



The Curtin Family

John and Catherine Curtin

Parents of Prime Minister John Curtin

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John Curtin Senior was born in County Cork, Ireland on Christmas Day 1853. He arrived in South Australia as an assisted immigrant in 1873 then moved on to settle in Melbourne. He worked as a Pentridge Prison warden before joining the Artillery Corps in 1877 and transferring to the police force in 1878. In mid-1883 he married another Irish immigrant Catherine (Kate) Agnes Bourke at St Patrick's Cathedral.

John and Kate started their married life in a rented timber cottage at Creswick where John was a local foot constable. John Junior was born in early 1883, George arrived in 1887 and Mary in 1885. John Senior developed rheumatoid arthritis as a consequence of his work and his police career ended in January 1890 due to ill health. He then leased a central Melbourne hotel, which failed because of the economic depression. Their second daughter and fourth child Hannah arrived in 1891.

John Senior took various jobs around the state. In 1899 the family settled in Brunswick. John, incapacitated, was unable to work and the family survived on money from Catherine's sewing and their children's wages.

John Curtin Senior died in the Melbourne Hospital on 25 March 1919 and Catherine died in 1938 from diabetes and bronchitis. Their son, John Curtin Junior, now a Member of the House of Representatives and Labor Party Leader, attended his mother's funeral mass at St Ambrose's, Brunswick. His parents, who had a keen interest in politics, a hatred of social injustice and a love of reading, had high expectations for their elder son and nurtured his political ambition. They were not disappointed. Curtin went on to become a universally admired Second World War Prime Minister.

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