

## *A sampler of 333 years of Irish footprints in Milford*

*Organized just 10 years ago, the Irish Heritage Society of Milford has a large and growing membership, a home, an annual festival and a busy schedule of events. Its latest goal is to publish a book about Irish people who have played roles in the shore town's long history. Hopefully, this all-Milford issue of The Shanachie will make a wee contribution to that project. To learn more about Milford's own exciting "Celtic Tiger," go to [www.milfordirish.org](http://www.milfordirish.org).*

## Gov. Dongan & Gov. Treat sealed historic deal in 1684

When an Irishman — likely the first ever — set foot in Milford in February 1684, he was welcomed by the governor of Connecticut and an artillery salute. The honored visitor was Thomas Dongan, governor of the Province of New York. He was born in 1634 in Celbridge, Co. Kildare, to an aristocratic Catholic Anglo-Irish family. His host was Gov. Robert Treat, who was born in 1624 to a Puritan family in Pitminster in Somerset County southwestern England.

The Catholic New York governor and his Protestant Connecticut counterpart put their heads together and resolved an issue which had been simmering for years and which threatened the very existence of Connecticut.

Treat arrived in America while still in his teens. After a brief stay in Wethersfield, he moved to New Haven where in 1639 he joined a group of about 50 settlers who founded Milford. He quickly rose to prominence. In 1641, he was selected to assist in surveying and laying out the township of Milford. Later he served as a judge, captain



*Irish-born Gov. Thomas Dongan of New York, above, and English native Gov. Robert Treat of Connecticut and of Milford finalized the border of Connecticut and New York in a historic meeting at Milford in 1684.*

of the militia and deputy to the General Court in New Haven. He also led a successful movement to separate Milford from the New Haven colony and merge it with Connecticut.

In 1666, with 30 other Milford residents, Treat organized a new colony at what today is Newark, N.J. He returned to Milford in 1672, and was chosen to command Connecticut's troops in King Philip's War. In 1683, he was elected governor of Connecticut. He served 15 years as governor.

Dongan, too, rose to prominence in colonial America. In the 1650s, his family controlled most of the land in Celbridge, a community founded in the early 1200s by the Nor-

man lord Thomas de Hereford on the banks of the Liffey River just 10 miles west of Dublin.

Thomas Dongan's father, John Dongan, was a member of the Irish Parliament. His mother Mary was a descendant of one of the Anglo-Norman knights who invaded Ireland in A.D. 1170. Her brother, Richard Talbot, was the earl of Tyrconnell.

Throughout the numerous upheavals of

the 16th century in Ireland, the Dongans remained loyal to the Catholic faith and to the House of Stuart, which ruled Ireland and England for most of the 1500s.

Like many sons of Irish families, Thomas Dongan chose a military career in the British army. He was the lieutenant colonel of an English regiment of 1,500 raised in Ireland by Sir George Hamilton to aid French ruler Louis XIV against the Dutch. After Hamilton's death in action in 1676, Dongan succeeded to the colonelcy of the regiment. He held the rank of major-general for a campaign in 1678 in Flanders, but resigned when appointed deputy governor of Tangier, a city in northwestern Morocco which was occupied by England.

In 1682, Dongan was appointed governor of the Province of New York. As New Netherland, the province was ruled for 40 years by the Dutch before being captured by the English in 1664. It was renamed New York, in honor of the Duke of York, James Stuart, the brother of English King Charles II.

Dongan served only until 1688, but his administration was remarkable for its achievements. New York historian William Smith described him as "a man of integrity, moderation and genteel manners ... among the best of our governors." Another historian wrote that "he had broad, intelligent

## Scots-Irish preacher ridden out of town

The Great Awakening of the 1740s was a time of both renewed and controversial religious fervor in Connecticut. Congregationalism was the established church in Connecticut and strict laws prevented itinerant ministers preaching unorthodox doctrines or even preaching at all without the prior approval of Congregational pastors.

In Milford, the awakening led to a split among members of the original First Church.

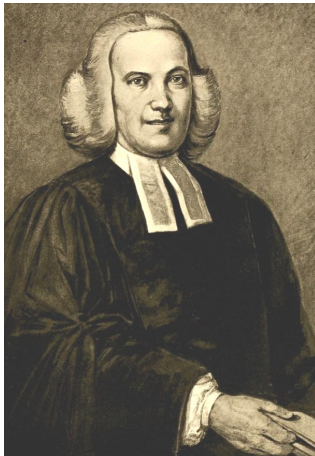
The dissenters left that church because they objected both to the sermons and the theology of a new pastor, the Rev. Samuel Whitelsey of Wallingford. The parting was not cordial; it was said that "the debates were conducted with so much passion that fists were doubled."

In late November 1741, the dissatisfied members of the original church "declared their sober dissent from the established church and professed themselves to be Presbyterians, according to the church of Scotland."

A year later the more than 30 Presbyterian families built a new Plymouth Church. Several clergymen — Benajah Case of Simsbury and John Ells of Canaan — preached there and were arrested. Another who preached in the new church was Richard Treat, a native of Milford and a descendant of the original settlers who was living in New Jersey and was connected with the Presbytery of New Brunswick in that state. The Milford church members wished to retain him as their pastor, but the presbytery sent instead a young Scots-Irish clergyman to be pastor of the Plymouth Church.

He was the Rev. Samuel Finley, born in County Armagh, Ireland, in 1715, the second of 13 children of Michael and Ann O'Neill Finley. Like many Scots-Irish, the Finleys emigrated to America, arriving in Philadelphia in 1734 and settling first on nearby Neshainmy Creek in Bucks County.

The Finleys were zealous Presbyterians and three of their sons became ministers. Samuel is thought to have studied at the famous "Log College" whose students were



Rev. Samuel Finley

taught in a log cabin in Neshainmy by another emigrant of the province of Ulster, the Rev. William Tennent.

Finley was licensed to preach by the New Brunswick Presbytery in August 1740 and ordained in October 1742. He preached with great success in Pennsylvania and lower New Jersey. The presbytery instructed him to preach at other Connecticut churches "when Providence may

open a door for him."

Finley's pastorate lasted barely more than a week. He preached in Milford on Aug. 25, 1743, and the next Sunday at the White Haven Church in New Haven, another dissenting parish. In her *History of the United Church in New Haven*, Mary Hewitt Mitchell tells how Finley was taken into custody:

"Part of his punishment ... was to be taken to the First Church (Milford), made to sit in the aisle, and listen to the 'approved minister' of the place. This proceeding could not have been uplifting to anyone. He was presented to the Grand Jury which, according to the law, ordered him to be carried out of the colony as a vagrant and to pay the expenses incurred in connection with his departure."

In 1744, Finley was made pastor of the Presbyterian church in Nottingham, Md., where he remained for 17 years. In 1761, he was elected president of the College of New Jersey, which became Princeton University. His presidency was marked by "quiet but rapid development. The number of students was increased. The curriculum was enriched."

Sources: *Ancestry.com*, *Compendium of American Genealogy*, Vol. VI, p. 774. John Maclean, *History of the College of New Jersey*, Vol. I, Philadelphia, 1877, p. 277ff. Mary Hewitt Mitchell, *History of the United Church of New Haven*, New Haven, 1942, pp. 10-11, 16-17, 143ff, 153-155. Edward R. Lambert, *History of the Colony of New Haven*, New Haven, 1838, pp. 106-108. Samuel Finley, *Wikipedia*. William L. Kingsley, *Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut*, New Haven, 1861, pp. 51, 120-121. Charles J. Hoadly, *Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, 1735-1743*, pp. 569-570.

