



ΕCHOES

OF

IRISH

HISTORY

VOLUME II

by

Mike McCormack

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## PREFACE

Happy is the man who achieves success in doing what he enjoys. The study of Irish history has always been my favorite pastime, and it has long been a personal goal to interest others in the drama that can be found in the history of Ireland and her people. My earliest attempts at achieving that goal were writings on Irish history presented in my capacity as Historian for the Suffolk County Board of the *Ancient Order of Hibernians*.

The writings soon became the subject of weekly spots on several radio programs, including my own *Echoes of Ireland*, broadcast over WLIM on Long Island. These vignettes written on a *people* level became popular, and I began selecting stories based on their appeal to the non-historians among us – in short, to present not detailed, footnoted Irish history, but *Echoes of Irish History* with the hope that it would encourage people to seek the source of that echo.

The reaction was most rewarding; people enjoyed them and wanted more. As a result of requests from the radio audience, and encouragement from popular entertainer, Noel Kingston, a selected number of the radio spots came to print in *Echoes of Irish History*, published on St. Patrick's Day, 1984. *Echoes* was not intended to compete with the detailed offerings of learned historians, but rather to inspire an interest in a subject too long overlooked by too many. The stories, taken from the ancient, near-ancient, and contemporary writings that it has been my pleasure to read, were as accurate as historical research allowed. Some were light, and some were serious, but all were true to the purpose for which they were intended – to show Irish history as a worthwhile and interesting avocation.

Within six months over 500 copies were sold, and within nine months they were completely gone. The response was tremendous and all the comments were positive. I was absolutely astounded. I hadn't been mistaken. There is a popular attraction in the history of Ireland, and all that was needed was to present it in an easy to read manner.

Happy is the man who achieves success in doing that which he enjoys. My sincerest thanks to all who have made the success of *Echoes of Irish History* possible: to the *Ancient Order of Hibernians* for recognizing the true value of the subject, to Noel Kingston who believed in this writer, to all whose purchase inspired this second volume, and mostly to my wife, Tena, for understanding that Irish history sometimes takes precedence over chores that must be done, and my sons, Kevin and Sean, who did those chores so that their father could bury himself in books.

To each and all I happily dedicate *Echoes of Irish History, Volume II*.

## SAINT PATRICK

Each year around March 17, the name of St. Patrick appears in every major publication in the civilized world - sometimes with honor and sometimes with scorn - often due to the conduct of those who celebrate his memory at affairs which bear his name. Of the many things written about this holy man, some are true, some misleading, and some false. St. Patrick was Italian; St. Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland; St. Patrick was the first to bring Christianity to Ireland - all of these statements are false!

Lets take them one at a time. Some claim St Patrick to be Italian because he was born in Roman occupied territory, and his name was actually Patri-cius. Unfortunately, the mists of time have descended on the exact loca-tion of his birth, but what is concluded from available evidence is that he was born somewhere in Wales around 386 AD. Patrick himself wrote that the scene of his youth was Banavem Tiburniae (possibly the town of Tibur-nia near Holyhead in western Wales), where his father was a member of the governing body. Other Welsh sources suggest southern Wales near the Bristol Channel at the mouth of the Severn River. Although Wales was part of the Roman Empire at that time, it was a Celtic country and its people were one race with the people of Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Cornwall, and the Isle of Man. As for his Italian sounding name, it was given to him when he was consecrated Bishop and assigned to the mission in Ireland. Before that time, our patron Saint's name was Succat, a Celtic name meaning *vic-torious*. There is, therefore, more evidence to suggest that Patrick was Celt-ic, than any other nationality. He even identified himself as such in his letter to the British prince, Coroticus.

As for the snakes, although a popular legend, it is geologically known that there never were any in Ireland to begin with. His connection with that legend stems from the Viking misinterpretation of his name. *Paud* in the old norse language meant toad, and when the Vikings heard of a Saint called *Paud-rig*, who had lived in Ireland before their coming, they concluded it meant toad-expeller. That was only the beginning; the legend was rein-forced by the Church's representation of the Devil as a serpent, and of Patrick driving the Devil out of Ireland in that form. However, Patrick is more revered for what he brought to Ireland, than what he drove away. Yet he was not the first to bring Christianity . . . but he was by far the most effective.

The story begins when Patrick was about 16 years old and Ireland's High King was Niall of the Nine Hostages. Irish warriors raided the coast of Wales, and among the hostages taken as slaves was the youth, Succat. According to tradition, he was taken to Mt. Slemish, Co. Antrim, where he tended the flocks of Miliuc Mac Boin who, according to Ludwig Beiler's



*The Life and Legend of St. Patrick*, was either a Druid or a Gaelic Chieftain. After six years, Succat escaped following a voice that he heard in his dreams. He fled to Wexford, found passage, and eventually returned to his family. There he received his vocation for missionary work in Ireland in three separate dreams - the most notable was one in which the voice of the Irish called, "Holy youth, come again and walk among us."

Succat received religious training at monastic settlements in Gaul, Italy, and the islands of the Tyrrhene Sea, as noted in his *Confession*. He was ordained Deacon by Amator, Bishop of Auxerre about 418 AD. It is known that he was consecrated Bishop and received the name Patricius in 432 AD, but there are conflicting reports regarding the interim period. Beiler maintains that Patrick remained at Auxerre under St. Germanus, Amator's successor, while scholars Whitney Stokes in 1887, and Kathleen Mulchrone in 1956, advanced the theory that Patrick worked as a simple priest in Ireland from 419 to 431. In any case, it is certain that he was in Auxerre in 431, when St. Germanus selected Palladius, a contemporary of Patrick's, to head the first Irish mission. Palladius was sent, with full Papal authority, as the first Bishop of Ireland, but his mission was short-lived. According to the memoirs of Tirechan, a cleric in Meath about 690 AD, Palladius was martyred within the year. Patrick was assigned to replace Palladius in 432, and in view of the reported fate of the former mission, the dedication and courage of Patrick is obvious. Working to Patrick's advantage was the fact that he knew Irish customs and language from his years in captivity, and the fact that he was a Celt. Patrick never condemned the Irish as idolatous pagans, but appealed to their pride. He addressed them on their terms, explaining their traditions in terms of Christianity, and was eventually accepted as one of their own. He converted key people among the nobility and people, and recruited a native clergy from these classes.

He began his missionary work in Ulster, built his first Church at Saul, two miles from Downpatrick, and from there journeyed across the land. Patrick's own writings and the writings of his contemporaries show him to have been a missionary of extraordinary zeal, energy, and courage, careless of his own safety in his fervor to *spread the nets for God*. In his own writings, he mentions this *Divine impatience* as well as describing himself as an Irishman. For 29 years, Patrick labored among his beloved Irish, converting and baptizing them by the thousands until his death on March 17, 461 AD. Tradition establishes that this holy man is buried at Downpatrick where he shares the same grave with Saints Brigid and Columille. St. Patrick was equivalently canonized in the 17th century by the extension of his feast day to the universal Church calendar.

This then, is the man, the Saint that we honor in March, and it our duty to see that nothing but praise and reverence are attached to his name. We

may celebrate his memory with joy, but remember his love for the Irish and the tremendous gift of faith that he bestowed upon us, and celebrate with reverent joy. We can begin by replacing all references to Paddy's Day with the proper name of **Saint Patrick's Day**.





## THE BREHON LAW

Brehon Law, the ancient legal code of the Celtic people, was a well-developed set of judicial guidelines, transmitted orally and with extreme accuracy from generation to generation by a special class of professional jurists called *Brithem* (Judge in early Gaelic). This marvelous institution, which survived intact until the Elizabethan plantation of Ireland, has excited the wonder and admiration of laymen as well as eminent lawyers versed in ancient law codes. It is a wonder to modern scholars that such a great and just judicial system had existed since the dim ages of antiquity on one little island far off on the rim of the ancient world.

