

[Eric Weber](#)

Admin · September 2 at 3:09 PM

On September 2, 1846 Frank Walpole was born in County Kilkenny, Ireland to Thomas and Margaret (Lynch) Walpole. In 1852 the family emigrated to America and soon settled in Cummington, where Thomas was a farm laborer at the time of their daughter Mary Ann's birth in 1854. By 1855 they had moved to Chesterfield, where daughter Fanny was born in 1858, and where they remained at least into the late 1860s.

By then Frank was grown and finding work wherever he could get it. He did farm labor, drove cattle to market in Albany, clerked in a store, and worked as a flour salesman. In November 1879 he married Kate Lawler (1856-1945) of Skinnerville, who was reputedly the first child born in this town to Irish immigrant parents. As a teenager in 1874, Kate had escaped the Mill River Disaster by fleeing her job in the James Woolen Mill and running to safety at her family's house above the Williamsburg railroad depot before the flood could catch her.

Kate bore eleven children between 1880 and 1897, only two of whom died in childhood. The births of the first three in 1880, '81 and '84 were recorded in Northampton, and the family may have been living in Leeds then. After 1885 the family moved to Haydenville, apparently renting a home for a while, until in 1892 Frank bought the former John Miller farm (now Valley View Farm) at the top of what was later named Walpole Hill Road. His father Thomas died on the farm two years later, and Frank ran it as a dairy farm until his own death in 1917. He was succeeded by his sons Mark, Willis, Charles and Leonard. The farm remained in their hands and continued as a dairy into the mid-1970s. Thomas also worked at United Aircraft in East Hartford for a time. Leonard was a rural mail carrier for the Haydenville P.O., and Willis worked on the town highway crew.

Few of Haydenville's Irish immigrant families tried as hard as the Walpoles did to stick to farming after coming to America. Most were seduced by the higher pay that was available in the mills

and factories if one could live with the gritty and hazardous working conditions. The Walpoles were a notable exception.