## Celtic invasion in 1750s

Most United States communities did not experience a large influx of Irish people until the late 1840s when the Great Hunger forced hundreds of thousands to seek refuge from starvation in Ireland. But, Milford and four other Connecticut shoreline towns, due to an unusual quirk of American history, had their own Celtic influx 100 years prior to that.

To fight the French and Indian War from 1755 to 1760, England sent to the 13 American colonies an army of 15,000 to 20,000 troops. The "English" regiments in that army, ironically, numbered more Irish and Scottish than English soldiers. A major logistical problem for England was providing lodging for that huge army during the winter months between campaigns that were fought mostly in northern New York and New England and in Canada. The English government responded with a Quartering Act that required Americans to open public buildings and their own homes if barracks were not available.

In winter 1757-58 and 1758-59, the Connecticut towns of Milford, Fairfield, Stratford, Norwalk and Stamford were required to provide housing for English regiments numbering more than 1,000 troops. The regiments were the 78th Regiment of Foot in 1757-58, and the 48th Regiment of Foot in 1758-59. The 78th comprised almost entirely Highland Scots, while the ranks of the 48th were 34 percent Irish, 10 percent Scottish and 40 percent English plus a large contingent of colonial American recruits most of whom were Irish. Milford took in 253 soldiers of the 48th Regiment for 17 weeks in the winter of 1758-59.

The New Englanders and their guests made do with each other, but not without some ruffled feathers. Residents of each town were required to provide rooms, bedding, firewood, cider, candles, guardhouses and a hospital for the troops. They turned over public buildings to the troops or opened their homes to them. The Connecticut Gen-

(Please turn to page 12)

## Irish population grew from a handful to a multitude

Connecticut was not a welcoming place for Irish emigrants in the colonial and early United States eras. In those times, Irish immigrants mostly steered clear of New England and settled in the Middle Atlantic or southern colonies and states. However, Connecticut records do reveal the presence of a few foreigners.

For example, an online list of marriages in the First Congregational Church in Milford contains a July 11, 1791, notice of the wedding of Francis Voluntine and Kata Fitzgerald. There seem to be no other Fitzgerald or Voluntine records in early Milford although there is recorded the marriage of an Edmund Fitzgerald of Simsbury in 1801 and the death of a Delia Voluntine at the age of 25 in 1810 in Bloomfield.

### Census returns

The returns of the first U.S. census in 1790 also contain at least several names of Milford residents who perhaps were Irish. One is John Burk, a white man living by himself. Another is Anthony OCain, a white man, age "16 and over," the head of a household including two women. In October 1825 a newspaper reported the wedding at Milford of Mr. Francis O'Cane to Miss Sally Hine."

During the War of 1812, the United States, concerned about the possibility of espionage, compiled listings of foreigners living in various states. Among them was a Milford resident, Patrick Davitt, described as "age 23, 1 year in U.S., from Ireland, no family." The listing said Davitt was a hatter by trade.

The 1840 census returns for Milford list a Michael O Brynn, a head of household in his 30s. His family included two females, one aged 15 to 19, the other 20 to 29. Also on the 1840 returns is Andrew Sullivan, the head of a household of six.

The 1850 census returns — the first U.S. census that identified the name, age and birthplace of everyone in each household — confirm that the 1840 O'Brynn and Sullivan families were Irish.

In 1850, the O'Brynn family included only Michael, 45, a laborer, and his wife Mary, 35, both born in Ireland. The Sullivan family in 1850 included: Andrew, 44, and his wife Ann, 37, both born in Ireland, and their children all born in Connecticut: Thomas, 12; James and Mary, 11. Given the age of the

children, the Sullivans must have arrived in Milford before 1838. Andrew Sullivan's occupation in 1850 was "laborer," and the family owned real estate valued at \$200.

### Irish farmers

By 1850, just after the potato famine in Ireland, Milford had a substantial Irish presence. The town was still largely a farming community and many Irish immigrants found work as farm hands. Their presence living and working on farms is evidence that the stereotype of Irish-Americans all flocking to the cities is false.

Among the Milford Irish who found work on the land in the 1850s was Martin Fummins, 38, who lived in the farm home of Daniel Fenn Jr., 43, his wife Maria Fenn and

(Please turn to page 4)

## 1868 Irish neighborhood

*The cutout, right, is taken from a map of Milford in an 1868 New Haven County atlas. The cutout shows the location of residences, the town's first Catholic church and the New Haven Railroad tracks at the bottom. The homes include five Irish families just above the tracks. The 1870 census returns provide details of the families:*

*Patrick Ryan, 53, a railroad worker, and his wife, Mary, 55, both born in Ireland, lived next to the church.*

*Patrick Nolan, 40, a hostler, his wife Mary, 35, both born in Ireland, their six children born in Connecticut, and a Daniel Nolan, 80, born in Ireland.*

*Thomas Haley, 40, a laborer born in Ireland, and his wife, Mary, 32, born in Connecticut, and their five children, all born in Connecticut.*

*Martin Brennan, 45, a laborer, and his wife, Mary, both born in Ireland, and their son, Thomas, 21, born in Connecticut and employed on the railroad.*

*John Conner, 43, a railroad laborer, his wife, Margaret, 40, both born in Ireland, and their three children.*

*Near the top and just north of the New Haven-Milford Turnpike is the residence of John Maher, 47, a gardener, and his wife Anne, 40, both born in Ireland, and their five children.*



## Milford offered Irish a variety of ways to make a living

(Continued from page 3)

their two sons, aged 15 and 13. Another Irish native, Timothy McCormick, was at the age of 24 older than the head of household farmer he lived with and worked for, Stephen Gunn Jr., 23. Family members included Stephen's wife Mary and a two-year-old daughter Mary.

Peter McGovern, 18, and an Irish native, worked for affluent farmer Anson Merwin, 63, and his wife Calena, 55, whose property was valued at \$8,000. Their household included: son, Caleb, 27, also a farmer, and daughters, Louisa, 25, and Mary 18.

The Merwin family property was extensive. On the next farm over was Miles Merwin, 23, and his wife Sarah, 24, and their year old daughter. Their farmhand was Irish born, Martin Hickey, 28. Nearby was Mark Merwin, 53, his wife Julia, 53, their son and daughter, 22 and 11, and their farmhand, James Cogan, 25.

Some farmers in 1850 had whole staffs of Irish male and female help. Selah Strong, 58, a farmer whose property was valued at \$5,000, had three Irish-born workers: Mary Burns, 30; Peter Folee, 22; and Michael Hickey, 28. The 1850 census did not list the occupation of women, but it was quite easy to identify the servants, like Mary Burns, whose names appeared after those of family members and boarders in the listings.

### Irish women and domestic service

The female servants found work in a variety of families. Ellen Agan, 21, worked in the home of Dennis Teach, a 47-year-old merchant, his wife Maria, 44, and their seven children aged from two to 22. Mary Doane, 25, worked for Charles P. Strong, 47, whose occupation was "dealer in homes." The household included Charles's wife Clarissa, 38, three children, and the Rev. James Carder, 48, an Episcopalian minister who boarded there.

Some of the Irish women apparently were considered so insignificant that the census takers included no surname for them. The word "unknown" was substituted for the surname of Jana, a 20-year-old Irish girl in the home of 55-year-old farmer Samuel Dickingham. Irish-born Julia, 17, suffered the same indignity in the home of William Conrad, 58, a merchant.