St. Patrick is reported to have been so impressed with that great body of ancient law literature, that he began the work of transcribing it from its oral form. His efforts filled five volumes, which are known today as the *Senchus Mor*, and its ordinances have been called *Cain Padraic* in his honor. Realizing that those five volumes are only a portion of what remains today, and what remains today is only a fraction of the ancient Irish *Cana* or Ordinances, we can get an indication of the vastness of the law literature of ancient Ireland. It also illustrates a high level of civilization among a people who the British portrayed as backward and uncivilized.

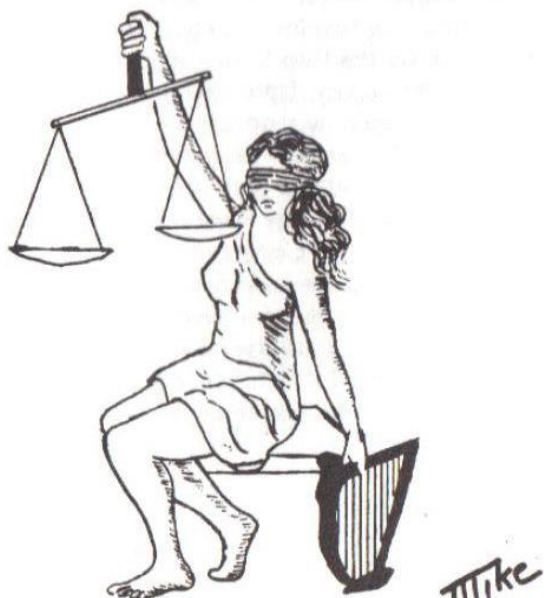
The Brehon Law covered every relationship and shade of relationship, social and moral, between individuals. *Brithem*, who arbitrated the law, were important officers at all the royal courts of Ireland from the earliest time of which we have any record - legendary or historical. The law was based on an individual's identity, defined in terms of clan and personal wealth. Since land was the common property of the clan and could not be transferred by an individual, personal wealth was reckoned in terms of cattle and other private possessions. Honor was evaluated in terms of this personal wealth, and in turn, each person's wealth or 'honor price' reflected their legal status in the community and determined the validity of their contracts. The threat of loss or reduction in status as a result of a judgement against one's honor price, was the prime factor in upholding the effectiveness of the Brehon Law.

Brehon Law applied to many areas. In education: a student was indebted to his instructor. If a schoolmaster was incapacitated by old age and had no clan to care for him, he was the responsibility of his former students whom he had brought to a better life through his teaching. In medicine: when a physician treated a patient, the law determined the fee. If the physician could not properly treat a wound, either through neglect or lack of skill, the law specified that he pay the same to the patient as would the one who inflicted the wound - that is, to maintain the injured party until he was well. Under Brehon Law, women were equal to men with regard to education

and property. After marriage, the woman was a partner with, and not the property of, her husband as was the case in many other civilizations in the ancient world. Any property that she owned before her marriage remained hers, and the more property (spinning wheel, loom, dishes, etc) that she brought into her marriage, the higher her legal standing in that partnership (hence, the tradition of the dowry).

Another tradition rooted in the Brehon Law that survives to this day has to do with an individual who was wronged by a person or persons of higher rank and authority. The procedure was for the offended party demanding justice to sit by the door of the unjust party and take no food while a sympathetic public looked on, and its indignation grew daily against the unjust party who had forced such an extreme course. In short, it was a hunger-strike for compelling justice from the more powerful. If the person accused felt that he was right, he could hunger-strike in return, and public opinion went with the one who held out the longest. It might help to realize in today's world that when a group of Irish political prisoners go on a hunger-strike (a course of action that some find pointless), they are, in fact, following a method of redress once considered logical in a code of laws that predate recorded history; they are crying out for public opinion to influence a just solution to their situation.

With all of its ordinances and judgements, Brehon Law was the most advanced system of jurisprudence in the ancient world, and as such has been a tremendous source of pride to the Irish who realize that justice has always been a part of their heritage.





## SAINT BRENDAN, THE NAVIGATOR

It was long considered that Columbus was the first European to set foot on the New World. Subsequent investigation however, revealed that the Vikings had visited the Western Hemisphere five centuries earlier. The question of who really discovered America was generally considered answered with evidence of those Viking settlements.

The Irish argued, of course, that an Irish monk named St. Brendan had made the journey across the Atlantic long before the Vikings. In fact, he had written *The Navagatio* (the story of his visit to a vast land across the Western Ocean) over 900 years before Columbus and over 400 years before the Viking voyages. The Irish knew that St. Brendan's writings were part of Columbus' library of information upon which he based his theory of a round world. Time gradually widened the gap between the event and the story and, with the advent of scientific insistence on supporting evidence for all facts, it became increasingly more difficult to defend St. Brendan's voyage. After all, the only evidence was his own writings and they could not be verified; further, how could a man sail the stormy Atlantic in the small leather-covered boat, or curragh, described in *The Navagatio*? The story of St. Brendan's voyage was soon relegated to the category of legend.

In June 1977, British historian Timothy Severin and a three-man crew completed a 2,000-mile journey from Ireland to Newfoundland in a leaky 36-foot craft made of ox-hide stretched over a wooden frame. The vessel had been built according to the description of his curragh given by St. Brendan. Severin constructed the curragh - appropriately christened *Brendan* - and made the journey across the Atlantic to prove that it would have indeed been possible for the Irish Saint and his crew to have sailed to the new world before the Vikings. Upon the arrival of *Brendan* in Newfoundland, Severin was besieged by reporters seeking a statement. "It was only about 150 years after Columbus," he reminded them, "that people began to doubt that the Irish had been here. We've restored the balance."

The modern voyage of Timothy Severin in *Brendan* was sponsored and financed, in part, by *National Geographic* magazine, which subsequently presented a number of articles and documentary films on the expedition. Ironically, while Severin and his crew were restoring credibility to the story of St. Brendan's early voyage to the new world, other archeological evidence was being unearthed which pointed to the existence of European settlements in America even earlier than St. Brendan's. That's our next story.

## THE FIRST AMERICANS

Who were the first Europeans in the new world? Was it Columbus, the Vikings, or St. Brendan? Certainly, St. Brendan's account predates the others by some 400 years and establishes European visitors as early as the Sixth Century AD. However, recent archeological finds in the New England area indicates a European settlement as far back as 800 BC! The evidence is threefold: first, in an ancient complex of stone buildings; second, in scores of tablets inscribed with a writing matching that used in western Europe around 800 BC; and third, in American Indian words that parallel those used in western Europe at that time. The study of this data inescapably suggests that the adventurers who crossed the Atlantic over 2700 years ago were Celtic!

On Mystery Hill, New Hampshire, the ruins of a burial tomb and oracle chamber are being studied. Surrounding the hill are great stones, geometrically aligned for viewing such celestial events as the summer and winter solstices and seasonal star and lunar patterns. The parallel to Stonehenge and similar structures in Ireland is remarkable. Near Woodstock, Vermont, another oracle chamber has been identified. The Celtic identity of these structures has been established through the science of epigraphy - the study of ancient inscriptions on stone. Dr. Barry Fell, Harvard Professor and President of the Epigraphic Society, identified and translated the inscriptions as Ogham, a system of cypher used by Celtic people over 2500 years ago. Dr. Fell's research is conclusive in dating the Celtic presence in North America. Some of the inscriptions identify graves, others taken from the oracle chamber contain religious writings, and still others concern land boundaries. Together, they suggest a Celtic settlement in the New World, when Ogham was in use about 800 BC. Further, a study of local Indian words and place names reveal Celtic roots. Other methods, such as the defining and dating of pottery, tools, and implements found at the site, have also revealed the settlement to be Celtic, matching items produced in the Celtic regions of western Europe during the Bronze Age.

