



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSEUM OF NEWPORT IRISH HISTORY

Published by the Museum of Newport Irish History
P.O. Box 1378 Newport, RI 02840 (401) 848-0661

VOLUME 21

SPRING 2007

THE MURPHY, O'MURCHADHA AND MAC MURCHADHA FAMILY

"Murphy" is the anglicized version of the Irish surnames "O'Murchadha" and "Mac Murchadha", and is the most numerous Irish name in all of Ireland, covering some 48 pages in the combined Irish phone book. The name "Mac Murchadha" is exclusive to Ulster, where the family was part of the *Cinel Eoghain* tribal grouping, with ties to the *Ui Neill* dynasty. In Ulster today the Murphys are most numerous in CO. Armagh, though they are found throughout CO. Fermanagh and CO. Monaghan.

In the South today, the Murphys are the most numerous in Munster, and while there were septs¹ in a number of counties, the most important was the great clan of Leinster, centered in CO. Wexford. The Munster sept is associated with the Barony of Muskerry, CO. Cork². The Wexford Murphys were directly descended from the kings of Leinster. The Leinster Murphys descend from Murrough MacMurrough, brother of Dermot MacMurrough. Dermot MacMurrough set the stage for the English invasion of Ireland by inviting the Anglo-Normans to assist him in a political conflict in the 13th Century. One branch of the Murphy family, based in Oularteigh, managed to retain their lands throughout the centuries of rebellions and fighting, and their succession continues unbroken to the present.

(continued on page 2)



MURPHY (O'MORCHOE)



O'MURPHY
(Muskerry)



MacMURROUGH

The Murphy name has been recorded throughout the centuries, primarily in connection to the Ulster and Leinster septs, and often in reference to chiefs and soldiers. In the 19th Century the Murphys figured largely in the Irish Brigades that were formed in the armies of several European countries. Examples include Marshal Le Baron O' Murphy, Commandant of the Legion d' Honneur, and Colonel le Chevalier O' Murphy of the 3rd Regiment of Cuirassiers.³

¹ The word "sept" is a collective term describing a group of persons or immediate ancestors who have a common surname and inhabited the same territory (Source: Edward MacLysaght, *Irish Families*: Dublin, 1991).

² Before the establishment of the county system, the area of the present County Cork was divided between the territories of Desmond, Muskerry and Corea Laoidhe.

³ For the brief summary above, the author uses sources including an article by John Grehan in *Ireland of the Welcomes* and his book, *Tracing Your Irish Ancestry*, as well as *Irish Families* by MacSlaght, and *Irish Family Histories* by Ida Grehan.

SOME NOTABLE MURPHYS IN HISTORY

The *Dictionary of National Biography* lists, among other prominent Murphys, Francis (1795-1858) of Navan, CO. Meath, who was the first Bishop of Australia. Also listed is John (1753-1798), priest, who was a leader of the 1798 Rebellion. He fought at Vinegar Hill, escaped, but was later captured and executed. Famous female Murphys include Marie Louise O'Murphy (1737-1814), daughter of an Irish soldier who settled in France. She was a painter's model, then became mistress of King Louis XV. She spent some time in prison during the "Reign of Terror" for her royal connections.

William Martin Murphy (1844-1921) was one of Ireland's first business tycoons. He led the group of business leaders during the infamous 1913 General Strike in Dublin. James J. Murphy was head of the Murphy Brewery, founded in 1856 in Cork. Patrick Murphy (1834-1864) from County Down was noted for his great height. He was 8 feet, 1-inch tall.

In the United States, Tim Murphy (1751-1818), was a great frontiersman, born in Pennsylvania to Irish parents. He joined the Colonial militia, then "Morgan's Rifles", fighting in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and at Saratoga. He is credited with shooting British Brigadier General Simon Fraser at a critical time at the Battle of Saratoga, hitting his target at 300 yards, and turning the tide of this important battle. Murphy also shot and killed a senior Aide-de-Camp. These two shots served to shatter the morale of the British, who retreated after Fraser fell. After the Battle of Saratoga, Tim Murphy organized the local and militias fighting the British and Indians in the Schoharie (New York) Valley.

