

When 's great-great-grandfather sailed from Ireland to America with his family he did it with money made from his brick business. And new research in Ballina, Co. Mayo, has revealed that 27,000 of Edward Blewitt's bricks make up the pillars of St. Muredach's Cathedral where President Biden is due to deliver a public address next Friday. The town was already abuzz at the thought of a presidential visit to the place that was once home to his forefathers. Now Ernie Caffrey, whose store stands on the location of the old Blewitt home, said he hopes to be able to share the new research with the president. 'He is going to speak outside the cathedral where his ancestors' bricks are still holding up the roof,' he told DailyMail.com, marveling at the extraordinary connection.

(Image: [[]]) St Muredach's Cathedral where bricks sold by Edward Blewitt in 1828 were used in the pillars in the nave, according to recent research connecting President Biden to the building

(Image: [[]]) Ernie Caffrey, whose store stands on the location of the old Blewitt home, worked with two historians to pore over cathedral documents to make the connection with the president

Not only do the bricks form the pillars of Ballina's cathedral, but they were the foundation of the Blewitt family fortune that allowed them to sail to a new life in America. While many emigrants sailed individually, sending back money to bring over relatives one at a time, Edward Blewitt could afford tickets for his wife Mary and their eight children to sail together on the SS Excelsior in 1851. It offered them an escape route from one of the areas hit hardest by the Irish potato famine. Caffrey said there had long been tales that the bricks might be connected to Biden. But he and two historians, Terry Reilly and Brendan Walsh, dug through church records to find the details. 'We have the cathedral minutes of that era showing payment for the bricks.

He got £21 and 12 shillings for 27000 bricks,' he said, equivalent to about £20,000 (\$25,000). The minutes show the deal was struck in 1828 soon after construction began. They stand in the nave of the great cathedral inside 12 thick, round pillars supporting the enormous double-height structure.

(Image: [[]]) Details of the transaction were published in a 1985 history by the Rev E MacHale, but no one at the time would have thought much more about the name Blewitt, spelled here as Bluit

(Image: [[]]) But the family connection will come full circle next Friday when Biden is due to deliver a speech on the final day of his visit using the cathedral as a spectacular backdrop

But at the moment you need to know they are there.

The pillars are covered in plaster. That could change by the time Biden arrives next week. Fr. Aidan O'Boyle, parish priest of Ballina, said there are plans to remove a portion of plaster so that the president can see the contribution of his great-great-great grandfather. 'What we'll try and do between now and next Friday is bore in without pulling the place down so that we could get back into the brick,' he said. Work also begins next week constructing a stage outside the cathedral, next to the River Moy for the speech, one of the big set-pieces of the visit.

(Image: [[]]) The bricks are still in place holding the roof above the nave visible but are covered in plaster

(Image: [[]]) Fr.

Aidan O'Boyle, parish priest of Ballina, said there are now plans to remove a portion of plaster so that the president can see the contribution of his great-great-great grandfather

(Image: [[]]) There is not much left of the old Blewitt home, just part of a wall and a filled-in fireplace.

Caffrey has decorated with flags and red, white and blue flowers in case of a VIP visit The discovery, along with the fact that some of Edward Blewitt's daughters were baptized at the cathedral, makes the location all the more fitting. 'The fact that the cathedral will be the backdrop and that his ancestors were involved in its construction and that some of his earliest ancestors that went to the States were baptized here, [tranh sơn mài cửu huyền cao cấp](#) that's a that's a big deal for him,' said O'Boyle. 'And then the fact that he is a religious man. His faith is important to him and it's one of the things that his mother brought, that makes it all the more exciting.' Biden's mother, Jean Finnegan, traces her ancestral line to two Irish families — the Blewitts from Ballina and the Finnegans from Co.

Louth, another stop on his visit next week. The cathedral is not the only place where the Blewitt bricks can be seen. An old wall and a brick fire place are still standing at the back of what is now Caffrey's Gallery, a store stocked with art from across Ireland.

(Image: [[]]) Biden arriving in County Mayo in 2016 during his last visit to Ireland in an official capacity.

The then vice president spent six days in the country, [Tranh thờ gia tiên](#) visiting Dublin, Mayo and Louth

(Image: [[]]) Joe Blewitt and [\[https://tranhsonmaicuuhuyen.com/\]](https://tranhsonmaicuuhuyen.com/) [tranh sơn mài cửu huyền](#) his wife Deirdre drink champagne underneath a mural of their third cousin Joe Biden as locals celebrate Biden's election in the County Mayo town of Ballina in 2020

Caffrey, a former publican who represented Co.

Mayo in the Irish Senate, said the construction was unusual. Most fireplaces would have been made from stone at the time. 'But he had an [abundance](#) of bricks,' he said with a chuckle. The fireplace is now in the courtyard of his store, and it is marked with a Stars and Stripes flag and an Irish Tricolor. Red, white and blue pansies have been planted in front and another Stars and Stripes flies overhead. 'We put it up today,' said Caffrey. He is hoping that Biden gets to visit the old Blewitt home, but that is in the lap of the gods — or more likely the U.S.

Secret Service. [external frame](#) 'There's so many factors, Secret Service and other agencies, programs laid out ... so you don't know,' he said. 'You hope for the best.'

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