

DID YOU KNOW...

History, they say, is written by the victors. They might as well have added “by the men,” since so many women’s stories have gotten lost. (Is that why it’s called HIStory?)

Students of Irish history recognize the name of Henry Joy McCracken, commander in chief of the rebel force that marched on Antrim in the 1798 Rebellion. Although his sister had arranged for his escape to America, he was caught and executed.

Few, however, have heard of that sister. Mary Ann McCracken, born into that progressive philanthropic family in Belfast in 1770. Francis McCracken was a prominent shipowner; their mother Anne Joy came from another wealthy family which made its money in the linen trade and founded the Belfast News Letter. Concerned about the negative affect of British policies upon Irish industry, they were active in the reform movement of the 1790s.

Mary Ann was enrolled in a co-educational school, where young women received the same education as young men, and where she excelled in mathematics..

Like her brother Henry Joy, she was interested in reviving the ancient poetry and music of Ireland - they were both enthusiastic supporters of the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792. She was a founding member of the Belfast Harp Society, founded after the turn of the century, and gave considerable financial assistance to individual harpists.

Like him, also, Mary Ann held radical beliefs, not just about politics, but social issues as well. Her letters to him in jail are full of political commentary, news of raids, arrests and arms seizures - showing that she was very much involved in the events around her. The letters demonstrate an advanced and well developed feminist consciousness, as well. ("Is it not almost time for the clouds of error and prejudice to disperse and that the female part of Creation as well as the male should throw off the fetters with which they have been so long mentally bound and conscious of the dignity and importance of their nature, rise to the situation for which they were designed...") Poverty and slavery also concerned her. Mary Ann led the Women's Abolitionary committee, continuing to promote the cause long after others had lost interest. At the age of 88, she could be seen on the Belfast docks, handing out anti-slavery leaflets to those boarding ships bound for the United States, where slavery was still practised.

After Henry's death she defied family opposition and brought up his illegitimate daughter Maria in the family home.

Subsequently, she and her sister Margaret opened a muslin business, employing a number of handloom weavers working at home. A progressive employer, she wrote about factory hygiene and the condition of workers, even suggesting they should be provided with warm coats! She was also opposed to the Act of Union, concerned for its effects on the poor. The sisters struggled to keep their business open during the economic depression that followed. Mary Ann worried about what would happen to the women if they were made redundant, but by 1815, the McCrackens were forced to close shop.

Mary Ann continued to be concerned about education and poverty, helping to establish an Industrial School in 1847, and later a nursery for orphans. She supported the Poorhouse and was active in the Belfast Ladies

Association for the Relief of Irish Destitution, the Belfast Ladies Clothing Society and the Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick

Mary Ann McCracken never married, having lost the man she loved in the rebellion of 1803. She died in 1866, just weeks after her 96th birthday and is buried with her brother in the shadow of the Poorhouse to which she was so dedicated.

DID YOU KNOW - March 2012

By Deirdre McKeirnan Hetzler

Beannachtaí na Féile Pádraig! Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Did you know that the way Americans celebrate this day was for years foreign to the Irish themselves? I remember, when I was in college there, that it was a quieter day, with Mass in the morning and *ceilis* (traditional set dancing) in the evening. I don't remember the pubs being open, though they may have been.

In fact, a 1974 *Irish Times* editorial (April 19) said "The culture debate has been proceeding now for some months and there have been numerous definitions as to what exactly the product means....the St. Patrick's Day parade and its attendant junketings [in America] are an embarrassment to the Irish people." Times have changed across the pond, however! Although it's still a 'holy day' with Mass likely to be celebrated at least partly *as Gaeilge* (in Irish), the Irish now can drown the shamrock with the best of us.