### A melting pot indeed

*This advertisement in the Connecticut Post of March 12, 2002, promoted a St. Patrick's Day treat: a pastry known by the Yiddish word "bagel" that, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary online, is derived from Middle High German.*

There also were a number of complete families among Milford's Irish in 1850. Irish natives John Lyons, 40 and his wife Sarah, 31, presided over a household that included two children born in Connecticut, James 4, and Ann 1, and 25-year-old Irish-born Christopher Lyons, also a laborer.

The two Lyons men apparently were among a group of Irishmen employed in construction of rail lines from New York to New Haven in the mid-1840s.

In 1848, Father Edward J. O'Brien celebrated Mass in the Lyons home, perhaps the first Catholic worship in Milford.

Another Irish railroading family that put down roots in Milford by 1860 was that of Patrick and Ellen Feltis. Patrick, 35, was a laborer; Ellen, 28, a washerwoman. They were the parents of three daughters: Mary J., 6; Elizabeth, 4; Margaret, 3 — all born in Connecticut.

On Feb. 13, 1900, the *New Haven Register* published Patrick's obituary saying that he was "for more than 40 years in the employ of the Consolidated railroad ... The deceased was 73 years of age. For 15 years he had been gate tender at the West Town Street crossing, but when grade crossings were abolished he was transferred to the passenger depots where he has since been employed ... Mr. Feltis attended to his duties as usual on Saturday. While going home on Saturday night he was suddenly seized with

severe pains ... He soon became unconscious ..." Feltis, the obituary said, "was a widower, his wife having died several years ago. One daughter and three sons survive him."

Another immigrant family was that of Thomas Moor, a 40-year-old Irish native. He was listed as a laborer, with an Irish-born wife, Sarah, 31, and two Connecticut-born children, Sarah, 3, and William, 1. Their listing is in the middle of a census page that includes eight shoemakers, suggesting that he may have been an apprentice in that trade.

An Irishman who was doing well in Milford in 1850 was 37-year-old John Conner, a sail maker in a seafaring community. He owned real estate valued at \$3,000. On the 1850 returns, his birthplace was given as New York, the birthplace of his wife, Elizabeth, 34, as Connecticut. Their children were all Connecticut natives: Sarah, 10; Jane, 8; Harriett, 6; John, 3, and Nichols, 1. The Conner household also included three Irish natives: Ann and Catherine Winkle, 18 and 16, probably servants, and Patrick Leary, 40, a laborer.

Ten years later on the 1860kl returns, Conner's name was spelled Connor, Ireland was given for his birthplace and he continued to prosper with real estate valued at \$6,000 and personal estate, at \$4,000. All of his and Elizabeth's children still lived at home and there was one additional child, Mary, age 6.

In 1860, Irish women continued to find employment as servants. Catherine Murphy, 17, worked as a servant in the home of manufacturer Isaac and Mary Green and their three children. Elizabeth Addis, 16, and Mary Kilhuly, 24, were servants in the home of Harvey Beach. Mary Graff, 25, worked in the home of Dennis Beach who was listed as a "speculator." Elizabeth McCann, 40, and Michael Donevant, 38, both were servants in the home of Richard Baldwin, a merchant.

### Straw hat factory

During the latter years of the 19th century, the manufacture of straw hats was the major industry in Milford. On April 17, 1873, the *Milford Telegram* reported that the Baldwin and Hills hat factory in its busy season "employs from 250 to 300 men,

from 400 to 500 girls in factory and about as many more at their homes ..."

Irish immigrants made up a small portion of those factory workers. In 1870, workers in the "straw shop" included Irish natives Thomas Madden, 25; Edward Mooney, 30; Thomas Phelan, 33; Edward Scott, 21; Richard Purcel, 35; James Murphy, 30; John Kennedy, 20; James Doherty, 19; S. Cogne, 20; James Stanford, 21; Patrick Martin, 25; Arthur Burke, 53; Cornelius Halogan, 40, and his son, Patrick, 24.

Irish women also found work in the homes of the executives of the straw factory. Nathan A. Baldwin, "manufacturer of hats," had three Irish servants — Bridget Cummings, 32, Kate Duffer, 25, and Margaret Troy, 50, in his home. Henry Baldwin, "importer of straw goods," also employed three: Ann Malon, 48, Ellen Hughes, 23, and Anna Dolan, 25.

#### Agriculture lingers

Despite the growing industrialization of Milford, a number of Irish residents in 1870 made their living off the land. John Lines, 58, a native of Ireland, was a farmer, with real estate valued at \$8,000. He and his wife, Sarah, 50, had personal belongings valued at \$2,000. Their daughters, Ann and Sarah, worked in the straw shop. Their sons, Edward and John, 17 and 15 lived at home working as farm hands.

#### World War I hero

Eugene Sullivan, a descendant of Irish and German grandparents, enlisted in 1917 at the age of 18 in the 56th Coast Artillery Corps. The son of Eugene and Lena Sullivan who lived on Gulf Street, Sullivan spent 11 months in France and fought in three decisive battles on the Western Front: Chateau-Thierry, the Argonne Forest and the second battle of the Marne. In the Marne battle he was severely gassed, but rejoined his unit after hospitalization. Employed as a pattern-maker for the Lake Torpedo Boat Co. of Bridgeport before the war, Sullivan was unable to work full-time after returning home because of his wartime injuries. He died in April 1931 at the age of 33.

Source: *Milford Citizen*, April 16, 1931.

In 1870, the Census Bureau conducted a special detailed census of the holdings and produce of farms. A number of the Milford profiles were of Irish farmers.

Cornelius Leyden and his wife Margaret were both 35-year-old Irish immigrants. Their household included Bridget Huland, 73, also a native of Ireland and perhaps a mother-in-law, and also children, Frank, 11, Louisa, 7, and Theresa, 5.

The agricultural listing showed that the Leyden's owned 26 acres of improved land and two acres unimproved. The farm was valued at \$2,000. The livestock included one horse, two milk cows, two oxen, total value \$160. The produce included: 30 bushels of Indian corn, 30 bushels of oats, 150 bushels of Irish potatoes; 200 pounds of butter; 10 tons of hay. The total value of produce was \$630. The listing includes \$200 of wages paid.

#### Irish boardinghouse

By 1900, a sign of the increasing urbanization of Milford was the presence of at least one Irish boardinghouse. It was located at 34 New Haven Ave. and operated by a 42-year-old widow, Catherine T. Hickey who was born in Ireland about 1857. Hickey's husband, John, had recently died. He was born in Ireland about 1839 and had worked on the railroad in Milford.

Living in the Hickey boardinghouse were her four children: Mary J., 9; Agnes, 7; George J., 4; and William F., nine months old and five boarders.

The boarders represented a variety of backgrounds, including: Patrick L. Welch, 41, a day laborer born in Connecticut of Irish parents; John Clifford, 30, a straw hatter, born in Massachusetts of Irish parents; Daniel W. Whiting, 60, straw hatter born in Massachusetts of Massachusetts parents; Henry F. Miller, 29, straw hatter, born in Connecticut of a German father and Connecticut mother; and Timothy McCarthy, 30, a Britannia metalsmith, born in Connecticut of Irish parents.