Charles Francis Murphy (1858-1924) was head of New York's Tammany Hall during its rise to political power. Audie Leon Murphy (1924-1971) was the son of poor Texas sharecroppers. He was the most decorated U.S. combat soldier of World War II. He later became a successful actor, starring in a number of movies including *Beyond Glory* and *To Hell And Back*. Audie Murphy died in a plane crash in 1971, at age 46.

MURPHY'S LAW

A discussion of famous Murphys would be incomplete without a reference to "Murphy's Law". The original law reads: "If there are two or more ways to do something, and one of those ways can result in a catastrophe, then someone will do it." Edward A. Murphy, Jr. was one of the engineers on the rocket-sled experiments conducted by the U.S. Air Force in 1949 to test human acceleration tolerances (the impact of "G forces" on humans). One experiment required the attachment of 16 sensors to different parts of the subject's body, and there were two ways each sensor could be glued to its mount. Someone methodically installed all 16 the wrong way, making results void from a test in which a Major John Paul Stapp was the subject. Edward Murphy reportedly made the original form of his now-famous pronouncement, which the test subject, Major Stapp, quoted at a news conference several days later. "Murphy's Law" soon spread within the technical subculture related to aerospace engineering, and within a few years, variants of the law passed into popular culture, such as: "Anything that can go wrong, will".

LOOKING FOR EARLY MURPHYS IN NEWPORT COUNTY

A search of city and town records and the Newport Historical Society documents of Newport County show the earliest Murphy recorded is probably one James Murfie, who was accused

of adultery with Grace Lawton, wife of Thomas Lawton of Portsmouth. According to the entry for October, 1673 in the Rhode Island General Court of Trials, as transcribed by Jane Fletcher Fiske (Bedford, Mass., 1998), Lawton, who was indicted, was acquitted.

In the Vital records of Rhode Island, 1636-1850 (transcribed by James V. Arnold, 1898), Trinity Church records the marriages of Edward Murfee and Catharine Fitzgerald on October 25, 1743; John Murfey and Mary Caside on March 1, 1732; and Jean Murphy and John West on February 2, 1726. Baptisms recorded at Trinity include Elizabeth Murphy, January 7, 1745, and Mary Murphy (an adult) on January 13, 1758. The 1790 Federal Census lists an Edward Murphy, his wife, and two children residing in Newport County (this census did not list the county's towns separately). The same Edward Murphy is also listed in the 1800 and 1810 Censuses, along with his family. He is not listed in the 1820 census, where three Murphys are listed as heads of households.

The publicly recorded listing of Murphy names grew slowly during the early 1800s, and by 1863 the Newport City Directory listed 15 Murphys, including Patrick, a barber, John a boat pilot, and Michael, in the Naval Academy⁴. By 1892 the City Directory lists 77 Murphys, including a fireman named Pat, a blacksmith, masons and plumbers. Some of the older gravestones in St. Mary's Cemetery on Warner Street are for John Murphy (1830-1919), Patrick Murphy (1835-1907), Michael Murphy, born CO. Kerry, died in 1894, aged 90, Patrick Murphy (1841-1891), and Patrick Murphy of Killawrence, CO. Cork, died 1893, aged 80.

⁴ During the Civil War the U.S. Naval Academy was moved from Annapolis, MD to Newport. It was housed in the former Atlantic House Hotel, which stood at the corner of Bellevue Avenue and Pelham Street, the site of the current Elk's Hall.

THE MURPHYS IN NEWPORT COUNTY TODAY

Murphy is today, the second-most numerous of the Irish surnames in Newport County, following "Sullivan" (and "O'Sullivan"). Murphy listings in the current telephone book total 109, including 36 in Newport, 25 in Portsmouth, 22 in Middletown, and 13 each in Tiverton and Jamestown. In the (first) 1856 City Directory, there 11 Murphy listings. The 1918 Directory listed 125, and in the 1956 City Directory there were 165 Murphy listings.⁵ The apparent decline in Murphys from the 1950s to the present may be due to the popularity of cell phones, which have unlisted phone numbers.

Newport Historical Society obituary records include 198 Murphy listings, the second most-numerous name recorded after "Sullivan" (O'Sullivan). Prominent Murphys among these include Dr. Edward V. Murhpy (1871-1939) who was Newport Health Commissioner and Port Physician, and a champion against tuberculosis. Also of note was golf professional Michael C. Murphy (1899-1965), Assistant Pro at Newport Country Club and first Pro at Wanumetonomy Country Club.