That editorial went on to praise the work of the IACI: "The Irish American Cultural Institute, therefore, is invaluable. This organization, financed from philanthropic sources, has been waging an incessant campaign to foster Irish literature, painting and all the creative arts. It runs an admirable journal, *Eire-Ireland*, which is a showpiece for Ireland in America..." For those who complained that the journal was too intellectual, Dr. McKiernan used to say, "Aren't you glad something Irish is highbrow!"

McKiernan founded the IACI to provide an antidote to the "shamroguery," as he called it, that occurs around the 17th of March. Not that he was opposed to a good time, or the parades, but that being Irish was about much more than that. "If you're proud of being Irish, wouldn't you want that to be 365 days a year, rather than a few hours on one day?"

In his vision, the objectives of the IACI included, in part:

- Promoting the study of and research into Irish civilization, with a special emphasis upon the interrelationships between Irish and American cultures;
- Acting as patron for Irish music, theatre, art, literature, science and various scholarly undertakings;
- Stimulating Irish cultural development.

In the last 50 years, the IACI has lived up to those standards, supporting hundreds of emerging artists, educating thousands of Americans about the richness of Irish culture and about the myriad contributions of the Irish to this country, and providing research grants, in addition, of course to the publication of *Eire-Ireland* and the (now online) newsletter. I don't think we can say 'mission accomplished' yet! There's work still to be done. Are you ready?

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

April 2012

“The more things change, the more they remain the same.” So goes the old adage, paraphrased in the opening lines of a recent story in *The Irish Times* (30 March). The 2011 Irish census reveals a country of interesting contrasts, the writer said. So much has changed, yet....

While emigration is once again an issue, the 2011 population of 4.6 million is at its highest level in 150 years. Ireland has the highest birth rate in Europe, with more than 70,000 births per year. In fact, the natural increase (births minus deaths) is the highest on record. This may bode well for the future economy, despite creating challenges meanwhile, in providing sufficient services like health and education.

Much has been made of the decline of the Catholic Church, with Dublin’s Archbishop stating only 14% are churchgoers. But in this census, over 84% describe themselves as Roman Catholics, an increase of 5%. While some of this may be attributed to immigrants, part of that increase was among native Irish. There is also the likelihood that folks identify with Catholicism more for cultural than religious reasons.

Marriage is still highly popular, despite a large number of cohabiting couples. The fastest growing kind of household is the old-fashioned nuclear family, couples with children.

And the language! Regardless of the perennial discussion about its viability, the census recorded a 7.1% increase in self-declared Irish speakers, 41.4% of respondents. Few, however, use it daily outside of school. Still, the “Yuppie” thing in Dublin (and Belfast) is to send children to schools where all subjects are taught through Irish.

Population has shifted heavily towards the commuting area around Dublin, although the city itself registered a 4.2% loss. County Laois, the fastest growing county, evidenced a 20% increase. While Limerick and Cork cities also experienced losses, Galway city increased over 4%. The province of Leinster now accounts for 54% of the country’s population.

The number of foreign born people living in Ireland increased by 25% in the last 5 years. Polish nationals have overtaken those from the UK as the largest non-Irish group. Others living in Ireland include Romanian, Indian, Chinese, Lithuanian, Latvian, French, German, Filipino, Slovak and American.

Much that Irish Americans love about our ancestral homeland remains. Change is knocking at the door in Ireland, but not as loudly as one might have expected.

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

April 2012

Matthew Carey, where are you when we need you?

Furious antagonism between the two major political parties of his day led this Irish immigrant to write his most famous pamphlet, *The Olive Branch* (1814), in an attempt to unite the Federalist and Republican parties. This work went through ten editions. Selling 10,000 copies (an immense amount for his day), its extensive influence is credited with contributing to the political repose of the Monroe administration.

Born in Dublin in 1760, Carey escaped to America in 1784 (disguised as a woman) to avoid further imprisonment for his writings. At 17, four years after being apprenticed to a printer, he had written a pamphlet comparing America's "taxation without representation" to the situation of Irish Catholics, and calling for the end of the Penal Laws. Denounced as treasonous, Carey fled to France, where Ben Franklin employed him in a printing business.

