

# American Patriot: Patrick Neylon

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*One of the periodic portraits of Boylston’s earliest families and key figures in our community as we commemorated the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Revolutionary War.*

Patrick Neylon, the son of Patrick Neylon Sr. and Jane Cavanaugh, was born between 1825-1833 in Ireland.<sup>1,2</sup> He first appears as a laborer in the Worcester, Worcester County Massachusetts area in 1855 which is the same year his sister, Nancy Neylon, uses as her immigration year so it is probable although not confirmed that they immigrated in the early to mid-1850s. As well as seeking opportunity in America, he was likely fleeing the “Great Famine” that Ireland was experiencing due to the failure of the potato crop in that country which took place between 1845-1852.<sup>3</sup>

Over the course of his life, Patrick’s surname is found spelled in a myriad of ways in official records. It is likely that he was not able to read or write. As evidence, in Ireland’s 1841 national census, only 1 in 4 people over the age of 5 could read and write.<sup>4</sup> If someone was not literate, they would verbally give their details to somebody else (*e.g.*, census taker, neighbor) who would write down what it sounded like, what they thought they heard, which certainly leads to spelling errors. Clarity was likely compounded by an accent, in Patrick’s case an Irish brogue.



**Kendall Farm- Sawyers Mills  
Boylston, Massachusetts**  
*Digital Commonwealth Photograph Collection*

### Life in Boylston

In 1860, at age 27 years, Patrick “Nylan,” paid a poll tax as a resident and was working as a laborer on the farm of Oliver S. Kendall in Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts. Working alongside him at the Kendall Farm as a domestic was his sister, Nancy Nylan, age 20 years.<sup>5</sup>

### Enlists to Serve for Boylston in the Union Army

A year later, listing his age as 35 years, Patrick “Naylon,” enlisted from Boylston, in the Union Army on 26 November 1861, mustering in on the same date as a private in the 15<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, Company C.<sup>6</sup> He served with Captain Bowman’s company and was credited to the quota required of Boylston. Patrick was described as being 5 feet, 6½ inches in height, with grey eyes, dark hair and a dark complexion.

During Patrick’s time of service, the 15<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts fought in major battles in Virginia, including Ball’s Bluff on 21 October 1861, Yorktown on 28 April 1862; and Fair Oaks on 31 May 1862-1 June 1862. The Battle of Fair Oaks had resulted in heavy casualties for both Union and Confederate troops alike, resulting in an estimated of 13,736 casualties.<sup>7</sup> Patrick was one of the wounded. Patrick Neylon, born in Ennis, County Clare, Ireland, was stationed at the Convalescent Camp near Alexandria. He was on transport 14 August 1862 Virginia. On 18 August 1862, Patrick was listed among the wounded having arrived at New York from Fortress Monroe.<sup>8</sup> He ended his military service on 2 December 1862 when he was granted a discharge due to his disability from being wounded in battle six months prior.

Upon returning home to Boylston, Patrick applied for a veteran's disability pension which was approved on 5 June 1863.<sup>9</sup>

### Sibling Marries

On 21 April 1862, Patrick’s sister, Nancy Neelan, age 22 years, born in Ireland, and Michael Doyle were married by P.J. O'Reilly, clergyman of West Boylston, Massachusetts.<sup>10</sup> In 1862 the Roman Catholic Chapel in the area was St. Luke’s Mission Chapel which had been completed in 1854, Reverend Patrick J. O’Reilly had become its curate in 1857; serving West Boylston and the Sawyers Mills area of Boylston, Massachusetts.<sup>11</sup> Nancy and Michael went on to have eight children: John Doyle, born 28 February 1863 in Boylston; James E. Doyle, born 22 September 1865 in West Boylston; Mary A. Doyle, born 25 July 1867 in Worcester; Edward J. Doyle, born 6 July 1869 at Worcester; Julia J. Doyle, born c. 1871 in Worcester, Ellen Elizabeth “Nellie” Doyle, born 6 March 1874 in Boylston; William Thomas Doyle, born 23 December 1875 in Boylston; and Caty Doyle, born 8 November 1877 in Boylston.<sup>12,13,14</sup>



