

DID YOU KNOW...?

January 2011

By Deirdre McKiernan Hetzler

Perhaps it is not surprising that several Irishmen played seminal roles in the navies of various countries.

William Brown, the founder of the Argentine Navy, is considered one of Argentina's great heroes. Born in Foxford, Co. Mayo, in 1777, during the era of the harsh Penal Laws, he was brought to the United States as a child. At the age of eleven, he went to sea as a cabin boy, eventually working his way up to the captaincy of a merchant vessel. While a ship's captain, Brown was press-ganged into service on a British vessel, an unheard of and entirely illegal action. During the Napoleonic Wars, he escaped, only to be captured and imprisoned by the French, from whom he also escaped. Renouncing his maritime career, he married in England, but the call of the sea lured him back. In 1809, Brown set himself up as a merchant in Montevideo, Uruguay, and soon established a packet service between Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Attacked by Spanish forces, Argentina, determined to protect her coasts and trade, commissioned Brown to lead her fledgling navy. Following his victories over the Spanish fleet, he chased and hassled Spanish shipping from his waters, much to the consternation of the Argentine investors of his ships, leading to the threat of a court-martial. Fleeing to England, Brown pursued a legal remedy, returning to Argentina and enjoying a brief retirement before being recalled to active service. He led the navy during Argentina's war with Brazil and later, with Uruguay. Admiral Brown died in 1857. Statues have been erected to honor him both in Buenos Aires, and in his native Ireland.

Thomas Charles James Wright, officer in Simón Bolívar's army and founder of the Ecuadorian naval school, was born in 1799 in Drogheda, County Louth. Sent to the naval college at Portsmouth in 1810, he was later involved in the blockade of the Atlantic coast of the United States. Subsequently, Wright developed radical republican ideas, and traveled to South America, where he met met Simón Bolívar, for whom he quickly acquired boundless admiration. Wright's initial victory in a campaign inspired Bolívar to undertake his audacious New Granada campaign and the march across the Andes. Wright's consummate skill impressed Bolivar and who made him lieutenant-colonel in early 1822. Settling in Guayaquil in 1826, Wright founded the nautical school that is still functioning there. Following Ecuador's independence in 1830, Wright became one of the new republic's leading citizens. By then, he was the commander of the Ecuadorian navy and governor of Guayaquil. When a military plot in 1845 overthrew the liberal regime he supported, Wright went into exile in Chile for fifteen years. In Chile he met and exerted a great influence upon the Ecuadorian exile Eloy Alfaro, who would be president in 1897-1913. Thomas Wright died in 1868.

Patricio Lynch was a Chilean naval and military officer of mixed Irish and Latin American ancestry who played a distinguished part in the Pacific War between his country and the

Allied powers of Peru and Bolivia. He was a descendant of Patrick Lynch, who had emigrated from Galway first to Spain and then to Argentina in the 1740s, becoming a wealthy landowner. (Ernesto "Ché" Guevara, is also a descendant of this man.) Patricio fought in the naval war against Spain (1864-1866) and then held a series of peace-time appointments including that of Minister of the Marine. Lynch played an important part in the campaign that resulted in the capture of Lima (January 1881). He was then appointed Military Governor of occupied Peru until the end of the War. Promoted to Rear-Admiral, in 1884, Lynch was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Spain. Patricio Lynch died in 1886, on a return trip from Spain. Several Chilean ships have been named after him.

Peter Campbell, naval officer and founder of the Uruguayan navy, was born in Ireland in 1780. He enlisted in the 71st Highland Regiment, one of troops that invaded Buenos Aires in 1806. After the British campaigns failed in their attempt and the regiment withdrew, Campbell was one of the soldiers who managed to remain in the River Plate. He joined the patriot ranks as a guerrilla leader, harassing Spanish forces both on land and on the Paraná river and rose to prominence as a superb guerrilla fighter. Campbell played a prominent role in the affairs of Corrientes province, and for a period acted as its deputy governor. In 1814, he began putting together a squadron of river vessels to support rebel forces of emancipation. In 1818, Peter Campbell took charge of the second squadron of the Uruguayan naval forces, based in Goya and Esquina. He became naval commander-in-chief of the region and the scourge of the Paraguayan dictator Francia's river fleet. In 1818, Campbell was appointed as the first naval commander of the patriot fleet. It is on the basis of this appointment that the Irishman is acknowledged as the founder of the Uruguayan navy.