Returning to Ireland, he worked at the *Freeman's Journal* and founded the *Volunteers' Journal*. With a large circulation and an incendiary editorial policy, both were on borrowed time, and Carey was imprisoned briefly. Faced with another imprisonment, Carey fled.

When he arrived in Philadelphia, the Marquis de Lafayette, whom he had met in Paris, gave him \$400, with which he started his own printing business. Carey quickly developed political connections in the developing country. One of his most important supporters was John Adams.

Shortly after arriving, Carey founded the *Pennsylvania Herald*, then the *Columbian Journal* and the *American Museum*. His reports of the debates in the Assembly influenced their outcome. A prodigious essayist, he frequently wrote on various social topics.

As Director of the Bank of Pennsylvania, Carey became a major influence in the political economic thinking of his day. His published works are also credited with swaying public opinion toward the establishment of a powerful American navy.

Carey printed the first American version of the Douay-Rheims (Catholic) Bible and numerous editions of the King James version.

About 1791 he entered on the business of bookselling, in which he was eminently successful. He accumulated a large fortune. A contemporary said of Carey, "as a practical philanthropist, brave, munificent, and discreet, his adopted country is under lasting obligations to him. He was an untiring advocate of popular education, and a bold

reformer of municipal abuses — laboring effectually to carry out the greatest good of the greatest number."

Matthew Carey died in September 1839.

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

June 2012

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reformer of municipal abuses — laboring effectually to carry out the greatest good of the greatest number."

Matthew Carey died in September 1839. Mr. Dooley is still timely, especially in this election year, decades after his character was invented by Finley Peter Dunne, Chicago-based humorist and writer. The fictional Mr. Dooley expounded upon political and social issues of the day from his South-side Chicago Irish pub ("drinking emporium," as he called it) and he spoke with the thick verbiage and accent of an Irish immigrant from County Roscommon.

"Th' prisidincy is th' highest office in th' gift iv th' people. Th' vice-prisidincy is th' next highest an' the lowest. It isn't a crime exactly. Ye can't be sint to jail f'r it, but it's a kind iv a disgrace," said Dooley. "It is principally because iv th' vice-prisidint that most of our prisidints have enjoyed such rugged health. Th' Prisidint, afther sizin' up th' vice-prisidint, concludes that it wud be betther f'r th' counthry if he shud live yet awhile."

"Whin a man gets to be my age, he ducks political meetin's, an' reads th' papers an' weighs th' ividence an' th' argymints - pro-argymints an' con-argymints, an' makes up his mind ca'mly, an' votes th' Dimmycratic Ticket."

Of that party, however, Dooley said " 'Tis niver si good as whin 'tis broke, whin raysptictable people speak of it in whispers, and whin it has no leaders an' on'y wan principle, to go in an' take it away fr'm th' other fellows."

Of our current political extremes, Dooley's assessment might apply: "A fanatic is a man who does what he thinks th' Lord wud do if He knew th' facts in th' case."

Political truth? Dooley's solution: "All y've got to do is believe what ye hear, an' afther a while ye'll hear what ye believe."

As for the national conventions coming up, Dooley opined: "Th' proceedin's was open with a prayer that Providencemight r-remain undher th' protection iv th' administration."

Courts also fell victim to his sharp wit: "No matter whether th' Constitution follows th' flag or not, th' Supreme Court follows th' iliction returns." "An appeal is wan ye ask one court to show its contempt for another court."

According to an article in the November 5, 2006 edition of the New York Times, he coined the truism, often wrongly attributed to Tip O'Neill, that "all politics is local." But, especially this year, maybe Dooley's best advice is: "Thrust ivrybody – but cut th' ca-ards."

Dunne helped to shape the political and social life of his time. With his political acmen and a sly sense of humor, he appealed to popular fancy, but even won the admiration of President Theodore Roosevelt, who was the target of many of Dooley's barbs.

