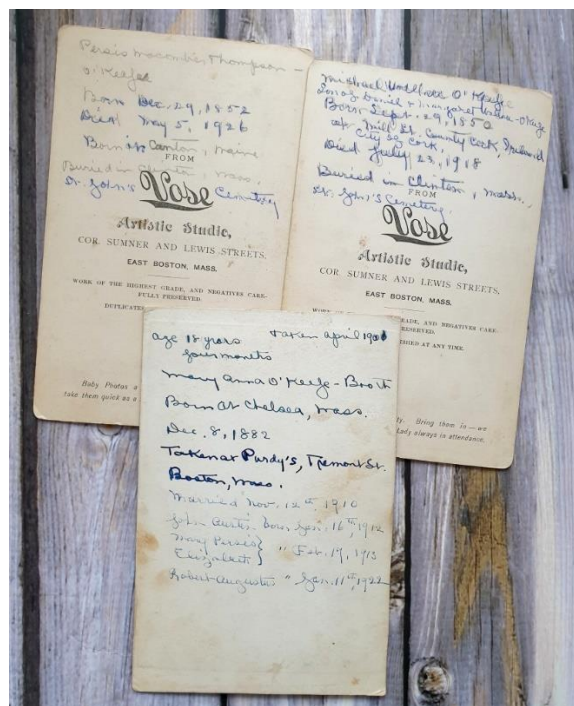


## Dr. Michael W. O'Keefe and Persis née Thompson



*UPDATED Please scroll to bottom to read*

These 3 identified cabinet cards came to me from the United States and oh my, this “detective” girl did a happy dance! Look at all the information, hand-written on them! Whomever these photos belonged to, who so lovingly recorded so many important genealogical details of the family history, should be awarded a golden star for excellence in genealogy :)! This is how you should label your old family photos, people! I can’t believe that these photos have lost their family!



First up, we have one **Michael Wallace O'Keefe**, rocking his sideburn in the first photograph. The handwritten text on the back of the photo says that O'Keefe was **born on September 29th, 1850, in Millstreet in the City of Cork in Ireland to parents Daniel O'Keefe and Margaret Wallace-O'Keefe.** (*\*Michael's marriage record shows a different name for his mother – Catherine instead of Margaret*)



This is Millstreet in Cork, Ireland, today. Somewhere on this street, Michael's childhood home stood and perhaps still stands today.



Photo by Mariusz Nastalczyk as found [HERE](#)

Unfortunately, I'm not familiar with Irish genealogy. I've tried to find census lists of Cork from the 1850s-60s on Ancestry and MyHeritage, but could not locate any Daniel O'Keefe, living with his family

in Millstreet. I have also not found a birth record for Michael from 1850. I assume his birth record would be with a one of the churches in Millstreet in Cork. But which one? Could it have been the St. Patrick's Church, located in Millstreet?

I also don't know when exactly Michael O'Keefe emigrated to the United States and if he travelled alone as a young boy or together with a family member. I suppose he made the journey after the Civil War had ended. But I've not found him on any passenger list. It would be interesting to see who he was travelling to (if there were relatives waiting for him in the United States). I don't know who took care of him while he studied and graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1871. The College is a private Jesuit liberal arts college, founded in 1843, the oldest Catholic college in New England and one of the oldest in the United States. Since he attended a Catholic school, this probably gives us the next clue to search for his parents and his birth record in a Catholic churchbooks in Cork.

He must have been quite a smart lad cause I then find O'Keefe among the graduates of the Bellevue Hospital Medical College in 1877 in New York (Click [HERE](#) to view). The Bellevue Hospital College in New York was established in 1861 and it was one of the first medical colleges intergrated into a hospital. The Annual Circular of the College describes that the "*experiment of engrafting a Medical School upon a large Hospital, a system almost universal in Great Britain, has been eminently successful, and the results have demonstrated the advantage of combining clinical with didactic teaching during the entire collegiate course of the student. The College building is situated within the Hospital grounds, so that the attendance upon clinical lectures involves no loss of time to the student, and the Faculty are thus enabled to give an amount of practical instruction which would otherwise be impossible.*" (Click [HERE](#) to view) The tuition fees for two full winter sessions were at 330\$ (equivalent to approx. 8000\$ today). There was no campus accommodation offered to the students. Boarding at a convenient distance from the College was at from \$5 to \$7 (about 175\$ in today's worth) per week, according to the College brochure from 1877. Nowadays, the old building of the College seems to have been incorporated in the building complex of the Bellevue Hospital in New York.

He then apparently moved to Boston and settled down to work as a physician in Boston. And perhaps this is where he met his future wife **Persis M. née Thompson**. Persis had been born in December 1852 in Maine to parents Charles Wallace Thompson and Aroline M. Persis had an older brother Charles D. Thompson, born in about 1848. Father Charles was a farmer whose land was worth 400\$ (equivalent to about 13,000\$) in 1850.