As an officer of the Continental Navy of the American Revolution, **John Paul Jones** helped establish traditions of courage and professionalism in the navy. John Paul was born in a humble gardener's cottage in Scotland, adding the surname Jones later in life. Going to sea as a youth, he became master of a merchant ship by the age of twenty-one. Having taken up residence in Virginia after his brother's death, he volunteered early in the War of Independence to serve in his adopted country's infant navy and raised with his own hands the Continental ensign on board the flagship of the Navy's first fleet. Taking the war to the enemy's homeland, he executed daring raids along the British coast. After his ship, the *Bonhomme Richard*, began taking on water and fires broke out on board, the British commander asked Jones if he had struck his flag. Jones famously replied, "I have not yet begun to fight!" In the end, it was the British commander who surrendered. Jones is remembered for his indomitable will, his unwillingness to consider surrender when the slightest hope of victory still burned.

DID YOU KNOW.....?

That ours is the only Irish American organization for which every president of Ireland since DeValera has been an official patron? President Ó Dálaigh, in a 1976 letter to the Founder, said "...the foundation of the Institute has been the most significant event in Irish-American relations in the last quarter of a century." A legacy to live up to!

Ireland's last two presidents have been high in their praise, as well. Women have had an important place in Irish history and culture, but the election of the first woman president in 1990 was rather unexpected. After being appointed the youngest law professor at Trinity College (1969-75) and as the youngest ever Senator (serving 1969-89), Mayo-born Mary Robinson mobilized diverse constituencies to win the (mostly honorific) presidency. This was a special victory for Irish women, who had, in the words of Robinson's inaugural address, "felt themselves outside history" and would now be "written back" into it. Robinson used her voice to utilize the educational potential of the presidency to draw attention to numerous universal concerns, particularly the socially and economically disadvantaged, the environment, and human rights in general. She resigned a few months before the end of her term to become UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002). In 2004, Robinson received Amnesty International's Ambassador of Conscience Award for her work in human rights. Since 2002, she has been honorary Chairperson of Oxfam International; she serves on the boards of a variety of organizations, and has also been Professor of Practice in International Affairs at Columbia University, teaching international human rights. Robinson was succeeded in the Irish presidency by another woman, Mary McAleese, a Belfast lawyer.

Far less well known is Sarah Clarke (Sister Mary Auxilus, 1919-2002), a Sister of the La Sainte Union, which she joined in Killashee, County Kildare, as a teenager, training as a teacher. Teaching first in Athlone, then at several schools in England, her life changed forever when she attended her first political meeting in 1970. Receiving permission from her Order to join the civil rights movement, she at first believed that simply telling people about injustice would cause things to be set right. Writing to Catholic MPs (members of the government), she received little encouragement. While never giving up her efforts of persuasion, her identification with those she saw as wrong and oppressed intensified. With the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974, waves of arrests caused in the Irish community as the Special Branch targeted them primarily because they were Irish. Sister Sarah devoted herself to arranging legal representation, visiting prisoners, meeting and ferrying around the traumatized families, becoming, in the words of one exonerated prisoner, "the Joan of Arc of the prisons." Hers was the Sermon on the Mount Catholicism, leavened with a profound compassion and a down-to-earth understanding of human frailty. Once asked how she could justify visiting terrorists, she simply quoted Christ, "I was sick and in prison, and you visited me." Many, however, were innocent victims of British justice and public pressure to convict, such as the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four (remember the movie "In the Name of the Father"?), and the Maguire Sisters, to name a few. (One of the Guildford Four married RFK's daughter, Courtney.) In her late 60s, the Home Office banned Sarah on unspecified security grounds, from

attending a prisoner's marriage. She was a thorn in the side of every prison Governor in England as she fought for justice and prisoners' rights.

