

BRIDGET'S SHAWL Appraised May 10, 2014

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Bridget O'Donnell of Cork, Ireland, my great-grandmother, was sent out to Boston by her father in 1846 to escape the poverty and starvation prevailing in Ireland. He gave her for the journey a silver butter knife and a linen-wool shawl. My cousin, Kathy Robinson Perko, Flagstaff, Arizona is the custodian of the shawl and butter knife which were passed down from Bridget O'Donnell of Cork to her daughter, Katharine Crossgrove Lyons [my grandmother], to her daughter, Mary Lyons Robinson and finally, to her daughter, Katharine Robinson Perko. [Bridget's Shawl](#) was featured in IRISH AMERICA magazine, January 2014.

I had the shawl evaluated April, 2014 by JACQUELINE FIELD, textile and dress historian (at University of Southern Maine, Portland) who advised me:

- **Bridget's Shawl is from the 1840s.** This type of shawl was very popular from the 1800s to 1870s, Shawls were very fashionable and it was essential to have such a fine shawl in a lady's wardrobe, especially to wear on Sundays. A shawl was worn like a TRIANGLE.
- There were small mills all around Cork and Ireland at that time and in England.
- The linen for the shawl would have been readily available, commercially. Designers did their work on graph paper in studios in a town. The French made the best shawls.
- The typical pattern is printed on the shawl by rollers and is known as '**PAISLEY**', derived from the famous pattern originating at Paisley, a town outside of Glasgow, Scotland.
 - By the 19th century, Paisley had established itself as a centre of the weaving industry, giving its name to the Paisley Shawl and the Paisley Pattern.
 - The paisley design is from India. By 1870, the advent of the *Jacquard* loom in Europe destroyed the exclusivity of the original Kashmir [Indian] shawl, which began to be produced in the mills at Paisley, Scotland and in France.
 - Even the characteristic Kashmiri motif, the *mango-shape*, began to be known simply as the *paisley*. Others called it "*droplet-shaped vegetables*" or "*Welsh pears*".
 - The Jacquard loom was the first machine to use punched cards which controlled the weaving, enabling an ordinary workman to produce the most beautiful patterns in a style previously accomplished only with patience, skill, and hard work which required a two man operation: a weaver and a draw boy who was to sit inside the loom and lift or move a number of threads according to the directions of the master weaver. Today, looms are computerized based on the Jacquard loom system.
 - As of 1993, all of Paisley's mills had closed, although they are memorialized in the town's museums and civic history.