The archeological conclusion is that a Celtic society existed in North America long before other Europeans came. Scientists will require years of further study to accurately define the details of that society, but Dr. Fell has released a book on his studies thus far; it is called *America BC* and should be available at local libraries.

So, whenever it is said that Columbus or the Vikings discovered America, you can reply that they were following an Irish map!



## IRISH LEARNING

Toward the end of the fifth century, much of Europe was successively invaded by nomadic barbarian tribes like the Huns under Attila in 450 AD. Much of the classic learning of the past was lost, and Europe entered the *Dark Ages*, a period which would last until the 11th century when interest in learning returned and led to the *Renaissance*. The Renaissance, which took place in Italy between the 14th and 17th centuries, was a revival of the learning of the past expressed in a flowering of the arts and literature and by the beginnings of modern science.

It was, in fact, a revival; a rebirth of interest in classical learning which had been kept alive through the Dark Ages and supplemented by illuminated manuscripts, beautiful art treasures, and intriguing physical studies, before being re-introduced to an illiterate continent engulfed in five centuries of literary darkness. To the Italians belongs the credit for transforming much of the rediscovered subject matter into magnificent works of art and for advancing that learning brought to them. But to whom do we credit the almost superhuman task of nursing and sustaining the entire spectrum of world learning throughout a five century intellectual vacuum and of literally carrying that learning back into the abyss to spark an interest where none existed? For that answer, we must turn to the portion of Europe which remained free of the invading barbaric hordes; we must turn to Ireland during the Dark Ages of Europe.

In the annals of Irish history, the period between the 6th and 12th centuries is considered Ireland's second Golden Age. It was during this time that Irish monks preserved the culture of Europe and enhanced it with their own. It was a time that saw the creation of illuminated manuscripts such as the Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow as well as prose, poetry, law tracts, annals, and histories including written versions of the great Irish epics, the Lives of the Saints, and the oldest translations into a European language of the Iliad and the Roman Civil War, among other classics. Artisans created such beautiful metalwork as the Ardagh Chalice, the Tara Brooch, and the Cross of Cong, and such magnificent stonework as the Cross of Muirdeach, mortarless oratories, and Romanesque and Gothic Cathedrals. It was a time that earned Ireland the titles *The Storehouse of the Past and the Birthplace of the Future*, *The Lamp of the West*, *The University of Europe*, and the *Isle of Saints and Scholars*.

It all began with the Irish monastic system. As Bernard Share wrote in *Irish Lives*, "Monasteries in Ireland were more like universities and many subjects were studied there which had nothing to do with religious life". Max Caulfield, in his book *The Irish Mystique* states of the monks, "Irish scholars - speaking not only their own tongue but Latin and Greek as well -

at that time were more learned than any at [Pope] Gregory's disposal in those dismal days when the European continent was barbaric". Dr. H. Zimmer wrote, "While on the mainland and in Britain, budding Christianity and the germs of western culture, such as it was, were effectively trodden underfoot...when the entire West threatened to sink hopelessly into barbarism, the Irish established several seminaries of learning in their own country. The standard of learning was much higher than with Gregory the Great and his followers".

Thus it was that western learning was preserved and expanded in the monasteries of Ireland. The return of that learning to the continent came as a result of the missionary zeal of the Irish Monks who set out to travel the world, spreading Christianity, and with it, the learning that they had preserved. Typical of these Irish missionary Monks was St. Columbanus. He had been educated under St. Comgall at Bangor, which Bernard Share called, "one of the most important centres of learning in the whole country". Sometime around 585 AD, Columbanus and twelve companions left Ireland for the continent. They stopped first at the court of King Childebert of Burgundy where they established a monastery at Anagrates. A growing number of students led to the opening of yet another center of learning at nearby Luxeuil. In 595, King Childebert died and his mother, fearing the influence of the Irish Monks over her grandchildren, turned the court against Columbanus, and he and his companions were forced to flee. In 612, the Monks travelled southward over the Alps, but not before St. Gall (one of Columbanus' companions) founded a monastery in Switzerland which still stands in the town that bears his name.

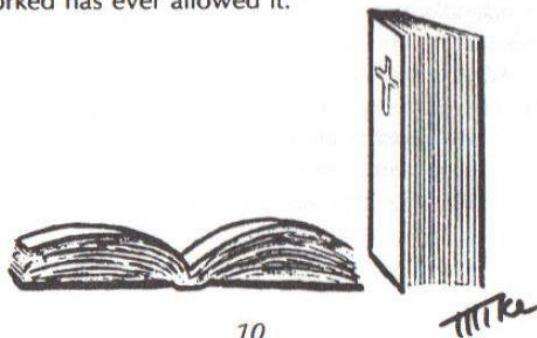
After crossing the Alps, Columbanus and his Monks pressed on through Lombardy in northern Italy. About 40 miles from Pavia, the Monks constructed a monastery at Bobbio which was to become one of the most important centers of learning in pre-Renaissance Italy. founded in 612, it was the oldest monastery in northern Italy and from the 9th to the 12th centuries, it was a center of European cultural life. Share wrote that Bobbio, "grew and grew, attracting many to it", and he credits the Irish Monks with "bringing light and learning" to the many monastic settlements that they founded throughout Italy. Writing of Columbanus, Share continued, "He left poems and other writings in Latin, and a tradition of Irish Christianity and scholarship on the continent which was to grow into full flower in the centuries ahead".

That 'full flower' would be the Renaissance and the holy monks of Ireland were the ones who preserved the embers of European civilization and eventually rekindled the desire for learning which was to lead to that all-important milestone in western civilization. The Irish influence in pre-Renaissance Italy is evidenced in a number of instances: a painting of the



Irish monk, Cataldus, Bishop of Tatanto, still hangs in the Cathedral at Cefalu in Sicily, and a 14th century church in Pinerolo is dedicated to St. Briget, the co-patron of that city. Turner, in his *History of Philosophy*, wrote, "Although it was Italy that inspired Charlemagne with the idea of founding schools throughout the Empire, it was Ireland that sent him the Masters who were to impart the new learning...Throughout the 9th century, they were found in every Cathedral and monastery of the Empire as well as at the Court of the Frankish Kings, and they were so identified with the new intellectual movement that the teaching of the newly-founded schools was characterized as *Irish Learning*".

Though the immense Irish contribution to the re-education of Europe can be documented, the story is not popularly known. Unfortunately the Irish monks at the time were not part of a strictly organized ecclesiastic system. Each monastery was the independent central authority for its own monks, and unity between monasteries, subservient to a higher central authority, was lacking. Although this in no way hampered their mission of spreading Christianity and civil learning, it provided no lasting organization to perpetuate their memory and the memory of their contributions. The unorganized Irish monastic system eventually ran into conflict with the centralized Church of Rome which, under Pope Adrian IV, authorized King Henry II to invade Ireland and reorganize the Irish Church into one that would be subservient to the See of St. Peter in Rome. This eventually spelled the end of the old Irish monastic system, but not before it had made perhaps the most singularly important contribution of the age - the return of civilization to a world that had lost it. Max Caulfield, in *The Irish Mystique*, wrote, "In any history of medieval Europe there is an extraordinary and almost inexplicable silence with regard to the work of Irishmen in bringing Christianity - then synonymous with civilization and learning - to the barbarians". He continued, "In many parts of Europe, it was the Irish Monks who had laid the real groundwork, doing the rough job of converting and dispelling illiteracy, although they never brought with them that episcopal organization which alone could have guaranteed enduring results. Their memory deserves a better fate however, than the cause for which they worked has ever allowed it."