Another thorn in the side of the British government is the stuff of legend. Gráinne Ní Mháille, nick-named Granuaile, and known to the English as Grace O'Malley, was a 16th century pirate and leader of her clan. The only child of the sea-faring head of the Ó Máille clan and his wife, Gráinne (pronounced Gran' yuh) preferred her father's company and learned to love life on the sea. Ó Máilles taxed all those who fished off their coasts and traded with folks on the Continent. Married first to a chieftain of the Ó Flaithbheartaighs (O'Flahertys), Gráinne continued her trading business. Flaithbheartaigh ships would stop and board other traders in their waters, demanding either cash or a portion of the cargo in exchange for safe passage the rest of the way to Galway, leading to complaints filed with the English Privy Council. On her husband's death, she returned to O'Mháille territory, taking with her many O'Flaherty followers who were loyal to her. She later married Risdeárd an Iarainn Bourke, called "Iron Richard," whose family controlled most of County Mayo, under Brehon law. According to tradition, Gráinne built up her following, fortifying Bourke's castle, and dismissing him on his return from some battle. She did, however, bear him a son while onboard ship, and they appear to have remained allied for her own purposes. Gráinne opposed the English encroachment on Irish territory and made a lifelong enemy of Sir Richard Bingham. When he arrested her two surviving sons and her half-brother, she traveled to Queen Elizabeth's court to secure their release. Conversing in Latin, she apparently made an impression, as the Queen granted her request to free them and remove Bingham from Ireland, in return for a promise to cease supporting rebellion. When Bingham was returned to Ireland, Gráinne returned to supporting rebellion. She died in 1603.

DID YOU KNOW?
By Deirdre McKiernan Hetzler

Seldom is Easter as late in the spring as it is this year. But the April 24th date marks the 95th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising, a pivotal event in Irish history. One, no doubt, familiar to our readers.

For the first 50 years, the leaders of the Rising were considered heroes. Then, as revisionists took over the writing of history, these men were seriously demoted. At the end of the 20th century, however, a new wave of historians began revising the revisionists, searching for a balanced account.

What few may know is that it was the revival of Irish culture (what Joyce mockingly called 'the Gaelic twilight') that led inexorably to the desire for freedom and independence. The Gaelic League, founded in 1893 by Douglas Hyde (later to become the first President of Ireland) to foster the Irish language, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), founded by Michael Cusack, and the National (later Abbey) Theatre, founded by WB Yeats and Lady Gregory, all played a part.

However, the language movement may well have been the principal catalyst. Virtually all of the leaders of the Rising were or became Irish speakers. Many were poets and idealists, as well. Padraic H. Pearse, the leader of the Rising, began as a member of the Gaelic League and editor of its paper, then founding an all-Irish school, and coming only gradually to believe in the necessity for armed rebellion.

Remembering those who signed the Proclamation of the Republic (incidentally, a specifically gender inclusive document) is only natural, as they paid with their lives: PH Pearse, Thomas J. Clarke, Seán MacDiarmada, Thomas MacDonagh, Eamonn Ceannt, James Connolly, and Joseph Mary Plunkett (married to Grace Gifford in his prison cell hours before his execution). Several others were executed, including Pearse's brother, William, and Seán MacBride (whose son eventually won the Nobel Peace Prize). (Google Padraic's poem "The Mother", written for his mother just before his death.)

But what of the women? Many folks have heard of Constance (Countess) Markievicz, second in command in Stephen's Green during the Rising. She later became the first woman elected to the British House of Commons (though she refused to take her seat), and also both the first Irish female Cabinet Minister and only the second female government minister in Europe.

Few realize that Clarke's wife, Kathleen (nee Daly) was the only woman privy to the plans for the Rising. She lost both her husband and her brother Edward ("Ned") to the firing squad.

Although Markievicz is the most famous, Hanna (Johanna) Sheehy Skeffington should not be overlooked. She and many other women acted as couriers. Many of the Sisters of Mercy cared for and even hid the wounded at the Jarvis Street Hospital.

Hanna was also a labor organizer and famous suffragette. Her husband, Francis Sheehy Skeffington, a suffragist and avowed pacifist, went into the city centre during that fateful week, to attempt to organize a citizens police to prevent the looting of damaged shops. He was arrested for no stated, or indeed obvious, reason while returning home and murdered in cold blood the following day. Hanna was never told either of his detention or death. She only discovered what happened four days later when she met the chaplain of the British barracks. The soldier, Bowen-Colthurst, was found guilty but quickly released.

