

## Ethnic Heritage Center has treasure trove of school records

About 20 years ago, Jeanne Roche Whalen, at that time president of the Connecticut Irish-American Historical Society and director of the Ethnic Heritage Center in New Haven, set out on a rescue mission.

Due to proposed school renovation, more than 200 boxes of New Haven public school records stored at Fair Haven Middle School were in danger of destruction. The state archivist believed the records were of sufficient historical value to be saved, but someone had to arrange new living quarters for them.

Whalen found a way to rescue the endangered species. With the approval of the state archivist and authorization from the Ethnic Heritage Center board, she secured a pickup truck and with a few helping hands moved the boxes from the basement of the school to the heritage center's home on the campus of Southern Connecticut State University.

Her action saved the records from immediate destruction. But the most the young and struggling Ethnic Heritage Center could do at that point was to provide a safe harbor for the records. Their long-range fate was still an open question, as was the



*Maureen Delahunt and Pat Heslin inspect a fragile, century-old ledger book filled with the records, memorandums and minutes of New Haven's public schools of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Included among the records being researched, catalogued and photographed with a high-tech camera at the Ethnic Heritage Center on the campus of Southern Connecticut State University are filing cards containing data about the schoolchildren and their families.*

mystery of exactly what was in this extensive collection and how valuable or worthless the records might prove to be.

The records remained in file cabinets and cardboard boxes for years and survived one or two moves of the Ethnic Heritage Center quarters on the SCSU campus.

In 2001, volunteers Maureen Delahunt and Dotti Heslin began the daunting task of unpacking and inventorying the records. At about the same time, other volunteers, including Joan Ciaburri and Frances Jack, arranged and made an inventory of the card catalogs.

In 2006-2007, the Attendance Registers portion of the collection, the largest record group by volume, was microfilmed at no charge by the Mormon Genealogical Society.

With the purchase of a microfilm reader, the EHC was able to allow viewing and copying of the records, which are arranged chronologically by school. Preliminary research in the remaining cabinets and cardboard boxes revealed ledgers and bound records that dated from the late 1890s to the 1930s, and revealed

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## Family researchers looking for connections

One of the ways in which our organization fulfills its goal of preserving the history of Connecticut's Irish people is by assisting members and non-members alike with their genealogy projects.

Our Genealogy Group conducts workshops, sponsors exhibits and a computer service at the annual Irish festival in North Haven and meets regularly at the Irish-American Community Center in East Haven.

We also encourage people to contact us with queries about their family tree issues and problems. In recent months, we have received the four queries listed below. Anyone who has information that might help these researchers, please contact us by email ([ctiahs@gmail.com](mailto:ctiahs@gmail.com)) or by regular mail (CTIAHS, P.O. 185833, Hamden, CT 06518) and we will forward the information to those who submitted the queries. Please make sure to use the query number when responding.

**Query S13-1** Seeking descendants/relatives of James **White** (b. 02/05/1875) and Mary White (b. 05/26/1876). Mary dau. of Martin and Brigid (nee **Mannion**) White of Clonadarg, Athlone, Co. Offaly. Martin White, d. 1882; Brigid remarried 1886 to a man named **Gavin**. Family emigrated to U.S. c. 1895. Also seeking people with links to/familiar with the Clonadarg/Ballinatown/Athlone area for research suggestions.

**Query S13-2** Seeking information on siblings of Mary Anne **O'Brien** from Athlone. Mary Anne m. William H. **Crofut** April 12, 1883 in Danbury CT. Witnesses were Mary Ellen O'Brien **Gallagher** of Danbury and Richard **Spooner** of New York City. Mary Anne and Mary Ellen had three sisters who also came to the U.S.: M. Katherine O'Brien (never married), Mary Agnes O'Brien (in 1930 census she was unmarried, living in Bridgeport), and Mary Margaret O'Brien **Durnin** of Richmond N.Y. Three O'Brien brothers may also have come to the U.S. O'Brien family's mother's maiden name **Bailey**; father's given name unknown.

**Query S13-3** Seeking descendants of great-grandparents, Mary (d. 1943) and Daniel J. (d. 1925) **Nolan** of New Haven and their children: Marguerite L., Charles R., Russell F., Edwin J., Mary Connie, Robert, John A. (and possibly including George and Cathleen).