Sources: *Online, Early Connecticut Marriages, Milford First Congregational Church*, book 5, p. 9. *Connecticut Church Record Abstracts, Vol 004, Barkhamsted*, p. 20; *Vol 007, Bloomfield*, p. 197. *Middlesex Gazette, Middletown*, Oct 19, 1825. *British Aliens in the United States During the War of 1812*, compiled by Kenneth Scott, Baltimore, 1979, p. 53. *U.S. Census returns, Milford, 1840, 1850, 1960, 1870, 1880, 1900.*

## THE MARKETPLACE

*Advertisements in Milford directories over the years chart the course of Irish entrepreneurs.*

1917

**John A. Dempsey**

**Practical Painter  
and Decorator**

*Estimates furnished on request*

Telephone Connection

96 West Main Street

Milford, Conn.

1926

**Thomas P. Wrinn**

**Family Shoe Store**

*Shoes for the Entire Family*

*At Reasonable Prices*

*Ladies' Comfort Shoes*

18 Broad Street

Milford, Conn.

1930

PETER N. LANDINE  
President

K. A. KENNEDY  
Secretary

JAMES J. PHALEN  
Vice-President

LAWRENCE J. FITZGERALD  
Treasurer

**The Rostand Mfg. Co.**

1947

**THE A. J. DONAHUE CORPORATION**

**GARTER MANUFACTURERS**

*Foundation Garments*

*Telephone 1400*

FACTORY LANE

MILFORD, CONN.

1955

**WILLIAM O'NEILL, Jr.**

*Insurance Agency*

**ALL FORMS OF INSURANCE**

**24 HOUR SERVICE**

19 Woodside Ter.

TEL. 2-8448

Milford, Conn.

## Lauralton Hall founded & staffed by Irish nuns

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Sisters of Mercy, who had founded schools in New Haven and Hartford during the very early years of the Diocese of Hartford, wished to found one for young women in southern Connecticut. In the search for a site, the nuns learned of a 40-acre parcel and mansion owned by the Taylor family of Milford. The family sold the home and site with the proviso that the name of the mansion, Lauralton Hall, be retained. The nuns agreed with another proviso: that the school name also include "The Academy of Our Lady of Mercy." The first Connecticut preparatory school for Catholic young women opened on Sept. 11, 1905, and today prospers well into its second century.

The "Irishness" of the academy is evident from the roots of the school staff at the time of its opening in 1905, and 25 years later in 1930. The 1905 staff included: Sister Mary Claven, director, born in Connecticut of an Irish mother and father; Sister Helena Garvey, born in Ireland; Sister Agnes Claven, born in Connecticut of Irish parents; Sister Elizabeth Fay, Connecticut of Irish parents; Sister Margaret Griffith, New York of parents born in New York and England; Sister Mary Worten, born in Massachusetts; Sister Julia Bigin, born in Connecticut of Irish and Scot parents; Sister Margaret Smith, born in Connecticut of Irish parents. Margaret O'Brien, born in Ireland; Margaret Regan, born in Ireland. Margaret Darenny, Ireland; Sophia Mayer, Germany; Margaret Brennan, Ireland; Catherine Gaffney, Ireland; Katherine Dorsey, Ireland; Josephine Rinle, New York of Irish parents; Catherine Burns, in Connecticut.

The 1930 U.S. census returns show that while the academy was growing, its staff continued to be predominantly Irish: Sister Gertrude Byrnes, born in Connecticut of Irish parents; Sister Basil Russell, born in Ireland; Sister Borgia White, Ireland; Sister Joseph Garvey, Ireland; Sister Madeline, Connecticut of Irish parents; Sister Elizabeth Maginn, Connecticut of Irish parents; Sister Geraldine Higgins, New York of New York parents; Sister Bertrand Fay, Connecticut of Irish parents; Sister Magdeline Griffith, New York of New York father and English mother; Sister Edmund Russell, Ireland; Sister Edward Higgins, New York, of New York father, and Louisiana mother.



**Lauralton Hall**

Also, Sister Dorlita Smith, New York of Irish parents; Sister Helena Riorden, Connecticut of New York father and Irish mother; Sister Celestine Norton, Connecticut of Connecticut parents; Sister Chanatell Harper, Irish born of Scots father; Sister Corona O'Brien, Connecticut of Irish parents; Sister Joanne Neagle, Connecticut of Connecticut parents; Sister Benedict Joseph Pickett, Connecticut of Irish parents; Sister Herman Joseph Moore, Connecticut of Connecticut father and New York mother; Sister Cecelia Sullivan, Connecticut of Irish parents; Sister Vincentine Shum, born New York of German father, Irish mother; Sister Ursula Dorney, born in Ireland.

Also, Sister Alexes Crehan, Ireland; Sister Regina Regan, Ireland; Sister Monica Doyle, Ireland; Sister Cajetan Gaffey, Ireland; Sister Wenceslaus Brennan, Ireland; Sister Claver Hovey, New York of German parents; Sister Dorothy Hayden, Connecticut; Josephine Pochado, Connecticut; Marie Chiaputti, Connecticut of Italian parents. Margaret Mazzi, Connecticut of Italian parents; Mary Majcin, Connecticut of Czechoslovakian father and Connecticut mother.

Also, Alice Kennelly, New York of New York parents; Anna Piccone, born in Connecticut of Italian parents; Elizabeth Giri, Connecticut of Italian parents; Mary Murphy, Connecticut of Connecticut parents; Mary Machette, Connecticut of Italian parents; Alice Kelly, Connecticut of Connecticut parents; Laura Saunders, Connecticut parents; Mary Agnes Gorman, Connecticut parents; Aneilla Leonardi, born in Switzerland of Swiss parents; John Bartlewiski, born in Poland of Polish parents; Margaret L. Russell, Ireland.

Sources: 1910 and 1930 U.S. census returns; Lauralton Hall, Wikipedia online.

## 1876 Irish seison?

"Milford Combination Troupe" was the name mentioned for a music group that gave its first concert at the Town Hall in February 1876, reported the *Milford Sentinel*. From the names of the members, it sounded much like a typical Irish seison. "A very fine audience filled the house, and the entertainment was pronounced by those who attended as being very good in its line," reported the *Sentinel* on Feb. 10, 1876. "The different performers each carried off their parts intelligibly and amusingly. The program consisted of a variety of song, farce and dancing. J. F. O'Neill with the violin, acquitted himself well and was so heartily encoored that he repeated his performance."

The program included: "Susan Jane," F. Sheahan; "Broken Down," M. Starr; "Rosey May" Wm. Quinn; fancy jig, Wm. Quinn; "Happy Old Man," F. O'Neill; banjo solo, Wm. Trowers; "Apple and Pears," F. Sheahan' Irish jig, Wm. Trowers; "Song and Dance," Wm. Quinn; "Hard Trials" by the Big Four; "Song and Dance," Wm. Quinn; acrobatic feats, Crow brothers; clog, Wm. Quinn.

## Baseball or Irish ball?

"A well-contested game of ball was played at the Milford Athletic Association field Saturday afternoon between the T.A.B. of Derby and the M.A.A. teams," reported the *New Haven Register* on Sept. 24, 1894. "Ten innings were played and the game left a tie on account of darkness.

"O'Brien and Mahoney were the battery for Derby and Carey and Walsh for Milford. In the eighth, the score was 7 to 3 in favor of Milford, but with the bases full, a home run was knocked over the fence, tying the score, and when night fell the score stood the same.

"Capt. Conley of Milford made another of his phenomenal catches in the second inning that scared the Derbys ...

"The rooters accompanying Derby started the rooting in the eighth inning and the Milford crowd not to be outdone commenced too, and for the rest of the game the ground was a bedlam."