**Catholic Church  
West Boylston**  
*Taken by Metropolitan Water Works during  
Construction of Wachusett Reservoir  
Digital Commonwealth Photograph*

<sup>1</sup> Marriage Records, Watertown, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, 1864, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>2</sup> Boylston, Massachusetts Rebellion Records  
<sup>3</sup> Irish Potato Famine, History.com Editors, updated 9 August 2022, original 17 October 2017, accessed 9 February 2023  
<sup>4</sup> Schooling and the Promotion of Literacy in Nineteenth Century Ireland, Ph.D. Thesis, John Logan, University College Cork, 1992  
<sup>5</sup> United States Federal Census, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1860, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>6</sup> *United States, Civil War Soldier Records, Patrick Naylon, digital image, fold3.com*  
<sup>7</sup> Seven Pines, America Battlefield Trust, battlefields.org  
<sup>8</sup> The Worcester Spy, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 27 August 1862, digital image, genealogybank.com  
<sup>9</sup> *United States, Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934, Patrick Nayland, alias Patrick Naylor*  
<sup>10</sup> Marriage Records, West Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1862, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>11</sup> Celebrating our Parish, 70 Years of Our Catholic Community, Saint Mary of the Hills, Boylston, Massachusetts, Nancy O’Loughlin Filgate et al, The Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc. 2022  
<sup>12</sup> Birth Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1863, 1874, 1876 and 1877  
<sup>13</sup> Birth Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1867, 1869, digital images, ancestry.com  
<sup>14</sup> Death Records, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1893

Marriage and Moving to Worcester

It had been on 19 November 1864 at Watertown, Middlesex County, Massachusetts that Patrick “Neilon”, age 38 years, a resident of Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, married Bridget Dolan, age 28 years. Patrick had been born Ireland, the son of Patrick Neilon and Jane Cavanaugh. His wife, Bridget, had also been born Ireland, the daughter of Edward Dolan and Margaret Dolan.<sup>15,16</sup> Although Bridget Dolan was a resident of Watertown at the time of her marriage, she had previously in 1860, been boarding at the Taylor Inn in Boylston along with Mary Dolan, aged 23 years old. Both Bridget and Mary Dolan were mill operatives at that time. It is likely when they were both living in Boylston at that earlier juncture that Bridget and Patrick met.<sup>17</sup>

Bridget (Dolan) Neylon’s sister Margaret (Dolan) McDonald resided in Worcester where she married stone mason Dennis Kavanaugh on 23 October 1873. It was was Margaret’s 3<sup>rd</sup> marriage. Margaret died prior to 1900 when her widower husband Dennis Kavanaugh was boarding at Bridget Neylon’s home at 5 Prescott Place, but much will occur prior to this federal census in 1900.<sup>18,19</sup>

Untangling Correct Pair of Patricks and Bridgets

There were two pairs of individuals named Patrick and Bridget Neylon in the Worcester area, so these siblings Margaret (Dolan) Kavanaugh and Nancy (Neylon) Doyle played key roles in determining the accurate history of these two Irish families. This narrative focuses on Patrick the laborer who was in Boylston and Worcester, Massachusetts not the Patrick in Milford, Massachusetts.

Patrick and Bridget moved several times while living in the City of Worcester. In 1873 Patrick Nealon, a laborer, and his wife Bridget resided at 23 Summer Street. In 1890 Patrick was listed on the Veteran’s Census as having served from 14 December 1891 to 1 December 1862 in the 15<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment Company C, during which service he was wounded in the right leg. Patrick was residing at 7 McCormick Court, Worcester, where he was a laborer at 94 Grove Street.<sup>20,21</sup> By 1893 Patrick “Kneeland”, a laborer and Bridget were then living at 5 Prescott Place.<sup>22</sup>

On 18 Aug 1886 at Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, Patrick Neyland was listed on "Boylston's Roll of Honor in the War of the Rebellion," in the Centennial celebration of the incorporation of the town of Boylston, Massachusetts.<sup>23</sup>