**Query S13-4** Seeking relatives of Thomas **Ryan** (b. 1872 Kerry Ire, d. 1937 New Haven CT), husband of Julia **Wren** (b. 1876 in Kerry Ire., d. 1949 New Haven, CT); and, Charles **Molloy** (b. 1873 New Haven, CT, d. 1909 New Haven, CT, husband of Ellen **McGinness** (b. 1875 New Haven, CT, d. 1938 New Haven, CT).

## Help wanted: Irish women who worked as household servants

Almost every Irish-American family has on its family tree a mother, grandmother, aunt or cousin who worked as a domestic servant.

Whether as live-ins or day workers, these housekeepers, nursemaids, cooks, waitresses and seamstresses contributed as much to the success stories of America's Irish as did the Irish men who dug canals and built the railroads.

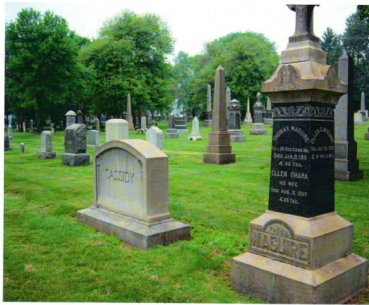
The CTIAHS is collecting stories about these industrious and enterprising young Irish women to publish a book or booklet honoring those who enriched the history of the Irish in Connecticut.

We are looking for stories about ancestors going back into the 1800s and early 1900s and also stories about more recent Irish immigrants who worked for families after arriving in Connecticut in the 1940s on up through the last half century.

If you have memories, stories and pictures of women in your families, please contact us: by email at [ctiahs@gmail.com](mailto:ctiahs@gmail.com) or by regular mail at CTIAHS, P.O. 185833, Hamden, CT 06518.

Early New Haven Irish and their Final Resting Places:

The Old Catholic and Saint Bernard cemeteries



The eventful history of these cemeteries and a listing of names and Irish origins of many of those buried there

by  
The Connecticut Irish American Historical Society

## The perfect holiday gift for genealogist friends

Anyone looking for an out-of-the-ordinary Christmas gift for a genealogist friend or relative may find that the latest book published by the Connecticut Irish-American Historical Society is just what an Irish genealogist would love to find under the tree.

The book is titled: *Early New Haven Irish and Their Final Resting Places*. It is a handsome, 87-page paperback that is chock full of names and details of Irish families in the greater New Haven area.

Text in the front of the book traces the founding and development of both Catholic churches and burial grounds beginning in 1833. Then in table format, the book provides the burial locations, names, dates and places of origin in Ireland of New Haven Irish from that time to the early 20th century. The entries are alphabetized and there is an index making it easy to locate names in the tables. It is an indispensable reference book for the descendants of the early Irish settlers of New Haven and vicinity.

Copies may be obtained from Mary McMahon, 640 Arrowhead Drive, Orange, CT 06477. Please include a check made out to CTIAHS for \$15 plus \$2 for mailing for each copy ordered.

## New Haven monument honors forgotten Fenian hero

Connecticut's Irish-Americans were conspicuous in their support of the Fenian movement that conducted political and military campaigns to free Ireland from British rule in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Constitution State spawned a significant number of Fenians. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, cadres of Connecticut Irish Civil War veterans marched off to attack Canada in the hope that military pressure there might force England to do right by Ireland. A number of Connecticut veterans also went to Ireland to join nationalist uprisings there. Some were arrested and imprisoned in Ireland.

Irish organizations in Connecticut raised money for Fenian attacks on the British army of occupation in Ireland. Connecticut Irish nationalists had a hand in the construction of a one-man submarine, the Fenian Ram, designed to attack British shipping. Connecticut Irishmen played key roles in such escapades as the Catalpa expedition which freed Irish inmates from prison in Western Australia.

But of all the Fenians with Connecticut connections and of all the Fenian activities in the state, the least publicized is the story of a freedom fighter named Patrick Tierney who is buried in St. Bernard's Cemetery in New Haven and to whose memory a monument was erected in St. Lawrence Cemetery in New Haven in 1891.

Patrick Tierney was only 40 years old when he died in New Haven in 1882. He lived in the United States for just a few days short of four years and was in New Haven for only about two of those years. His story has none of the heroics of some of the Fenian exploits, but it is a testament to the sacrifices made by many who devoted their lives to win freedom for their homeland.