## Militia delivered knockout punch to New York City pugilists

Located half a mile offshore in Milford harbor and connected at low tide by a narrow sandbar, Charles Island is rich in history and folklore. It was mapped in 1614 by the Dutch explorer Adriaen Block and supposedly visited by the notorious Capt. Kidd in 1699. It was used as a summer home by an Indian sachem, Ansantawae. Later vacationers enjoyed the luxuries of a resort named the Ansantawae House.

In 1870, Charles Island was even the location of a confrontation between sportsmen and law enforcers. Since boxing was illegal in that era, the pugilists, their backers and the gamblers who fed the sport arranged matches in out-of-the-way places where they could slip in, get the fight over with and be gone before authorities could react. Such was the case on April 12 that year when a match was organized on Charles Island between two New York City Irish fighters, Jim Kerrigan and Jack Toughy.

The New Yorkers began to arrive in Milford the day before, 50 of them by train, and another contingent, including Kerrigan, by steamboat from New York. The fans offered the ship's captain \$300 to put them ashore at Charles Island. However, a veritable gale was blowing that evening in Milford. The captain refused to stop at Charles Island and continued on into New Haven Harbor, leaving Kerrigan and his followers to take a train back to Milford. Meanwhile, Toughy and 150 fans who had also hired a steamboat had to disembark at Bridgeport and catch a train to Milford.

Tipped off by all the New Yorkers in fancy outfits suddenly showing up in peaceful Milford, Selectman M. Phineas Bristol telegraphed New Haven County Sheriff Edward Hotchkiss, who wired Connecticut Gov. Marshall Jewell, who ordered state Adjutant General Benjamin Merwin to call out whatever troops he needed to stop the fight.

Merwin activated five companies of militiamen: the New Haven Grays, Governor's Foot Guards, Sarsfield Guards, Montgomery Guards and New Haven Light Guards. At least two — the Sarsfield and Montgomery guards — were Irish outfits. Merwin left New Haven on the 9:45 a.m. train to scout the situation; the troops, about 175 all told, followed on a special train at 11 a.m.

Meanwhile, the New Yorkers had set up a



*This photograph taken on Charles Island shows the sandbar that connects the tiny island to the mainland at low tide.*

prize ring near an old tavern. Toughy and his crowd had not yet arrived so a preliminary match had been arranged between two boxers named Williams and Kelly. Fortunately on reaching Bridgeport, Toughy and his fans heard rumors about the call-up of the militia. Rather than continue on to what might be an entirely different fight than they had anticipated, they boarded the next train back to New York.

When the militiamen arrived in Milford, the officers split them into two wings to execute a pincers movement on the fight fans. The right wing, comprising the Sarsfield, Montgomery and Light Guards commanded by Merwin himself, took the road south toward the mainland beach so as to come out opposite the west end of the island. The left wing, comprising the Grays and Foot Guards commanded by Lieut. Col. E. E. Smith, set out across the fields and marshes that led to the shore opposite the eastern end of the island.

By that time, the lookouts posted by the fight fans had gotten wind of what was going on and all of the New Yorkers began to move through the woods on the island toward a sandbar that could be traversed to the mainland at low tide. As they reached the sandbar, two companies of the left wing came charging over a hill on the beach, their weapons at the ready. Smith brandished his sword and ordered the New Yorkers to fall back from the sandbar. For a few moments they hesitated as if considering whether to take a stand and fight it out.

Just then, the right wing militia came charging out of the undergrowth onto the beach. "The roughs," commented one Connecticut newspaper, "quickly counted the odds and retreated to the island, closely pursued by Lieut. Col. Smith and his men. Seeing that escape by the sandbar was cut off, several attempted to launch boats, but the sea was running high and the wind was blowing a gale. Two boats were launched and the men piled in, but before the boats could get off, the sea and wind blew one back ... The other boat containing six men at last got clear of the shore when a Capt. Fox was ordered to take a squad of the foot guard and stop it. Muskets were brought ready to fire at the men in the boat when the sea filled it with water, pitching the men overboard."

In all, 85 of the New Yorkers were rounded up, shackled to each other and marched through the streets of Milford to the train depot amid much rejoicing by the people of the town. The militia men and their prisoners returned to New Haven about 6:30 p.m. and the prisoners were marched off to police headquarters. The militia drum corps rubbed a bit of salt into the wounded pride of the prisoners by escorting them to the tune of the *Rogues March*.

*Sources: New Haven Register, April 12, 13, 1870. Hartford Courant, April 16, 1870. The Shanachie, July-August, Number 4, 2001.*

### ***Irish clambake***

Charles Island apparently was a fascinating place for one other group of Irishmen. On Aug. 3, 1892, the *New Haven Register* announced: "The Giants Causeway Association, including Councilmen Ahern and Fitzgerald, David Sliney, Bernard Shanley, Thomas Flannagan, Matthew Flannagan, James Farrell, Richard Reilly, Patrick Cannon, Thomas Keys, Bartholomew Ahern, John Bree and William McCarthy will go to Charles Island in the steam launch *Banshee* next Sunday on their annual clambake." At least some of the names in the article are those of Irishmen who were prominent in New Haven city politics and government in that era.

## Irish community supported parish fair

A newspaper article about a holiday fair at St. Mary's Church in 1885 provides a virtual roll call of Milford's Irish community and some of their neighbors and friends. The \$1,100 proceeds of the fair came mostly from the raffle or auction of a wide variety of items.

The article listed both the items and the winners. They included: Chamber set, Maggie Nolan; lambrequins, Mrs. John Connors; china set, E.L. Cornwall; tidy, Mary Leddy; silver watch, Thomas F. Fogarty; oil stove, Lizzie Feltis; half dozen silver spoons, Timothy Rohan; boy's suit of clothes, Eugene Quinn; pickle castor, A.H. Bristol; chest of tea, Thomas F. Fogarty; ice cream knife, J.P. Brogan; baby's carriage robe, Nellie Nolan; white bedspread, Mrs. Flynn.

Also, bed quilts, Mrs. Timothy Sullivan, Mrs. John Connor, Mrs. Adelbert P. Armstrong; box of cigars, John Coyne; picture of the pastor Father James Larkin, E. A. Reichell; three bags of flour, Mrs. John Connors; case of preserves, Father Larkin; wine set, Mrs. Thomas Dooley; prayer book, Thomas F. Fogarty; ladies cloud, William Hickey; parlor stove, John C. Curnias; pair of blankets, Mrs. Andrew Healy; barrel of flour, Father Larkin and Charles A. Tomlin-

son; china set, John Kennedy; mantle lambrequin, J.P. Bogan; ladies boots, Maggie Teelan; meerschaum pipe, Edward Phelan; dolls furniture, Martha Olyger; 3 bags of flour, Mrs. Andrew Healy and Mrs. Cornelius Hollinger; piece of cotton cloth, Sarah Scrivenes; doll's dinner set, Mrs. Andrew Healy; plush mirror, Miss Lizzie Feltis; toilet cushion, George Clark.

Also, cake, Mrs. John Nolan; silk handkerchief, Mary Dooley; table cover, Albert Terhan; hanging lamp, Hannah Connor; gold chain and bracelets, Mary P. Fenlon; statue of the Blessed Virgin, Miss Sarah O'Connor; surprise box, Mrs. James Murphy; bachelor's tea set, Mrs. Edward Reichel; ton of coal, Thomas Rose and W.C. Durans; menagerie, Lizzie Feltis; toilet set, J.M. Nolan; \$5 gold piece, Christopher Nolan.

