

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story was written, in March 2023, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of women who appear in the 1901 census for St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex and Farmfield Reformatory for Inebriate Women, Horley, Surrey.*

## **Margaret Colgrove née Lynch**

**Margaret Lynch** was born in Islington in **January 1871** to **Anne Sullivan** (b 1844) and **James Lynch** (b 1836), both Roman Catholics born in Ireland. She had two older brothers, **James** (b 1865) and **William** (b 1869), an older sister **Bridget** (b 1867) and a younger sister **Annie** (b 1873).

There is a Latin record of a baptism for Margarita Lynch on **5 February 1871** at St John the Evangelist RC church in Islington which gives a birth date of **15 January 1871**. It shows her parents as Jacobi and Anne Lynch (nee Sullivan) and the godparents as Martimus (Martin) Lynch and Helena(?) Sullivan.

In the **1871 census**, Margaret age 3 months is living at 10 Islington Place with her father James, a 'Fancy Paste Board Boxmaker', mother Anne, and siblings James, Bridget and William. A third James listed on the census is a visitor, age 26 and a fitter.

By **1881** the family is at 10 Homer Street, St Marylebone, with Ann being recorded as widowed and Bridget listed as Tilley. There is no obvious death record for James, although James Lynch is a common name (not just in Margaret's family) and on Margaret's later marriage record he is not shown as deceased. Nor is there an obvious census return for him in 1881.

On **19 October 1890**, Margaret Lynch married **Charles Robert Colgrove** (b 1867), at Holy Trinity Church, Haverstock Hill (which is not RC). Charles comes from a large family in Buckinghamshire and is a waiter and carver. Her father James is a builder, his father Joseph a butcher. One of the witnesses who made his mark was James Lynch, although this could equally well be her older brother or even the visitor to the family in 1871.

The following year, there is a census record for C Colgrove and Marg't Colgrove living at 511 Cambridge Road, Bethnal Green, a coffee house. Both are described as servants, he is a cook (professional), she is a waitress.

Their son **Charles Robert Colgrove** was born on **27 July 1894**. At this point, there is nothing to indicate any troubles in the family.

However, on **2 Feb 1897**, Margaret is admitted to the City Road workhouse in Holborn by the Police and later discharges herself. By **1901**, she is recorded in

the census at St. Joseph's Inebriate Reformatory, Ashford, Middlesex; she is 29 years old, married and a domestic cook.

In the 1901 census there is a Charles Colgrove age 6 recorded as a boarder at St Vincent's school in Hendon, run by an order of nuns, the sisters of charity; Mary Burns is the superintendent. It is described as an '*orphanage, school and home for children*', home to 239 children – poor law boys, some as young as 2 - and 24 female staff. It seems very likely that this is Margaret's son, and that her husband Charles is not in the picture. There is no obvious census record for him in 1901, nor is there a death record prior to that, although there are some records (not verified) which suggest he went to Ohio America, became a naturalised citizen and remarried, dying in 1941.

Further records for Margaret suggest that life does not get any better. On **16 November 1902**, she is admitted to the **St Pancras workhouse** from 2 Crescent Place. At this time, she is still recorded as being married and doing laundry work. She spent some five months in the workhouse, was discharged on **22 April 1903** but readmitted 5 days later. She discharged herself a few days later, was readmitted the same day, and discharged herself again on **15 June 1903**.

On **24 June 1905** she is again admitted to St Pancras, this time with her son Charles and a second son **Joseph** born in 1903, who is noted as illegitimate (and possibly born in the workhouse during her earlier stay, though this is not recorded). Her address is given as 29 Thanet Street, the boys' as 109 Seymour Street (I can find no links to this house). Her husband is recorded as Charles, address not known. On **13 September 1905**, Margaret gives birth to an

illegitimate son, **William**. The births of both younger sons are registered. The family stays there for another month.

Soon after leaving the workhouse Margaret finds herself in further trouble, as she is arrested for assaulting police constable Beale with a hatpin. 'The constable stated that he was arresting the prisoner for drunkenness. As they were approaching the station at Kings-cross she drew her hatpin and became violent. In the struggle she attempted to stab him. He caught the blow and stopped it with his thumb.' She was sentenced to 6 weeks in prison.

The family has a two-month spell in St Pancras early in 1906. **Later that year, on 27 September 1906** Margaret and her 3 children Charles (12), Joseph (2) and William (1) are admitted to **St John's Road workhouse, Islington** She is now recorded as being widowed, her occupation cook. Last address was 33 Hornsey Road.

On **26 November** she is back in **St Pancras Workhouse** with the 3 boys where they remained until 10 December when they were discharged to the police. The family had a further 4 brief stays in this workhouse between January and July 1907. The record states that Margaret has no home and is "unable to give address of any friends".

On **20 April 1907**, she discharges herself from **St John's Road workhouse**, together with William. Her last address is recorded as Holloway Prison.

There are no further records that definitely link to Margaret. Her story starts well, she is married and working, has a son. However, at some stage she finds herself a single mother, and never seems able to get things back on track.

There is very probably a link between Charles' disappearance and her drinking and subsequent stays in prison and the workhouse, but it is impossible to determine which came first without more information about what happened to Charles.

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Sources:

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