Tierney was born in Ennis, County Clare, in 1842. He survived the horrors of the Great Hunger. He was just 16 years old when in 1858 a group of Irish nationalists, convinced that England would never grant Ireland its freedom short of physical force, organized the Irish Republican Brotherhood whose members soon came to be known as Fenians, a name taken from that of the ancient warrior class of Ireland.

Two years later, Tierney, who had been employed as a leather worker, joined the Brit-

ish army. As did other Irish lads, he may have enlisted in the 87th Royal Irish Fusiliers because he sympathized with the Fenians and intended to use the military training to fight for an independent Ireland. If not, he soon was converted to that cause. The Irish Republican Brotherhood had so much support by the mid-1860s that regiments like the 87th — known as the "Faughs" from the Gaelic battle cry "Faugh a Ballagh" or "Clear the way" — were infested with cells of discontented Irish soldiers. The English government responded by planting numerous spies and informers in the ranks.

One of the informers was John Warner, originally a sergeant in the Cork Militia Artillery. Warner rose to the rank of captain in the IRB, then revealed to the police the names of IRB officers as well as the details of their plans for an uprising. In May 1866, Tierney tracked Warner down in Dublin where he had been spirited away after betraying his IRB comrades. Tierney confronted Warner at the police barracks in Howth and stabbed him with a knife.

Warner survived, but Tierney was quickly subdued by the informer's police guards and charged with assault with intent to kill. When arrested, Tierney gave his name as Edward O'Connor and pleaded guilty in the hope of aborting any investigation that would lead back to the 87th regiment and endanger his IRB comrades.

Tierney was convicted in June 1866 and sentenced to penal servitude for life. After incarceration for eight months at Mountjoy Prison in Dublin, he was transferred to Spike Island, a prison located in the Cork City harbor.

"The officials plainly intimated to me on the day of my arrival on Spike Island, Feb. 13,

1867, what they would do," Tierney said years later. "Twenty prisoners came with me from Mountjoy. Thirteen of those were returned convicts. The principal warden, Duggan, came among us to look at the new hands and after cracking some jokes with

his old acquaintances, he asked me my name. I replied, 'Edward O'Connor.' 'You seem to be an insolent fellow,' said he. I answered I was sorry he should think so, as I did not mean to be.

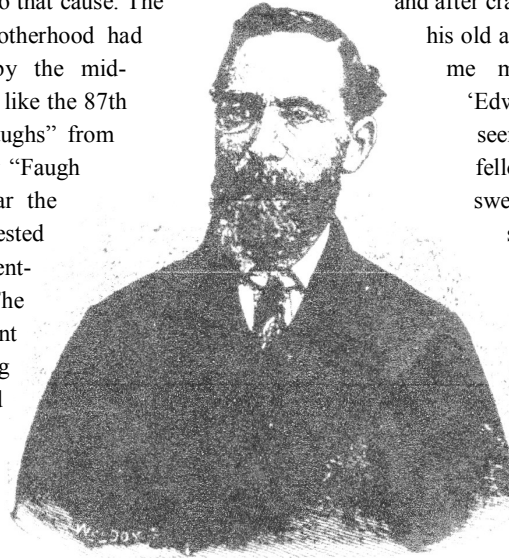
"He repeated, 'You are insolent. Do you see that boy beside you. He is the meanest pickpocket here and you are nothing more than him and we will make you feel it.' I said that I would conduct myself the same as any other pris-

oner if allowed to do so. 'But you won't be allowed to do so,' was the reply. 'You are a convicted felon, belonging to a convicted society, and we will make you feel what it is to be a convicted felon before your time expires.'

"And, certainly, they left nothing undone that would leave that threat unaccomplished. Gov. Haley told me on the Sunday after my arrival in Spike that no one in Spike would have any pity for me. 'Some of your equals outside may have pity for you,' said he, 'but I assure you no one here will and I advise you never to come before me. This was as much as to say to his warders the oftener you bring this man before me, the more pleased I will be with you. From that time forth I seemed to be the special object of petty vengeance.'

Tierney was assigned to a prison detail whose task it was to cut stone. When his hands became severely lacerated from that work, he was accused of idleness. Then, on May 18, 1867, he attempted to escape by seizing a boat and rowing to the mainland. Appre-

*(Please turn to page 4)*



*A native of County Clare, Patrick Tierney died in New Haven after spending much of his adult life incarcerated on Spike Island in the harbor of Cork city for Fenian activities while serving in a British regiment.*



(Continued from page 3)

hended before he reached land, he was given a flogging of 36 lashes and sent to solitary confinement with no dressing for his wounds. While the wounds were still raw and inflamed, he was forced to go back to work, and “with his right leg chained to his right arm he resumed his task which in chains he continued to perform from Sept. 30, 1867, until April 1869.” Later, for asking a soldier to bring him some tobacco and proffering him a sovereign for the service, he was reported and put on a diet of bread and water.

