the aviation branches of the military. The fledgling oil industry grew by leaps and bounds stimulated by the demand of the war economy. Downey was about to change its course, though the rocky road of the Depression lay just around the next bend. The people of

Downey suffered during the Depression years along with the rest of the nation. Its position as an agricultural centre insured that food was available to sustain the local population. Orange groves remained visible in the downtown area with dairies located along the banks of the two rivers.

Downey remained a small town until the 1950s and 1960s. As the surrounding orange groves were transformed into homes and commercial centers, the downtown experienced progressive decline. The opening of the Stonewood Center Mall one mile east in 1958 continued to draw away many customers and businesses.

One of the first significant investments in redevelopment occurred in 1967 with the widening of Downey Ave. The realignment resulted in several blocks of new store fronts and landscape improvements.

In the 1970s, the city began the first steps to confront the issue of downtown revitalization. In the years since the adoption of the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy in 1978, several successful projects have been completed. Among these were the Embassy Suites/Mimi's Cafe and the Civic Center complex.

In the 1990s Downey again faced the challenge of revitalizing the downtown area. A "Blue Ribbon Committee" made up of city representatives, business leaders and residents analyzed the downtown area in 1991. The Downey Avenue Street Faire, which was started by the Chamber of Commerce in 1994, now draws over 20,000 people to the downtown area each spring. More recently, a multi-screen theater complex and 400-space public parking structure were completed in 1997.

October, 2009

The sheer magnitude of John Gately Downey's achievements and accomplishments in a comparatively short lifetime are difficult to fully absorb and comprehend when viewed in the context of to-day's world. Dead at the early age of sixty-six, John was one of a very select group of visionary leaders whose energy and foresight combined with enormous ambition, courage and talent, forged and developed the then fledgling state of California into an economic and political powerhouse.

His achievements are all the more remarkable when one considers that his productive life effectively came to an end after the untimely and tragic death of his wife Maria, in January of 1883. In just thirty-three short years after his arrival in Los Angeles from San Francisco, he conquered the world of business and politics and left an indelible mark that endures across the entire length and breadth of the state of California to the present day. Yet, for some reason, he remains virtually unknown in the land of his birth. Having grown up here in South County Roscommon myself, it wasn't until I had left Ireland and settled in California that I first heard of John Downey.

The life story of John Downey and his remarkable sisters, Eleanor and Annie is not ancient history by any measure. To give you an idea of just how recent all of this is, consider that John's sister, Eleanor, just one year his junior, died in 1928. There are people here in the parish of Taughmacconnell, to-day, who were alive and well when Eleanor was still reigning over high society in San Francisco. That's how recent all of this is.

Despite having achieved enormous success in the fields of politics and business, John always remained true to his upbringing in Castlesampson. He never lost his love of the land, and in his lifetime he accumulated some two hundred thousand acres. He raised sheep and cattle and planted vineyards and orange groves, and was a prime mover in establishing California as a leading producer of both crops.

Eleanor's husband, Edward Martin from County Wexford, was a hugely successful businessman in his own right. Like John Downey, Edward Martin also loved the land. At the time of his death, Ed. Martin left a huge estate including land holdings well in excess of six hundred thousand acres.

Annie's husband, Peter Donahue, was equally impressive. Known to this day as *The Father of California Industry*, Peter Donahue built railroads as well as the railcars and steam engines that ran on them. They built ships in his own shipyards and produced mining equipment that worked the California goldfields and the great Comstock load in Nevada. Peter's most enduring achievement however, was the founding and establishment of Pacific Gas and Electric Company, (P. G. & E.) which is still one of the worlds great utility companies, providing gas and electricity for much of California.

In their lifetime, the Downey's from Castlesampson became one of the most powerful and influential families in the history of the great state of California. Their influence is still felt to some degree everyday by most of its nearly 36 million residents. That's an amazing legacy for a family from Castlesampson, in the parish of Taughmaconnell, in South County Roscommon.

Gene O'Sullivan.
California.



Tim O'Connell and Gene Sullivan at the ruins of Governor John J. Downey's dwelling house in Castlesampson.

The Downey Historical Society

7810 Quill Dr., Downey, CA 90242

Taughmaconnell Heritage Society
Athlone
County Roscommon,
Ireland.
October, 2009

Chairman Micheal Moore,

It has come to our attention that you will be dedicating a bust to the memory and honor of John Gately Downey, our city's founder. We are sincerely appreciative and wish to participate in this honor.

John Downey was an immigrant to the United States as a young man. His studies of apothecary science, and his economic good sense brought him considerable early success. His personal integrity and unwavering credibility, combined with his desire to serve his fellow man, attracted him to the field of politics. John Downey was California's seventh Governor at a crucial period in the history of the State of California, as well as in that of the nation. Displaying enormous courage, he supported the anti-slavery, Republican President Abraham Lincoln, and, by doing so, went against the dictates of his own wing of the Democratic Party for the benefit and betterment of the United States of America. This courageous and selfless act tipped the balance towards the Union cause, but cost him his career in statewide politics.

His political aspirations stymied at the early age of thirty-three years, Governor Downey became a central figure in the development and growth of the city of Los Angeles as well as the entire Los Angeles basin. His bank, Farmers and Merchants Bank, was the first chartered bank in the Southland. That, combined with his revered status in the community as the first Governor of the State from Southern California, made him the hub in the wheel of progress here, throughout his lifetime

He was the first major landowner in Southern California to subdivide and sell his property for the overall good of the citizenry. His purchase of the Santa Gertruid Rancho in 1859, and its subsequent subdivision in the early 1870's, led to the establishment of the city named in his honor, Downey California.

John Downey impacted the lives of countless people who have made California their home. His decisive leadership and dogged determination has been an inspiration to all who know of and appreciate the contributions he made to their world during his lifetime. A copy of his portrait as Governor hangs in our lobby and serves as a constant reminder for us here, that he passed this way, and, that he left an indelible mark on the American landscape.

We are grateful and proud that you will be honoring him, as his memory deserves special recognition in the place of his birth.

Sincerely,

John G Vincent

President and CEO, Downey Historical Society