THE IRISH IN RHODE ISLAND

A Historical Appreciation

By

PATRICK T. CONLEY

THE IRISH IN RHODE ISLAND

A Historical Appreciation

By

PATRICK T. CONLEY

Rhode Island Ethnic Heritage Pamphlet Series

Published Jointly
by
The Rhode Island Heritage Commission
and
The Rhode Island Publications Society
Providence, 1986

Published jointly by
The Rhode Island Heritage Commission
Robert B. Lynch, *Chairman*
and
The Rhode Island Publications Society
Dr. Patrick T. Conley, *Chairman*

Printed in the U.S.A.
ISBN: 0-917012-83-6

Published with a grant from the
Rhode Island Heritage Commission

Rhode Island Ethnic Heritage Pamphlet Series
Dr. Patrick T. Conley, *General Editor*

Cover photo: Celtic Cross on Patriots' Lot,
St. Mary's Parish Cemetery, Pawtucket.

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

In 1975 and 1976, on the eve of the bicentennial observance, in my capacity as chairman of Rhode Island's celebration (ri76), I established eighteen ethnic heritage committees, consisting of recognized leaders of this state's major ethnocultural groups. One purpose of this move was to involve in bicentennial activities those ethnic communities whose contact with this country did not extend as far back as the Revolutionary era. I urged such groups to observe and commemorate the contributions they had made to the American and Rhode Island experience from the time of their arrival down to the bicentennial year. A much more important reason for establishing the ethnic heritage program, however, was to allow each group to present its unique contributions, customs, and folkways to its neighbors from other cultural backgrounds. Formulated under the premise that knowledge promotes understanding and understanding begets brotherhood, the program was designed to break down the ethnocentric barriers and antagonisms that hindered us from achieving that lofty motto and goal—*E pluribus unum*, one out of many.

The one task assigned to each group upon its formation was to write a brief interpretive account of its Rhode Island experience—its motives for migration, areas of settlement, cultural survivals, and economic, political, and social activities—together with an assessment of its contribution to the development of our state. Though some efforts are more sociological, subjective, anecdotal, or selective than the neat, precise historical narrative that I envisioned, each of these pamphlets in its own way makes a valuable statement to all Rhode Islanders and provides a useful self-evaluation for the group that is the subject of analysis.

After the bicentennial's expiration, the concept of an ethnic heritage pamphlet series was kept alive by the Rhode Island Heritage Commission and its tireless chairman, Robert J. McKenna. Albert T. Klyberg of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Dr. Hilliard Beller of the Rhode Island Publications Society, and, especially, the authors of the various essays have also labored to bring this project to fruition as their contribution to the 350th anniversary of the founding of the state. No historical enterprise could be more appropriate for this 1986 celebration than a recounting of the toil and the triumph of our diverse peoples: From American Indians to Southeast Asians, we are Rhode Islanders all!

Patrick T. Conley

Prologue

In the 1980 federal census, the first to pose the question of ancestry, 210,950 Rhode Islanders claimed Irish descent. This figure represents more than 22 percent of the state's total population. Despite the early advantage of the English and subsequent waves of immigration from French Canada and Italy, Irish-Americans have been Rhode Island's numerically dominant ethnic group for more than a century.

Rhode Island's Irish are a diverse lot and defy easy generalization. Statistically, it can be determined that the bulk are middle-class, Roman Catholic, and Democratic; that they are urban or suburban dwellers; and that they are clustered near the center of the political and ideological spectrum. An impressionistic assessment is more tenuous and less susceptible of proof, but wit, a facility with the English language, a sense of humor emphasizing the ironic, sociability, sentimentality, compassion, impulsiveness, a quick temper, a penchant for politics, a preference for secure occupations over those fraught with entrepreneurial risk, and a relatively high level of devotion to formal religion seem to be among their more common ethnocultural traits.

With all this said, perhaps poetess Louise MacNeice was closer to the truth when she observed that "it is never safe to generalize about the Irish."

The Protestant Pioneers

The Irish presence in Rhode Island dates from the mid-seventeenth century. Our knowledge of this Irish vanguard stems from the researches of several Irish-American genealogists and apologists, such as Thomas Hamilton Murray, who defensively scoured the records of the American colonies to establish a long Irish-American lineage and thus overcome the charge of "foreignness" hurled at the nineteenth-century Irish and their Catholic Church. Ironically, most of these early Irish Rhode Islanders were Protestant—mainly Baptists, Quakers, Presbyterians, or Anglicans—and those few with Catholic antecedents soon lost their religious affiliation for lack of Catholic clergy within the colony. Among the handful of seventeenth-century Irish Rhode Islanders (for New England had a much smaller percentage of Celtic immigrants than the middle or southern colonies) were Charles McCarthy, an original proprietor of (East) Greenwich, and Edward Larkin of Newport and Westerly, who served briefly in the colonial legislature.

In the early eighteenth century the colony's most notable Irishmen served as clergymen or schoolmasters. Among the former was Derry-born Reverend James McSparran (1680-1757), for thirty-seven years the distinguished rector of St. Paul's Church (Wickford), which served the spiritual needs of South County Anglicans. McSparran, who tutored President Thomas Clap of Yale, gained renown by publishing *America Dissected* (Dublin, 1753), a collection of his letters to friends in Ireland, which proved for its British audience a valuable source of information on the American colonies. Another even more illustrious Irish scholar and clergyman was George Berkeley, Anglican essayist and philosopher, who stayed at Whitehall Farm in present-day Middletown during his eventful

George Berkeley (top left), a leading Irish philosopher and clergyman, had a productive stay in Newport from 1729 to 1731; Irish-born Anglican clergyman James McSparran (top right), rector of St. Paul's Church in Wickford from 1721 to 1757, was a major religious and cultural leader in the Narragansett Country; John Sullivan (bottom left) was commander of the American forces in the Battle of Rhode Island (1778); and John Carter (bottom right), the son of an Irish naval officer, was Revolutionary Providence's most prominent journalist.

sojourn in America from 1729 to 1731. After the failure of his cherished but impractical project of establishing an Anglican college in Bermuda, Berkeley returned to Ireland, where he was rewarded with the bishopic of Cloyne.

Notable Irish tutors (of which there were a good number in relation to the small Irish population) included Stephen Jackson (1700-1765), who left Kilkenny and settled in Providence. This teacher and prosperous farmer had a son, Richard, who became president of the Providence-Washington Insurance Company (1800-1838) and a four-term congressman, and a grandson, Charles, a prominent industrialist who served as governor in 1845-46. Other Irish schoolmasters were John Dorrance (1747-1813), a Providence civic leader, and the Reverend James "Paddy" Wilson of Limerick, first a teacher and then the colorful pastor of Beneficent ("Roundtop") Congregational Church. James Manning, first president of the College of Rhode Island (now Brown University) and the son of a New Jersey farmer, was probably of Irish descent. Though a Baptist in religion, Manning graduated from the College of New Jersey (Princeton), then a citadel of Irish Presbyterianism. Despite the fact that Manning's Celtic origins are in doubt, it is certain that Protestants in Ireland financed much of the initial endowment for his College of Rhode Island.

Colonial Rhode Island's most famous Irish craftsman was Kingston silversmith Samuel Casey, and its most renowned business family (Irish or otherwise) were the Brown brothers of Providence—James, Nicholas, Joseph, John, and Moses. The Browns' mother, Hope Power, was the daughter of Nicholas Power (1673-1734), a native of Ireland who served in the Rhode Island General Assembly and as a colonel in the state miltia. Colonel Power's oldest daughter, Mary, was the mother of Nicholas Cooke, the state's Revolutionary War governor (1775-1778). In view of the sparseness of their numbers (one genealogist counted only 166 Irish surnames in the pre-1776 colonial records), the impact of the Irish on the English colony of Rhode Island was considerable.

During the American Revolution nearly three hundred Irish names appeared on Rhode Island's military and naval rolls, and the American commander in New England's largest military engagement, the inconclusive Battle of Rhode Island, was General John Sullivan of New Hampshire, whose parents had migrated from Ireland in the 1720s. When Rochambeau's French army came to Newport as allies of the American cause in 1780, many of its soldiers

were Irish nationals, particularly those men from Colonel Arthur Dillon's regiment who served in Lauzun's Legion.

A strong journalistic supporter of the Revolutionary cause was John Carter (1745-1814), the son of an Irish naval officer killed in the service of the Crown. Carter came to Providence as a journeyman printer from Philadelphia, where he had been apprenticed to Benjamin Franklin. From 1767 until 1814 he molded public opinion in Providence as the editor of the *Providence Gazette.* A major supporter of the ratification of the federal Constitution, Carter also served as Providence postmaster from 1772 to 1792. His daughter Ann (1769-1798) married Nicholas Brown, Jr. (son of the famous Providence merchant), the great benefactor of Brown University. The present-day Brown family is descended from their only child, John Carter Brown.

Whereas John Carter was the child of an Irish naval officer, two notable Rhode Island commodores of the early national period were sons of an Irish immigrant mother. Newport's Oliver Hazard Perry (1785-1819), hero of the decisive Battle of Lake Erie (1813), and Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794-1858), who opened Japan to Western trade and influence, were the children of Sarah Wallace (Alexander) Perry, a native of Newry in County Down, and mariner Christopher Perry of South Kingstown, who met Sarah when he was confined to a British internment camp in Kinsale, Ireland, as a Revolutionary War prisoner. After the conflict, Perry sailed back to Ireland to bring Sarah to America.

In the three decades following the winning of independence, Irish immigration was negligible, for Catholic Ireland, the great source of the Irish exodus, was still immobile. Though they suffered religious persecution and political repression, most Irish Catholics were bound to the soil and kept in a state of ignorance concerning opportunities elsewhere—a people of limited horizons and hopes. Those few who came to colonial America went to Maryland and Pennsylvania. Small, overwhelmingly English, and a haven for radical Protestants, Rhode Island then had little allure for the Catholic Celt.

The Catholic Exodus, 1815-1922

In the aftermath of the War of 1812, the first significant migration of Catholic Irish to North America began as Irish agriculture experienced a period of reorganization. Tenant farmers of all classes suffered from the postwar decline in agricultural prices. This condition led to expansion of the grazing industry, with its concomitant consolidation of farmland. Consolidation and eviction was also stimulated by the disfranchisement of the small tenant farmers in 1829. The failures of the potato crop in 1818 and 1822 provided further sources of discontent.