In addition to the raffle of such items, there was "a very spirited contest for the silver ice pitcher" which resulted in favor of Dr. William H. Andrews who accumulated 1,050 votes. The article declared, "Father Larkin is well pleased with the success of the fair and thanks all who attended or who contributed in any many manner to it."

*Source: New Haven Register, Nov. 30, 1885.*

## Governors Treat & Dongan

*(Continued from page 1)*

views, was an accomplished politician and was essentially a man for the times ... fitted to inspire confidence in all around him."

One of Dongan's first acts was to call an election by freeholders of a legislative assembly. The assembly passed a "Charter of Liberties and Privileges" that guaranteed New Yorkers "religious liberty, the right of suffrage, trial by jury and no taxation without the consent of the assembly."

The inscription on a statue of Dongan in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., states, "Dongan's charter was the Magna Carta of American constitutional liberty. Many of its principles are embedded in the structure of our federal government." One admirer said of Dongan, "As a statesman, dealing with human rights, he was a century in advance of his times."

Another of Dongan's initiatives was to settle a border dispute between Connecticut and New York. A settlement had been

proposed in 1650 while the Dutch still controlled New York, but had never been ratified by either colony. New Yorkers said Connecticut was using "crowding out" tactics to move the boundary bit by bit as close as they could to the Hudson River. Connecticut politicians were concerned that New York would succeed in its original proposal that the border should be the Connecticut River, about 70 miles to the east. Had that happened, New York would have gobbled up much of Connecticut and the Nutmeg State today would be only 15 miles wide.

In November 1683, the Connecticut General Assembly sent a delegation led by Gov. Treat to Manhattan. The delegates discovered that Dongan, despite his bluster, was willing to compromise. After some negotiations, New York and Connecticut both were willing to accept a borderline roughly 20 miles west of the Hudson River.

On Feb. 23, Dongan came to Treat's hometown of Milford and the two governor's ratified the compromise with their

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## First police chief

In 1915, a son of Irish immigrants became Milford's first police chief. James M. Maher, the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Nolan Maher, was born in Connecticut in 1865. James is listed as a "hack driver" on the 1900 census. At that time, he and his wife Annie were the parents of five children: Mary, 15; Thomas, 13; James, 11; Anne, 9; and Elizabeth, 1. The 1909 Milford directory contains an advertisement, above, for Maher's Express.

Maher served as one of several constables in Milford and when a Board of Police Commissioners was established in 1915, he was selected as police chief supervising a department of five patrolmen. He served as chief until his death in 1931.

*Source: History of Milford, 1639-1939, Milford Tercentenary Commission., p. 118.*

signatures. With minor adjustments, that line has stood the test of more than three centuries. The evidence that there were celebratory fireworks in Milford that day is that in May 1684, the Connecticut legislature granted to Samuel Adkins of Milford, "five pounds as their charity towards the damage he received in shooting of a great gun when Gov. Dongan was last at Milford."

*Sources: Roland Mather Hooker, Boundaries of Connecticut, 1933, pp. 28-38. J. Hammond Trumbull, Public Records of Connecticut, May 1678-June 1859, p. 176, 337-339. Peter R. Christoph, editor, The Dongan Papers, xiii-xxi. John Harvey Treat, The Treat Family ... in England and America, Salem, 1893, p. 130, 153. The National Magazine, Vol. XVI, Nr. 4, pp. 380-382. Franklin M. Danaher, "An Address to the Dongan Club of Albany," Albany, NY, 1880, pp. 29, 52-55. Online Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, "Dongan, Thomas." Online Library of Liberty, "1683: Charter of Liberties and Privileges." Martha Lamb, History of the City of New York, 1877, N.Y. p. 300. William Smith, The History of the Late Province of New York, Vol 1, New York 1829, p. 59.*

## ***Milford's First Lady: Town Clerk Margaret Egan***

**M**argaret Sullivan Egan was a fine example of how Irish people seem to have a natural bent for public service. She was held in such great regard by Milford's citizens that they elected her their town and city clerk from 1959 to 1961 and from 1963 to 1987. Egan ran unopposed in nearly all of her 13 election campaigns, losing only in 1961. She also led the ticket in the number of votes received in most cases. Once described as "Milford's First Lady," Egan was the recipient of the Liberty Bell Award of the Milford Bar Association and a Hall of Fame Award from the Connecticut Association of Town Clerks.

A newspaper reporter in Massachusetts, Egan, whose husband, Lawrence, was a Milford police commissioner, was born in Beachmont, Mass, in 1905. She was a resident of Milford for more than 50 years. She ran a travel agency in Milford.

Egan was active in numerous Milford and statewide organizations: Democratic Town Committee, Democratic State Committee, Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Milford Business and Professional Women's Association, United Way of Milford, Milford Emblem Club, Ladies Auxiliary of the American Legion, St. Mary's Church and Ladies Guild.

The Margaret S. Egan Community Center on Matthew Street is named in her honor and in 1987 she was the first woman to receive the Distinguished Irish American Award from the Knights of St. Patrick in New Haven. In 1994, she was grand marshal of the Milford St. Patrick's Day parade.

Margaret Egan died at the age of 92 on June 6, 1998, and is buried in St. Mary's Cemetery.

*Sources: New Haven Register, June 7, 1998. Frank Juliano, Milford: A Brief History, Charleston, SC, 2010, p. 95.*

## **When Superintendent Joseph A. Foran died, flags flew at half-staff**

**J**oseph A. Foran's first job was in a meat market. He was only 15 at the time and had left school without a diploma. Reportedly, his teachers at Milford High School suggested to his parents that Foran would do better in the working world than in college. Foran discovered that was not the case when he applied for a promotion in a meat packing warehouse and was rejected for want of at least a high school diploma.

As things turned out, Foran made his mark as the superintendent of schools in Milford for 21 years from 1946 to 1967. He so excelled at that position that his obituary in the *Milford Mirror* began with the announcement, "Flags flew at half staff Monday in honor of Joseph Foran who died over the weekend." The obituary continued: "Mr. Foran is a legend of sorts in Milford. One of the city's high schools bears his name and for the past decade he has been a one-man history book, an authority of the city he called home."

Foran was born in Meriden on July 18, 1906, one of seven children of John and Anna Marie O'Connor Foran. John was a painter by trade. The Forans relocated to Milford during World War I and Joseph grew up in a tenement apartment house near the Milford Green. He fondly recalled playing football and baseball on a sandlot

on New Haven Avenue in Milford.

At the age of 24, Foran enrolled in night school and progressed to the point that he was able to enter Yale with a scholarship. He graduated in the late 1930s with a master's, as well as a bachelor's degree, and began his career in education at the Central Grammar School in Milford. He married Regina Agnes Lesnikowski, also a teacher. He was selected as superintendent in 1946. In the years after his appointment, Foran had to deal with a major challenge facing public education: the need for an extensive building program due to the post-World War II baby boom.

Hotly contested debates and budgetary problems were the order of the day. Foran was criticized for building "cookie-cutter" schools of a single design.

To get the most for each dollar spent, Foran did adopt an economically frugal policy on the architecture of new schools. According to one historian, he "purchased one architectural plan and simply oriented the building in the most suitable way on the lot."

Foran later recalled, "We had double shifts in the high schools, grammar schools were overcrowded and prefabricated classrooms had to be put up to handle the problem." He was adamant about the need to

build. He led the effort to keep pace of the population growth by building numerous new elementary schools and a new high school, and adding new wings.