Tierney spent 12 years in the prison on Spike Island under such conditions and in virtual isolation. Because he maintained the alias Edward O’Connor, even his family did not know for years what had happened to Patrick Tierney. His mother died in 1842, but Tierney did not know that until in March 1878 his sister Bridget Cullen discovered his whereabouts and was allowed to visit the prison.

Outraged by seeing her brother confined “in a dark cell chained to the wall like a prisoner in the Middle Ages,” Cullen publicized his situation and the statements he made concerning his treatment. Her efforts led to the appointment of a commission comprised of two members of the British Parliament, Spencer Talbot and Henry Holland. Finally, a decision, said to be promoted by Queen Victoria herself, was made to release Tierney. The pardon was granted on Nov. 18, 1878.

Tierney later recalled his final days in Ireland: “On 20 November, (prison) director John Barlow had me brought before him and said the government were about to give me my liberty, on condition that I would leave the

country and never return.

“I asked him if the government would be averse to my remaining in Ireland on medical grounds. He said not and then asked what was amiss with me. I replied an abscess on the back. He sent for Dr. O’Keefe and asked him if the voyage would be injurious to me. Dr. O’Keefe replied no that I was fit to go to any portion of the world. I made no more objection then, but asked director Barlow to telegraph to my relations so as to have them (visit) on 21 November which would be the next day from the time of the interview. He said he could not do that without letting other people know it.

“I saw then that they wanted to smuggle me out of the country without letting me see either friend or relative and I declined to go without seeing them. They did not come to see me until Saturday when I bade them a final farewell.

“On 3 December, the deputy governor George Sheehan gave me a hint that I would be going by the mail steamer for New York next day, but would tell me nothing for certain. Next day morning, December 4, I went to my work as usual with the invalids with whom I had been working for the past fortnight when about 11 a.m. one of the clerks came for me and I was conducted before the doctor. He told me to take off the poultice that I had on my back and he afterwards extracted a quantity of matter from the abscess and dressed it with lint and sticking plaster.

“I was then dressed and taken before director Barlow who again impressed upon me the condition of perpetual exile or imprisonment. I told him I knew the conditions very well and

was prepared to put up with the consequences if I violated them.”

Tierney had only one last request for the prison official. He wished to bid farewell to his fellow prisoner, Edward O’Kelly, the only other Fenian still incarcerated on Spike Island. O’Kelly, a prominent member of the IRB in Dublin, was a suspect in the shooting of an informer, David Murphy. He was tried three times and, on the third try in June 1873, was convicted and sentenced to penal servitude for life. Prison officials granted the request. O’Kelly, prisoner number 13938, was brought to the office. He and Tierney, prisoner number 12901, shook hands and parted, expressing their hopes that the separation would not be long.

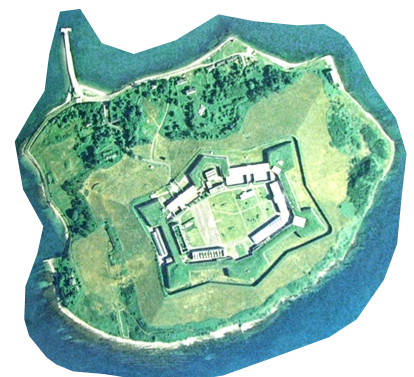
The utmost secrecy was maintained and Tierney was not allowed even one last footstep on the Irish mainland. A special boat conveyed him from the prison to the steamship City of Chester. The Cork agents of the Inman steamship line were entirely ignorant of the occurrence as the ticket was taken from the purser on board the ship.

The City of Chester docked in New York City on Dec. 12, 1879. Tierney’s arrival was noted by the *New York Times*: “When he was convicted he was 25 years old and he is now about 37 ... Tierney immediately upon landing here was taken to Sweeney’s Hotel ... He does not know what he will do here, having formed as yet no plans for the future.”