The loosening of restrictions on passenger travel in 1827, which was immediately reflected in cheaper fares, brought a sharp upturn in immigration to America. This liberalization of the Passenger Acts coincided with the onset of chronic crop failures. The introduction of inferior-quality potatoes, together with a succession of wet seasons and the appearance of blight, had rendered the staple food of the peasantry utterly unreliable, and in thirteen of the seventeen years after 1828 there were partial failures of the vital potato crop. Departure from this stricken land seemed for many the only rational solution.

Up to 1835 the typical Irish migrant was from the farming class, usually poor but seldom destitute, and possessed of the rudiments of education. During the late 1830s more of the low cottiers—impoverished, often illiterate, but not devoid of hope or ambition—undertook the voyage to the New World. This was especially true after the passage of the Irish Poor Law of 1838, which shifted the increasingly heavy burden of supporting Irish paupers from English taxpayers to Anglo-Irish landlords. Faced with this onerous levy, the landlords found it desirable to promote emigration of the poor. This was facilitated by the act itself, which integrated eviction and

emigration into a new economic policy. Under its provisions the dispossessed could be lodged in workhouses, and since the measure also provided for assisted imigration, it was only a logical succession from eviction to workhouse to emigrant ship.

This change in 1838 increased the quantity of the Irish immigration and lowered its socioeconomic level, prompting a nativist reaction in America. It is more than coincidence that Henry B. Anthony's *Providence Journal* launched its relentless campaign against the "foreign vagabond" in the year 1838, setting in motion the wave of nativism which engulfed Rhode Island in the 1840s and 1850s.

Such were the basic causes and nature of the pre-Famine migration. During the three decades between 1815 and 1845, a million Irishmen, most of whom were Roman Catholics, came to North America. Perhaps five thousand of these settled in Rhode Island. Many of that number took a circuitous route to the state. Those who could afford it went to Liverpool, England, whence they sailed to New York or Boston and then traveled overland to the mill villages of Rhode Island. Those who were less fortunate took the cheaper route from Ireland to Quebec, Nova Scotia, or the Maritime Provinces, either in packets or in the empty holds of returning timber ships, and then came overland or by coastal vessel to Rhode Island. Such traffic was not burdened with the American laws regulating passenger room and safety precautions.

A deluge of refugees began with the onset of a serious potato blight late in 1845 and the crop's complete failure in the fall of 1846. For five terrible years Ireland went through a succession of miseries which left it in economic ruin. Deprived of their staff of life, tens of thousands of Irish starved to death and more than a million fled in abject destitution.

According to the leading student of American immigration, Oscar Handlin, the Famine migration was unique. "The nature of its distinctiveness," says Handlin, "may be gathered from the circumstances that produced it. This exodus was not a carefully planned movement from a less desirable to a more desirable home. This was a flight, and precise destination mattered little. The *Cork Examiner* noted, 'The emigrants of this year (1847) are not like those of former ones; they are now actually *running away* from fever and disease and hunger, with money scarcely sufficient to pay passage for and find food for the voyage.' No other contemporaneous migration partook so fully of this poverty-stricken helplessness." These Irish reached America as a thoroughly downtrodden people, with searing

memories of religious persecution and devastating economic hardship.

In each of the years from 1847 to 1854, over 100,000 Irish, mostly from the cottier class, came to America. The Irish migration to the United States by decades in the period 1840-1870 was unequaled by any other immigrant group up to that time. From 1841 to 1850, 780,719 made their hegira, and in the peak decade, 1851-1860, that figure rose to 914,119. In the period from 1861 to 1870, the volume declined to 435,778, but that number was second only to that of the German arrivals. Throughout the era migration was subsidized by remittances from Irish in America to their relatives in the homeland.

The overwhelming majority of the Irish became urban dwellers in Rhode Island and elsewhere despite their rural background. They entered this unfamiliar milieu because they needed immediate employment and lacked the funds to continue onward to the more promising frontier areas. In addition, the Irish cottier was hardly an agriculturalist in the normal sense; he was a wretched subsistence farmer who clung to the soil for survival. The land held bitter memories for him.

Rhode Island got its share of this outpouring from Ireland. The federal census of 1850, the first national survey to record the nativity of the population, revealed that the state had 23,111 foreign-born out of a total population of 147,545. At this point the natives of Ireland totaled 15,944, or 69 percent of the foreign-born. By the time of the first state census in 1865, the foreign-born population had climbed to 39,703; of this figure the Irish-born accounted for 27,030, or 68 percent. By the federal count of 1870, there were 31,534 of Irish birth, but the beginnings of large-scale French Canadian migration had cut Ireland's percentage of the total foreign-born to approximately 55 percent. During this period Providence ranked sixth among the cities of the nation in its number of Irish-born residents.

These figures, however impressive, do not indicate the full Irish impact upon the state at this time. There were many Irish emigrés, for example, who went first to England, Scotland, or British America and established a domicile there and had children before coming to the United States. Such wanderers would be listed as arrivals from their most recent country of residence, and their children would be regarded as natives of that nation. The number of Irish who followed this pattern of migration was significant.

Another factor to be considered in assessing the physical impact

of the Irish is that of parentage. Rhode Island's superintendent of the census, Edwin M. Snow, was the pioneer among the nation's statisticians in recording not only foreign birth but also the parentage of the native-born. The 1865 state census, one of the first to include this demographic factor, indicated that there were 21,106 American-born children of Irish parentage, a figure which pushed the Irish share of the total foreign stock in Rhode Island to 73.1 percent—and this figure did not include 3,558 persons of "mixed" parentage, a high proportion of whom had either a mother or a father of Irish extraction.

* * * * *

By 1875—fifty years after the onset of their immigration—the Catholic Irish had established settlements and churches in all the urban and industrial areas of the state, including Newport (especially the lower Thames Street neighborhood), Providence (mainly in Fox Point, the North End, Smith Hill, Olneyville, Manton, Wanskuck, and South Providence), Pawtucket, Woonsocket, the mill villages of Lincoln and Cumberland (including Central Falls, Valley Falls, Lonsdale, and Ashton), Harrisville, Pascoag, Greenville, Georgiaville, Cranston (especially Arlington and the Print Works district), the Pawtuxet Valley (particularly the villages of Crompton, Riverpoint, and Phenix), East Greenwich, Wakefield, Westerly, Warren, and Bristol. Aside from the English, no other Rhode Island ethnic group dispersed so widely.

Of the thousands of Irish who flocked to the state in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, many found their circumstances bleak. Depressed to the status of paupers by the conditions of their flight from Ireland, driven into debilitating slums or drab mill villages by their position as unskilled laborers, and isolated intellectually by their cultural background and physical segregation, these Irish saw insuperable social, economic, and religious barriers between themselves and the natives. As long as these barriers were to persist, they would stimulate and perpetuate group consciousness in both Irish and Yankees and leave the community divided within itself.

The most pressing economic concern of the newcomers was to obtain employment, but most post-Famine Irish had escaped into a way of life completely alien and unfavorable to them. These poverty-stricken peasants, rudely transposed to an urban industrial area, were barred by training and discrimination from most decent jobs. The absence of other opportunities forced the vast majority into the ranks of an unskilled proletariat, whose cheap labor and abundant numbers

energized all aspects of the state's industrial development. In the economic sphere, Irish women played an important role as factory hands, home seamstresses, and domestics for the well-to-do Yankee merchants, industrialists, and professional men.

Despite their willingness to work, the Irish found the value of their labor low, often too low to support them and their families adequately. Further, from the day they landed, these immigrants competed for jobs that were cyclically scarce. Through all these years unemployment was endemic to the economic system, and those at the bottom of the ladder were particularly hard-hit in times of local or national depression like that associated with the panics of 1857 and 1873.

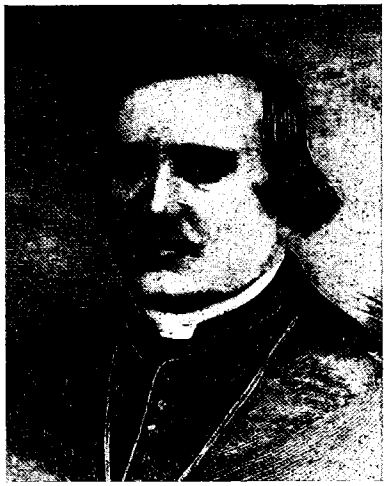
This economic uncertainty was compounded in some areas by squalid living conditions. Immigrant rents were high beyond all reason, tenements were overcrowded, sewerage and sanitation facilities were primitive where they existed at all. This inadequate housing and inescapable filth took their toll in sickness and lives. When a cholera epidemic ravaged Providence in 1854, the highest percentage of fatal cases were in the neighborhoods of India Street and Fox Point Hill, both Irish ghettoes. Nine-tenths of all deaths occurred among foreigners, a toll influenced by the wretched tenements in which they lived and their habits of life.

Public charity and even emergency public works programs were far from sufficient to meet the needs of the Irish Catholic immigrant. Thus, such church-related efforts as the Sisters of Mercy charitable fairs and, especially, the St. Vincent de Paul societies that were formed in the various parishes assumed a major role in caring for the destitute. These were augmented by certain fraternal agencies like the Shamrock Benevolent Aid Society of Woonsocket, established during the depression in 1858.

On the eve of the Civil War, the Irish were the substratum of Rhode Island society. Spurned as lower-class menials, politically impotent, and discriminated against as Catholics ("No Irish Need Apply"), they were caught in a web of poverty and social alienation from which they would not escape until new immigrants came to take their place. Even politics, the traditional road of the Irish to power and prestige, was blocked by formidable constitutional obstacles such as the real estate requirement for voting imposed upon those of foreign birth.

* * * * *

During the nineteenth century, Irish immigration and the growth of the Catholic Church were closely intertwined. The first



Among the nineteenth-century Irishmen most responsbile for the establishment of Rhode Island Catholicism were missionary priest and parish founder James Fitton (top left); Bishop Bernard O'Reilly (top right), who perished at sea returning from a clerical recruiting trip to Ireland; Thomas F. Hendricken (bottom left), first bishop of the Diocese of Providence and cathedral builder; and Joseph Banigan (bottom right), a millionaire philanthropist who was the Church's greatest benefactor.

tiny Irish Catholic communities were at the Portsmouth coal mines and in the Fox Point section of Providence near that town's bustling harbor. French priests from Boston began to visit both areas during the second decade of the century. The Providence Irish secured the use of a building on Sheldon Street as the state's first Catholic church in 1813, but the structure was destroyed by the Great Gale of 1815.