This Easter, let us be grateful for our own freedom, and that of our ancestral homeland.

May 2011

DID YOU KNOW.....

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

That the IACI logo was designed by Northern Ireland artist Brian Ferran?

Born in Derry in 1940, **Brian Ferran** trained as an art teacher at St Joseph's College of Education, Belfast and taught art from 1963 to 1966. Graduating with a BA Honors degree in Art History from the Courtauld Institute of London University and a post-graduate Diploma in Business Administration from Queens University, Belfast, he then spent a year at Brera Academy of Fine Art, Milan, Italy.

Ferran served on the staff of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for a number of years before a bit of anti-Catholic discrimination backfired, leading to his appointment as its Chief Executive. He has lectured at universities and public galleries in the United States on aspects of contemporary Irish art.

In 1965, he designed the logo of the Irish American Cultural Institute, a unique intertwining of the American eagle and a figure from the Book of Kells. In 1972, four of his works were reproduced on the covers of the cultural journal Eire Ireland. In the 1990s, Brian served briefly on the IACI Board.

Among his myriad accomplishments, he completed three large stained glass windows for a church at St Patricks College, Haghera, County Derry and a mural 10 feet high by 15 feet long for the entrance to St Columbs College Derry. Brian Ferran has been awarded too many prestigious awards to mention, and his work can be found in many major collections in Europe and America.

Brian is married to artist **Denise Ferran**. Born in Saintfield Co. Down, Denise grew up in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh and trained as an art teacher at St. Mary's University College, Belfast. She taught at St. Dominic's High School, Belfast before serving as Head of Education at the Ulster Museum.

She has a BA with honors in the History of European Art from the Courtauld Institute, a Diploma in Advanced Studies in Education from Queen's University, Belfast, a Ph.D in Art History from Trinity College, Dublin and an Hon. MFA from the University of Ulster. Her paintings are also in major collections and grace several Irish establishments. A few years ago, Denise was a Fulbright Scholar on a satellite campus of the University of Minnesota.

The Ferrans tell a humorous story about the IACI's founder. Many years ago, on a lazy Sunday morning, Denise saw a large coach pull up outside their Belfast home, and begin disgorging passengers. When she recognized their friend, Eoin McKiernan, she realized what was up. He

had forgotten about the Sunday closures in Northern Ireland, and the folks traveling on his tour needed a rest stop! Denise provided hospitality, the group got to visit with a real Irish family, and everyone enjoyed the unplanned stop.

As a tribute to Dr. McKiernan, the Ferrans spoke to the Rochester, NY chapter about the connection between art and the political events of 20th century Ireland. They now live in Malin Head, on the breathtakingly beautiful Inishowen Peninsula in Donegal.

Even less well known is another Irish artist, **Michael Augustine Power**, who was born in Dungarvan, County Waterford, Ireland in 1877. He reportedly studied at The Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin. After the death of his father, he adopted the name O'Malley, in honor of his much loved stepfather, and became known in art circles as Power-O'Malley.

Emigrating to New York at the turn of the century he did book illustrations and covers for *Life*, *The Literary Digest*, *Harpers* and *Puck*. "Moving to the west coast, Power-O'Malley advised John Ford on film settings and is said to have painted sets for Cecil B. de Mille's epic "The King of Kings." However, he made regular painting trips to the land of his birth, being particularly drawn to Achill Island in County Mayo. Among the many exhibits of his paintings are those at Iona College (New Rochelle, NY 2002-2003) and St. John Fisher College (Rochester, NY 2010), the latter having been arranged by Ivan Lennon of the Rochester IACI chapter.

Thank you to Ivan Lennon for contributing content for this article!

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

June 2011

That St. Andrew's Church (Westland Row) claims to be the oldest Catholic parish in Dublin since the Reformation? Daniel O'Connell ("the Liberator") donated the money for its inception. Three Rochester women on the recent McKiernan tour were given an insider's view of the church after Sunday Mass.