A reporter for the *Irish-American Weekly* wrote: “Mr. Tierney is still in years a young man and should be in the prime of life and manhood, but the hardships to which he was subjected in prison have made him premature-

## UCC archaeology students search for graves of prisoners on Spike Island

Spike Island in the harbor of Cork has served many purposes. It was the site of a monastic settlement in the 7th century. Later it was a gathering place for pirates. In 1779, the British built a fortress, Fort Westmoreland, there. From the mid 1800s through the Irish War of Independence, the fort was a political prison where Irish nationalists were incarcerated. It earned a reputation as “Ireland’s Alcatraz.” It continued as a prison and a military post during the Free State and early Irish Republic eras. In 2009, the island was turned over to the Cork County Council for development as a historical site. As one part of the development activities, students of University College Cork, led by archaeology professor Dr. Barra O’Donnabhain, excavated the prison buildings and adjacent grounds for the remains of Irish convicts and artifacts. The project, O’Donnabhain said at a ceremony in July 2013, “aims to give a voice to the men and boys who were incarcerated and died in the prison during the Victorian era, broadening our understanding of the role of the convict prison as one of the mechanisms by which the empire was established and maintained.”



*Spike Island and its fortress/prison*

ly old. The haggard lines in his face tell too plainly the story of the tortures to which the brutal jailers of England subjected the Irish political prisoners, tortures under which the weak in body succumbed and died, while those of more enduring physique survive only as wrecks of their former selves ... Tierney is a man of singularly quiet, modest demeanor, but evidently of great determination where his feelings and convictions are enlisted. Like all his fellow prisoners, his sufferings have only made him more steadfast in his devotion to the cause for which he endured them and he hopes the day will yet come when he can lend a hand in the overthrow of the tyranny which persecuted him for his love of country."

The parting wish of Tierney and Edward O'Kelly was soon after fulfilled. O'Kelly was released under the same terms in early February 1879 and arrived on the steamship Marathon on Feb. 27. "While some of the committee were shaking hands with O'Kelly," reported the *New York Herald*, "his old fellow prisoner Patrick Tierney who was released from Spike Island about a month ago mingled with the crowd and called out, 'Where is 13938?' ... The newly liberated man stood aghast for a moment and being hailed on his entering New York by his old prison title, he looked around exclaiming, 'Who calls me like that?' 'It is I, 12901,' replied Tierney. And the two comrades exchanged a cordial greeting."

O'Kelly had precious little time to enjoy his freedom. He died five months later in mid-July 1879. Tierney, his longtime prison comrade was among the Fenians who attended the funeral in Newark, N.J.

For his part, Tierney "made several efforts to support himself in independence," but the infirmities caused by his years in prison and the barbarities inflicted on him were insurmountable obstacles. He reportedly came to Connecticut and worked briefly at the stone quarries in Stony Creek. When his health continued to deteriorate, the Clan-na-Gael in New Haven and James Reynolds, the Fenian who played a major role in the Catalpa expedition, arranged for his hospitalization at the state hospital in New Haven.

To the Irish people of the tri-state region, Tierney was a hero, but he remained a humble and unassuming man, claiming he had done nothing more than his duty. When the Robert Emmet Philo-Celtic Literary Society of New York City made a profit from a celebration of



*This Celtic cross monument in St. Lawrence Cemetery in New Haven was erected in 1898 to honor the Fenian hero Patrick Tierney, who died in New Haven in 1882 and is actually buried in St. Bernard's Cemetery nearby.*

the 103rd birthday of Emmet, it sent a large donation to aid the peasants in Ireland who were suffering in the Land War. The society decided also to assist Tierney for his heroic service to Ireland. The society reported: "Mr. Tierney was notified of the intention of the society and in his characteristically manly way, urged the society to send the money to Ireland, as he could get along without it."

Tierney died at the state hospital in New Haven on Nov. 29, 1882. "His end was peaceful," said his obituary. "The deceased died from hip and spine disease contracted in pris-

on where he was subjected to the most brutal treatment ... On Thanksgiving morning, his remains were taken in charge by the members of the Clan-na-Gael and brought to St. John's Church where a requiem Mass was celebrated by the Rev. Father Cooney.

"A tribute to the memory of the deceased was paid by Father Cooney who spoke of his great patience under acute suffering and the resignation with which he confronted death. The earnest zest of the deceased in the cause of Ireland was also alluded to and Father Cooney thanked the members of the Clan-na-Gael Association and the officials of the hospital for their kindly treatment of one who had suffered so much. When the religious services were concluded the remains were taken to St. Bernard's Cemetery and deposited in a grave specially purchased for that purpose by the Clan-na-Gael Association ..."