A more significant influx of Irish occurred in the mid-1820s, prompting Bishop Benedict Fenwick of Boston to dispatch Father Robert Woodley to Newport in 1828 as Rhode Island's first resident priest. There, in April 1828, the young cleric founded St. Mary's, the state's oldest parish. In 1829 the busy Woodley—whose mission territory included the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut in their entirety, plus southeastern Massachusetts—built the state's first Catholic church specifically constructed for that purpose at St. Mary's, Pawtucket.

When Woodley came to Rhode Island to establish a Catholic presence, Rhode Island's Roman Catholics numbered about 600 out of a total state population of 97,000, a mere six-tenths of 1 percent. The 600 faithful served by Woodley in 1828 were concentrated in Newport, where they worked as laborers on Fort Adams; in Portsmouth, where they were employed as miners at the coal pits; and in Providence, Cranston, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket, where they served the needs of the growing factory system or were employed in such public works projects as the construction of the Blackstone Canal. Nearly all of them were Irish. In the 1830s, as the railroad came to Rhode Island, this Irish migration continued, and in the 1840s and 1850s, in the wake of Ireland's disastrous famine, it reached impressive proportions. By 1865 three out of every eight Rhode Islanders were of Irish stock, the state's Irish Catholic community numbered nearly 50,000, and pioneer missionary priests like the Reverend James Fitton had established twenty widely scattered parishes. The energetic and seemingly ubiquitous Fitton, a founder of Holy Cross College (1843), was a driving force in the development of Rhode Island Catholicism, serving in every major area of Irish settlement, including Newport, Providence, Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and the Pawtuxet Valley.

To spiritually accommodate the Irish influx of the mid-nineteenth century, the Diocese of Boston was subdivided and the Diocese of Hartford created in 1844. This new administrative entity included the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island. Its first bishop, the frail, devout William Tyler, was a Yankee convert from Protestantism. Although the see city of his new diocese was

Hartford, Tyler decided to govern from Providence, which was a more prosperous community with a larger Catholic population.

The decade of the 1840s saw several important developments which affected the Irish Catholic community. One was the famous Dorr Rebellion, which occurred between 1841 and 1843 over an attempt to broaden democracy in Rhode Island and replace the antiquated royal charter of 1663 with a written state constitution. The opponents of political reformer Thomas Dorr were partly motivated by anti-Catholic prejudice and political nativism, themes which have often been ignored in discussions of this colorful episode. Over the objections of Dorr, Rhode Island's state constitution of 1843 (still in effect as amended) established a real estate requirement for foreign-born voters which was designed to discriminate against Irish Catholic immigrants.

Another event of importance was the John Gordon murder trial—the Sacco-Vanzetti case of the nineteenth century. This 1844 travesty of justice, which on the basis of circumstantial evidence resulted in the hanging of a young Irish Catholic immigrant for the killing of prominent industrialist Amasa Sprague, caused such misgiving that it contributed to the abolition of the death penalty in Rhode Island eight years later.

In 1850 William Tyler was succeeded as bishop of Hartford by Irish-born Bernard O'Reilly, called "Paddy the Priest" by some native Rhode Islanders. In 1851 this bold and strong-willed bishop brought Mother Xavier Warde and the predominantly Irish Sisters of Mercy to Providence, where they immediately founded St. Xavier's Academy for girls, the first Catholic secondary school in the state. Four years later, during the height of the Know-Nothing movement, O'Reilly personally defended the Mercy nuns from an anti-Catholic mob that had congregated at St. Xavier's Convent to "free" a young girl who had allegedly been confined therein. Returning from a clerical recruiting trip to Europe in 1856, O'Reilly perished at sea when his ship was lost in a North Atlantic storm. This pugnacious prelate was a man for the times who courageously resisted nativistic attacks upon his Church.

The last bishop of Hartford to preside over Rhode Island Catholicism was Francis Patrick McFarland, whose episcopacy coincided with the Civil War and Reconstruction years. This gentle and scholarly prelate's tenure was marked by the emergence of a Catholic presence in the social and political affairs of Rhode Island. McFarland's energy and learning built the first bridges to the non-Catholic community of the state, resulting in a lessening of the

extreme Know-Nothing antagonisms that had dominated the 1840s and 1850s.

The Civil War was a testing ground that also helped to mollify native fears of Irish Catholics. Animated by a desire to preserve the Union and thereby prove their Americanism, Irish immigrants and their sons fought side by side with Yankee boys. Sharing the same hardships and spilling their blood in the most costly battles in our country's history, they forged a common bond that diminished (but did not eliminate) the ethnoreligious bitterness and distrust of the preceding decade. Two members of the local Irish community—John Corcoran and James Welsh—were recipients of the newly created Congressional Medal of Honor for their wartime heroism. In 1877 this award was bestowed also on Owen McGair (grandfather of Cranston attorney and probate judge William J. McGair) for heroic service in the Indian wars.

In the years before 1872, when the Diocese of Hartford was itself divided and the Diocese of Providence created, Rhode Island's Catholic population grew dramatically. The history of Irish-American Catholicism in these formative years contains a number of noteworthy themes. The Church was a poor and struggling enterprise often dependent on aid from foreign mission societies. It was attempting to grow in a hostile environment of bigotry and nativism; it took genuine courage to be a practicing Catholic. These were lean, tough years, and they took their toll on the pioneer bishops: Tyler died at age 43, O'Reilly at 52, and McFarland at 55.

The other salient fact of this period was the role of the lowly Irish immigrants in building the Church of Providence. During the years prior to 1872, almost the only influences upon Rhode Island Catholicism were those distinctive Irish traits which gave the local Catholic community a unity of religious outlook. The vast majority of clergy were either trained in Ireland or educated in American facsimiles of the Irish seminaries. The laity of Providence was also overwhelmingly Irish in origin and perspective. Irishness and Catholicism had fused and produced what was in reality an Irish national church. The creation of the Diocese of Providence (with Irish-born Thomas F. Hendricken its first bishop) was the Irish immigrants' first notable achievement in their adopted land.

* * * * *

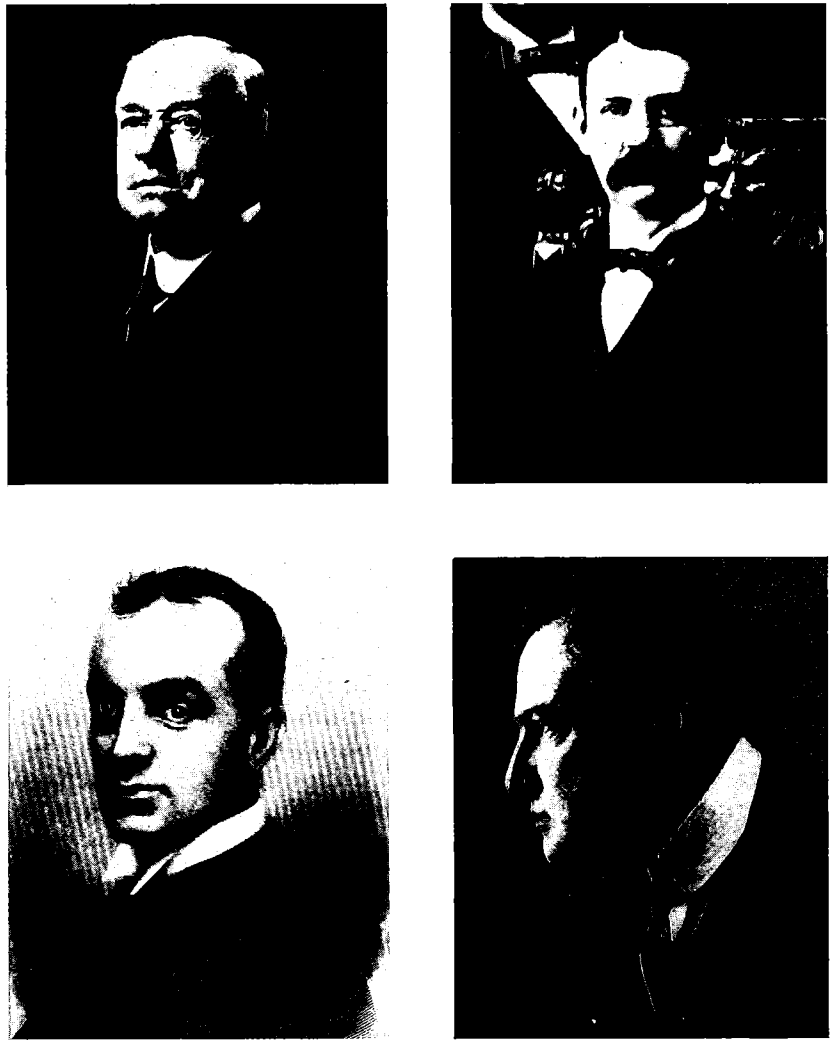
During the last third of the nineteenth century, the era of America's Industrial Revolution, the Irish of Rhode Island made a slow yet significant climb up the socioeconomic ladder as new immigrants from French Canada, eastern Europe, and the

Mediterranean took their place on the bottom rungs. Political advancement also became less difficult as more native-born Irish reached voting age. Whereas the 1865 state census revealed that "only one in twelve or thirteen of the foreign-born of adult age was a voter," economic advancement for the Irish immigrant and native birth for his male children combined by the 1880s to make the real estate requirement for voting and officeholding much less restrictive.

According to the census of 1885, the state had 92,700 citizens with at least one parent of Irish birth, but for the first time more than half of these (50,313) were native-born. When these foreign-stock Irish (immigrants or their children) were added to second- and third-generation Irish-Americans, the total number must have easily exceeded 100,000 in a general Rhode Island population of 304,000. This one-to-three ratio was the relative high point of Irish numerical presence in the state.

Numbers plus native birth equaled political clout. Leading the Irish political advance was Charles E. Gorman (1844-1917), Boston-born of an Irish father and a Yankee mother. An outspoken advocate of equal rights and suffrage reform, Democrat Gorman successively became the first Irish-Catholic member of the bar (1865), state legislator (1870), Providence city councilman (1875), and speaker of the House (1887). His younger colleague, attorney Edwin Daniel McGuinness (1856-1901), became the first Irish Catholic general officer, winning election as secretary of state in 1887. In 1896 Democrat McGuinness also became Providence's first Irish Catholic mayor, but the city's most notable chief executive of this or any era was Thomas Doyle, of Irish Protestant stock, whose eighteen years of service between 1864 and 1886 constituted an unparalleled era for Providence's growth and development. A contemporary of Doyle's, Dublin-born Thomas Davis, was a prominent businessman who served one term (1853-1855) in the Congress of the United States. Although Davis was a Protestant, he was an outspoken foe of nativism and had several public confrontations with bigoted *Journal* editor Henry B. Anthony concerning the rights of naturalized citizens. After a successful business career, Davis built a large estate in Providence that is now occupied by Veterans' Hospital and the recreational area called Davis Park.