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan-Hetzler

July 2012

We all recognize the name of Henry Ford, but how many of us know of Patrick Ford (no relation)? Few people today have any idea of the revolution in American opinion in regard to Ireland brought about by Patrick Ford and the Irish World in the latter half of the 19th century

His pen ignited the hearts and united the minds of Irish-Americans providing valuable support to the cause of land reform and freedom in Ireland. As the foremost champion of the Irish cause in America, he was regarded, in England, as the personification of Irish opposition to English rule.

Born in Galway in 1837, Ford's family brought him to Boston in 1845. He left school at thirteen and in two years was working in the print office of William Lloyd Garrison, the great abolitionist editor of *The Liberator*. Shortly afterwards, Patrick began writing, and by 1861, was editor and publisher of the *Boston Tribune* (a/k/a *Boston Sunday Tribune* or *Boston Sunday Times*).

Ford enlisted in 9th Massachusetts Regiment at the outbreak of the Civil War and participated in the Battle of Fredericksburg.

After the war, he moved to Charleston, SC, where he edited the *Southern Carolina Leader*, printed to support newly-freed slaves, and founded *The Charleston Gazette*.

Settling in New York City in 1870, Ford founded the *Irish World*, which became the principal newspaper of Irish America. At a period when the *New York Times* had a circulation of fewer than 10,000 and the *New York World* fewer than 30,000 the circulation of *The Irish World* rose to a million; one issue even sold a million and a half copies. Ford railed against the injustices of landlordism in Ireland, appealing also for material aid to the poor tenants. When the Land League came into existence in 1879, he founded 2,500 branches in the US, raised considerable monies for their work in Ireland, and suggested what became the No Rent Manifesto. Michael Davitt, the League's founder, called Ford "the most powerful support of the struggle in Ireland on the American continent."

Patrick Ford was also a force in American politics, energetically supporting Horace Greeley's presidential campaign in 1872 and helping to found the Greenback Party in 1874. In 1884, he got thousands of voters to desert the Democrats and vote for James Blaine.

In the run-up to the Spanish-American War, the discourse of the New York Irish, led in part by Ford and his paper, was particularly significant. It framed the debate by seeing the war's goal as imperialism, which contradicted their idea of what the US should

represent. Equating imperialism with Anglo identity, The Irish World saw similarities between Irish and Cuban/Puerto Rican history, feared the development of an American colonialism like England's, and emphasized the role that many other ethnic communities played in the formation of a more pluralistic US identity.

The Irish World's eye-catching artwork also opened new ground on two fronts. Ford's cartoons illustrated that Irish immigrants were not simply bent on assimilating into American culture, but simultaneously retained an ethnic solidarity with other Irish around the world. "All Irishmen, and all Irishmen's sons the world over," editorialized Ford, "are parts of one mighty whole." The Irish World's artwork also undermined the idea that Irish immigrant racial identity was predominantly characterized by white supremacy. "When we say the [American] 'people,'" editorialized Ford in 1874, "we mean the whole people... without regard to race or color... [or] particular faction or class of the people."

Patrick Ford edited the paper until his death in September, 1913.

DID YOU KNOW?

By Deirdre McKiernan Hetzler

August 2012

If you read the NY Times or the Irish papers, you know that a young Irish woman won the Olympic gold medal in boxing – Ireland's first gold medal in the 2012 games, and only the ninth gold in Irish history. This was also the first lightweight gold medal in Olympic women's boxing,

Twenty-six year old Katie Taylor from Bray, Co. Wicklow, raised her arms in triumph, mouthed her thanks to God, while the fans responded with deafening cheers. She took her medal, caressed it and kissed it and hugged her Russian opponent. As she was leaving the arena in the official parade, somebody gave Taylor a Tricolour. She draped it over her shoulders and ran a jubilant lap of honor, the spotlight tracing her skipping path.