On lighter note, Jamestown lawyer John A. Murphy, who is the author of the "Murphy's Law" section in the *Jamestown Press*, published a book entitled *Murphy was a Lawyer.....and a Quahogger* (Tashtassue Press, 2005). The book, which was illustrated

and jointly published by famed Rhode Island cartoonist, Don Bousquet, is a collection of interesting facts about law. Finally, Current City of Newport Historian and Museum of Newport Irish History Historian is Patrick Murphy, first-generation Irish-American.

⁵ Source: Newport Historical Society.

THE MURPHY COAT OF ARMS

The Murphy(O'Morchoe), O'Murphy and MacMurrough arms reproduced on page one are the official arms from the Irish Office of Arms (Genealogical Office). The office was established in 1552, under the British, and it was transferred to the Irish Government in 1943, some twenty years after the establishment of the Irish Free State. David O'Morchoe is the current Chief of the Name, recognized as such by The Chief Herald of Ireland.

References for Murphy Article:

Irish Families, Edward MacLysaght: Crown Publishers NY, 1972 (originally published in 1957)

Irish Family Histories, Ida Grehan: Roberts Rinehard Publishers, 1993

Pioneer Irish in New England, Michael J. O'Brien: P.J. Kennedy NY, 1988

Irish Records, Sources for Family & Local History, James G. Ryan: Flyleaf Press Ireland, 1998

Murphy article References continued:

Newport City Directories: 1856, 1863, 1892, and 1956.

Federal Census Records: 1790, 1800, 1810, 1820

St. Mary's Cemetery listings, transcribed by Beth Hurd

Life and Adventures of Timothy Murphy, The Benefactor of Schoharie, The Middleburgh Gazette, Paul B. Mattice, Editor. Reprint of William H. Gallup, by Mr. Sigsby. 1839 reprint, Aug. 1 1912.

The Saratoga Rifleman, Donald Norman Moran: www.AmericanRevolution.org/Murphy.htm

FORT ADAMS TRUST GOLF TOURNAMENT SEPTEMBER 28

The Fort Adams Trust will hold a fundraiser gold tournament on Friday, September 28 at the Wanumetonomy Golf and Country Club at 152 Browns Lane in Middletown. Tee time is 8:30 a.m. Ticket price of \$125 per person (\$500 for foursome) includes continental breakfast and served lunch. Cash bar available.

Sponsorship opportunities are also available. Call 401-841-0707 for more information or to reserve.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

From Newport:

Phyllis Gallagher Newton

Amy & David Burns

NEW MEMBERS EVENT SET FOR SEPTEMBER 20

The Museum Membership Committee will host an event for current and prospective new members on Thursday, September 20 at the Hibernian Hall, 2 Wellington Avenue in Newport. A full evening including dinner, entertainment and camaraderie is planned. Current members attending are encouraged to bring a potential new member guest. Details to follow.

MICHAEL F. CROWLEY LECTURE SERIES KICKS OFF OCTOBER 18

The Museum's first lecture of the Fall/Winter 2007-08 season will be held Thursday, October 18. Details to follow.

Please save the date!

THE MUSEUM OF NEWPORT IRISH HISTORY
P.O. Box 1378
Newport, RI 02840

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Newport, RI
Non-Profit
Organization
Permit #110

JOIN THE MUSEUM OF NEWPORT IRISH HISTORY AND SUPPORT YOUR IRISH HERITAGE



Vincent Arnold, President (401) 847-2890
Robert McKenna, 1st Vice President (401) 846-9296
Michael Slein, 2nd Vice President (401) 847-7201
Maria Carroll, Secretary (401) 846-8865
William Nagle, Treasurer (401) 846-8499
Pat Murphy, Historian PTKMrphy@Verizon.net
Shannon Buss, Membership (401) 846-4341

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Address _____

Town/City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email _____

Check Membership: Individual(\$10/yr) Family(\$20/Yr) Business(\$35/yr)

Life(\$100) Family Life (\$150)

Amount enclosed \$ _____ (Donations are tax deductible—a 501(c)3 organization)

Mail to: The Museum of Newport Irish History, P.O. Box 1378, Newport, RI 02840

www.newportirishhistory.com

VA4466@netzero.com