## CHARLES THOMPSON

The name of Charles Thompson is not as familiar today as it was in the early days of America when it was widely known and respected. Born in Co. Derry, Thompson was one of the most influential men of the entire American Revolution. He served as Secretary of the Continental Congress for over 15 years (the entire life of that body) and was, in fact, the Chief Executive of the American Government several times between 1776 and 1789. During brief illnesses of the Congress Presidents and after John Hancock's resignation from the post in 1786, Thompson served as President, the highest office in the land. He wrote the final draft of the Declaration of Independence and, as its congressional attester, was the first to read it both in Congress and publicly. He was in charge of the election of the first President and was the Congressional Delegate who offered the position to George Washington in 1789.

As the only Secretary of the Continental Congress, his signature and seal are on all the new nation's official papers, and his minutes are the official history of the birth and early development of the United States. Delegates to the Continental Congress came and went, but Thompson remained the only one to see, hear, and record all of the deliberations and decisions - witnessing it from beginning to end as no other man did. Few equalled his knowledge of the politics of the time and his advice was often sought.

His most recognizable contribution exists to this day. On the day that the Declaration of Independence was first adopted, Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams were appointed as a committee to design an official seal for the new nation. That committee and two succeeding committees failed to agree on an acceptable design. After six years of fruitless effort, the task was turned over to Secretary Charles Thompson. Thompson designed both sides of the seal in less than a week and had it ready for Congressional approval in June, 1782. It was unanimously adopted and has never been changed. The *Great Seal of the United States* that is displayed on a variety of items from the one dollar bill to the President's jet airplane, is the legacy of Charles Thompson - another of the Irish who helped make America great.





## THE DESMOND WAR

In Ireland in the mid-1500's, England's divide and conquer strategy was aimed at preventing the native Irish and the Norman lords from becoming strong enough to threaten the Crown. Unfortunately, this policy also led to Norman Lords warring among themselves with the Irish clans caught in the middle. One rivalry that had a severe impact on Irish history was that between the Fitzgerald family of the House of Geraldine and the Butler family of the House of Ormond.

In 1558, Elizabeth I acceded to the throne of England and declared Anglicanism the national religion of England and Ireland. The Earl of Ormond, Thomas Butler (Elizabeth's cousin on the Boleyn side and a childhood playmate at Court), accepted the new religion while the Earl of Desmond, Gerald Fitzgerald, refused to recognize Henry VIII's split with Rome and denied the Church of England. The two great Norman Houses drifted even further apart.

In 1565, a battle for the control of Munster erupted between the Earls of Desmond and Ormond; in May their armies clashed at Affane leaving Lord Butler victorious and over 300 Geraldine dead. The Queen summoned her two Norman-Irish Lords to London, and Butler arrived with Fitzgerald as his prisoner. Both were remanded for breaking the Queen's peace and the Protestant Lord Butler was released on parole while the Catholic Lord Fitzgerald was placed in the Tower for his failure to rule as an Englishman and his "*degeneracy into Chieftaincy and Gaelic forms*". Gerald's imprisonment was a warning to his clan to submit to English ways, but instead they became more rebellious. In July, 1568, Elizabeth confiscated Lord Fitzgerald's Munster holdings and ordered them broken up and re-settled by loyal Englishmen. A land rush was led by Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Peter Carew, and a score of adventurers who made no distinction between Desmond land and any other. Although many of the Munster clans had submitted to the Crown and been regranted their property under English law, the government looked away as greedy adventurers stripped clans of their lands, evicting families across the length and breadth of Munster and south Leinster.

It wasn't long before Sir Peter Carew encroached on the territory of Lord Butler himself, devastating settlements all the way to Kilkenny. It was English Knight against English Lord on an Irish battlefield with local clans drawn into the maelstrom by the sheer intensity of the struggle. The whole south was aflame as the Munster clans united against this new influx of English usurpers who had come to claim their land. Gaelic Chieftains and Norman Lords found a champion for their cause in James Fitzmaurice, a Captain of Desmond who rose to lead in place of the imprisoned Gerald.

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## THE SECOND DESMOND WAR

James Fitzmaurice left Ireland, after the First Desmond War, to seek help in regaining his lands and his country for the Church. He found support among the Catholic rulers of Europe. In Spain and Rome, he was promised a force to oust the English and establish Pope Gregory XIII's nephew on the Irish throne. Ratification of all former Irish chieftaincies would then follow.

On July 17, 1579, Fitzmaurice landed at Dingle Bay with a paltry force of 80 Spanish soldiers, 300 Italians impressed from the jails of Rome, and some 300 exiled Irish clergy and adventurers. Elizabeth dismissed the force as a serious threat though her parliament called her irresponsible, citing the fact that the First Desmond War took four years to suppress. As Fitzmaurice began his campaign, the Irish people were again caught in a battle between Norman Lords and the Crown; again they would suffer as Ireland became the primary issue between the pro- and anti-Elizabeth factions at Court as well as a central battlefield between the Roman Church and the Protestant Reformation. Then, an accident of fate occurred that changed the course of Irish history. In August, Theobald Burke, a loyal Munster Lord, caught Fitzmaurice confiscating a number of Burke's horses and one of Burke's musketeers shot and killed the young leader. The Crown's relief over the death of Fitzmaurice was shortlived however, for a new leader soon emerged.

English field commander, Nicholas Maltby, demanded that the Earl of Desmond - recently pardoned by the Queen - join in pursuing the rebels, but Gerald refused to take the field against his kin. Maltby notified London that the Earl had joined the traitors, and marched to Gerald's castle at Askeaton, put his estates to the torch and his tenants to the sword. Finding the castle impregnable, Maltby broke into Askeaton Abbey across from the castle, desecrated the altar, defaced the statues, smashed the finest stained glass in the west of Ireland, broke into the tombs, and scattered the remains of the Desmond dead along the river. When Gerald complained to London, he was told to surrender his castle and estates, after which he would be allowed to live at peace in England. Gerald would have none of it. He was no stranger to England or the Tower of London: twice during his youth, Gerald had been detained there; his father had escaped imprisonment there only by dying in Ireland; his grandfather had died in the Tower; and his great-uncle, Silken Thomas, had spent 18 months in the Tower before being hanged, drawn, and quartered with five of his kinsmen. Gerald refused to submit and, on November 3, was officially declared a traitor. The aged Lord, who had wanted only to be left in peace, was now forced into rebellion against the Crown. The reluctant rebel was carried out of Askeaton by eager Fitzgerald supporters and placed on a white charger. As

his limbs shook with palsy, the ancient sword of Desmond was thrust into his bony hands. Amid battle cries and cheering, the Earl of Desmond reluctantly rode out to war. By no choice of his was he declared a traitor, but now a traitor he would be. The Great Earl was in the saddle and the entire West rose to join him. The Second Desmond War was on.

The Second Desmond War ultimately cost 500,000 lives, mostly Irish caught between the warring factions as entire areas were depopulated. In January 1580, Elizabeth turned her full attention to Ireland. Soon there were "more men serving under the Queen's pay than ever there were in Ireland in all these hundreds of years", as England's Treasurer William Cecil wrote. A reign of terror was instituted with pardon extended only to those who produced evidence of having slain a rebel. Baskets of heads were brought into English camps as the price of pardon, and these grisly trophies, passed off as the heads of fellow rebels, often were not. *Pelham's Pardon* worked a monstrous injustice on the people of Ireland by turning Irish against Irish and weakening traditional Gaelic ties, yet it accomplished a military aim: it compromised Gerald's forces from within as his followers increasingly grew to distrust one another. Furthermore Gerald, pitted against England's most resourceful commanders, proved to be a weak tactician. He avoided confrontation waiting for foreign aid or the English to offer terms, and drew back into Kerry leaving the heart of Munster open to the avenging English who destroyed everything they could.