In 1891, the Second Division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in New Haven appointed a committee of Dominick Butler, James P. Bree and Hugo Connelley to raise funds to erect "a suitable monument over the grave of Patrick Tierney in St. Bernard's Cemetery."

Sixteen years later, Tierney's memory was honored. In January 1898, the *New Haven Register* reported: "A movement set on foot several years ago by a number of patriotic Irishmen in this city to obtain funds to erect a monument to Patrick Tierney, the Irish patriot, has just reached a favorable conclusion. The parties interested in the affair were the late James Reynolds, Capt. Lawrence O'Brien, Capt. Connor and J.D. Cunningham. Through their efforts \$300 has been collected and this spring a handsome 12-foot Celtic cross will be set up in St. Lawrence Cemetery in the memory of the man who suffered that Ireland might be free ... It is the intention now to remove the remains this spring to St. Lawrence and erect the monument. The unveiling will take place in its appropriate ceremonies and will be made one of the events of this centennial year in the history of the Irish cause for freedom."

*Sources: Special thanks to Ellen Bohan, who first brought Patrick Tierney's story to the attention of the CTLAHS, and whose research uncovered a number of clippings chronicling his life. The clippings include: New York Times, Dec. 13, 1878; Irish American Weekly, Jan. 4, 1879, Feb. 22, 1879, May 15, 1880; Irish Nation, Dec. 16, 1882; New Haven Register, Dec. 1, 1882, Nov. 13, 1891, Jan. 1, 1898; Toronto Globe, Oct. 3, 1891.*



## Ethnic Heritage Center staff, volunteers rescue school records

(Continued from page 1)

tantalizing hints of a treasure trove of information on the history and operations of the public schools of New Haven. The EHC needed to come up with a plan to get at them.

Late in 2012, Joan Cavanagh, archivist at the Ethnic Heritage Center, repeated Whalen's earlier performance. As Whalen had done years before, Cavanagh found a way to at last unwrap the mystery of what exactly was in those large, bound record books. Cavanagh wrote a grant application to the State of Connecticut for a stipend that would pay the expenses of opening the records up, making an assessment of their content and value, and initiating preservation activities for these 80- to 100-year-old documents.

The state responded with the offer of a grant of \$7,000 provided that the Ethnic Heritage Center contribute to the project either by equivalent funding or by what is known in the world of grants as "in-kind services."

In-kind services boil down to man- or woman-power. In this case, in-kind services meant Cavanagh and volunteers from the five historical societies that comprise the Ethnic Heritage Center go page-by-page through 20 old ledger books and card-by-card through half-a-dozen card files to record all the events, issues and people mentioned. It was a daunting task, but it got done and the results now reveal that the project was well worth the effort.

The volunteers who provided the in-kind services included: Rose Mentone of the Italian American Historical Society of Connecticut, Geraldine Poole of the Greater New Haven African-American Historical Society and Pat Heslin and Maureen Delahunt of the Connecticut Irish-American Historical Society.

Cavanagh oversaw the work and also analyzed some documents. Peter Vollemans, office assistant and computer technician at the Ethnic Heritage Center, arranged the scanning of some of the materials and the use of a high-tech camera to photograph materials that are too fragile to handle.

The materials that have been catalogued include:

- Minutes of meetings of the Committee on Finance, various dates 1913-1922.

*Name		Date Entered	Room	Grade	Citizenship	Scholarship	Days Present
Residence		Yr.	Mo.				
Boyle, Mary Catherine		41	9	Kg. RM.			167
Feb. 8 - 1937		Verification B.C.					
Place of Birth New Haven							
Father's Name John J.		Occupation Police officer					
Country of Birth U.S.A.		Radio Dispatcher					
Mother's Name <del>Mary</del> Heenan Catherine		Occupation H.W.					
Country of Birth U.S.A.							
*Form G. S. S. 362a		*Write last name first					

*In the computerless world of the middle decades of the 20th century, much data was recorded and preserved on three-by-five file cards. The card above is typical of the school records of New Haven in the 1940s. The student, Mary Catherine Boyle, is the daughter of one of several Irish Boyle families in New Haven. Her father, John J. Boyle, was a police officer; her mother, Catherine, was a "H.W.," or housewife. Apparently there were mix-ups with the father's occupation and the mother's name. The mix-up was corrected not by "cut and paste" on a computer, but with the tried-and-true cross-out line.*

- Committee on Schools minutes, various dates, 1910-1933.
- Committee on School Buildings minutes, various dates, 1913-1945.
- Superintendent's records, minutes of meetings, letters, reports, various dates 1897-1911.
- Superintendent's bulletins, minutes of meetings, 1950-1952.
- Supervisor's circular letters, various dates 1934-1937.
- Ledger books: Disbursements for instruction, National Defense Program and National Youth Administration training program.
- Card catalogues of Department of Exceptional Children.