Final Days

Patrick Neylon, age 69 years, a laborer born in Ireland, died in Worcester on 28 January 1895 and was interred there in Section M Lot 73 Range 11 of Saint John’s Cemetery. His cause of death was listed as “prob. cancer of stomach, exhaustion for want of food.”<sup>24</sup> His wife, Bridget Neylon has purchased the burial lot in 1894.<sup>25</sup> His death notice appeared in the Worcester Daily Spy on 29 January 1895:

Death of a Veteran

*Patrick Neylon, 70 years old, died at his home, 5 Prescott Place, Monday evening. Mr. Neylon has been ill for some time. He was former member of Post 10, G.A.R. and was a member of Co. C, 15<sup>th</sup> regiment, M.V. M. He leaves a wife.*

His obituary “A Soldiers Funeral” appeared two days later on 1 February 1895. His requiem high mass was offered at the Church of the Immaculate Conception by Reverend Robert Walsh, assisted by Reverend J. H. McKechnie and Reverend James Gildea. Floral bouquets included one from the Clara Barton Tent, Daughter of the Veterans. The pall bearers were: Daniel Jones, Thomas Gilmore, James McNamara, Edward Dolan, Michael Dolan, and Patrick Dolan.<sup>26</sup>



Saint John’s Cemetery  
Photograph by Family Researcher

Patrick would be the first of four burials in this lot.<sup>27</sup> The next burial would be his sister Nancy’s 21-year-old daughter, Nellie, who died four months later on 23 April 1895 from anemia and neurasthenia with pericarditis.<sup>28</sup> His sister, Nancy and her husband would have the adjoining lot #74.

His Widow’s Later Years and Death

On 8 March 1895, his wife, Bridget, applied for a Civil War Widow’s Pension.<sup>29</sup> In 1900 Bridget Neylon, widow, age 60 years who had immigrated in 1855 from Ireland where she was born March 1840 and her brother-in-law Dennis Cavanaugh, widower, age 60 years, who had immigrated in 1866 from Ireland where he had been born February 1840, were both residing at 5 Prescott Place. Bridget was listed as having had 2 children born, but neither were living at that time.<sup>30</sup>

Bridget (Dolan) Neylon, age 70 years, widow of Patrick, died three years later on 26 November 1903 from broncho-pneumonia at her residence at 5 Prescott Place. The informant of her death certificate was Denis Kavanaugh, nephew. Her nephews: James J. Dolan, Patrick W. Dolan, John L. Dolan and Edward Dolan were pall bearers at her funeral along with Michael Doherty. She was buried with her husband in Saint John Cemetery, Worcester.<sup>31,32</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Massachusetts, United Stated, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Sacramental Records, transcription, ancestry.com  
<sup>16</sup> Marriage Records, Watertown, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, digital image, ancestry.com; note the name is Patrick Naly in the town marriage records.  
<sup>17</sup> United States Federal Census, Boylston, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1860, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>18</sup> Marriage Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1873, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>19</sup> United States Federal Census, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1900, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>20</sup> United States Veterans Schedules of 1890, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>21</sup> City Directory, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, digital image, ancestry.com, 1891  
<sup>22</sup> City Directory, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1893, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>23</sup> Boylston Centennial, August 18, 1886, Press of Sanford & Davis, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1887  
<sup>24</sup> Death Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1895, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>25</sup> Cemetery Records, Saint John’s Cemetery, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts  
<sup>26</sup> Worcester Daily Spy, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1 February 1895, digital image, genealogybank.com  
<sup>27</sup> Gravestone, Patrick Naylon, Saint John’s Cemetery, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, findagrave.com  
<sup>28</sup> Death Records, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1895, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>29</sup> United States, Civil War Pension Index: General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934, Patrick Nayland, alias Patrick Naylor  
<sup>30</sup> United States Federal Census, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1900, digital image, ancestry.com  
<sup>31</sup> Worcester Daily Spy, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, November 29, 1903, digital image, genealogybank.com  
<sup>32</sup> Gravestone, Bridget Naylon, Saint John’s Cemetery, Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts, findagrave.com  
Withers, Leah et al, Boylston Veterans of the American Civil War, Boylston Historical Collaborative, Boylston, Massachusetts