While the English success was partly due to Gerald's lack of leadership, it was also due to the strategy of Butler and Pelham. Pelham believed that Ireland could only be won by the destruction of the Geraldines and, in his opinion, every Irishman was a Geraldine. Butler conceived the plan to strike at the people, their homes, herds, and crops; those who survived would turn against their own and bring in Gerald to stop the slaughter. English forces marched through Munster to rendezvous at Killarney leaving the country behind them scoured and dead; they denuded the land in nine months and turned toward Kerry with the largest force ever seen in the West. By May, 1580, Gerald was being flushed from hiding place after hiding place, when suddenly a new force emerged. James Eustace, Viscount Baltinglas, rose in Kildare with the clans of Wicklow. Disgusted at the rape of Munster, Eustace threatened Dublin while Pelham's forces were still concentrated in Kerry. All of Ireland was in chaos; it had become a killing ground; a scene of mindless, vengeful butchery with quarterings, flayings, mutilation, and torture commonplace. In England, Elizabeth heard rumors of a Spanish fleet headed for the Kerry coast that Pelham had just deserted and she replaced Pelham, sending the Puritan Lord Grey with a larger force than even Pelham had commanded. They landed in August and, by September 7, the war had a fresh beginning.



Lord Grey decided on a bold strike and marched into the Wicklow mountains after rebel cheftain Fiach McHugh O'Byrne. He suffered a crushing defeat at Glenmalure and the remnants of his army limped back to Dublin. No sooner had Grey's forces caught their breath, than they had to set out again - the Spanish had landed in Kerry! All available English forces in Ireland marched to meet them. The long-awaited Spanish aid (an ill-trained and poorly-equipped force of Basques and Italians) landed at Smerwick and occupied old Fort Del Oro. On November 5, Admiral Winter and the English fleet blockaded Del Oro and on November 6, Lord Grey arrived with an army of 4,000 men and the best siege artillery in Ireland. The next morning, the bombardment of Fort Del Oro began; by nightfall the garrison was shattered, and truce parties from the fortress sought terms of surrender. Irish accounts say that Grey promised quarter in order to lure the garrison into surrender and then reneged; Italian accounts say that Grey suggested mercy but then changed his mind; English accounts note that Grey left the decision to his officers. Debatable though it may be, what happened on the morning of November 8 is not; it was brutal cold-blooded murder! The fort surrendered and the Basques and Italians marched out to be disarmed. Soldiers entered the fort and dragged out the still-fighting Irish. All were then pushed back into the fort and gallows were erected. After the women were hanged, the Irish leaders were led to a blacksmith's forge where their arms and legs were broken in three places each. After suffering for two days without food and water, they were carted to the English camp where they were hanged, drawn, and quartered. As for the captives in the fort, Captain Mackworth and Captain Walter Raleigh led 200 armed men into the fort and slaughtered the defenseless prisoners. The vicious, calculating manner in which the Smerwick massacre was executed left an undying hatred in the hearts of the Irish and the term, *Grey's Promise* was the byword for treachery in Catholic Europe.

After Smerwick, only Gerald persevered. He carried on the war against all hope, striking at all who dealt with the English while the English struck at all who didn't - there was no middle ground. Finally, Gerald was sealed up in the Slieve Mish (the Phantom Mountains) of Kerry with a few followers who had not deserted him for the mercy of the Crown. On November 10, 1583 Maurice O'Moriarty, pursuing men who had stolen several of his cattle, entered the Slieve Mish Mountains with a score of family and half a dozen soldiers. In the Glenageenty Woods, about a mile from Tralee in the lee of Caherconree Mountain, O'Moriarty spied a cabin - the last hiding place of the Earl of Desmond. Surrounding the hut with his men, O'Moriarty broke down the door and confronted a child, a woman, and an old man whose joints were swollen with dampness and cold. Daniel O'Kelly attacked the crippled old man cowering in a corner and

## FIACH McHUGH O'BYRNE

During the Second Desmond War, Gerald Fitzgerald, the Norman-Irish Earl of Desmond, was declared a traitor, as were the Gaelic Chieftains who supported his cause against the Crown. One of the great Irish chieftains caught up in this Desmond War was Fiach McHugh O'Byrne whose clan controlled the Wicklow Mountains. Opposed to growing English control in Ireland, O'Byrne allied himself with the Geraldine cause and, because of his proximity to the Pale (Dublin), was considered a serious threat. In 1580, Lord Deputy Grey was sent by Queen Elizabeth to direct military operations and bring Ireland back to peaceful subservience. Grey decided on an initial display of strength and unwisely decided to track O'Byrne into the Wicklow Mountains and bring back his head as an example to the Irish. Trusting in the superior numbers and discipline of the English troops to defeat the untrained Irish, Grey underestimated two important factors: first, that O'Byrne was a seasoned war chieftain and his clan were no strangers to battle; and second, that the untamed wilderness of the Wicklow Mountains favored the guerilla tactics perfected by O'Byrne through long years of defending the lands of his clan.

It was no secret to O'Byrne that Grey would attempt an invasion of his hills and the Irish leader had plenty of time to perfect a strategy. On the night before the battle, as the Wicklow men prepared for the coming conflict, their bard - Doighre O'Daly - composed a battle verse to inspire the Wicklow men. It was a stirring composition reminding them of their heroic past, praising the courage and prowess of the warriors, and lamenting those who fell in former defense of their lands. As dawn approached, the Bard concluded his war poem:

[against the] Host of armor red and bright,  
may we fight a valient fight;  
for the green spot of the earth,  
for the land that gave us birth.

The English army, burdened with supplies, had left Dublin and wound its way up through the valley of Glendalough. Now, Grey began to appreciate the ruggedness of the terrain. O'Byrne waited patiently in his Ballinacor Mountain stronghold overlooking the valley of Glenmalure - the next valley to the south. When the English finally struggled their way over the mountains separating the two valleys, O'Byrne was ready. As the Crown forces descended into Glenmalure, the surrounding hills erupted with the sound of Irish pipes playing the war march of the O'Byrne clan as the Wicklow men, shouting war cries, fell on Grey's army, and scattered them. Sir William Stanley, commanding the rear of the English column, later wrote, "The Irish were laid all along the woods as we should pass, behind



trees, rocks, crags, bogs, and in coverts". As the remnants of the English Army scrambled for high ground, the Wicklow men made short work of officers and foot-soldier alike. In total disorder, Grey and his forces fled the lands of Fiach McHugh O'Byrne leaving over 500 of their men to sleep forever in the Valley of Glenmalure.

Three centuries after the battle, Patrick J. McCall wrote a lyric describing the day. The lyric was put to the tune of the O'Byrne war march that echoed through the Wicklow hills on that fateful September afternoon; the combination became a song popular to this day - Carry me up to Carlow!



## LONG ISLAND'S IRISH GHOST

There are few men in history whose life was reportedly as adventurous as that of Thomas Jones of Strabane, Co.Tyrone. He grew up in Ireland near the end of the 17th century - a time of political turmoil in England and intense persecution in Ireland. When the English King James II and William of Orange battled for the throne of England, young Jones was one of many Irish who flocked to James' banner in the belief that the Catholic King would restore the rights of Catholics in Ireland. In 1690, he marched under Patrick Sarsfield against the overwhelming forces of William of Orange at the *Battle of the Boyne* and, after the Irish retreat, fought with the diminishing remnants of the Jacobite army at the heroic stand at Athlone on the Shannon, the Battle of Aughrim, and finally the gallant defense of Limerick where William's superior army offered terms to the Irish in the infamous *Treaty of Limerick*. After the treaty was signed, all who bore arms in support of James' cause were bound over to serve in the English Army or depart Ireland forever. Of the 14,000 Irish fighting men, only about 1,000 turned to William's banner; the rest left for France and the Irish regiments of the French Army where they would distinguish themselves in battle in the years to come. Ireland called her exiled warriors *The Wild Geese*. Not a man of them saw Ireland again.

