Researching Ancestors in the Canadian Maritimes
President’s Message
Greg Atkinson #1766

Hello to fellow TIARA members. It’s that time of year, renewal time that is. Pat Deal is waiting for renewals and to welcome newcomers. Give her something to do. You’ll put a smile on her face as well as mine. TIARA has a lot to offer including our monthly meetings with guests who speak on a variety of topics of interest to our membership. Our next meeting on Dec. 11th, features Maureen Taylor, the Photodetective, an internationally renowned expert in photo identification, preservation and genealogical research. The annual research trips to Ireland are planned for April, 2016. Researching at wonderful repositories, sharing your finds with friends, spending time in Ireland – an experience not to be missed. Information and registration forms are available at the TIARA website: www.tiara.ie

On a recent rainy weekend morning I decided to take a look at the Irish censuses of 1901 and 1911 for the townlands where my two Donegal ancestors emigrated from in the late 19th century. I had looked before and gathered information but, as any good genealogist knows, a record is always worth more than one look. Things just keeping popping up!

I know the name of one townland because it appeared on a Forester record for one of my ancestors. If TIARA had not rescued this valuable resource I may never have known that information. I know the place of origin (Continued on page 75)

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The Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB), almost since its inception, has endeavoured to make its resources available to even those researchers unable to make the long trek to our doors. Long before the advent of the World Wide Web, PANB put in place an inter-library loan system which resulted in the lending of thousands of its microfilms to institutions primarily within North America, but occasionally even to other corners of the globe. That program continues today, but has been overtaken, to a large extent, by our efforts in building an internet destination which provides many of those same records in digital form. In this article we will highlight some of those records, especially ones aimed at those attempting to search for their Irish roots.

New Brunswick’s east coast location made it an entry point for thousands of immigrants seeking a new life in North America. In the early 1800s the colony’s relatively small population, and desire to attract settlers, made it a place that many came to call their home. Given the massive wave of Irish immigrants to British North America, nearly 500,000 by the 1850s, and the colony’s less expensive passage fares, it is little wonder that New Brunswick gathered its fair share. As a result these settlers ensconced themselves in every facet of society and geographical location of the colony called New Brunswick – which ironically had nearly been called ‘New Ireland’ by officials considering a good name for it at the time of inception.

Given the great interest of those tracing their Irish genealogical roots, the Archives, in concert with local Irish cultural and historical groups, launched an ‘Irish Portal’ on our website a few years back. It draws on the wealth of materials in the Provincial Archives’ holdings covering the Irish experience of immigration and re-settlement. The related topics and materials go beyond the expected norms. The resources include teachers’ petitions highlighting the impact of Irish teachers in New Brunswick education; almshouse records reflecting the state of New Brunswick’s welfare system; as well as searchable databases, constituted from passenger lists, Irish entries from the 1851 and 1861 census, and listings of “surplus” tenants sent to St Andrews. When combined with digitized records consisting of manuscript collections, the Provincial Secretary’s Immigration Records, newspaper articles and virtual exhibits, these resources come alive to reveal the complexity of the Irish emigrant’s life in our province.

A visit to our website, www.archives.gnb.ca is always the best place to start, whether or not one is doing Irish research. A variety of indexes and databases are available there, and most especially for this article, the entrance to the ‘Irish Portal’ site: http://www.archives.gnb.ca/Irish/databases_en.html.

Of course one of the major questions which genealogists seek answers to is, “where specifically in Ireland did my ancestors originate?” Many records, such as census twentieth century vital statistics certificates state baldly ‘Ireland’. Fortunately, the Archives has a number of databases that can be helpful in answering that question. Several also have the distinct advantage of being fairly contemporary as to the time of the actual migration, when memories were still fresh. These are highlighted below.

Saint John Almshouse Records

The first collection of note covers admissions to the Saint John Almshouse from 1843 to 1897. The Almshouse was established to accommodate the overflow of poor emigrants in the Province. As a large number were housed here directly upon alighting from their ships, their points of origin are carefully recorded, as well as a field to note their eventual disposition. This sometimes provides a next point of destination on their immigration journey. The database provides both the option of searching by name, or browsing page. The following partial page from the St John Almshouse records illustrates the information on offer.
**Provincial Secretary: Immigration Administration Records**

During the years prior to Canada’s Confederation in 1867, the colony of New Brunswick administered its own immigration, under the office of the Provincial Secretary. The ‘Irish Portal’ website offers a variety of digitized records covering that work. The finding aid with links to the documents can be accessed directly at:


Although many of the documents are administrative in nature, offering a background into some of the challenges facing immigration authorities, there are also items which, similar to the Almshouse registers, detail the individual immigrants. The ‘Catalogues of Immigrants Relieved on Poor and Immigrant Account’ originates from 1842, includes name, age, county of birth, number in family, to what place removed from Saint John, and in cases of death, the place of interment.

**Passenger Lists:**

Passenger lists are, of course, one of the best ways to track one’s family from the point of origin to North America. The ‘Irish Portal’ makes available digitized images of all such lists in the Archives. It must be stated however, the years covered by these lists are somewhat limited. Below is a list of which years and ports are represented, with the bulk of them being for Saint John in 1833 and 1834.