In the state's other cities, where the urban-dwelling Irish had also congregated, similar political breakthroughs occurred. In Pawtucket, Irish Catholic Hugh J. Carroll gained the mayoralty in 1890, followed by co-religionists Patrick J. Boyle in Newport (1895), Thomas McNally in Central Falls (1905), and Edward Sullivan in Cranston (1910), the first mayor of that city.



Politics was a major Irish pathway to power and influence. The Irish Catholic community's political pioneers were Charles E. Gorman (top left), first state legislator (1870) and House speaker (1887); Antrim-born Edwin D. McGuinness (top right), first general officer as secretary of state (1887) and first mayor of Providence (1896); James H. Higgins (bottom left), first governor (1907); and Galway-born George F. O'Shaunessy (bottom right), first United States congressman (1911).

Attorney James H. Higgins, who had succeeded the colorful and dynamic John J. Fitzgerald as mayor of Pawtucket in 1903, won election in 1906 and again in 1907 as Rhode Island's first Irish Catholic governor. Galway-born Democrat George O'Shaunessy (1868-1934) became another local Irish Catholic pathbreaker, securing election four times to the U.S. House of Representatives (1911-1919). He was followed to Washington two years later by five-term Irish Republican congressman Ambrose Kennedy of Woonsocket. In 1913, after the victory of Joseph Gainer, the Irish began their unbroken sixty-year grip on the Providence mayoralty, and by that time they were firmly in control of the organizational structure of the Democratic party.

The Irish economic rise, though less spectacular, had some "rags to riches" scenarios. The most notable climb was made by Joseph Banigan (1839-1898), Rhode Island's first Irish Catholic millionaire. The Irish-born son of parents who migrated to Rhode Island from Scotland in 1849, Banigan got in on the ground floor of the emerging rubber goods industry and improved Charles Goodyear's process for the vulcanization of rubber. By 1889 he opened the Alice Mill in Woonsocket, then the largest rubber shoe factory in the world. Three years later Banigan helped form the massive U.S. Rubber Company and became its president (1893-1896). In 1898 he financed the construction of Providence's first "skyscraper," the ten-story Banigan Building.

Even more impressive than the money Banigan amassed were his charitable donations. Influenced by his humble origins, Banigan was his Church's greatest benefactor, though his generosity is but dimly remembered. Among his many local endowments were huge gifts to establish and sustain the original Home for Aged Poor in Pawtucket, St. Maria's Home for Working Girls, St. Joseph Hospital, St. Vincent de Paul Infant Asylum, and St. Bernard Mortuary Chapel in St. Francis Cemetery, Pawtucket, where this self-made Irish immigrant was laid to rest in July 1898.

By that date Irish-born William and Thomas Gilbane had directed their firm (established 1873) to the forefront among local building contractors, and James Hanley (1841-1912), another Irish immigrant, had become the region's most prominent brewer. Though such Horatio Alger stories were not common, Irish-American small businessmen, lawyers, and physicians were becoming increasingly so in the early years of this century. Especially notable was Dr. John William Keefe, a founder of St. Joseph Hospital, a World War I surgeon, president of the Rhode Island

Medical Society (1913-1914), president of the American Association of Obstetricians, Gynecologists, and Abdominal Surgeons (1916-1917), and founder of an East Side surgical center. These professionals and entrepreneurs took their place alongside Celtic clerics and politicians as the Irish elbowed their way into the middle class.

In the blue-collar field, Irish-Americans made great strides in the building trades, acquiring skills as masons, carpenters, plumbers, steamfitters, painters, plasterers, electricians, and ironworkers. Railroad, street car, and public utility employment, professional police work, and fire fighting also had strong appeal.

As Irish-American labor leaders, affiliated with the Knights of Labor or the AF of L, led the fight for the eight-hour day, Americans used their newly acquired leisure to partake of such popular spectator sports as professional baseball. The new national pastime produced a number of local Irish-American luminaries, including Orator Jim O'Rourke, batting star of the national champion Providence Grays, and Hugh Duffy of Cranston, whose 1894 batting average of .440 with Boston of the National League is still the unapproachable major league record. Both O'Rourke and Duffy are enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame. The "Boston Strong Boy," John L. Sullivan, became another local Irish sports celebrity. In the early 1880s the world's heavyweight boxing champion trained in the Pawtuxet Valley, where he met and married Annie Bates of Centreville.

A more genteel spectator activity of great popularity was vaudeville. Here also the Rhode Island Irish community produced performers of national stature, the most magnetic of whom was George M. Cohan. Born in the Fox Point section of Providence on July 3, 1878, to variety performers Jerry and Nellie (Costigan) Cohan, George joined his sister Josie and their parents on stage well before he reached his teens. The four Cohans left the local circuit for Broadway during the 1890s. Cohan eventually became America's most successful theatrical producer, and during his fifty-five years in show business he composed more than five hundred songs, including such patriotic airs as "Over There," "You're a Grand Old Flag," and "Yankee Doodle Boy." During World War I, Cohan's inspirational music heightened American military ardor and reaffirmed the commitment of Irish-Americans to their adopted land, despite our wartime association with England.

In the two generations from the end of the Civil War to the end of World War I, Irish-Americans, including those in Rhode Island, exhibited a zealous interest in home rule for their mother country.

Because of this concern for their homeland, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century they exerted greater pressure on American foreign policy than any other ethnocultural group.

The Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, popularly called the Fenians after the herioc band of ancient Irish warriors (*Fianna Eireann),* flourished in the local Irish community in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. In August 1865 over five thousand Irish gathered at Rocky Point to hear state Fenian president Patrick McGreevey and national president John O'Mahoney urge the American Irish to assist in fomenting a revolution in Ireland against British rule.

Though the "Fenian frenzy" subsided by 1870, in part because of an abortive raid by ill-organized Fenians into British Canada, the home rule issue stayed alive as funds for the cause poured into Ireland from Rhode Island and other centers of Irish-American influence. This support was due largely to the efforts of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, an Irish fraternal society whose first division was established in Rhode Island in 1870.

The state attracted some heroic exiles who had engaged in the fight for Irish freedom, most notably Frank and Mary Byrne, lieutenants to Charles Stewart Parnell, and James Wilson, a leader in the Irish Fenian revolt of 1867 who settled in the Blackstone Valley after a daring American-aided escape from an Australian prison. One of the sponsors of this bold rescue mission, staged by the ship *Catalpa*, was Michael McAloon of Pawtucket. The Byrnes, Wilson, and his wife are buried at a site in St. Mary's Cemetery, Pawtucket, called Patriots' Lot, dedicated in 1899 to the cause of Irish freedom.

That the so-called "Irish question" continued to interest Rhode Island's Irish community until independence was achieved in 1922 is indicated by the fact that the state's Democratic U.S. senator, Peter Gerry, was the sponsor of the fifteenth reservation regarding American ratification of the Treaty of Versailles (Senator Henry Cabot Lodge sponsored the first fourteen). Gerry's proposed amendment to the treaty ending World War I expressed the Senate's adherence to the principle of national self-determination and in particular its sympathy for Irish independence.

In 1917, the year of the American entrance into the Great War, Bishop Matthew J. Harkins (the fourth and most productive in a line of seven Irish Catholic bishops of Providence spanning the years from 1850 to 1971) joined with a group of Irish professionals and businessmen and the Dominican Fathers of the Province of St. Joseph to found Providence College. The original purpose of the

college—to provide higher education with a Christian perspective to aspiring young men from the local Catholic community—was proclaimed at the dedication mass offered at the doors of Harkins Hall in May 1919. A major participant in these exercises was Dr. Charles Carroll, Rhode Island's most prominent public educator. The scholarly Carroll would eventually write the most authoritative multivolume history of the state, the first such work to give prominence to Rhode Island's more recent immigrants.

By the time Providence College was founded, Rhode Island Irishmen had already achieved distinction for their cultural and literary attainments. The earliest author of note was Father Bernard O'Reilly, a chaplain in New York's famed Irish regiment, "The Fighting Sixty-Ninth." After his Civil War service O'Reilly came to Woonsocket, where he served briefly as pastor of St. Charles parish from 1867 until January 1869 before returning to New York. Later in his career O'Reilly wrote numerous books, including biographies of Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII, that achieved global circulation.

In 1884 Alfred Thayer Mahan, descendant of an eighteenth-century Irish immigrant, began a productive tour of duty at Newport's newly created Naval War College, where he served both as professor and president. In 1890 Mahan (1840-1914) published *The Influence of Seapower upon History,* the most famous and influential of his numerous historical volumes advocating American expansion on strategic grounds. This country's most famous geopolitician, Mahan served as president of the American Historical Association in 1902.

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, the local Irish were given an advance look at the literary efforts of several promising young Irish authors by a most unlikely source—the *Providence Journal.* For forty-five years (1839-1884), while the paper had been under the malign influence of nativist and machine Republican Henry B. Anthony, Irish Catholics and Democratic politicians had been its twin nemeses. This changed (at least temporarily) when Alfred M. Williams (1840-1896) began his seven-year tenure as *Journal* editor in 1884.

Williams, a Taunton native, entered the newspaper profession during the Civil War. In 1865 Horace Greeley sent him to Ireland as a special correspondent to cover the Fenian revolt. In that troubled country Williams developed a sympathy for the oppressed Irish and an appreciation of their culture. His concern for the underdog continued throughout his career, as evidenced by his staunch support of women's suffrage and Indian rights.

Having come to Providence during the mid-seventies as a

reporter for the *Journal,* he rose rapidly through the ranks to become that influential paper's editor in 1884. The most notable aspect of Williams's career became his study and promotion of Irish literature. He wrote several works on the topic and published in the newly created *Sunday Journal* the early efforts of several then obscure (but now famous) Irish authors, including William Butler Yeats, Douglas Hyde (later president of the Irish republic), Katherine Tynan, and Mary Banim. According to Professor Horace Reynolds's book *A Providence Episode in the Irish Literary Renaissance,* these works are "a record in miniature of the beginnings of a movement that is today recognized as one of the most distinctive in the stream of English letters." Williams donated his vast and renowned collection of books in Irish history, literature, and folklore to the Providence Public Library, where they are still housed.

