

Daniel Toy (1842-1877)



Having died young without any children, this particular Daniel Toy doesn't get a lot of genealogical attention. But he has a place in Delaware history as one of the earliest commercial brewers in Delaware to set up operations outside of Wilmington.¹

Born in Rising Sun, Delaware, on November 9, 1842, Daniel was the eldest son of James A. Toy (1814-1881) and Ann Curran Toy (1824-1849). Being the eldest, he was named after his grandfather in accordance with [Irish naming practices](#). His mother died when he was six, while giving birth to his sister Rosanna and his father went on to marry Bridget McCullion in 1851.

Education

Soon after his mother's death, Daniel started school. From September of 1849 through March of 1851, Daniel attended the Brandywine Manufacturer's Sunday School on the grounds of the Hagley Powder Mills.² The records show he was the son of James Toy, storekeeper living at "New Bridge". This refers to the bridge over Brandywine Creek at the bottom of Rising Sun Lane and is one of the many [names used for the Rising Sun Village](#) area along the Brandywine. Constructed in 1833, this was a covered bridge with three truss lines and portals for two lanes of traffic. It was replaced in 1928.³ Daniel attended the school with his brother, John Thomas, and they both left the school at the same time. In 1850, Daniel appears in the 1850 Census for Christiana Hundred living with his father James and siblings John Thomas and Martha.



At about age 15, Daniel continued his education, attending St Mary's College in Wilmington⁴, where he is listed in the Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the College for school years 1856-1857 and 1857-1858.⁵ The mission of the college was to "qualify students, as thoroughly and in as short a time as possible, for entering the Counting House, and undertaking the usual pursuits of Mercantile life". This likely prepared him for his later life as a businessman.

¹ Delaware Beer History (<http://www.delawarebeerhistory.com/lagers-rise/toy-oneil/>)

² Student records of the Brandywine Manufacturer's Sunday School, Delaware Genealogical Society Journal, Volume 9, Number 2, page 38

³ "New Bridge" "Delaware's Historic Bridges, 2nd Edition Revised, 2000, DelDot Archaeology Series Number 170. (https://deldot.gov/archaeology/historic_pres/delaware_bridge_book/index.shtml)

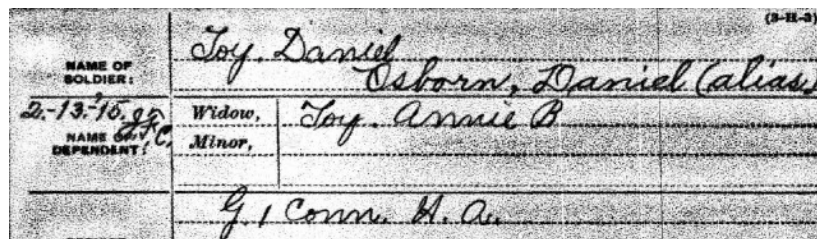
⁴ The College was located at Delaware Avenue and Jefferson streets on the 1868 map of Wilmington in the Pomeroy and Beers Atlas.

⁵ St Mary's College, Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the College, 1856-1857

Early Employment and Civil War

By July of 1860, Daniel had started his career as a Coach Trimmer, apprenticed to a Coach Manufacturer. Daniel actually appears twice in the 1860 census, once with his family in June of 1860 and a second time in July in the home of a coach manufacturer named Henry Pretzner. He continued working as a coach trimmer until he was drafted to fight for the Union in the Civil War in June of 1863. His name appeared on a list of conscripts in the Delaware State Journal and Statesmen on August 8 of 1863.

His time in the military is a bit of a mystery. His military records show that he fought in army for Connecticut, serving as a private in the 1st Battery, Heavy Artillery in Company G. These records also show that he served under the alias of Daniel Osborn.⁶ He likely served until the end of the war in 1865.



Brewery Partnership and Marriage

It's in 1867 that he begins a business partnership with John O'Neil, a fellow resident of Henry Clay and the son of a mill worker. On November 7, 1867, Daniel Toy and John O'Neil bought a corner property in Smyrna Delaware on the corner of [Commerce and Upham Streets](#).⁷ The Smyrna Times newspaper of November 6, 1867 announced that "Messrs. Toy and O'Neil have commenced the erection of a building on Upham St, 20ft x 40 ft, two stories, to be used as a brewery for porter, ale, mineral water, etc.". It's interesting to note that there is a tax assessment records for John O'Neil in Henry Clay where he is taxed as a retail dealer in Liquor. So, John had some previous experience in this line of business and Daniel was educated for the "Pursuits of Mercantile Life" at St. Mary's college.