Tom Jones sailed to France, but he didn't remain there long. He secured papers authorizing him to sail as a Privateer against the Spanish fleet in the Caribbean, and decided that this would be a career more to his liking. The daring Irishman was rather successful in that role and even earned a modicum of fame for his part in the terrible Port Royal earthquake of 1692. Port Royal, Jamaica, served as haven for privateers, pirates, and buccaneers of every description. One quiet morning, a severe earthquake shook that Caribbean version of Sodom and Gomorrah and sank a major portion of the town to the bottom of the harbor. Jones, who happened to be at anchor in the harbor that day, miraculously rode out the great tidal wave that resulted and carried many souls to safety.

With some of the riches amassed during his career as a privateer, Tom Jones began a trading business with Thomas Townsend, a Rhode Island Quaker. In time, Jones wed Townsend's daughter, Freelove, and the two settled in the wilds of old Fort Neck (now Massapequa) in Nassau County, Long Island. Jones immediately set up a trading business, and bought acres of wild and desolate land from the local Indians. The Jones family holdings eventually extended from a dense northern woodland (Bethpage) to the Great South Bay. Jones built his wife a huge two-story brick home, the first of its kind on Long Island, which became known, not remarkably, as Old Brick House and was located in the meadows on the Massapequa River



(Old Brick House Creek). It was exquisitely decorated with carved chairs, marble tables, and other souvenirs of his days as a Privateer, while its panelled walls glittered with objects of art in the light of the huge fireplaces.

Although Tom Jones had become a model citizen with *Captain of the Nassau County Militia*, *Church Warden at Oyster Bay*, and *Major of the Nassau County Regiment* among his titles, it was said that he was not above smuggling a little rum now and then. When a local sheriff demanded tax for the smuggled rum, Jones displayed the boldness of a nature born in conflict in Ireland and fine-tuned in Jamaica and on the high seas. He laid out elegant tables in front of his home covered with white lace and laden with silver goblets of wine beside dishes of plump oysters, roasted striped bass stuffed with corn bread, roast goose, rashers of ham, and roast ribs of beef from his own stock. In an open space between the succulent dishes Tom had placed a pair of well polished silver pistols. When the sheriff and his posse arrived and faced Tom over the tables, Tom offered them the choice of 'lunch or pistols.' The lawmen wisely chose lunch, and sat down to what may have been the first organized outdoor cookout on Long Island.

Death finally overtook the daring Irish privateer and his lady; their final resting place, a short distance south of Old Brick House, became known as Pirates' Grave. In later years the site was repeatedly desecrated in search of maps or buried treasure until, finally, Tom and Freelove, along with their red sandstone markers, were moved to the safety of Grace Church on Merrick Road. Old Brick House remained for 150 years, a deserted mansion near an empty grave, whose windows remained ever open after the old man's death despite efforts to board or brick them up. Local residents claimed that, as soon as night fell, the window coverings would be dismantled amid strange sights and awful noises.

Progress has changed the face of old Tom Jones' land. Somewhere beneath the paved streets and cement driveways of Massapequa lie the fields that he surveyed for his lady, Freelove, and the ground that they walked in life. All that remains to their memory are weatherbeaten tombstones hidden in the shadows behind Grace Church and the Jones name on several streets and on a huge expanse of beach, once the southernmost part of the vast Jones holdings, that hosts millions of tourists every summer. Yet, there are still those who say that when the tourists depart and the moon shines down on the deserted sands of Jones' Beach, the ghost of old Tom can be seen walking the shores in the quiet of the night pointing out across the Atlantic and telling of his adventures in Ireland, in the Caribbean, and on the high seas to a smaller lady-like figure who is always by his side.

## ROBERT EMMET

The United Irishmen were a group of Catholics and Protestants united to work for Ireland's independence, and they rose for that freedom in 1798. The English put down the rising with extreme brutality and instituted a "campaign of frightfulness", as Suemus MacManus called it, "to break the spirit of the Irish that they should never dare to dream of liberty again". Terrible atrocities were reported as English militia ran down all who had belonged to, or had sympathies with the United Irishmen. This prompted United Irishmen leaders, still at large, to plan another strike for freedom. Entering into alliance with Napoleon Bonaparte and his minister, Tallyrand, they planned a rising for 1803.

With promises of a French force; of cooperation from revolutionary societies in England and Scotland; and of money and support from men of high military and political standing in Ireland, the effort at first seemed more likely to succeed than the ill-fated effort of five years earlier. In the autumn of 1802, a young man returned from France to coordinate the plans in Ireland. His name was Robert Emmet.

He had been a Republican student leader at Trinity College before the '98 rising and had been expelled for refusing to take an oath of allegiance to King George. His older brother, Thomas Addis Emmet, was one of the '98 leaders imprisoned by the English and subsequently exiled to France. Young Emmet's prime objective was to organize and arm volunteers to cooperate with the French when they landed. He contacted surviving fighters of '98 and reported that 19 counties stood ready. He then confined his activities to Dublin with three other leaders, Michael Dwyer, Myles Byrne, and Bernard Duggin. Alas, today we know that Bernard Duggin was a Castle spy who relayed all the plans to the English. Emmet, patiently waiting, began receiving reports that Tallyrand was only using Ireland for his own political ends, and the young Irish leader began to despair of French aid. On July 16, an explosion in an apartment that he had been using as an arms depot convinced Emmet that his plans were near discovery; he moved the date of the rising up to July 23. Assurances came from all over the country that if Dublin rose, the rest of Ireland would speedily follow.

On July 23, as Emmet awaited his men at the assembly point, a rumor reached him that soldiers were on their way. Confident that the rest of Ireland would follow his lead, Emmet drew his sword and led a ragged army of little more than 100 men into the Saturday night streets of Dublin. Confused timetables, misleading reports, and contradicting orders (reportedly authored by Duggin) left the revolution that Emmet had so carefully planned little more than a street riot that cost 30 lives. Emmet was on the run! He made his way into the trackless Wicklow Mountains where he



would be safe from Crown forces. As arrangements were being made for his passage to France, Emmet daringly came down from the hills to be near his dying mother and his sweetheart, Sarah Curran. Meanwhile, an English officer, Major Sirr, was seeking Emmet with a vengeance. He arrested Emmet's young housekeeper, Anne Devlin, and, though bayoneted twice and half-hanged, she never revealed his whereabouts.

Sirr finally found Emmet and cast him into prison. Love letters from Miss Curran (which Emmet carried in the folds of his white neck cloth) were confiscated and Miss Curran was arrested for questioning. Though she longed to admit her love for him, at Emmet's strict insistence she denied all knowledge of the rebel leader lest she be incriminated and tortured as had Anne Devlin. Emmet knew that his last gesture would have to be a defiant condemnation of the English at his trial, but he would not be able to do it if his beloved were in danger of reprisal for his last words and actions. Obediently, Sarah denied him, but Major Sirr was determined to prove a connection. During her questioning, Miss Curran was escorted across the prison yard when, suddenly, a door at the opposite end of the yard opened and out stepped Emmet between two guards! The two young lover's hearts pounded in their breasts as they were walked toward each other, and passed without the slightest hint of recognition.