In January 1897 the American-Irish Historical Society was formed, largely through the efforts of Thomas Hamilton Murray, editor of the Woonsocket *Evening Call,* who became this national organization's first secretary-general and the editor of its widely circulated historical journal. The group's name, with "American" first, and its objects—"to study the Irish element in the composition of the American people; to investigate and record the influence of this element in the upbuilding of the nation, and to collect and publish facts relating to and illustrating that influence"—demonstrate an Irish-American drive to achieve respectability and cultural acceptance. Murray wrote a number of well-researched articles on the early Rhode Island Irish for his journal and hosted several of the society's national conventions. Many prominent Rhode Islanders of Irish ancestry (regardless of their religious affiliation) joined the organization, including Governor Elisha Dyer, former House Speaker Charles E. Gorman, Mayors Edwin D. McGuinness, Hugh J. Carroll, and Patrick J. Boyle; Thomas Z. Lee of Providence, who succeeded Murray as secretary-general; and a host of physicians, lawyers, and businessmen. One clerical member was Father Austin Dowling of Providence, who wrote the first scholarly history of the Diocese of Providence in 1899.

Another contemporary organization that stressed both Americanism and cultural advancement was the Knights of Columbus. Founded in New Haven in 1882, it spread throughout Rhode Island during the 1890s and was warmly embraced by Irish Catholics. During the period prior to World War I, this fraternal society was, de facto, an Irish Catholic benevolent association and the favored social group of upwardly mobile Irish-Amercan leaders who desired to

project a gentlemanly image and to dispel the nineteenth-century stereotype of the rowdy, fighting Irishman.

By 1922, the year the Irish Free State was created, Rhode Island's Irish had made major advances in all walks of life, having accomplished the difficult transition from "Paddy" to "Yank" or "Studs." No major political office, except for U.S. senator, had eluded their grasp, and they dominated the hierarchy of the state's Democratic party, though that party was still the minority. In the religious life they boasted a long list of prominent individuals, both male and female; Father Austin Dowling had even risen to the rank of archbishop of the prestigious See of St. Paul, Minnesota.

With their own sports celebrities, war heroes, show-biz personalities, millionaires, labor leaders, educators, historians, and respected professionals, as well as a host of civil servants, skilled workers, and God-fearing, law-abiding common folk, Rhode Island's Irish had—in spite of the notorious prohibition—indeed applied.

The Irish Arrive, 1922-1986

In the three generations from the early 1920s to the present, Rhode Island's Irish-Americans achieved distinction and success commensurate with their rapidly increasing numbers. With two of every nine Rhode Islanders claiming Irish ancestry by the 1980 federal census, an essay of this limited scope can scarcely do justice to its subject. For every notable Gael singled out for mention, hundreds must go unnamed. For every field of endeavor surveyed, an equal number of worthy skills and occupations may be ignored. And for every full-blooded Irishman, intermarriage has produced a complex ethnic mix such as Patrick Conley, with a maternal line composed of northern Italian and English stock. Similarly, Italian blood courses through the maternal line of Edward J. McElroy, Jr., state AFL-CIO president, while the fathers of Providence College professor of Irish history Paul O'Malley and popular Warwick ex-mayor Joe Walsh married into the related Jewish clans of Baker and Horowitz. Conversely, Bishop Kenneth Angell, descended on his father's side from the Thomas Angell that accompanied Roger Williams to Providence, is also the son of Mae Cooney; and Supreme Court Justice Joseph Weisberger, a noted Catholic layman, descended from a mother who bore the maiden name of Ann Meighan. With these qualifications and complexities in mind, one may attempt to recite the recent achievements of the Rhode Island Irish, both full-bloods and hybrids.

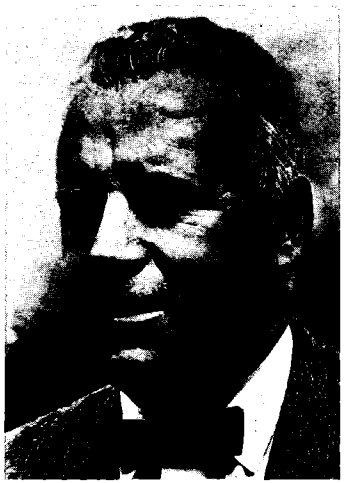
When the local Irish Catholic community finally reached the plateau of respectability and acceptance early in this century, many Irish were faced with a delemma: should they join the "ins" or lead the "outs"? Without hesitation, those involved in the Rhode Island political world enthusiastically chose the latter course.

During the two decades between world wars, the state experienced a turbulant political transformation from traditional Republican party dominance to rule by the Democrats. The Irish were the architects of that upheaval. By finally mastering the game of ethnic politics (much later than their counterparts elsewhere) and by taking advantage of economic shifts, social changes, and cultural trends on both the state and national levels, Irish Democratic politicians weaned Franco-Americans, Italians, Jews, Poles, and blacks from their traditional Republican allegiance and ushered them into an Irish-led Democratic fold that dominated state government from 1940 through the elections of 1982.

The spearheads of this Irish political advance were a handful of youthful legislators who entered the General Assembly in the years following the outbreak of World War I. Foremost among them were William S. Flynn of South Providence, Holy Cross, and Georgetown Law School; Robert Emmet Quinn, a Brown- and Harvard-educated attorney from West Warwick and the nephew of Colonel Patrick Quinn, who had carved that mill town from Warwick's western sector in 1913; William E. Reddy, another West Warwick lawyer via Holy Cross and Boston University Law School; Francis B. Condon, a Georgetown Law School graduate from Central Falls; James H. Kiernan, a Providence clerk; and Thomas Patrick McCoy, a Pawtucket streetcar conductor. Both of the latter graduated (in McCoy's words) from "the school of hard knocks."

Of this bright, ambitious group, Flynn was the first to rise and the first to fall. Having won an upset victory in the 1922 gubernatorial race, he saw his administration made turbulent by zealous Democratic attempts to enact constitutional reforms, attempts that were countered by equally determined Republican moves to maintain the status quo. In 1924, after the adjournment of the infamous "stink-bomb legislature," Flynn lost his bid to become Rhode Island's first Irish-American United States senator.

Both Bill Reddy and Jim Kiernan confined their political careers to the state House of Representatives. Reddy capped off a twenty-three-year tenure with two terms as speaker (1933-1937) during the era of the General Assembly's famed "Bloodless Revolution." Kiernan had even greater longevity. "Mr. Democrat" represented Providence's Mount Pleasant section in the House for a record-setting fifty-one years, from January 1915 to December 1965, serving as House speaker in 1937-38 and as majority leader from 1940 until his death in office at the age of eighty-one.



In the 1920s and 1930s these Irish-American political leaders transformed Rhode Island from a predominantly Republican to a predominantly Democratic state: Governor Robert Emmet Quinn (top left); Governor, U.S. Senator, and Democratic National Chairman J. Howard McGrath (top right); Pawtucket Mayor Thomas P. McCoy (bottom left); and U.S. Congressman John E. Fogarty (bottom right).

Tom McCoy moved from the legislature to the city chairmanship and mayoralty of Pawtucket (1936-1945). Though his plans for statewide office were thwarted, he was a major strategist in the Bloodless Revolution of January 1935—that "first hurrah" whereby the Democratic party seized control of state government. McCoy also exerted a great impact on state policies and elections from his Pawtucket command post. There, with the aid of Harry Curvin, he constructed Rhode Island's best example of a genuine, smooth-functioning political machine. The colorful "Prince of Pawtucket" survived a statewide Republican landslide in the 1938 elections by actually polling more ballots in some city districts than there were registered voters. Later, at a communion breakfast, while a state criminal probe of this phenomenon was under way, McCoy wryly explained the secret of his political survival: "We're politically sophisticated in Pawtucket. Elsewhere they use arithmetic to count votes; here we use algebra."

Francis B. Condon, McCoy's Blackstone Valley neighbor from Central Falls, operated on a more elevated plane. He moved in succession from the Rhode Island House (1921-1926) to the Congress (1930-1935) to the state Supreme Court (1935-1965). For his last seven years on the bench, Condon served as chief justice, succeeding Edmund W. Flynn (William's brother), who had assumed direction of the high court on January 1, 1935, as a result of the Bloodless Revolution. Flynn's twenty-two-year tenure has been the longest in Rhode Island's history.

Of all those Irish political leaders of the World War I era, Robert Emmet Quinn was the most durable. Quinn rose from the state Senate (1923-1925 and 1929-1933), where he led the famous 1924 filibuster, to the lieutenant governorship (1933-1937), where he presided over the Bloodless Revolution, to the governorship (1937-1939), where he battled with Narragansett Park director Walter O'Hara in the ludicrous and nationally scandalous "Race Track War" of 1937. While that episode and a national recession cost "Battling Bob" reelection, he was later appointed to the Rhode Island Superior Court (1941-1951) and then to the newly established U.S. Court of Military Appeals (1951-1975), where he served as chief judge.

Another early twentieth-century Irish political pioneer was Mrs. Isabelle Florence Ahearn O'Neill, Rhode Island's first female legislator. Born in Woonsocket, she was educated at such diverse schools as Harvard College, the Boston School of Oratory, and Hemmingway Gymnasium. When she was elected in the Flynn

campaign of 1922 as a Democratic representative from the Broadway district of Providence, she was a teacher of elocution and physical education. Mrs. O'Neill served four terms as a member of the House education committee and two terms as state senator prior to retiring undefeated from elective office in 1935. She died in 1975 at the age of ninety-four.

One Rhode Island Celt who sought from the start to carve out his political career on the national level was Thomas Gardiner ("Tommy the Cork") Corcoran (1900-1981), a leading draftsman and lobbyist for much of the legislation now labeled Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Recommended by his Harvard Law School Professor Felix Frankfurter, Corcoran joined the New Deal "Brain Trust" and drafted such landmark laws as those creating the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Housing Administration, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Fair Labor Standards Board. Corcoran, a Pawtucket-born son of an Irish immigrant, often entertained Roosevelt with Irish ballads as well as drafting some of the president's political speeches. For forty years after his retirement from government employ in 1940, Corcoran was one of Washington's most prominent and successful lawyer-lobbyists. Another local Irishman lured to the Potomac was John Fanning, a twenty-five-year member of the National Labor Relations Board who chaired that body from 1977 to 1981.

During the decades following 1935, when the Irish-led Democratic party solidified its hold on state government, a new wave of home-grown Irish-American political leaders emerged. Most notable of these Roosevelt-era luminaries were J. Howard McGrath, John E. Fogarty, Dennis J. Roberts, William E. Powers, and Harry F. Curvin.