It was in Smyrna that he met his future wife, Annie B Finn (1846-1919). Annie was the daughter of John Finn, a wealthy peach farmer living in the southern part of Duck Creek Hundred.⁸ John Finn and his wife came to the United States from Baltinglass, Wicklow, Ireland in the early 1830s. Daniel and Annie were married on January 24, 1870 at St Paul's Catholic Church in Delaware City, Delaware.⁹ In June of 1870, Daniel and Annie are shown living in Smyrna in the Census, with real estate valued at \$2,000. Daniel's occupation is "Bottler of Ale".¹⁰

⁶ U.S., Civil War Pension Index. Pension application filed by his wife Annie.

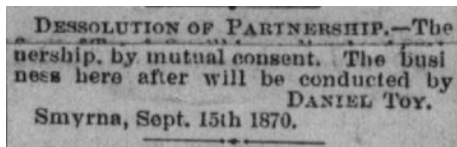
⁷ Delaware Land Records, Volume G5, page 89

⁸ In the 1870 census, John Finn is shown owning real estate valued at \$10,000 (roughly \$200,000 in 2020).

⁹ St Paul's Parish Records (<https://www.lalley.com>)

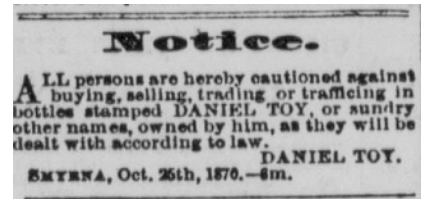
¹⁰ 1870 US Census for Smyrna, Delaware

Little is known about Daniel's Partner John O'Neil. He was born around 1842 in Ireland, lived in Rising Sun, and married Rose Boisson (1840-1912). John is also shown in the 1870 US Census for Smyrna with the occupation of "bottling ale". However, the value of his real estate was \$700, considerably less than Daniels worth, suggesting that, although they were partners, Daniel was more invested in the brewing business. On September 17, 1870, there is a fragment of a notice in the Smyrna Herald



announcing the "Dessolution of Partnership" "by mutual consent. The business here after will be conducted by Daniel Toy." This appears to be when John O'Neil left the business." No other references to John have been found. His wife, Rose, is shown as a widower in the 1880 census and living in Wilmington, Delaware.

We also know that the brewery had bottles manufactured to contain their products – bottles that are much sought after by Delaware bottle collectors. We also know they were sought after by Daniel! In October 1870, Daniel paid for a notice in the Smyrna Herald that ran six months, cautioning people against buying or selling these bottles. The cost of the bottles must have been a significant cost of doing business.



There are also bottle collectors in our branch of the Toy family. The bottle on the left is engraved "Toy & O'Neil, Smyrna DE". This bottle would date from 1870 or earlier.

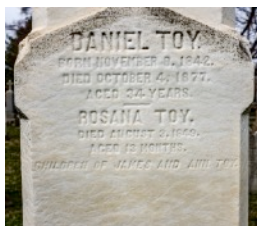
The one on the right is the later one, inscribed only with "Daniel Toy, Smyrna DE".

These bottles were acquired from other collectors over the years by members of the Toy Family in Delaware. They are currently in the collection of Michael E Toy, great, great nephew of Daniel.



It appears that the business continued in operation until 1875, although there was a notice published in the Wilmington News Journal paper on April 1873 that "Daniel Toy, of Smyrna, is about to move to Wilmington." On September 2, 1875, the brewery property was sold at Sheriff's sale. No reasons have been found for the ending of the business, but it may have been related to Daniel's failing health.

Death of Daniel



Daniel died two years later on October 4, 1877 at the age of 34 and was buried from the home of his father on Kennett Pike, interred at the St Joseph on the Brandywine cemetery. The cause of death is unknown. What Daniel did after his return to Wilmington is unclear, but we know that he was working as a teacher at the end of his life.

After his death, the Teachers' Institute of Delaware passed a resolution honoring him that was published in the News Journal paper.

"Resolved, That we recognize in Daniel Toy, who has been removed by death in the first year of his efforts as instructor in our public schools, one who by his affable, kind and obliging manners, and by his moral, temperate and religious life, one worthy the high calling he had chosen."

Daniel's wife Annie lived for many more years, dying in 1919 at the age of 72. In her will, she left to her niece, Ida (Toy) Johnson "of the City of Wilmington, the picture of my late husband, Daniel Toy". That picture is, I believe, the one that leads off this story, collected by Eugene Toy (1904-1961) as he prepared his 1941 genealogy of the Toy family.