**A Peterloo Connection as Recalled by a Descendant of
Richard Carlile**

First, some biographical information is in order. My name is Justin M. Doyle, the fourth child of Leonard J. Doyle and Elizabeth Anne Finegan. I have resided in Minnesota, U.S.A., most of my life. Because I am a direct descendant (great-great-great grandson) of Richard Carlile, I will be in Manchester this coming August, 2019, to honor his memory and the memory of all the martyrs and survivors of Peterloo. My father was the youngest child of James J. Doyle and Emma Belle Lange, whose father, Leonard A. Lange, was the husband of Frances (Fanny) Carlile, daughter of Mary Kelly and Richard Carlile, Jr., whose father, Richard Carlile, was on the hustings at Peterloo on that fateful day that we will gather to remember.

I did not learn about Peterloo until only a few years ago (as seems to be the case with many both in this country and in Great Britain). I do recall, though, knowing of our family connection with Carlile since I was a young child. On my mother’s dresser, under glass, was a portrait of him, and, in my adolescence, my mother remarked how much I resembled him (I think my sideburns added to the effect). There is also a facial characteristic which seems to have been handed down, known to us as “the Carlile mouth.” It manifests itself in our response to those who urge us to smile: “I am smiling.”

I also recall that we were told about Carlile’s imprisonment, and the reasons therefor: his willful violation of the stamp act, conviction on trumped-up charges of blasphemy, seditious libel, etc. We were proud of this heritage, as we knew that it was based on truth and the struggle for freedom of the press. We understood that the stamp act, in its many iterations, was nothing more than a thinly disguised political tool to price the published truth out of the reach of the unwashed masses. We were particularly intrigued by the account that we had heard from our parents of Carlile and his accomplices printing some of his material on fabric (silk or cotton, depending upon who told the story) because the paper sellers were barred from selling to Carlile. As we understood, some of those items survived, but were unfortunately thrown in the dustbin by someone who either failed to recognize their historic value, or, even more shamefully (at least in my opinion), failed to sympathize with the sentiments expressed therein.

I cannot say in precisely what way the political views of my immediate family were shaped by our association with Carlile, as my father, his three sisters, and our eight first cousins are the only direct Carlile descendants that I have known. It would seem, however, that the intervening generations preserved and furthered much of the dedication to truth and justice that Carlile pursued. In fact, my father and all of his sisters were graduated from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with bachelor’s degrees in journalism.

While in graduate school at Milwaukee, in about 1938, my father had written an article for the campus daily, on the staff of which he was a regular contributor, entitled something like “Marquette Students Offer Varied Opinions on Conscription.” It was rewritten, without my father’s consent, and published under his byline, retitled “Marquette Students Heavily in Favor of Conscription,” or something to that effect. Because my father had access to the campus printshop, having managed its affairs for several years, he printed, bound, and circulated a flyer with the word “CENSORED” stamped across its face, stating the facts as he had written them. To reward his effort, he was called on the carpet by school officials and suspended from school. This seems to me to be precisely the same approach that Carlile took to his work, i.e., that the personal consequences of one’s actions, as long as those actions were honorable and honest, were far less important than were the pursuit of truth and freedom of the press. My father was subsequently employed by several large-circulation newspapers before pursuing work as a translator and editor. My youngest brother, Michael, is also a journalism graduate who was employed as an editor for a small-town weekly. As for myself, while still in high school, I and a group of other students from three local high schools founded and published our own newspaper as an alternative to the bland, censored journals that were the official school publications. Our efforts were rewarded as well: we were banned from distributing our paper on school grounds. We simply stood across the street and gave away our rag, receiving enough contributions from readers to continue publishing for some time.

Both of my parents were active in Catholic Worker houses of hospitality in New

York City, Rochester, N.Y., and Milwaukee, and passed on to us a daily concern for those who suffered from many of society’s institutional injustices. All of my siblings, as well as my parents, have long been active in peace and justice issues, dating back to the struggle for civil rights in this country, anti-war protests during the Vietnam era, and continuing with whatever is the cause of the day, many of which seem to bear an uncanny resemblance to the causes of two centuries ago. My oldest brother, Tim, who has indicated that he also hopes to attend the commemoration in Manchester, was a conscientious objector to military service. My older sister, Anne, was arrested “for failing to comply with an official directive” while participating in a “Continental Walk for Disarmament and Social Justice,” a 1976 alternative bicentennial commemoration of the founding of the U.S.A. She is pictured on the cover of a magazine, smiling broadly as she was arrested, secure in the knowledge that she was doing the honorable thing, despite her arrest.

My own history includes my enlistment in the U.S. Navy at age 25, and my realization, about three years later, that I could not conscientiously continue to serve in that capacity. I have always been a very methodical researcher, and concluded that I should seek discharge as a conscientious objector. My application was approved, a relatively rare occurrence in what many would regard as “peacetime,” (1981) but I recall very distinctly a telephone conversation with my mother during that time, in which she wondered what I might do were my application disapproved. I don’t recall a moment’s hesitation in my response, which was that I would simply refuse to serve despite the consequences. I don’t think that it was a matter of stubbornness; it was a simply a deeply held conviction, like my father’s and my sister’s, that the honorable course was to be followed, regardless of the result. Another lasting impression was that “peacetime” is merely a party-line euphemism for the absence of recognizable armed conflict. In reality the conditions which supported the possibility of war were all readily at hand, but few were willing to confront them. I had no intention of becoming a martyr for the cause, but believed that my course was clear, and for that I am grateful to my ancestry, and to my great-great-grandfather in particular, for his example.

All of my siblings, and the next generation, are regular political activists, delegates to conventions of political parties, and, in my case, an endorsed (though unsuccessful) candidate for the Minnesota legislature. One nephew in particular is a very committed Wobbly (i.e., a member of the Industrial Workers of the World), and a talented songwriter and musician who chronicles contemporary events and their impact on labor in particular.

I do not mean, in sending you this narrative, to lessen the importance of remembering the victims of Peterloo, but my connection is to a survivor, and I think it is important to remember that without Carlile’s published account of the massacre, the entire incident might easily have been swept under the rug, and freedom of the press and the rights of citizens might be no more secure than they were two hundred years ago.

Thank you for your invitation to share this narrative with you. Please feel free to share it as you see fit.

Justin M. Doyle

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