In the dock, Emmet secured his place in Irish history with a stirring and defiant speech denouncing the oppressors of his land. On September 20, the 25-year old rebel was taken to Thomas Street and hanged, drawn, and quartered. Then sorrowfully was laid to rest the bold Robert Emmet - the darling of Erin.



## JOHN HOLLAND

Irish history contains the names of many men who have excelled in their fields, yet have never been accorded recognition for their contributions. One such Irishman, who deserves a prominent place in American history, was John Phillip Holland - inventor of the modern submarine.

Born in Liscannor, Co. Clare on February 24, 1842 to John and Mary (nee Scanlon) Holland, John grew up during the great hunger of 1845 to 49 which left him with poor eyesight for the rest of his life. Young Holland inherited a love of the sea from his father, a member of the Coast Guards in County Clare, but his poor eyesight prevented him from following in his fathers footsteps. Instead, he earned a living as a teacher in Counties Cork and Louth. Little is known of his life in Ireland, but it is reported that in 1865 he was teaching in Ballycar National School No. 4319 where a faint inscription in the whitewashed wall by the fireplace reads '*J Holland*'. At this time, naval activities of the American civil war held the interest of the young teacher, particularly the sinking of the Union frigate *Housatonic* by the unstable Confederate underwater craft *Huntley*. Holland had already been designing submarines for many years, and the Confederate action verified the importance of his ideas. Unable to promote interest in his submarine in Ireland, he emigrated to the United States.

The 30-year old teacher came through Ellis Island in 1872, and found employment in St. John's School, Patterson, NJ. In 1875, Holland offered his plan for a submersible boat to the U.S. Navy, but it was rejected as the "fantastic scheme of a civilian landsman." If only he could raise enough money to build a prototype vessel, he felt certain that he could convince the sceptics. As many other patriotic young Irishmen had done before him, Holland drifted toward the ranks of the American branch of the Fenian Brotherhood - Clan na Gael - which he joined in 1876. Here he found interested listeners to his plans for a submersible boat that could sink the largest British fleet. With the help of John Breslin, one of the men behind the Dublin prison escape of Fenian leader, James Stephens (see *Echoes of Irish History*, volume 1), Holland introduced his plan to Clan na Gael. Delighted with the prospect of a weapon that might strike a blow for Ireland, the Fenians offered to finance Holland's project.

A prototype was constructed to demonstrate his theories, and in 1878 a one-man, cigar-shaped submarine successfully slipped beneath the waves of the Passaic river. With the help of Clan na Gael, Holland then built a submarine of 20-tons displacement which was christened *Fenian Ram*. With an actual sub to test, Holland refined his design, but by 1882 disputes within the Fenian organization left him less and less in control of the project. Once again, he tried the U.S. Government, and again he was rejected.



With the excitement surrounding the success of the project, the secret was out. Spectators came to stare in amazement as the submarine went through its trials. In the interest of secrecy, the Clan na Gael (as owners of the subs) took them from Holland and moved them to a shipyard in Mattituck, Long Island, for further testing, as a plaque to that effect in the shipyard testifies. Finally, they were moved to New Haven, Ct. where, with no qualified people to operate them, they were eventually scuttled. Later, the *Fenian Ram* was salvaged, used during a fund-raising campaign for the Easter Rising, and its rusting hull finally erected as a monument in Westside Park in Patterson, NJ.

Holland persevered, constructing 10 subs by 1892. In 1895, he finally won a \$15,000. U.S.Navy contract to build a submarine, but the Navy insisted on modifications which made the sub *Plunger* a failure. While building *Plunger*, Holland also built another sub, *Holland* to the original design. It was a 53-foot sub of 50 tons displacement, with a compressed-air operated torpedo tube; it was a complete success. The Navy was impressed, the *U.S.S. Holland* became the first American submarine, and John Holland received an order for six more subs. Although the brain-child of the tenacious Irishman became the prototype for the greatest submarine fleet in the world, success came too late. Holland was deeply in debt and couldn't finance a company to meet the order. Financier Isaac Rice bought Holland's company and patents, and founded the Electric Boat Company in Groton Ct. (later to become General Dynamics). Rice dealt with both the U.S. and British governments, and sold them the original patents much to the chagrin of their inventor and Clan na Gael. Holland himself was moved lower and lower in Rice's successful company, ending up as only one of a staff of designers. In 1904, Holland left the company and spent his remaining years in costly unsuccessful litigation over his patents. On August 12, 1914, John P. Holland died in obscure poverty in Newark, NJ leaving his wife Margaret with five children. As he lay dying, the Germans and British were readying their respective Navies for war and the eyes of both fleets were submarines, built with John Holland's principles.

Holland's original dolphin-shaped hull design remained the standard for American submarines for many years until a narrower design was introduced during World War II. Ironically, when the advent of nuclear energy gave rise to higher powered and faster submarines, the narrower design proved unstable and the wisdom of Holland's original design was evident. U.S. Navy engineers eventually returned to Holland's design and all U.S. submarines from the 1958 *Skipjack* to the present day bear a likeness to the Navy's first submarine *Holland*, named after its forgotten inventor, one of the Irish who made America great.

## THE LITTLE CHURCH OF ST. MARY

Many Irish immigrants signed on to build America's railroads, so it was no surprise to find names like Cunningham, Hammil, Maher, and Doyle among those building the Orange and Alexandria Railroad in Virginia, not far from Bull Run. These and other Irish workers built a small town around one of the railroad's principal stations and the community became known as Fairfax Station. One of the first projects of the Fairfax Station Irish was the erection of a Catholic church. They labored in their off-hours to put up the small frame building and even pooled their money to buy a bell for its steeple. The new St. Mary's Church at Fairfax Station had barely opened its doors when Virginia decided to secede from the Union and the American Civil War began. Many of the Fairfax Station Irish joined the totally Irish Regiments that had been formed in the Confederate Army such as the First Virginia Regiment which became *The Emmet Guard* and the 27th Virginia Infantry which was called *The Virginia Hibernians*.

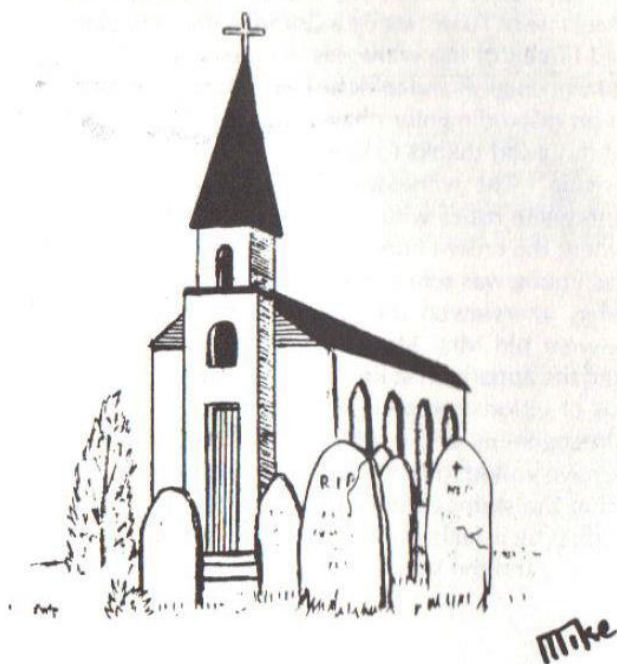
The little town of Fairfax Station was soon found to be strategically located between the important railroad station and a main road to Washington, DC. Further, the Union Army had taken the railroad depot at Alexandria in order to protect the Capitol and southern forces occupied the station at Manassas, making the Fairfax Station area the scene of some of the bloodiest fighting of the war. On August 30, 1862, General Lee sent his best commanders, Generals Stonewall Jackson, J. E. B. Stuart, and James Longstreet up through Virginia to intercept the Union Army of General Pope who were en route to join forces with the army of General McClellan, then moving back toward Washington. Lee and his forces met the Union Army and fought what came to be known as the second battle of Manassas and Chantilly. Three days of fierce fighting left 1,744 Union dead and another 8,452 wounded. During the battle, two gallant Union officers were lost, Major Generals Kearney and Stephens. Major General Philip Kearney had been a hero of the Mexican War during which he fought at the side of General Robert E. Lee. When Lee heard that his former comrade had fallen, he ordered the bodies returned to the Union camp. On Sept 1, under a flag of truce amid the roar of thunder and artillery, the bodies of Kearney and Stephens were carried by Confederate soldiers to a tent beside St. Mary's where a makeshift field hospital had been set up.