A sampling of the records provides fascinating insights into the events, projects, issues and controversies which occupied educators and affected students in bygone years.

In the years 1918-1921, for example, kindergarten classes were established in the city's grammar schools. About the same time, concern was expressed about the teaching of the

"Darwinian Theory" in New Haven High School.

In 1920, the superintendent of schools expressed concern about female teachers getting married because they were not considered as efficient as before marriage and lost too much time for maternity.

About the same time, the superintendent recommended that electric lights be installed in all rooms in which double sessions were held. The rooms became too dark for students to do any work in late afternoon during the winter months.

Beginning in 1934, teachers took a voluntary 20 percent cut in salary during the Great Depression.

In 1931, New Haven notified East Haven that it would have to build its own high school because New Haven High School was becoming congested. Two years later, the same message was given to Hamden with notation that every year the number of students from area towns was increasing.

Source: *New Haven School Collection, Ethnic Heritage Center, 270 Fitch Street, New Haven 06515; www.ethnicheritagecenter.org.*

## Parliament should have listened to the Englishmen of Meriden

Had the members of the British Parliament in 1893 listened to Englishmen from Meriden, Connecticut, the people of both England and Ireland might have been spared much injustice, pain, heartache, armed conflict and bad feelings that continue on to this very day.

In February that year, Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone proposed for the second time that the people of Ireland be allowed to govern themselves. Born in Liverpool of Scottish descent, Gladstone had a career in parliament spanning 60 years. He evolved from a "High Tory" in 1832 when first elected to become the leader of the Liberal Party.

Four separate times Gladstone served as prime minister of Great Britain: from 1868 to 1874, from 1880 to 1885, from February to June 1886 and from 1892 to 1894. Twice he introduced legislation for Irish home rule.

The first time arose in the wake of the Land War" of the late 1870s and early 1880s. That conflict was the most widespread mass movement in Ireland until that time. It was fought more with the weapons of civil disobedience, social ostracism and establishment of a shadow government than with firearms.

The land troubles convinced Gladstone that home rule was the proper solution for England's Irish problem. On April 8, 1886, he introduced his first home rule bill in the House of Commons. Rioting in Belfast signified the unbending opposition of Unionists and in June the proposal was defeated by the relatively close vote of 391 to 311. In July, Gladstone's administration was defeated at the polls.

Six years later, in August 1892, voters returned Gladstone to office. On Feb. 13, 1893, he introduced a home rule bill for the second time. He proposed a 48-member senate and a 103-member lower chamber to rule Ireland's internal affairs. He argued that continuing to deny Ireland the right to govern its internal affairs would only increase the threat that the Irish would demand a complete cessation of the union with England that had been forced upon it in 1801.

Ireland, he said, had consented to the universal supremacy of the empire. "In return," he said, "she has asked you only that she have

the management of her own affairs with reason and justice combined with the voice of her people."

As in 1886, demonstrations and disturbances followed in 1893 in Ulster. In early March, Gladstone was burned in effigy during a protest meeting of 5,000 in Belfast. Speakers told the crowd that "a hundred thousand Orangemen were ready to resist to the death the home rule bill." Arthur J. Balfour, a native of Scotland and leader of the Conservative Party, was greeted in Belfast by "a vast concourse ... thousands of Unionists" who



*William Ewart Gladstone served four times as prime minister of England during his 60 year career in Parliament. On two separate occasions, he attempted unsuccessfully to muster votes for home rule in Ireland.*

cheered loudly on his appearance and who were "so enthusiastic that they took the horses out of the carriage which bore the conservative statesman and eagerly sought the honor of drawing the vehicle through the streets."