Foran even slashed his own salary to guarantee the quality of education available to Milford's children. In 1955, the education budget had to be cut by \$55,000. In that year's budget, reported the *Milford Citizen*, the school board had included a \$1,000 raise for the superintendent "in order to bring his salary in closer relation to those of superintendents in neighboring towns. Mr. Foran suggested that this figure be cut in half. A compromise figure of \$700 was decided upon when the board met in a special session ..."

As a result of the board's action, reported the *Citizen*, "Milford public school teachers will get the pay raises set up in the original budget for 1955-1956 ..."

Foran took a leave of absence after an illness in 1965, and retired as superintendent in 1967. However, he did not leave education, but taught at St. Joseph High School in Trumbull until 1975 and served on the Milford Board of Education.

Foran died on March 24, 2002, aged 95.

*Sources: Milford Citizen, May 12, 1955, Milford Mirror, March 28, 2002. Frank Juliano, Milford: A Brief History, Charleston, SC, 2010, pp. 75-77.*

## Larkin resort catered to Irish clientele

**M**ilford's shoreline had numerous resort houses, but one in particular seemed to be the most popular gathering place for south central Connecticut's Irish.

In 1891, John Larkin, a resident of Derby, acquired the Milford Beach House at Burns Point at the entrance of Milford harbor. Larkin was a native of County Kilkenny and the second of 11 children of Edward, a stone mason, and Anna Callahan Larkin. The family was among the multitude of Irish fleeing the starvation of the Great Hunger between 1845 and the early 1850s.

The Larkins landed first at Grosse Isle in the St. Lawrence River. They entered the United States through the province of Quebec and after a brief stay in Vermont settled in Norwich in eastern Connecticut.

In 1865, Edward and Anna moved to a farm in Minnesota. Anna died in 1881 and Edward in 1886. As they grew up, the Larkin children scattered. William became a horse and cattle breeder in Oregon; Mary, Thomas and Augustine stayed in Minnesota. Michael enlisted in the Union Army in the Civil War and died in Maryland. Nicholas remained in Connecticut and earned his living as a stone mason in Shelton.

When 15 years old, John took a job in the woolen and cotton mills in nearby Sprague, CT. He remained there 16 years before opening a meat market in Derby in the Naugatuck Valley. The business grew into a grocery and liquor store.

Larkin was active, too, in community life in Derby. He was elected burgess in the Borough of Birmingham and assessor of the city. He also was an active Catholic and a member of the Knights of Columbus.

John and his wife, Jane Murray, who was born in County Cork, had three children who remained in Derby: John, an attorney and city clerk; Edmund, a dentist; and Jennie, whose husband Ira Hoyet was manager of the Derby Opera House.

During John Larkin's tenure as proprietor, the Milford Beach House became a popular venue for social events sponsored by area Irish groups.

On Aug. 18, 1893, the *New Haven Register* reported: "Mirth reigned supreme at the Milford Beach House last night. It was the event of the season at Burns Point and a score of merry invited guests aided the

dozen cottagers at mine host Larkin's inn in making the annual hop a delightful success.

"The pavilion never held a jollier party ... What the assembly lacked in dancing, they made up in song interspersed between the dancing program of 12 numbers. Vocal selections by W.J. Sheehan, J.C. Criddle, Charles O'Connell and Reilly Philips were enthusiastically received ... The visitors ... left New Haven at 6:30 and returned at midnight, special buses being chartered to transport them from the Milford station to the Beach House.

"Among the partygoers were Dr. O'Reilly, Dr. O'Connor, W.J. Sheehan, Dr. McCabe, William O'Connell, Mr. and Mrs. B.J. Dillon, Edward Larkin, Yale '94, John McHugh, Daniel O'Connell, Daniel McWilliams, John Cohane, Timothy Laflin, John McHugh ...

"Also, Miss Emily Reilly of Brooklyn, Misses Margaret and Celia Dillon, Misses Lizzie and Maud Reilly and Miss Eva Murray ... The young ladies from this city (New Haven) who are enjoying a fortnight's sojourn on the Milford beach and as whose guests the above party came are: Misses Jane Dillon, Katie Toole, Alice Reilly, Mary Dillon, Mollie Fahy, Maggie Cowey and Maria Kennedy ..."

At the turn of the century, the Milford Beach House remained a home for Irish folks in the region. "Proprietor Larkin of the Milford Beach House entertained a large tally-ho party from New Haven yesterday," reported the *New Haven Register* on Sept. 5, 1899. "About 24 guests were present and all enjoyed themselves in a royal manner."

Dinner was served and dancing followed with the party breaking up before midnight. Those attending were Irish: Minnie Dwyer, Anna McKeon, Marguerite Hayes, Katherine Butler, Ethel Ford, Mary Cohane, Winifred Brennan, Marguerite Skifington, Elizabeth Toole, Mary Tiernan, James and Thomas Maxwell, Dr. William Butler, Matthew Brennan, Frank Maher, Edward Conlin, D.F. Galligan, W. H. Hardy and John McCaffrey.

*Sources: Commemorative Biographical Record of New Haven County, Vol. 2, New Haven, 1920, p. 1480-1481. New Haven Register, Aug. 18, 1893, Sept. 5, 1899.*

## *Soldiers for the Union and for Ireland*

Many Milford Irish served in the Civil War: Patrick Gavin, Thomas Haley, Patrick Horigan, Dennis Keeshan, Lawrence Murphy, William McBride; James Maginnis, Andrew Nolan, John Shine, James McCarthy and James Sullivan.

Shine and his wife, Hannah, were both born in Ireland. He worked in the straw hat factory in Milford and became a citizen in 1855. He enlisted in the 1st Connecticut Light Battery, and at Beaufort, S.C., in May 1862, became the first Milford soldier wounded in the war.

Maginnis enlisted in Company E, 15th Connecticut Infantry on Aug. 11, 1862. He was captured in battle at Plymouth, N.C., in April 1864 and died in Andersonville Prison on Aug. 17, 1864.

James McCarthy enlisted in September 1861 in the 9th Connecticut Infantry, the state's Irish regiment. He was promoted to sergeant and received a disability discharge in October 1862.

After the war, McCarthy, was involved in the Fenian movement. In 1868, at a state Fenian convention in Hartford, he was sergeant-at-arms. The main speaker at the convention was Gen. John O'Neill, who had led Fenian troops in the first raids on Canada in 1866. O'Neill said he was prepared for another invasion to help Ireland win its independence and the delegates gave him a unanimous vote of support.

McCarthy and his wife, Ellen, also an Irish native, raised a family of six. A tailor by trade, he was involved in both religious and community affairs. He served on the Board of Trustees of St. Mary's Benevolent Society, was elected a selectman and justice of the peace and was a director of the Milford Water Co. He died in March 1902, at the age of 74 in his home on New Haven Avenue.

*Sources: Sketches of the Town of Milford, 1914, p. 45-46. Ancestry.com, U.S. census, Milford, 1850-60-70. Blaikie Hines, Civil War Volunteer Sons of Connecticut, Thomaston, Maine, 2002, p. 458-459. Sheldon Thorpe, History of the 15th Connecticut Volunteers, New Haven, 1893, p. 297. Irish-American Weekly, May 18, 1868. New Haven Register, April 11, 1893, Sept. 15, 1894, Oct. 27, 1894. Irish World, April 5, 1902.*

## St. Patrick's Day was a time for celebration — and lifesaving

Even when there was no Irish club in Milford, Irish members of other clubs made sure there was a celebration of Ireland's beloved patron saint.