Curvin was the protege and ally of McCoy. He represented Pawtucket in the House from 1931 to 1964. During the last twenty-three years and 223 days of that long tenure, he presided (some say dictatorially) as speaker. No one has ever approached Curvin's longevity record as House leader.

William E. Powers of Central Falls is thought by some to be Rhode Island's brightest major political figure of the century. He overcame the handicap of blindness, the result of a childhood accident, to rank at the top of his Boston University Law School class. After five terms in the House (1939-1949), Powers served nine years as attorney general before his elevation in January 1958 to the state Supreme Court. In 1973, having stepped down after fifteen

distinguished years on the high-court bench, he reemerged to chair that year's highly successful state constitutional convention.

Dennis J. Roberts, a noted high school athlete at LaSalle Academy, was, perhaps, the most powerful figure in state government during the decade following World War II. From 1941 to 1951 he served as mayor of Providence under that city's first strong-mayor charter, and he presided as governor from 1951 to 1959.

John E. Fogarty was even more durable. This bricklayer-turned-politician went to Washington as congressman from Rhode Island's Second District in January 1941. There he remained until his sudden death twenty-six years later, compiling the longest period of service in the U.S. House of Representatives of any Rhode Islander. Fogarty's many achievements in the area of health care legislation won him the national title of "Mr. Public Health," but the man with the green bow tie was equally renowned as an unrelenting supporter of Irish unification. Fogarty was a throwback to the Irish congressmen of the early twentieth century in his outspoken advocacy of Ireland's cause and in the public display of his Irish heritage.

Woonsocket-born J. Howard McGrath was undoubtedly the state's most versatile politician. After spending the war years as Rhode Island's governor, he was appointed U.S. solicitor general by his close political ally Harry S. Truman. In 1946 McGrath was elected to the U.S. Senate, the only Rhode Island Irish Catholic ever elected to that office. The following year Truman named him Democratic national chairman, and McGrath quickly proved his worth in the 1948 elections by overseeing Truman's surprising upset of presidential hopeful Thomas E. Dewey. In the following year the ambitious Rhode Islander gave up his Senate seat to become U.S. attorney general. After resigning this post in 1952, he returned to private business and the successful practice of law.

This political "big five" of the past half century are merely the highest blades of a lush green lawn of local politicos that have sprung from the "auld sod." Passing mention, at least, should be accorded also to U.S. Congressmen Jeremiah O'Connell, Bob Tiernan, and Eddie Beard; Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Roberts (brother of Governor Roberts) and Associate Justices O'Connell, Thomas F. Kelleher, and Donald F. Shea; Lieutenant Governor, acting Governor, and Superior Court Justice John S. McKiernan; Lieutenant Governor and long-time Family Court Chief Judge Edward P. Gallogly; interim U.S. Senator and federal District Court Judge

Edward L. Leahey; federal court judges Edward McEntee, Edward Day, and Francis Boyle; and four-term Governor J. Joseph Garrahy. An impressive roster, certainly, and yet apologies must be extended to all those mayors, general officers, legislators, state jurists, legislative leaders, and long-tenured civil servants who are simply too numerous to be included here. In politics, Rhode Island's Irish have made it big!

But not all Irish achievers have been men. During the past decade women have made a notable climb to the top of the political ladder. Burly "Bridget," the Irish domestic much maligned in late nineteenth-century cartoons and caricatures, has been replaced by impressive, articulate public figures. One such achiever is Florence Kerins Murray of Newport, who became, successively, the first woman associate justice of the Superior Court (1956), that court's first female presiding justice (1978), and the first woman to sit on the Rhode Island Supreme Court (1979). Her legal and civic attainments would fill a volume.

South Providence's once vibrant Irish community also produced a remarkable Irish-American political leader, one who is not only a woman but a Republican with an un-Irish name. In November 1984 Arlene Violet—a former Sister of Mercy, social activist, and daughter of popular Republican politico Henry A. "Mickey" Violet—became the first female in American history to be elected to the office of state attorney general. Inspired by such pioneers, Irish-American women, long the workhorses of local party organizations, are sure to play a more prominent role in Rhode Island political life in the years to come.

From the 1920s until 1971, Irish-Americans continued their dominance in the local hierarchy of the Catholic Church. William Hickey became coadjutor bishop of Providence in 1919, when Matthew Harkins was in declining health, and ascended to the See of Providence in his own right when Harkins died in 1921. Of all the bishops of Providence, Hickey (1921-1933) has the most complex character to analyze. A man of impulse who was quick to anger but also quick to forgive, he had authoritarian tendencies which were mingled with a genuine concern for the educational and social needs of those entrusted to his care. One of his major efforts was to bring order and centralization to the affairs of the diocese. An example of such centralized coordination was Hickey's inauguration of the Catholic Charity Fund Appeal in 1927. Another such effort was his High School Fund Drive, which provided a tremendous boost to diocesan secondary education and resulted in the founding of Mount




According to a recent study of nineteenth-century Irish immigrant women by Jewish scholar Hasia Diner, the Irish ladies, in terms of work, educational achievement, and upward mobility, were "much more successful than other female immigrants." Their descendants carry on this tradition: Florence Murray (top left), first associate justice of the state Supreme Court; Arlene Violet (top right), America's first female attorney general; Sister Lucille McKillop, R.S.M. (bottom left), president of Salve Regina College; and the late Sister Eileen Murphy, R.S.M. (bottom right), founder of Amos House, a South Providence settlement house for the destitute.

St. Charles Academy (Woonsocket), St. Raphael's Academy (Pawtucket), and the now defunct De La Salle Academy (Newport). Unfortunately, Hickey's centralization plans and his high-handed manner led to clashes with certain segments of the Franco-American community and furnished the background for the Sentinellist controversy of the 1920s, one of the most fascinating, turbulent, and difficult episodes in the history of Rhode Island Catholicism.

Hickey's successor, Francis P. Keough (1934-1947), was a warm, kindly, and popular bishop who set about the tasks of healing the ill feelings engendered by the Sentinellist agitation and adjusting to the administrative changes wrought by his predecessors, Harkins and Hickey. For this reason Keough's episcopacy has been called "The Era of Conciliation and Consolidation." Keough, however, made some important innovations of his own, most notably the creation of the Catholic Youth Organization (1935), the establishment of Our Lady of Providence Seminary (1941) for the education of young men preparing for the priesthood, and the founding of Salve Regina College (1947). Keough also crusaded against obscenity in movies and in print. He served as national chairman of the Bishops' Committee of the National Organization for Decent Literature (Legion of Decency). His efforts in Rhode Island and nationally were evidently viewed with favor by his ecclesiastical superiors, for Keough was elevated to the archbishopric of the primal See of Baltimore in 1947.

After the departure of Keough, Russell J. McVinney (1948-1971) assumed spiritual direction of the diocese—the only Rhode Island native to hold that post. During his episcopacy the Church made impressive material gains which attest to McVinney's administrative expertise. His tenure was a period in which Rhode Island Catholicism expanded its social role. Confronted with the enormous challenge of presiding over the Church in an age of social, educational, liturgical, and attitudinal flux, McVinney met this challenge extraordinarily well, despite his basically traditional posture, and next to Matthew Harkins he ranks as the man who exerted the most significant and beneficial impact on Rhode Island Catholicism.

Many other able Irish clerics served as administrators in the Providence diocese or were raised here and then departed to assume positions of church leadership elsewhere. John Cardinal Dearden, archbishop of Detroit, was born and spent his boyhood in the Blackstone Valley; Daniel P. Reilly of South Providence, a former diocesan chancellor, became bishop of Norwich, Connecticut; Ernest

B. Boland, O.P., of Smith Hill became a missionary bishop in Pakistan; Thomas J. Wade, S.M., was bishop of the Solomon Islands at the time of his death in 1969; and Francis Roque is now chief Catholic bishop of the U.S. armed forces.

In addition, Rhode Island has produced or served as the workshop for such nationally renowned scholars and writers as Monsignor John Sullivan, the Reverend Edward Flannery, and the Reverend Thomas Cullen; distinguished college-level educators such as the nearly unbroken succession of Dominican priests who have held the presidency of Providence College since its founding in 1919; and the long line of distinguished Irish-American professors, both clerics and laity, who have taught there.

In the world of business and corporate finance, the Rhode Island Irish have been less conspicuously successful, perhaps proving the truth of an observation made by the nineteenth-century English historian Thomas Babington Macaulay: "Irishmen are distinguished by qualities that tend to make them interesting rather than prosperous." With the exception of the nationally ranked Gilbane Building Company, which has spearheaded the revitalization of downtown Providence, there are no spectacular success stories, no Browns or Banigans, no Fortune 500 companies to the credit of Rhode Island's modern Irish community. In two major white-collar businesses, insurance and banking, the Catholic Irish have not been well represented at the top echelon. Notable exceptions have been Woonsocket businessman James M. McCarthy (father of Lorenzo C. McCarthy, O.P., third president of Providence College), who established Woonsocket Trust Company (now Eastland Bank); Michael Dooley, head of Providence's National Exchange Bank until its absorption by Industrial (now Fleet) Bank; Walter Farrell, president of Union Trust Company at the time of its merger with Industrial; Patrick Shanahan, currently president of First Bank and Trust; and, especially, John Cummings and his protege J. Terrence Murray, who have held in succession the top position at Fleet National Bank, Rhode Island's largest financial institution.

In the field of letters, Rhode Island's Irish-American community produced two noteworthy novelists of Irish-American life. In 1946 Edward McSorley, who lived for a time on Providence's South Side, published *Our Own Kind*. This widely circulated Book-of-the-Month Club selection poignantly depicts the travails of the McDermotts, an Irish working-class family in St. Malachi's (St. Michael's) Parish. Its sequel, *Young McDermott*, appeared three years later.

Even more famous and widely read than McSorley was

Woonsocket's Edwin O'Connor (1918-1968). This product of LaSalle Academy had among his credits such Irish-American literary classics as *The Last Hurrah* (1956), the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Edge of Sadness* (1961), and *All in the Family* (1966).

In Irish-American nonfiction, George W. Potter, an editor at the *Providence Journal*, penned one of the best general histories of the early nineteenth-century Irish migration—his posthumously published and popularly written *To the Golden Door: The Story of the Irish in Ireland and America* (1960). Potter, following the example of *Journal* editor Alfred Williams, also bequeathed his Irish books to the collections of the Providence Public Library.