Pardraig and Willie Pearse, executed for their role in the 1916 Easter Rising, were baptized at St. Andrew's. The Pearse family owned a stone cutting business nearby, and Willie carved a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary which still stands in the church.

Another famous rebel, Kevin Barry, the 18 year old medical student executed in 1918, was also baptized at St. Andrew's.

The current political scene in Ireland includes the initial declarations for the November presidential election and discussions about the country's financial concerns. Each political party can nominate a candidate, and an independent could also obtain the written support of 20 TDs (representatives in the Dáil/legislature) or of four county councils. The role of president is very different from that in the US, but the 'bully pulpit' has been exercised brilliantly by the last two presidents, both women. There are no women's names currently being put forward.

Ireland, as you know, has been hit hard by the recent recession and unemployment (almost unheard of 8 years ago) hovers just over 10%. The IMF bailout was created on punitive terms, which the new government (elected Feb 25) has so far been unable to renegotiate.

Irish politicians are back-peddaling on some of their campaign promises (like reducing judicial salaries), and cutting salaries, benefits and even pensions of those in the middle or bottom of the economic ladder, all in the name of austerity.

Yet the Central Bank figures released May 18th indicated average household wealth (including assets, not just salary) had actually increased. Averages, of course, are just that, and the wealthy class has been growing. Economically and psychologically, however, the 7,000 euro drop in the gross national income feels catastrophic.

But, argues Irish Times columnist Fintan O'Toole (June 7), "We are still left with a country that's earning more than enough to sustain a decent society [for everyone]. . . . We are cutting through the flesh of injustice and into the bone of obscenity. . . . But there is no necessity...in a society whose resources are more than adequate for basic decency - if they were shared with some degree of equality."

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

July 2011

...that there are many wonderful Irish artists and writers who are unfamiliar to American audiences? Many, such as Eavan Boland, John Montague, Robert Ballard, Seán Ó Riordáin, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, and Michael Hartnett, to name a few, were at one time recipients of IACI awards. (Another awardee, the playwright Brian Friel, went on to become famous on both sides of "the pond.")

One accomplished author who remains rather unknown here is a woman by the name of Una Troy Walsh (1910-1993). Born in Fermoy, County Cork, Una Troy married a physician, Joseph C. Walsh, in 1931, and lived her married life in Clonmel, County Tipperary. (Walsh's sister Mai was the wife of renowned artist Seán Keating.)

Using the pen name Elizabeth Connor, she began her writing career at the age of 26 with the London publication of her first novel, *Mount Prospect*, which she later adapted for the stage. The play won the Shaw 1st Prize, and was produced at the Abbey Theatre. The book was banned in Ireland! Walsh's second novel, *Dead Star's Light*, was published two years after her first. She wrote three more plays for the Abbey: *Swans and Geese* (1941), *Apple A Day* (1942), and *Dark Road* (1947). The latter was based on her second novel. A short story was published in *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*.

The theatre adaptation of *Dead Star's Light* earned her a public censure from the local parish priest, who denied the couple membership in his congregation.

In her mid-forties, Walsh began publishing under her maiden name, Una Troy. A prolific writer, she produced fifteen more novels. She co-wrote the adaptation of her 1955 work *We Are Seven* for the film "She Didn't Say No," which was banned as immoral in Ireland, but became England's official entry in the Brussels World Film Festival in 1958.

She died in 1993 in Bunmahon, County Waterford. Many of her papers, collected by Ann Butler of Cambridge, Massachusetts, are to be found as the "Una Troy Papers" at the National Library of Ireland.

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

August 2011

Did you know about the work of Paddy “Bogside” Doherty?

Born in 1926, Paddy was a carpenter and builder by trade, the father of a large family, and the genius behind the Inner City Trust and the rebuilding of the city of Derry.

As a young man, he and his family were the victims of the discrimination in housing which was so widespread in Northern Ireland at that time. Strongly active in the Civil Rights agitation of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Paddy believed in non-violence, despite threats and hostility which led others on a different path. He himself told me that one young republican, at the height of “The Troubles” said, “You be no good to us, because you would never carry a gun.”

As vice-chairman of the Citizens Defense Committee, Doherty played a major role in the events of August 1969 which culminated in the Battle of the Bogside, and was a leading figure in Free Derry in the years following its establishment.