Ireland had stopped still at 4.30 on Thursday, August 9th. Virtually everyone was watching the match. In her hometown, crowds, gathered by the thousands from all over the country, erupted in pure joyous pandemonium. This was Ireland's day, a welcome bright spot after the grayness of the recession.

Katie had dreamed of this day through sixteen years of training, coached by her own father. A four-time world champion, she is regarded as Ireland's foremost athlete. The Irish Independent newspaper once said Taylor was "as real as Mary Poppins, a fairy tale hurtling toward a happy ending." A dream come true – for Katie and for Ireland.

DID YOU KNOW...
September 2012

That Peter McGuire, an Irish labor leader, first suggested that Labor Day be a national holiday in the U.S.? His suggestion was adopted in Congress in 1894.

That the celebrated composer Victor Herbert was born in Dublin? Or that his grandfather, Samuel Lover, was a famous Irish novelist and poet? After his father's early death, Herbert was raised by his mother and grandfather on Irish stories, tales, and songs. He never missed an opportunity when music or musicians were needed to further the cause of Irish freedom, while living in this country.

That the widow and son of a famous founder of the United Irishman, Theobald Wolfe Tone, were buried in Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, N.Y.? After Tone's death, Matilda Witherington Tone found refuge in France, but Napoleon I's downfall caused her to flee with their eldest son, William, to America. (Two other children had died in France.) William Theobald Wolfe Tone served as a Captain in the U.S. army and edited and published his father's papers.

That the famous general of the American Revolution, General Edward Hand, was born in County Offaly, and had among his troops Irishmen from all the four provinces of Ireland? Other notable Irish officers included General John Sullivan of Limerick, General John Clarke of Antrim, General Walter Stewart of Derry, General Andrew Lewis of Donegal, General William Irvine of Enniskillen, and General John Shea of Meath.

That an organized slave traffic of Irish was begun under the ruthless Oliver Cromwell? Orphans of parents slaughtered by Cromwell's troops were the easiest prey. Some Irish accounts claim that up to 100,000 youngsters between the ages of 14 and 16 were shipped to Jamaica and adjacent islands. According to documented State Papers, governors of garrisons were ordered "to deliver...prisoners of war for laborers in workhouses, "marriageable women," "the destitute," and even "Papist priests" under age 40. By historical coincidence, the first African slaves were sent to the very same place and many intermarried. Have you ever wondered why African-Americans bear Irish names? While some may be traced to plantation owners or employees of long ago, some are descendants of Cromwell's slave trade.

DID YOU KNOW?

October 2012

That Celtic scholar and historian Peter Berresford Eillis writes mystery novels under the pseudonym Peter Tremayne? His heroine in all of these is an Irish nun, Sister Fidelma, and she has quite a following! (These books are a great read, by the way.)

The latest mystery available in this country, *Behold a Pale Horse*, is set in the Abbey in Bobbio, Italy, founded in 614 by Fidelma's countryman, St. Columbanus (in Irish, Colm Bán, meaning white dove). Columbanus journeyed across what is today France, Switzerland, Germany, and Austria, founding monasteries along the way. And, in his 60s, walked over the Alps to Italy, where he established the great abbey at Bobbio.

Columbanus was only one of many Irish monks who emigrated to preach in foreign lands, as part of what Irish monks called a "white martyrdom." That is, they chose to give up what was most dear to them – their homeland – for love of God.

From the 6th to the 12th centuries, hundreds of Irish monks set out to bring back to a barbarized continental Europe the Christianity and scholarship it had once known. The first was Colmcille of the O'Donnells, who, as an act of penance for instigating a war, left in 563 and, with twelve other monks, founded a monastery on the Isle of Iona that became a renowned center of learning. Iona today is home to an ecumenical community of monks who have given birth to some beautiful music.

