



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MUSEUM OF NEWPORT IRISH HISTORY

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THE FITZGERALD FAMILY

From time to time the newsletter will explore Irish surnames, both common and uncommon, in Newport County. Past issues have presented the history of the Sullivan/O'Sullivan Family (Fall/Winter 2006-07), the Murphy Family (Summer 2007), and the O'Neill Family (Spring 2008). In this issue we will discuss the history of the Fitzgerald family, which in Irish is "Mac Gearailt" ("son of Gerald").

The Fitzgerald lineage in Ireland was begun by Maurice Fitzgerald of Wales, who accompanied "Strongbow", the Earl of Pembroke, in the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland (1170). It is generally assumed that all of the Fitzgeralds are descendents of Maurice. The Fitzgeralds became one of the most powerful and prominent families throughout Irish history.

Notable among the family is Garret Mór Fitzgerald, 8th Earl of Kildare (d. 1513), who was appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland by English King Edward IV. He served 40 years throughout turbulent times and was, for all purposes, the uncrowned king of Ireland. He did overstep his authority, and under King Henry VII was imprisoned in the Tower of London for several years—only to emerge. He died from a wound obtained while fighting the O'Carrolls of Offaly. Garret's son, Gerald Fitzgerald (1487-1534), the 9th Earl of Kildare and Lord Deputy of Ireland, died in the Tower of London, where he had been detained, on numerous occasions, for instigating unrest against the English.



FITZGERALD

Gerald's daughter, Elizabeth (1527-1589), Countess of Lincoln, was the second wife of Sir Anthony Browne and, later, the third wife of English admiral Edward Clinton, 1st Earl of Lincoln. Also known as "The Fair Geraldine", Elizabeth was the inspiration for a number of artists and poets. She inspired "The Geraldine", a sonnet written by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1547), one of the founders of English Renaissance poetry. The epic poem, "Lay of the Last Minstrel", by Scottish historical novelist and poet, Sir Walter Scott

(1771-1832), describes Lady Geraldine in the sixth and final canto.

Elizabeth's brother, Thomas, was known as "Silkin Thomas" for his flamboyant and colorful clothing. Although raised in a thoroughly English manner, he rebelled against Henry VIII and, with four of his cousins, was executed at Tyburn (London) in 1537 at age 24. The murder of the cousins was King Henry's attempt to eradicate the Fitzgerald family, but he did not succeed, as other members of the family, horrified by the deaths, fled to France, though they later returned.

The Earls of Desmond, the Munster branch of the Fitzgeralds, known as "The Geraldines", struggled for years against the oppression of Queen Elizabeth I. The First Desmond Rebellion (1569-1573) was a protest against English policies establishing English political rule which favored the Fitzgeralds' rivals, the Butlers. The rebellion was led by James FitzMaurice FitzGerald, and was put down by the English in 1573, after which James spent a period of time in exile on the Continent. James returned to Ireland in 1579 to lead the Second Desmond Rebellion (1579-1583), bringing with him an invasion force that included Spanish and French troops; however he died shortly after landing. This insurrection was devastating to Munster, and was noted in history for the particularly brutal Smerwick Massacre of October 1580 in which hundreds of Irish, Spanish and Italian troops, along with Irish men and women were beheaded.

In the early 14th century the Earl of Desmond, Gerald FitzGerald, named his three sons hereditary knights: The Knight of Glin (also called "The Black Knight"); The Knight of Kerry (also called "The Green Knight"); and The White Knight (now extinct). The current Knight of Glin, the 29th, is Desmond John Villiers FitzGerald (b. July 13, 1937). He is the president of the Irish Georgian Society and a renowned Irish historian and authority on Irish furniture. He was spoken in Newport on several occasions.

In the United States John Fitzgerald (1867-1930), known as "Honey Fitz", was a longtime mayor of Boston and grandfather to the Kennedy political clan. Other famous American Fitzgeralds include F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940), American novelist and short story writer, famous for stories such as "The Great Gatsby", the screen version was filmed, in part, here in Newport.

EARLY FITZGERALDS IN NEW ENGLAND AND NEWPORT COUNTY

While the Fitzgerald name appears in a few instances in the 1600s in the Connecticut towns of Hartford (1664), New London (also 1664), and in Saybrook (1678), the earliest listing in Newport County is that of an Edward Fitzgerald, found in the 1790 U.S. census. The 1774 Rhode Island Census lists no Fitzgeralds. The City of Newport and Irish Museum historian, Patrick Murphy, has located records which list a marriage of Mary Fitzgerald to Thomas McHugh at St. Mary's Church in 1839. The 1856 Newport City Directory lists Catherine, widow of Nicholas; Patrick, a blacksmith; Christopher, a laborer; and William, a carpenter. The

1858 Directory lists only the aforementioned Catherine, as well as a William and a Christopher Fitzgerald.

The 1892 Newport City Directory lists 15 Fitzgeralds, and by 1935 there were 45 listings. The number of Fitzgerald listings dropped to 35 in the 1966 Directory. While not rare, the surname Fitzgerald remains one of the less common Irish names in Newport. The recent telephone directory lists 29 Fitzgeralds, though with today's unlisted cell phones, there are likely more. As a point of comparison, the most numerous Irish family name, Sullivan/O'Sullivan, had 266 listings in the City Directory of 1890 (vs. 15 Fitzgeralds in the 1892 Directory), and today there are more than 60 listed in the Newport County telephone directory (vs. 29 Fitzgeralds), excluding cell phone listings.