Thomas N. Brown, who taught for six years at Portsmouth Priory, was the author of *Irish-American Nationalism, 1870-1890* (1966), the standard account of Irish-American reaction to the home rule movement led by Charles Stewart Parnell. More recently, Professors Robert W. Hayman, Matthew J. Smith, and Patrick T. Conley of Providence College have published books on nineteenth-century Rhode Island Catholicism emphasizing the impact of the Irish on Church growth, while another distinguished educator, Professor William G. McLoughlin of Brown University, has established himself as one of the foremost authorities on the history of American Protestantism.

In the modern period the Rhode Island Irish community produced several nationally prominent entertainers, most notably Eddie Dowling of Woonsocket (1889-1976), a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, Broadway composer, and producer; vaudeville promoter and theater manager Edward M. Fay; jazz trumpeter Robert L. "Bobby" Hackett (1915-1976) from Providence's North End; actress Ruth Hussey (born in 1914 as Ruth Carol O'Rourke); and Woonsocket's famed soprano Eileen Farrell (1920). Less known but also impressive is the virtuosity of Sheila Falls, a Greenville resident, who won an international competition in 1983 to become "World Champion Irish Violinist" at the age of fifteen.

Irish competitiveness and pugnacity have brought prominence to many in the annals of Rhode Island sports. Ironically, no Irish-American fighter of national stature has come from the Rhode Island arena, but Hughie Glancy, Mickey Devine, and Wild Willie Greene excited local crowds in their heydays. Honest John Doherty and Leo P. Bradley were notable Rhode Island boxing promoters, but only Loquacious Leo Flynn achieved national prominence, serving as Jack Dempsey's manager in the years following the Manassa Mauler's loss of his heavyweight crown to fellow Irish-American Gene Tunney.

In football, another hard-hitting sport, the local Irish rooted for D. O. "Tuss" McLaughry, Brown's most successful football coach and the mentor of the famed "Iron Men" of 1926. Among McLaughry's most proficient pupils were his son John, who also coached Brown (1959-1966), and the Gilbane brothers, Tom and Bill, who had illustrious collegiate careers. Jack Cronin, a star with the 1928 Providence Steam Roller team—the National Football League champions—became dean of Rhode Island football coaches, serving at LaSalle Academy from 1927 to 1972, while doubling as director of the Providence Recreation Department.

But it was in baseball that Rhode Island's Irish-Americans made their greatest impact. O'Rourke and Duffy of an earlier era were succeeded in the Hall of Fame by Woonsocket-born Charles "Gabby" Hartnett. The oldest of fourteen children, Hartnett made his major league debut with the Chicago Cubs in 1922 and played with them for a nineteen-year span that included four World Series. Gabby, a fine defensive player and an excellent hitter, led National League catchers seven times in fielding percentage and six times in home runs. Joe McCarthy, the great Yankee manager, labeled Hartnett "the best catcher of all time."

Also making their mark in the big leagues were the Cooney family of Cranston. James John Cooney, born in Cranston in 1865, was the patriarch of the clan. He had four ballplaying sons, and they in turn produced six grandsons in the same mold. Jimmy Cooney, Sr., played for three years as a shortstop with Cap Anson's Cubs in the early 1890s. He then passed on the fundamentals of the game to his sons, two of whom—Jimmy, Jr., known as Scoops, and John—also went on to the major leagues. Scoops Cooney played for six teams in his seven-year major league career, winning acclaim as one of the classiest-fielding shortstops of his era. In May 1927 he accomplished that extreme rarity in baseball, an unassisted triple play. Johnny Cooney started his career in 1921 as a pitcher with the Boston Braves, but after an injury he switched to the outfield. He played for twenty seasons in the major leagues with Boston and the Brooklyn Dodgers. An excellent outfielder, he led the National League twice in fielding and made only thirty-four errors during a career consisting of 1,172 games. At the age of forty he finished second in the race for the National League batting crown. When Johnny retired in 1944, he had compiled a highly respectable lifetime batting average of .286.

On the local level, Tim O'Neil developed one of the largest and best-run sandlot baseball systems in America. On Saturdays from early May through Labor Day, a total of seven leagues (organized

according to age), each with eight teams (usually recruited from the neighborhoods), competed on the ballfields of metropolitan Providence. Figuring on the basis of a twenty-one-game schedule, nearly six hundred contests were played each season, with the best teams drawing more than a thousand spectators per game.

O'Neil, who began his baseball career as a coach in the 1890s, directed the St. Michael's parish teams, which boasted such young stars as future major leaguer Andy Coakley (the discoverer of Lou Gehrig) and Jack Flynn (the brother of William and Edmund), who later became a highly successful baseball coach at Providence College. In 1902 O'Neil began the system eventually called the Tim O'Neil League, for which he became nationally recognized. In most of his efforts he was cheerfully assisted by Joseph J. McCaffrey, Providence superintendent of playgrounds from 1913 to 1940. The ballfield at Roger Williams Park was dedicated to O'Neil, "King of the Sandlots," in 1946, several months before the death of the man who always maintained that "there is no such thing as a bad boy."

The most current local Irish-American baseball celebrity is James "Lou" Gorman of South Providence, general manager of the Boston Red Sox. A former star at LaSalle Academy and Stonehill College, Gorman is the son of the late Leo Gorman, a fire department battalion chief who led Providence to national prominence in the field of fire prevention during the 1950s.

In recent years basketball has held center stage among those sports played in Rhode Island. Providence College teams under "General" Al McClellan in the late 1920s and early 1930s won national recognition, as did Frank W. Keaney's fine squads at the University of Rhode Island in the 1940s. Keaney (who also coached four other sports at URI from 1920 to 1955) helped revolutionize basketball with his racehorse style of play and his "point-a-minute" teams that starred such renowned players as Ernie Calverley. The Mentor, as this innovative coach was called, had his team practice one season with smudge pots burning on the sidelines so that his players would get used to the smoke in the big arenas where his coaching talent carried them.

From the late 1950s through the 1970s, Providence College basketball again held the limelight. The Friars, under the successive tutelage of Joe Mullaney and Dave Gavitt, became a national basketball power featuring such luminaries as John Egan, Mike Reardon, Kevin Stacom, Fran Costello, and Providence's own Joe Hassett, all of whom made it to the pros, and Ray Flynn, who has since become the latest in the long list of Irish-American mayors of Boston.

A lesser-known but even more successful (and more Irish) athletic program at Providence College has been cross-country. For a decade in the 1970s and early 1980s, Friar runners dominated New England long-distance events and were consistently among the best in the nation. This dominance was due primarily to a steady stream of Irish imports, some of whom took up permanent residence in Rhode Island. The most notable performer among this wave of talented Irish harriers was John Treacy, who won the 1984 Olympic silver medalist for Ireland in the marathon. Another world-class marathoner is Pawtucket's Bobby Doyle, a leading local promoter of long-distance running competitions.

* * * * *

Despite the effects of acculturation and assimilation in the several generations following the onset of the great Irish exodus, and notwithstanding the impact of intermarriage, suburbanization, upward social mobility, and the dwindling of immigration, Irish heritage and culture remains vibrant in Rhode Island. Nearly every major college has Irish scholars in residence: L. Perry Curtis, Jr., an internationally prominent authority on Irish history, at Brown University; Paul O'Malley and Charles Duffy at Providence College; William O'Malley at the University of Rhode Island; artist Spenser Crooks, James White, Raymond Houghton, and Maureen Lapan at Rhode Island College; and Brother James Loxham, F.S.C., Robert J. McKenna, chairman of the state American and Irish Cultural Exchange Commission, and President Lucille McKillop, R.S.M., a national Irish step-dancing champion, all at Newport's Salve Regina College.

Perhaps more effective in the dissemination of Irish traditions to the general public are those devotees of Irish culture operating outside the narrow walls of academia. These contemporary purveyors of the Irish past and present include the late Thomas Loughran, historian of the Ancient Order of Hibernians; William McEnery, national Hibernian president; James P. Durkin and Mary McConaghy, founders of the now moribund Eire Society; the Reverend Kevin Brasil; columnists Fred Byland, John J. Conroy, Barbara Jencks, and Garrett D. Byrnes; novelist Jean McGarry; musicians Patrick Fallon (also a columnist and Irish radio-show host), Patrick Sky, and Michael Flynn; Irish step-dance instructors John Garrahy, Betty McCabe Halloran, Eileen Kelly Kennedy, Mary Hanley, and Kathleen Hanley; librarian Jeanne Tierney Richardson of the Providence Public Library, past chairman of the Irish-American Committee of the Rhode Island Heritage Commission;

Gaelic language teachers Sheila Hogg and Patricia Kirby; drama buff Patrick Bernard Clyne of the Irish Drama Society; James Murray, Sean Conner, Mike Sheridan, Laura Travis, Susan Millard, and Eamonn McGirr, who have conducted Irish shows on radio; John McLaughlin, Joseph V. Tally, Sr. and Jr., and George E. Conley, businessmen who have sponsored Irish projects; Donna Hayes LaFantasie, chairman of the large-scale Irish-American program conducted in conjunction with the 1976 bicentennial celebration, a program that brought the Chieftains and the Irish Fortnight to Rhode Island; and Irish culture buffs as diverse as Austin Daley, Representative Jack Skeffington, Henry Murray, Albert McAloon, Senator Erich A. O'D. Taylor, Edwin McDermott, John Sharkey, and Dublin-born Rabbi Theodore Lewis of Newport's Touro Synagogue. This litany, it must be admitted, is highly selective and subjective, representing merely this writer's personal contacts and associations during the past two decades.

The Northern Irish problem, festering anew in the late 1960s, has contributed to a revival of local Irish interest in Ireland's present condition. Several groups supportive of the Nationalist population of the Six Counties have recently formed a chapter of the militant Irish Northern Aid. Nationalist activists include Robert Whitaker, Neal Costigan, and James Fallon. Some of these same enthusiasts have also joined with others interested in the Irish question to establish WELCOME, a nondenominational organization which has been placing Northern Irish children with Rhode Island families since the summer of 1984.

Traditional Irish fraternal groups continue to be active. These include the Hibernians and their ladies' auxiliary, especially Newport Division No. 1; the Shamrock Society; the sons of Irish Kings; the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick; the Ceilidhe Club; and Pawtucket's Irish Social Club. These organizations, though primarily for socializing, also engage in constructive social and cultural efforts. Meanwhile, the strong Newport Irish community and their Pawtuxet Valley counterparts faithfully continue their impressive St. Patrick's Day parades in Newport and West Warwick each year.