Many of these Irish emigrants are commemorated today as patron saints of European countries or cities, among them: St. Gall in Switzerland, St. Killian in Germany, St. Cathal in San Cataldo (Italy), St. Donatus in Fiosole (Italy), and St. Fursey in Peronne (France). Irish monks were the mainstay of court schools (including Charlemagne's) in the Middle Ages. They became the teachers of whole nations and the counsellors of kings and emperors. No wonder Ireland was called the isle of saints and scholars!

What a great heritage we have!

DID YOU KNOW?

There are many outstanding women whom I admire throughout Irish history, from St. Brigid of Kildare to Constance Markievicz and Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, but this weekend, I am reminded of another, though little known, remarkable woman.

When Catherine Elizabeth McAuley was born on September 29, most likely in 1778, there was no way to foretell her extraordinary life and achievements. But when she died on November 11, 1841, she left a legacy that spanned several continents.

Her father's faith and concern for the poor apparently left a lasting impression on her. His early death, and later, that of her mother, together with the family's pecuniary losses, eventually led Catherine to accept an invitation to live with a childless Quaker couple, the Callaghans, for whom she became the daughter they never had.

They also cared for the poor of Dublin, and Catherine often was the conduit of their largesse. She saw firsthand the extreme poverty and destitution among the majority of the Irish, and also the splendid wealth of the few.

When the Callaghans died, Catherine was surprised to learn that they left her the equivalent of a million dollars today. Young, beautiful, intelligent, and full of fun, with a gentle disposition, the world lay before her.

Catherine soon chose to build a large home in the center of the city, from which she began to care for women caught in poverty. Only domestic employment was open to women of the day, and often the man of the house took advantage of them. Other women were driven to prostitution to survive. Catherine wanted better for them and their children, whom she began to educate. Soon, other women were drawn to her work and came to live with her.

This unusual arrangement raised eyebrows in society and the church. One priest called her an "upstart," thinking the "unlearned sex," the "weaker sex," could do "nothing but mischief by trying to assist the clergy." Catherine refused to accept that concept of women. While somewhat a product of the times, she was also a determined woman, capable of standing up to authority when necessary.

Although not her original intention, Catherine accepted the suggestion of the bishop that she start a religious community. Thus, were the Sisters of Mercy founded. From that original house on Baggot Street, now the International Headquarters of the Order, came dedicated women whose work among the poor inspired others, until today there are thousands of Houses of Mercy around the world, whose inhabitants staff hospitals, schools, parishes and beyond.

(cf. The Path of Mercy: The Life of Catherine McAuley by Mary C. Sullivan, RSM)

DECEMBER 2012

DID YOU KNOW....

That the word 'boycott' came into the English language as the result of land disputes in County Mayo in the late 19th century? In 1879, the potato crop had failed for the third year in a row. Irish peasant farmers in the west were suffering and again being evicted.

A Mayo man, Michael Davitt, founded the Land League (May, 1879), with the support of the Irish parliamentarian, Charles Stewart Parnell, in response to this crisis. His motto was "The land for the people!" The League agitated for fair rent, fixity of tenure, and freedom to sell, organising resistance to evictions and reductions in rents, as well as aiding the work of relief agencies. Members' activities sometimes led to violence, which the League denounced.

However, a campaign of ostracism against local landlords and their agents was one of their chief strategies. One such campaign was directed against Charles Boycott, the local agent for Lord Erne; a landowner in the Lough Mask area in Mayo. The local labor required to save the harvest on Lord Erne's estate was withheld, neighbors would not talk to him, shops would not serve him, local tradesmen refused to tend his house and the postman refused to deliver his mail. Farm laborers had to be imported, from what is now Northern Ireland, effectively multiplying the cost of harvesting the crops.

In December of 1880 Captain Boycott left Ireland a defeated icon of landlordism, and his name became synonymous with a campaign of ostracism.

Nollaig shona daoibhe! (Happy Christmas to all!)