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- *The Pioneer Irish In New England*, Michael J. O'Brien: Heritage Classics, 1988
- *Vital Records of Rhode Island; 1636-1850*, James Arnold, 1893
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- U. S. Census 1790
- Newport City Directories: 1856 and 1858
- Verizon "SuperYellowPages" Newport County telephone directory, June 2009-2010

MICHAEL F. CROWLEY LECTURE SERIES RESUMES IN OCTOBER

The first speaker for the 7th Annual Michael F. Crowley Lecture series will be Dr. Edward T. O'Donnell, Ph.D of Holy Cross College. Professor O'Donnell's talk is entitled "Compassion & Corruption: The Political Machine and the Irish American Experience". His talk will explore how the Irish were able to dominate the political scene in most American cities by the 1870s. This lecture is scheduled for the evening of Thursday, October 22. Details will follow and reservations will be required.

MUSEUM PARTICIPATES IN IRISH HERITAGE FESTIVAL

The Museum was invited to set up an information booth at the annual Newport Waterfront Irish Festival during Labor Day Weekend. With great weather, visitation to the booth was excellent during the three-day festival, and hundreds were drawn to our display of old photos and artifacts highlighting Newport's rich Irish history. Many inquiries were received and a number of new members joined. Many thanks to the volunteers who worked the event: Shannon Buss, Maria Carroll, Deanna Casey, Tom Gill, Pat Murphy, Sr. Shelia Murphy, and Harry Winthrop.



Deanna Casey works the Museum's booth during the Festival.



SOME PHOTOS FROM THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTIONS

Michael G. Murphy, Private, U.S. Army 82nd Division

Private Murphy was a Newport resident who was born in County Cork. He fought in World War I and died in action November 30, 1918. He is buried in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, about 25 miles northwest of Verdun, France, where the largest number of our military dead in Europe are buried, numbering more than 14,000. Murphy Field on Carroll Avenue is named in his honor.

Photo donated by Charles and Maureen Meehan.



Hibernia Boat Crew of 1903

The *Newport Daily News* of Tuesday, September 8, 1903 reported on the 12-oared boat race held the previous day, Labor Day, between a crew from the Ancient Order of Hibernians and a crew from the Newport Naval Training Station. The paper reported that the Hibernian boat finished some 200 yards, and 1 minute, 10 seconds ahead, to win the race. The above photo of the AOH boat and crew accompanied the *Daily News* story. This photo was later embellished with the addition of the AOH crew names and mounted on board, assumedly for display at the Hibernian Hall, Wellington Avenue, Newport. This embellished version is pictured above. The boat photo was also turned into a postcard, a sample of which is also in the Museum's collections.

Image donated by Ancient Order of Hibernians, Dennis E. Collins, Division # 1, Newport

BARNEY STREET CEMETERY UPDATE

The Museum continued its ongoing maintenance of the historic Barney Street Irish Cemetery during the summer. In July, a tree was removed, paid for by the grant received this spring from the Merritt Neighborhood Fund of the Aquidneck Land Trust. During the month of August the iron fence that surrounds the gravestones was removed in sections and repainted, for the first time since its installation in 1999. Volunteers gathered to plant additional perennial flowers and to keep the weeds at bay. Thanks to the volunteers for assisting with the fence refurbishment: John Booth and Bob Finn, and to those who assisted with the gardening: Jack McCormack, Ray Lynch and Ann Arnold May. Thanks also to Tim May for mowing the grass on a regular basis. If you would like to volunteer to assist in the maintenance of the cemetery please contact Ann Arnold May at tpm1@earthlink.net or 401-841-5493.



The Barney Street Cemetery, July 2009
(corner of Barney & Mt. Vernon Streets, Newport)

DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT E-MAIL?

Many Museum members receive periodic communications from the organization via e-mail. Examples include notices for upcoming lectures, announcements of fundraisers and, importantly, reminders to RSVP for fast-approaching events such as our popular Michael F. Crowley Lectures. All members will continue to receive their quarterly newsletter via U.S. Mail, though copies of back-issues may also be accessed at the Museum website. If you are not already receiving e-mails from the Museum and have an e-mail address you actively use, please consider forwarding it to us so we may stay in better touch with you. To do so, please send an e-mail request to Deanna Casey at: caseydj@cox.net, including your name(s), mailing address and phone number(s) so we may ensure our database is as up-to-date as possible. Thank you for your cooperation!

SUPPORT THE MUSEUM THROUGH YOUR PLACE OF WORK

The Museum of Newport Irish History is a registered 501©3 non-profit organization. Did you know you may support the Museum and its mission through your employer's United Way workplace campaign? Simply fill in "The Museum of Newport Irish History, Newport, R.I." on the pledge form, and your contribution will be forwarded to us by the United Way. Many companies also match employee's gifts to museums and other cultural and educational institutions, such as ours. This is an excellent way to increase your gift! Please contact your company's personnel or human resources department to find out if they offer a corporate matching gift program.

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*Do we
have your
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See page 5*

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