Finally, one must give a tip of the hat and the glass to the many tavern and pub proprietors throughout the state who perpetuate Irish song or festivity at such establishments as Muldoon's Saloon (Arthur Granfield), Dorsey's Tavern (Tommy Dorsey), the Harp and Shamrock (Pat Lyons), the Bowling Green (Buddy and Bob Johnson), the Blarney Stone (Bob Duffy), Shenanigan's (Gavin

Fitzgerald), and the Fiddler's Green Pub (Jim Cahalan). In the interest of sobriety, this list again is personal and selective.

* * * * *

Although it is now more than three centuries since the first Irish pioneers settled in Rhode Island, more than a century and a third since the Great Famine migration, and about three generations since the last significant Irish influx in the wake of the 1922-23 civil war, the Irish community remains a distinct and vigorous presence in Rhode Island: local Irish traditions are much in evidence, interest in the ancestral homeland continues strong, and the tendency of Irish-Americans to identify themselves as such is pronounced and decisive. Acculturation, upward mobility, and roots deep in the American soil have erased feelings of defensiveness, but they have not markedly diminished the Rhode Island Irish-American's sense of identity.

The Irish have exerted a significant impact on Rhode Island in every walk of life and every phase of human acitvity. In few other American states, if any, has the Irish community been so prominent in relative numbers and achievements. This brief, laudatory, and superficial essay is only the first general effort to relate the impressive story of the Rhode Island Irish, but it will have served its purpose well if it is not the last.

Suggested Reading and Reference

The best and most recent histories of Ireland for the general reader are Maire and Conor Cruise O'Brien, *A Concise History of Ireland* (New York, 1972); Karl S. Bottigheimer, *Ireland and the Irish: A Short History* (New York, 1982); T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin, *The Course of Irish History* (New York, 1969); and Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *Ireland: From Colony to Nation-State* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1979). On the Ireland whence departed the emigrants to America, consult Giovanni Costigan, *A History of Modern Ireland* (New York, 1969); J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland, 1603-1923* (London, 1966); Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Question, 1800-1922* (Lexington, Ky., 1968); and Timothy Patrick Coogan, *Ireland since the Rising* (London, 1966). More specialized works of interest and value include Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland, 1845-1849* (New York, 1962), the most moving account of the Famine; Robert E. Kennedy, Jr., *The Irish: Emigration, Marriage and Fertility* (Berkeley, Calif. 1973), an illuminating sociological study; Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *The Irish Countryman: An Anthropological Study* (Cambridge, Mass., rev. ed., 1968); and Emmet Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (New York, 1976). The best one-volume reference work on Ireland is Victor Meally, Allen Figgis, et al., *Encyclopedia of Ireland* (Dublin, 1968).

The indispensable bibliographical guide to the Irish in America is Seamus P. Metress, comp., *The Irish-American Experience: A Guide to the Literature* (Washington, D.C., 1981). The best and most entertaining general accounts of the American Irish are George W. Potter, *To the Golden Door: The Story of the Irish in Ireland and America* (Boston, 1960), an interpretative work by a Rhode Island historian that covers the period to 1861; William V. Shannon, *The American Irish: A Political and Social Portrait* (New York, rev. ed., 1966); Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America* (Bloomington, Ind., 1976); Andrew M. Greeley, *That Most Distressful Nation: The Taming of the American Irish* (Chicago, 1972); Patrick J. Blessing, "The Irish," in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, ed.* Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 524-545; John B. Duff, *The Irish in the United States* (Belmont, Calif.,

1971); and William D. Griffin, comp., *The Irish in America* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., 1973), which contains a useful chronology. Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge, La., 1956) is particularly good on the colonial Irish and Scots-Irish.

Immigration and its impact both on Ireland and America is the subject of Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York, 1985), a comprehensive work that supersedes all previous studies. Still useful, however, are Audrey Lockhart, *Some Aspects of Immigration from Ireland to the North American Colonies between 1660 and 1775* (New York, 1976); William F. Adams, *Ireland and Irish Emigration to the New World from 1815 to the Famine* (New Haven, 1932); and Arnold Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration, 1850-1900* (Minneapolis, 1958). Donald H. Akenson, *The United States and Ireland* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973) analyzes the formal and informal relationship between the two countries, while Charles Callan Tansill, *America and the Fight for Irish Freedom, 1866-1922* (New York, 1957) and Thomas N. Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism, 1870-1890* (Philadelphia, 1966) concentrate on the Irish-American reaction to the questions of home rule and independence.

Edward M. Levine, *The Irish and Irish Politicians* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1966) and Terry N. Clark, "The Irish Ethic and the Spirit of Patronage," *Ethnicity,* 2 (1975), 305-369, deal with an area where the American Irish have shown proficiency, while James D. Hackett, *Bishops of the United States of Irish Birth or Descent* (New York, 1936) deals with another. Hasia R. Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1983) is a product of the new women's history movement which analyzes the qualities that enabled Irish women to prosper in a new and challenging environment. Michael J. O'Brien, *Pioneer Irish in New England* (New York, 1937) is more traditional and antiquarian in its approach.

The best case studies of Irish acculturation in the urban Northeast are Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants* (Cambridge, Mass., rev. ed., 1959) and Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964) and *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in an American Metropolis, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, 1973). See also Timothy J. Meagher, ed., *From Paddy to Studs: Irish-Americans at the Turn of the Century* (Westport, Conn., 1986), an anthology of scholarly essays.

There is no comprehensive scholarly treatment of the Rhode Island Irish. Their story must be gleaned from general surveys of state and church history, from antiquarian essays, from parish histories, and from a handful of scholarly monographs dealing with the Irishman as voter and politician. Charles Carroll, *Rhode Island: Three Centuries of Democracy,* 4 vols. (New York, 1932), the best general history, is the only multivolume account that gives the Irish proper notice. The several histories of the Catholic Church, of necessity, deal extensively with Irish-Americans: Robert W. Hayman, *Catholicism in Rhode Island and the Diocese of Providence, 1780-1886*

(Providence, 1982); Patrick T. Conley and Matthew J. Smith, *Catholicism in Rhode Island: The Formative Era* (Providence, 1976); Austin Dowling, "The Diocese of Providence," in *History of the Catholic Church in the New England States,* ed. William Byrne (1899), I, 351-464; and Thomas F. Cullen, *The Catholic Church in Rhode Island* (Providence, 1936). Arthur E. Wilson, *Paddy Wilson's Meeting House* (Boston, 1950) discusses the career and impact of the Reverend James Wilson, the Irish immigrant pastor of Beneficent Congregational Church in Providence. Peter Coleman, *The Transformation of Rhode Island, 1790-1860* (Providence 1963) and Joseph Brennan, *Social Conditions in Industrial Rhode Island, 1820-1860* (Washington, D.C., 1940) assess the impact of the early Irish settlers and their quality of life, or lack thereof. Other, more specialized accounts include Richard J. Purcell, "Rhode Island's Early Schools and Irish Teachers," *Catholic Educational Review,* 32 (1934), 402-415, and "Irish Builders of Colonial Rhode Island," *Irish Quarterly Review,* 24 (1935), 289-300; William B. Stevens, Jr., "Newport's Beautiful Irish," *Yankee Magazine,* 41 (Sept. 1977); Robert A. Wheeler, "Fifth Ward Irish-Immigrant Mobility in Providence, 1850-1870," *Rhode Island History,* 32 (1973), 53-61; Leo F. Carroll, "Irish and Italians in Providence, Rhode Island, 1880-1960," *Rhode Island History,* 28 (1969), 67-74; and Matthew J. Smith, "The Real McCoy in the Bloodless Revolution of 1935," *Rhode Island History,* 32 (1973), 67-85. Richard A. Gabriel, *The Irish and Italians: Ethnics in City and Suburb* (New York, 1980) analyzes voting patterns in Providence and Warwick, and John K. White, "Alfred E. Smith's Rhode Island Revolution: The Election of 1928," *Rhode Island History,* 42 (1983), 57-66, describes the impact of Smith's candidacy on the local Irish-American community.

The Journal of the American-Irish Historical Society, published annually from 1897 to 1931, and the society's *Recorder,* published yearly since then, contain many historical articles and much data pertaining to early Rhode Island, especially when the *Journal* was edited by Thomas Hamilton Murray of Woonsocket. The most useful of these somewhat antiquarian essays are Thomas Hamilton Murray, "The Irish Vanguard of Rhode Island," 4 (1904), 109-133; "Irish Rhode Islanders in the American Revolution," 3 (1903), 3-17; "Sketch of an Early Irish Settlement in Rhode Island," 2 (1899), 152-157; and "The Irish Chapter in the History of Brown University," 2 (1899), 180-192; J. I. Cosgrove, "The Irish in Rhode Island to and Including the Revolution," 9 (1910), 365-385; T. Z. Lee, "The Irish of the Rhode Island Colony in Peace and War," 15 (1916), 156-167; and M. J. O'Brien, "[Irish] Obituary Notices in the Providence Rhode Island Newspapers," 25 (1926), 116-124. Murray also did an essay on an Irish Catholic founder of East Greenwich: "Charles MacCarthy, a Rhode Island Pioneer," *The Rosary Magazine,* 19 (1901), 441-455.

Acknowledgements

A work of this scope requires much advice and assistance. My gratitude extends to Matthew J. Smith, Robert J. McKenna, Paul F. O'Malley, and Jeanne Tierney Richardson for their substantive contributions; to Hilliard Beller for his editorial expertise; to Phyllis Cardullo for her secretarial skills; to Jane Jackson, Denise Bastien, and Joyce Botelho for providing the graphics; to Ray Woodcock, Sr. and Jr., for their expeditious printing; and to Patrick "Packy" Conley, Anne (Corrigan) Conley, Mary B. Conley, Thomas E. Conley, William L. Conley, Sr., Julia (Maney) Conley, Owen Corrigan, Rosemary (Conley) Danforth, and Margaret (Corrigan) McGowan for their inspiration and for the insights they have given me into Irish life and character.

Photo Credits

Cover photo by Patrick T. Conley.

Rhode Island Historical Society: Berkeley (RHi X3 5368), McSparran (RHi X3 5369), Sullivan (RHi X3 5370), Carter (RHi X3 4464), and McGuinness (RHi X3 4575).

Providence Journal Company: McCoy, Murphy.

Providence College Archives: Fogarty.

Salve Regina College: McKillop.

Patrick T. Conley, personal collection: Fitton, O'Reilly, Hendricken, Banigan, Gorman, Higgins, O'Shaunessy, Quinn, McGrath, Murray, Violet.