But, this time the prime minister got some unlikely support from an unlikely group in an unlikely place. On its front page on April 8, 1893, the *Meriden Morning Record* announced the news in its lead story on page one with a hometown journalistic flair. "One of the strongest home rule declarations ever sent from this side of the Atlantic," boasted the newspaper, "was made public in this city last night."

"It comprised a manifesto signed exclusively by Englishmen," the *Morning Record* ex-

plained, "in which Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy is unqualifiedly indorsed. The signers now are all residents of Meriden, but hail from different parts of England, including Barnsley, Sheffield, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Derby.

"The manifesto is especially significant as coming from Englishmen, and goes to show the rapidly increasing conviction in this country, as well as in Great Britain that home rule for Ireland should be no longer delayed.

"All the signers are highly respected residents of Meriden, most of them being men of considerable property. They are close observers of events across the water and are gentlemen of broad-minded and progressive ideas."

The newspaper revealed the names of 20 signers with the notation "and many others." The 20 included: Ernest Swinden, George Westwood, Samuel Cooper, Arthur Smith, Thomas Cumberlidge, James Perkins, P.H. Hines, Frederick Hardwick, Harvey Hall, John Grayson, William Maclairin, Arthur Gough, Walter Pendar, Joseph Wooley, Harvey Perkins, Thomas Vernon, Elijah Loy, J.R. Thompson, Percy Loy, H.A. Hill and John Hall.

A number of the signers made their living in the several silverware factories that were the mainstay of late 19th and early 20th century Meriden. Cooper, Grayson, Harvey Perkins, Vernon and Hill worked at the Meriden Britannia Company; Gough, Hardwick, Hines, Thompson and Percy Loy, at Meriden Silver Plate; Elijah Loy, at Wilcox Silver Plate; Cumberlidge, at Meriden Cutlery. James Perkins was a superintendent at C. Parker & Co.

Not content to just express support for Gladstone's proposal, the Meriden Englishmen composed a ringing endorsement worthy of presentation before a legislative body. Addressed to "All Englishmen residing in the United States," it read:

"Fellow Countrymen: You have doubtless followed with much interest the great movement now in progress under the auspices of the Liberal party of Great Britain. That movement, fortunate in the able leadership of William Ewart Gladstone, has for its fundamental

*(Please turn to page 8)*

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object the granting of Home Rule to Ireland.

“No progressive Englishman acquainted with the trend of events throughout the world and with the progress of all peoples toward self-government can, it seems to us, consistently withhold moral support for the policy advocated by Gladstone, Morley, Hardcourt and so many other distinguished men of our race at home and abroad.

“The Irish policy of the great Liberal party has received the warm approval of the best thinkers in England and America. That Ireland should have her own parliament and be allowed to manage her own affairs as do the American states is generally conceded.

“Wishing, therefore, to put ourselves on record, we, the undersigned Englishmen, resident in the City of Meriden, State of Connecticut, hereby express ourselves as in hearty accord with Mr. Gladstone and wish him and his fellow workers for the right,

justice and equity an abundant measure of success.

“We respectfully urge our fellow countrymen throughout the United States to take action similar to this, to the end that the people of England, Ireland and Scotland may have real union, instead of discord, and live together in the bonds of mutual confidence and good will.”

Unfortunately, no one in the British Isles paid attention to advice from Meriden, even though it was given by loyal and thoughtful Englishmen. Gladstone’s 1893 proposal was approved in the House of Commons on Sept. 2, but a week later, the House of Lords killed home rule once again by a wide margin of votes, 419 to 41.

The 1893 setback brought home rule agitation to a standstill. The movement revived in the first decade of the 20th century, but amid growing Irish sentiment that England would never grant it, and continuing opposition

from the Ulster unionists.

The final effort was made in 1913 when a bill again passed the House of Commons only to be rejected by the lords, not once but twice. In May 1914, the House of Commons passed one more home rule bill, but the outbreak of World War I shelved it once again.

In 1916, Irish nationalists took things into their own hands with the Easter Rebellion. The British execution of their leaders stoked the fires of discontent and was the death knell for any support for home rule.

World War I ended with no independence of any kind for Ireland and was followed by the Irish War of Independence, the Irish Civil War and continuing troubles.

*Sources: Meriden Daily Journal, April 5, 1893. Meriden Morning Record, March 30, April 8, 1893. New Haven Register, Feb. 14, April 3, March 3, Sept. 9, 1893. Irish World, April 15, 1893.*

## The Shanachíe

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with the past;  
we have handed  
a tradition  
to the future.”

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