Hundreds of Union wounded were treated on the high ground around St. Mary's. A terrible storm made the scene one of confusion as wounded men lay dying in the mud waiting for a doctor to reach them. It was to this scene that a woman from Washington, DC came to offer her help. She had spent the first year of the war tending wounded in Washington, and hearing of the heavy fighting, made her way to Fairfax Station. With two



assistants, she set up an operating room inside the little Church and assisted the surgeons in their tedious task. She moved tirelessly among the wounded, cleansing wounds, writing letters, and praying with them until a doctor was available. While serving the many wounded in these deplorable conditions, she conceived a plan for a civilian organization that could act quickly with the proper medical supplies and trained staff in any emergency - in peacetime or in war.

A final Confederate raid forced the evacuation of the wounded amid terribly unsanitary conditions, and the brave little lady from Washington was among the last to leave. The advancing Confederate troops found the station and most of the town destroyed by fire, but as if by a miracle, the little Church was barely touched. Only a few of its pews had been used by the Union Army for firewood. Years later, when President Grant heard of this, he ordered \$765. in war damages to St. Mary's to have them replaced, for the little Church of St. Mary's had earned a special significance in American history. It was there that the heroic little lady from Washington, DC had conceived a noble organization. The lady was the angel of the battlefield, Clara Barton, and the organization was the American Red Cross. . .and the little Irish Church of St. Mary's where it all started is still in use to this day.



## OUR LADY OF KNOCK

Sometime around 8 PM, on the evening of August 21, 1879, at the little Church of St. John the Baptist in the tiny Irish village of Knock, County Mayo, a small group of farm people witnessed an astonishing vision. Three figures, surrounded by a mysterious glowing light, suddenly appeared in an area adjacent to the Church. Behind them, on an altar, was a cross and a lamb surrounded by adoring angels. It was raining, but no rain seemed to touch them. Mary McLoughlin, the housekeeper of Father Bartholomew Cavanaugh, and her friend, Mary Byrne, thought at first that they were new statues ordered by the parish priest, but when the figures started to move, the witnesses recognized immediately that they were in the presence of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and St. John.

Mary Byrne ran to get her brother, Dominick, and he came with their mother, Margaret, and her granddaughter, 8-year old Catherine Murray. They couldn't believe what they were witnessing. Word spread. Within a short time, others from the area had gathered to see the mystical vision. No such heavenly visitation had ever before been reported in Ireland, and the people fell to their knees and prayed, oblivious of the soaking rain. The figures remained, hovering silently a few feet above the ground for nearly two hours, and then vanished as suddenly as they had appeared.

Within days after the vision, Father Cavanaugh requested that Archbishop McHale of Tuam, set up a Commission of Enquiry. The Commission examined fifteen of the witnesses, including 75-year old Bridget Trench, who spoke no English and told the Commission "Cead mile buiochas le Dia agus leis an maighdin ghlormhair a thug duinn an taispeanadh seo", or "A hundred thousand thanks to God and the glorious Virgin who have given us this vision". The witnesses all described Mary as a beautiful woman clothed in white robes with a bright crown upon her head; over her forehead, where the crown fitted the brow, she wore a beautiful golden rose.

The testimony was sent to Rome and studied. A second Commission, 57 years later, interviewed the surviving witnesses, including Mary Byrne (then 84-year old Mrs. Mary O'Connell). Results were sent to Rome in 1939, and the apparition at Knock was granted canonical sanction. Of the hundreds of visions reported, Knock is one of only ten to have received Church recognition, and it ranks with Fatima as a holy site of pilgrimage. Millions have visited Knock since 1879 and numerous miracles have been reported at the shrine. The Catholic people of Ireland, who struggled so hard to keep their faith alive through the penal times had received a visit from heaven, and the Virgin had acquired a new title - Our Lady of Knock.



## ST. VALENTINE'S IRISH CONNECTION

February 14 is Valentine's Day - a day honored worldwide by lovers, who use the occasion to send messages of undying affection to their sweet-hearts. Its also a day known to postmen (though not as eagerly awaited) who are burdened with carrying those messages on hundreds of thousands of cards decorated with hearts and flowers. Though the red heart has become the traditional symbol of Valentine's Day, there may be reason to also consider the Shamrock, for there is an Irish connection.

The exchange of affectionate messages has been a custom since Roman times, and cards have been used since the 16th century. Although the name of St. Valentine (a third century Christian martyr beheaded in Rome about 269 AD) has become attached to this ritual, little is known about the man. What is known, however, is that St. Valentine's feast day on the Church calendar happens to coincide with the old pagan celebrations of spring, perhaps explaining why the amorous rites associated with that celebration have become attached to his name. The Irish connection with St. Valentine is much more recent.

In the year 1836, Pope Gregory XVI sent a gift to the Carmelite Church on Whitefriar Street, Dublin, in recognition of the work of the church's former prior, Father John Spratt, who was widely recognized as a very holy man. The gift was a relic of a Christian martyr: a small gold-bound casket containing the earthly remains of St. Valentine. The relic had been exhumed from the cemetery of St. Hyppolytus on the Tiburtine Way, placed in a special casket, and brought to Dublin where it was enshrined in the little Church with great ceremony.

Each year, on February 14, the casket containing the Saint's mortal remains is carried in solemn procession to the high altar of the Carmelite Church for a special Young People's Mass. This little known Dublin church also sells Valentine's Day cards, and those that can be purchased there can truly be said to be the genuine article!



Mike



## A WORD TO THE READER

In this second volume of his *ECHOES OF IRISH HISTORY*, Mike McCormack proves once again that he has many strings to his bow – or to his harp, to be Irish about it. As a major columnist in the *Irish Echo* he has attracted a wide readership, but with this compilation of historical information he should reach even farther, because his work is as entertaining as it is scholarly.

There is little to know about Irish history that Mike does not know, and he has the true bardic gift for passing on his knowledge. Reading *ECHOES*, one might almost imagine oneself sitting beside a roaring fire, with a harpist quietly dreaming over his instrument in the background, while a master storyteller spins an enchantment that brings longago days to vivid life once more.

The *ECHOES* collection contains many highlights from Irish history, but listeners fortunate enough to be able to hear the radio show Mike hosts for WLIM, Suffolk County, Long Island, get to hear many more. The program called *ECHOES OF IRELAND* gives this gifted man ample opportunity to captivate an audience, and he does. But for those beyond the reach of his radio waves, this second volume of vignettes will prove a treasure trove in its own right.

Mike is a special man, a man with a passion for history and a gift for friendship. Both qualities are very Irish, as he is, and both qualities shine through his work. Readers who discover him for the first time in this volume of *ECHOES* will surely feel they have made a new friend, for to read Mike's writing is to know and love the man.

Enjoy !

Morgan Llywelyn, author of  
**Lion of Ireland** and  
**Bard: The Odyssey of the Irish and**  
**Grania: A Woman of Ireland**  
to be published in 1986