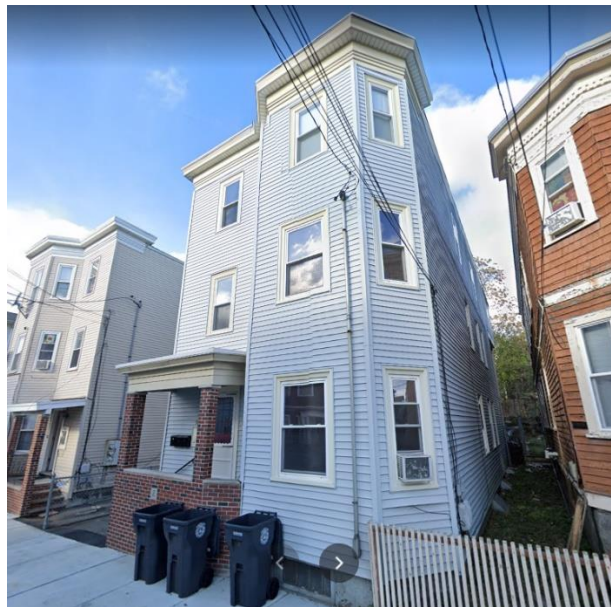


In 1850, the family of Charles Thompson was living in Canton, Oxford in Maine. Strangely though, in 1850 Persis was 5 months old, but his marriage record to Michael as well as her death record both say that she was born only in 1852. Did she make herself 2 years younger, or was it just an honest mistake by a clerk?

23	13	Charles K Thompson	25 m	Famer	400
24		Adeline M "	25 f		
25		Charles D "	2 m		
26		Persis "	5/12 f		

Census  
of 1850 from Canton, Maine (Click [HERE](#) to view).

Persis and Michael wed in October 1880 in the City of Chelsea in Massachusetts (Click [HERE](#) to view). In 1900, the couple with their two children was living at 50 Maverick Street in Boston. The above photo of Persis was taken on Maverick Square, so probably not that far from their home. I looked up the exact house on Google Maps – this is where the O’Keefe’s used to live in 1900:



50 Maverick Street, East Boston

Dr. Michael O’Keefe passed away in July 1918 and was buried at the Saint John’s Cemetery in Lancaster, Worcester County, Mass. Persis passed away 8 years later, in 1926. You can see their gravesite on Find a Grave (Click [HERE](#)). I’ve now added their photos to Find A Grave, as well, so that their relatives might find them and this blogpost. Persis and Michael O’Keefe had two children:

Son Charles Wallace O’Keefe, born on February 29th, 1884, married Lillian née Jarvis in May 1913. Charles did not follow his father’s footsteps to become a physician. He is listed as a clerk in his marriage record from 1913. The 1920 Census does not list any children for the couple. Charles passed away in 1958.

Daughter **Mary Anna O’Keefe**, who was just 18 years old in the photograph, had been born on December 8th, 1882 (Click [HERE](#)).



She married **Ernest Booth**, a physician, in November 1910 in Boston (Click [HERE](#)). Perhaps Ernest worked together with her father and this is how the couple met. An interesting fact is that Mary Anna was a trained nurse herself when she married Ernest, so obviously she had some sort of sympathy for the medical profession. This makes me wonder if, if times had been different and women didn't have to choose between a career and family, Mary Anna would have pursued a medical career, perhaps even as a physician herself? We'll never know that. I hope that Ernest valued her opinions and input. Maybe she helped out in his practice every once in a while. Mary Anna bore her husband Ernest Booth 4 children.

–John Austin Booth was born on January 16th, 1912. He served in the U.S. Army in WWII. He passed away in November 2000.

–Twins Mary Persia and Elizabeth Edna Booth were born on February 17th, 1913. Mary married Coleman B. Connelly. She passed away in 1993. Her twin sister Elizabeth married Chester Frederic Craigie Jr. and the couple moved to West Virginia. Elizabeth passed away in 1986 in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Elizabeth had a son Timothy Chester Craigie in May 1952. Timothy married in 1974.

–Robert Augustus Booth was born almost 10 years later, on January 11th, 1922. He was married too, but I don't know if he had any children. He passed away in July 2000 in Salem, Essex, Massachusetts.

Perhaps one of them owned and labelled these photos?

By the 1940 Census, none of the children had moved out of their childhood home. According to the 1930 and 1940 Censuses, Ernest, Mary Anna and their grown-up children lived at 58 Bayswater St. in Orient Heights in Boston. I can't find the house no. 58 on Google Maps, but the villas in the area all enjoy a pretty amazing view.

Mary Anna passed away in 1968. Ernest had passed away in 1941. Click [HERE](#) to view their gravesite on the St. John's Cemetery in Lancaster, Mass. Did Michael O'Keefe ever travel back to Ireland? Did he imagine this life for himself when he set sail towards the New World as a young Irish lad? Did he sense that he was going to become a respected

physician and a member of the Massachusetts Medical Society some day? Did he dare to hope to find love in the heart of an American girl who would bear him a son and a daughter? Maybe he did! I can almost see him smile under his bushy sideburns and hear him say ***"May the road rise up to meet you..."*** while rolling his "r"-s.

I leave you here with their photos which I colorised with AI.



It turns out that the family photos were split up and two of them ended up in France with Thelma from [L'Archivist](#). We're part of the same Instagram community of orphan photos. The photos she has show Mary Anna O'Keefe and her brother Charles as children. Sharing them here so that we keep the family photos together at least digitally.

