



William Martin O'Brien was born on March 17, 1866 in Wexford, Ireland to John and Sarah Kehoe O'Brien. He was one of five sons, with brothers James, Dennis, and Martin O'Brien. His family lived on modest means in a three-room house.

He left Wexford at age 18 in 1888 “to go to America, to make his fortune and seek adventure.” He left Ireland with a friend by the name of Martin Furlong from what was then known as Queenstown (now Cork). William arrived in Cleveland shortly after arriving in the US, and worked various skilled labor jobs. In 1900, William lived at 120 Aaron Street (currently East 36th street). He married Sarah McKinney in Cleveland on May 18, 1892. He applied for US citizenship in July of 1893, and it was

granted several years later, on November 4, 1895. William and Sarah started a family in 1897 with the birth of their daughter Sadie. The early years were difficult. Their daughter Sadie died in 1896, and William was left a widower with the death of his wife Sarah in 1899.

William prevailed though, and met Catherine Murray Hardy shortly after the loss of his wife and child. William and Catherine married on November 28, 1900 and began a new family. Their son William Bernard O'Brien was born on September 21, 1901 and Helen “Nellie” O'Brien followed in 1905. They lived a long and happy life—starting out on the West side of Cleveland and moving to East 52nd Street in 1907 and East 118th Street by 1920. William did achieve his goal of making a ‘fortune’ with his new family- when they were able to move into their two-family home on E. 118th Street. William also found success at work as a laborer, being promoted to a steamfitter and later engineer.

William died on February 28, 1936 and is buried next to his first wife Sarah and daughter Sadie at Calvary Cemetery in Cleveland. William's second wife Catherine and daughter Helen are also buried at Calvary. William's life is characteristic of the Irish immigrant experience in Cleveland at the turn of the twentieth century and while he had his struggles, like so many others, his is a story of overall success and family building that has had a lasting impact.

Submitted by Terrence O'Brien, grandson of William Martin O'Brien