Paddy chose to use his building talents to help restore the city, after violence had left its centre a smoldering ruin. With leads provided by IACI founder, Dr. Eoin McKiernan, Paddy toured the States to raise money for his vision. His soft-spoken and gentle approach won over supporters, even across community lines; he even met with SPrince Charles. The founding directors of the Inner City Trust included the Catholic Bishop of Derry, Dr Edward Daly, and the Anglican Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Dr James Mehaffey, each of whom is now retired.

Established to promote the relief of poverty and the advancement of education, in particular for young people, by providing training facilities for the acquisition and development of occupational skills and work experience, the Trust’s huge rebuilding program erased the dereliction of violence and urban decay.

Led by the redoubtable, recently retired, Paddy “Bogside” Doherty – and often acting on his dictum that “it is easier to seek forgiveness than to ask permission” – the trust innovatively overcame myriad hurdles as it put a new face on the city centre. Its achievements galvanized community morale and business confidence, and made a significant contribution to the development of Derry as a tourist destination..

September 2011 – Did You Know?

Did you know that many Irish served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, many with distinction?

Given that Irish immigrants fled oppression (and hunger), that might seem surprising, as one would expect them to sympathize with the condition of the slaves. Historian Philip Tucker points out that, by and large, the Irish were neither slave owners nor pro-slavery, but a variety of other concerns influenced them. Among them, the anti-Irish and anti-Catholic bigotry and violence of the Know-Nothings was more prevalent in the North. And the Irish immigrants in the South tended to be a bit more welcomed, and they wanted to protect their new homes.

The escaped Fenian rebel prisoner John Mitchel sided with the Confederacy, ending up in the cell adjacent to Jefferson Davis.

One famous soldier was Richard W. “Dick” Dowling. Born near Tuam, County Galway, in 1838, the second of eight children, he came to New Orleans in 1846. Orphaned in a yellow fever epidemic in 1853, Dowling settled down in Houston, where he established a successful chain of saloons. His most successful saloon was known as “The Bank,” which became Houston’s most popular social gathering place in the 1860s, reknowned for its hospitality.

Dowling was also involved in setting up Houston's first gaslight company, and was first to have it installed in his home and "The Bank". A founding member of Houston's Hook and Ladder Company Number One fire department, he was also involved in running the city's first streetcar company.

At the outbreak of the Civil War Dowling enlisted in a Texas unit composed primarily of Irish dockworkers and known as the Jefferson Davis Guards. In 1863, Lieutenant Dowling, along with a company of 44 mostly Irish men, known as the Davis guards, was assigned to an earthen artillery post on the Sabine River named Fort Griffin. Known for his skilled artillery work, Dowling spent his time at the remote outpost instructing his men in artillery targeting drills across the Sabine River's two channels, which the fort guarded.

On September 8, 1863 a Union navy flotilla of 5,000 men attempted to enter the channel. Dowling's artillery drills and strategies paid off as his small group forced the flotilla's retreat, capturing 350 prisoners and a large quantity of supplies, postponing a Union invasion of Texas.

The Confederate government offered its gratitude and admiration to Dowling and his unit while the ladies of Houston presented the unit with medals.

Dowling's promising future was cut short by a yellow fever epidemic and he died on September 23, 1867.

In 1905 the city of Houston commissioned a statue of Lt. Dowling, and it was erected at city hall, later moved to Sam Houston Park, and eventually relocated to Hermann Park. In 1998, the town of Tuam, also placed a bronze memorial plaque of Dowling on its Town Hall facade bearing his image and explaining his feats.

October 2011 – Did you know?

The image of Ireland that many Americans cherish is far from today's reality. That said, one important truth remains: In Ireland, people still matter. At least for now! (Thus, the owner who closed up so he could guide the American guests personally to my brother's house!)

Although current economic hardships have led the government to cut back on the social safety net, many good things remain. Senior citizens of a certain age have free bus and train transport, assistance with their electricity and telephone bills, and a reduced TV license fee. (Yes, one has to pay a yearly fee to have a TV!)