Articles on the front page of the *Milford Citizen* of March 19, 1931, demonstrate that both the Milford Wheel Club and the Milford Business and Professional Women's Club made sure St. Patrick's Day was given its proper prominence in the yearly calendar of events.

At their monthly meeting at the Hostess House, 17 Broad St., the professional women were led in an Irish songfest by their president, Margaret F. O'Connor, a teacher and administrator in Milford's public schools.

O'Connor happened to be also an Irish colleen and she began the festivities by singing "Danny Boy." She was followed by Ruth Burgess, "Believe Me if all Those Endearing Young Charm," and the entire membership who joined in with "The Girl I Left Behind" and "Dear Little Shamrock." Mrs. Nanchen Rosan accompanied the singing on the piano.

The professional women mingled pleasure and business at their meeting. In addition to the Irish music, the women heard a presentation by one of their members, Florence Maxwell, a supervisor in the Milford school system, who told of her trip to Detroit to attend a meeting of the National Education Association.

A theme at the meeting, she said, was the inadequacy of many school facilities, a theme of particular interest to the professional women whose goal was to provide at least a high school education for every American woman.

At the meeting of the Milford Wheel Club,

### Milford firefighter praised for action

On Sunday, March 17 — **St. Patrick's Day** — Fire Capt. Patrick Hayden saved the life of our 6-week-old son, Marc Edward Savo. We are aware that saving lives is an essential part of Hayden's daily work, as he is a 20-year veteran of the Milford Fire Department.

As parents who came so close to losing such a small child, we are forever indebted to Hayden. We cannot find the words to express the deep gratitude of our immediate and extended families.

How can you possibly ever thank someone for giving your child the gift of life? There isn't a word, gift or monetary value that you can place on the life of a person.

Hayden is a loving husband, father, neighbor, friend and a wonderful person. We'd like to ask that he receive a commendation from the Milford Fire Department and the city of Milford for his actions.

Because of Hayden, our son is alive and doing well. Hayden was truly our "St. Patrick" that day, and we will be forever grateful.

**Stephen and Patricia Savo**  
Milford

*On April 19, 2002, the Bridgeport Post published a letter from a Milford couple thankful for the St. Patrick's Day response of an Irish firefighter.*

the newspaper reported, "St. Patrick and James Phelan of the Rostrand Company divided honors ... Mr. Phelan, who has been

a club member for 28 years and St. Patrick, whose celebration occurred this Tuesday, were lauded with a program of entertainment provided by the committee which 'put your eye out.'"

Phelan was presented a dozen golf balls and a photograph of himself when he joined the club long ago. The Wheel Club president said Phelan looked as good as he had then. Phelan responded by singing "one of his famous Irish songs."

Like the professional women, the Wheel Club members engaged in a sing-along led by Thomas Macauley, singing "Long Way to Tipperary," "My Wild Irish Rose," "Mother Machree," and "Where the River Shannon Flows" with Tkljom McAviny at the piano. Then, said the newspaper, "One after another came on the acts, all of which were of a high order. The one which brought the most applause was Betty Dunnigan and Raymond Reed of New Haven in their Irish, Scotch and Swedish songs and dances ... Claire Brannigan was their accompanist ...

"Jackie Brannigan gave a sailor's hornpipe dance and Scotch impersonations and a song entitled "Tumbled Down Shack." ... William Rivers gave an exhibition of Irish war cries ... William Maher of Bridgeport played several bagpipe selections ... Jimmy Saunders sang two Irish songs.

"Harry Morrison sang with George Mandell at the piano and later he and B.J. Fagan vied with each other in storytelling."

Two speakers added to the evening. Lt. Joseph A. Dillon of the U.S. Army gave a humorous talk about football, baseball, lacrosse and boxing.

Former New Haven Mayor David Fitzgerald spoke about the early history of Ireland.

### Irish enjoyed and excelled at bicycling

The Milford Wheel Club was organized by the town's bicyclers in June 1892. In 1909, the club's president was 28-year-old Daniel Mulholland, a native of Pennsylvania and son of a Scottish father and an Irish mother. Mulholland, who was employed by the River Mfg. Co., later became the town assessor.

The town's most famous wheelman was another Irishman, Martin J. Walsh, who raced in bicycle competition, which at that time was a betting sport. Martin was the son of John T. Walsh. In September 1894, he defeated Charles Pierce "rather easily" in a race

that began at the Milford green "to and around the ball grounds at Savin Rock, thence to the Washington bridge at Stratford and return to the green." The 22-mile race began at 4 p.m. and Walsh crossed the finish line at 5:28. The *Milford Citizen* reported, "Upwards of \$300 changed hands" at the event, a third of which was won by John Walsh. "The young man is but 17 years of age and during the past season has run several very fast races," said the paper.

Sources: *Milford Directory*, 1909. *U.S. Census* 1910 and 1920. *Milford Citizen*, Sept 23, 1894.

## Celtic invasion

(Continued from page 2)

eral Assembly allocated tax money to reimburse the townspeople. One Highlander wrote with dismay that the Scots had been sent "among a set of Cromwellians," while some Stratford residents charged that the men of the 78th used the weathercock atop the village Episcopal Church for target practice. The Town Hall built in Milford in 1734, caught fire and burned to the ground reportedly due to "drinking and carousing" by the troops who were quartered there.

A more serious disruption occurred in the 78th Regiment during the Scottish new year's eve celebration of Hogmany in 1757 when Sgt. Alexander Fraser was charged with murdering Cpl. James Macky. The case led to what probably was the only trial in Connecticut history at which a Gaelic inter-

preter was required. Fraser, who was fluent in Gaelic, could speak scarcely a word of English. The jury of 12 Connecticut men acquitted Fraser by reason of self-defense.

The following winter, two Irishmen of the 48th Regiment, Phelix O'Neal and Richard Stafford, were imprisoned in New Haven in mid-December by order of Samuel Bassett of Milford, a New Haven County justice of the peace. The two remained in jail until freed by 100 of their comrades on Feb. 25, 1759. Colonial records say they were rescued "by strong hands." The *Connecticut Gazette* condemned the rescue as "tending to obstruct the harmony and good will" between townspeople and the troops. When they left Connecticut in the spring of 1759, the troops of the 48th Regiment fought in the campaign that captured Quebec in September that year and ended French control of Canada.

Whatever their appreciation for that, the

indignity of being forced to house troops left a bitter taste among Connecticut and other American colonists. Seventeen years later in their Declaration of Independence, Americans cited as one of their grievances against England the policy of "quartering large bodies of armed troops among us ..."

*Sources: Stephen Brumwell, Redcoats, The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763, New York, 2002. Harold E. Selesky, War and Society of Colonial Connecticut, Yale University, 1990, pp. 218-220. Lewis G. Knapp, In Pursuit of Paradise, History of the Town of Stratford, Connecticut, Stratford, 1989, p. 20. Fitch Papers, Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society, Vol. XVII, pp. 356-357. Charles J. Hoadley, Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, From May 1757 to March 1762, Vol. 11, pp. 190, 217-218, 295, 326, 341. History of Milford, Connecticut, 1639-1939, WPA, 1939, p. 44. Ian Macpherson McCulloch, Sons of the Mountains, Vol. I, Toronto, 2006, pp. 56, 63-64. Alan Rogers, Empire and Liberty, University of California, 1974, p. 88.*

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*In Ireland, a Shanachie is a folklorist, historian  
and keeper of the traditions of the people.*

"We have kept faith  
with the past;  
we have handed  
a tradition  
to the future."

*Padraic Pearse*

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