Those caring for incapacitated folks get an allowance, and there exists an enviable system of carers' support groups. Until recently, families were given an allowance for each child until age 18. That has been reduced in the current budget.

Still, does our image of Ireland encompass the existence of homelessness? Before the demise of the Celtic Tiger, official government figures showed that 2,399 households were categorized as homeless in 2005, with an additional 9,212 households living in one or another unsuitable situation.

The Simon Communities of Ireland arose to serve this population.

The Simon Community was founded in London in 1963 by Anton Wallich-Clifford, who realized that the problems of those without a home were not solved by a hostel bed, that being homeless is also about a lack of security, lack of belonging, lack of privacy and lack of safety. What was needed, he believed, was a service based on "Caring and Campaigning", exemplifying the possibility of a different, caring society.

The first Simon Community in Ireland was set up by students from Trinity College and University College Dublin in 1969 who had heard Wallich-Clifford speak. There are now eight Simon Communities around the country. Although each is independent, they are loosely affiliated and staffed by over 800 volunteers.

In addition to providing quality care, accommodation, projects and services, which support people and enable them to acquire and sustain an appropriate home of their own, Simon campaigns for legislative and policy changes and resources that will deliver on a right to housing and responsive services for people who have no homes.

One unique feature is the collaborative partnerships with those who use their services, as well as all those who work towards the elimination of homelessness. Another was expressed by a leader in the Dublin community: "The Simon Community takes the initiative, goes out to meet people rather than waiting for them to come."

Simon believes no one chooses to be homeless, that homelessness is not, and should never be accepted as, an inevitable outcome for any person.

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

November 2011

The Healy Building, Georgetown University's landmark building, was built by and named for the first African-American to receive a Ph.D. and to become president of a major American university. (Georgetown was the country's first Roman Catholic college.)

Patrick F. Healy, S.J., the son of an Irish planter, Michael Morris Healy, and his wife, Elisa, a former slave, was born in Macon, GA in 1834. Michael, an opponent of slavery, had bought Elisa's freedom so that he could marry her. Patrick was the third of their ten children.

Three Healy sons became priests, and one, James Augustine, became the first African-American bishop when he was named the second bishop of Portland, Maine. Another son, Alexander Sherwood, was Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Boston. Two daughters became nuns. One, Emma, founded the Sisters of the Holy Family.

Patrick O'Prunty, born in Emdale, County Down, in 1777, was the father of Charlotte Brontë, the author of Jane Eyre. He changed the Irish form of his name when he entered Cambridge University!

Eight signers of our Declaration of Independence were born outside the U.S.— one in Wales, two in Scotland, two in England, and three in Ireland.

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

December 2011

That the Irish invaded Canada?

On May 31, 1866, Gen. John O'Neill, a 25 year-old decorated Civil War veteran led 1,000 volunteers over the border from Buffalo, NY to Fort Erie, Ontario. They were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, commonly known as the Fenians, and their immediate goal was to impair or destroy the locks of the Welland Canal and seize the railway facilities in the vicinity. They made it clear their quarrel was with the British, and not with the Canadians, whom they expressed some hope to "liberate."

Similar raids were to occur simultaneously at other points along the border, as a three-pronged attack was envisioned. From the west, Fenians were to cross the Great Lakes at Chicago and Detroit, and from the east, at St. Albans, VT.

Unfortunately for the Fenian cause, neither of these forces materialized, and O'Neill was left on his own. A larger number of volunteers (one source said 6,000) was still in Buffalo, but when O'Neill sent for reinforcements, not only were there no boats to transport them, but a US Revenue Cutter was patrolling the waters, making a crossing impossible. Eventually the federal government offered those stranded in Buffalo free transportation home, on condition that they desist from neutrality violations.

Despite victorious skirmishes at Ridgeway and Fort Erie, O'Neill was outnumbered and chose to evacuate his troops. Many were captured but later released for lack of evidence. A few were tried, both in Canada and in Canandaigua, NY, and charged with violating neutrality laws. Canadian trials resulted in some prison sentences, but in Canandaigua, all charges were dismissed.

Realizing their vulnerability, it has been said, gave the Canadians added incentive to form a confederation, thereby turning a collection of provinces into a nation.