- **Port of Saint John** – 1816, 1833, 1834, 1838
- **Port of Saint Andrews** – 1837
- **Port of Bathurst** – 1837

The lists can be accessed by either name of the emigrant, or name of the vessel. The direct link to the main access page for the Passenger List Database is:


The following sample is a partial page for the Hibernia, which sailed from Kinsale, Ireland in 1833.
This covers only a portion of the records available on the ‘Irish Portal’ component of PANB’s website. There are also digitized images of Teachers’ Petitions from Irish immigrants requesting a license or payment for teaching services; 20th century entries from Saint John’s Brenan’s Funeral Home registers, documenting either Irish origins or parentage; and a searchable database to individuals who stated their place of birth as Ireland in the 1851 and 1861 New Brunswick Census.

Separate from the ‘Irish Portal’, PANB’s website also offers a number of databases which can be utilized to the same effect. One of the most popular and widely used is the product of a lifetime’s work by a New Brunswick genealogist, Daniel Johnson. He reviewed and indexed life events chronicled in the newspapers of the Province, commencing with the earliest in 1784 and continuing up to those published in 1896; his untimely passing in 2005 halted the work.

**Daniel Johnson – Vital Statistics from New Brunswick Newspapers Database:**
(http://www.archives.gnb.ca/Search/NewspaperVitalStats/?culture=en-CA)

There are two types of access points. One is a simple ‘surname’ search, while a ‘full text’ search enables the researcher to survey a wider range of options, including place of origin. For example, a search using only the key word ‘Sligo’ yielded the following result from the September 13, 1889 issue of the Saint John Globe concerning the Chrystal family of Kent County:

*d. South Branch (Kent Co.) 2nd Aug., John CHRYSTAL, age 94, left widow, six daughters, one son. Deceased was a native of County Sligo, Ireland and came to St. John, N.B., 1st May 1827. In the same vessel with him, also as passengers, were the old McPHELINE family of whom he was a near relative. (Sligo and Philadelphia papers please copy)*

Although the bulk of the entries do cover births, marriages, and deaths, the database also reveals occasional details as to native sons and daughters subsequent settlements in other parts of North America, as evidenced by the following example from the November 8, 1890 issue of Saint John’s newspaper, The Daily Sun:

**D.J. HENNESSY, a native of Fredericton, but now a resident of Butte, Montana, was re-elected state senator Tuesday for a second term.**

**Vital Statistics (RS141) Database:**

The special value of Daniel Johnson’s database is that the bulk of its coverage is for the time period in New Brunswick before births and deaths were civilly registered. The deaths and births cited there may be the only recording of those events. Beginning in the year 1888, however, the civil registration of birth and deaths commenced in the Province, marriages having already been recorded as far back as 1812, although not in a detailed fashion. These latter records, beginning in
1888, included the names of parents of the bride and groom, which was new to the registration process. In recognition of the importance to genealogists of these detailed vital statistics records, PANB’s website has indexed and digitized all civilly registered births older than 95 years, and all civilly registered marriages and deaths older than 50 years, the latter two recorded events commencing in 1888.

Although by the late 1880s many of the original Irish emigrants had died, their descendants were well represented in the population of the Province. The following death certificate, for a Catherine McCarthy, not only provides information on her parents’ names and Irish origins, but also, since she was a married woman, provides her maiden name as well. Researchers might note that, unfortunately, the initial death certificate form, used from 1888 to 1919, did not provide for parents’ name. That was rectified by the new form introduced in 1920.

The above highlight some of the databases featured on PANB’s website that are of special interest to those doing research on their Irish Brunswick roots. As already mentioned, though, there are a number of additional series, collections, and exhibits that pinpoint individuals, groups, or geographical areas, and sometimes, all three at once. For example, the ‘Dictionary of Miramichi Biography’ (http://www.archives.gnb.ca/Search/Hamilton/DMB/Default.aspx?culture=en-CA) provides thumbnail sketches of a goodly number of citizens of that area of New Brunswick and their involvement in the community at large.

Or the ‘Place Names of New Brunswick’ exhibit, which provides a map, both literally and figuratively, to the hundreds of communities, both current and long forgotten, which make up our Province. Many of them, of course, named after the very areas from whence they came. Here, for example, one of the documents featured on that portion of the exhibit devoted to Londonderry Settlement in Kings County, NB.
And finally, to end where we began, the Archives continues to provide an interlibrary loan service for those who wish to access material which has been microfilmed, but is not as yet available digitally online. Genealogical Guides for each New Brunswick County are to be found on the ‘Research Tools’ portion our website:
These are organized by type of record, and include outside dates of the material, and the appropriate reel numbers to use in ordering through the interlibrary loan process.

In today’s world of genealogical research, it is easy to be seduced by the idea that everything is online, a mouse click away, but that is far from the truth. The Archives holds land, probate, and court records that shed light on the lives of past residents of New Brunswick. In addition, the Archives holds the documents created by our predecessors and even earlier generations of genealogists that can expedite your research. The internet affords speed and access to many sources that genealogists who worked in the 1970s can only marvel at, but there is still no substitute to visiting an archive that holds the records about your ancestors. Besides seeing some originals, it is possible to make linkages that distance research would never uncover. Visiting the internet can never replace the personal learning gleaned from searching in person at an archive that holds the sources of your personal and collective past.

Occasionally I tilt at windmills. I sometimes used that method to search for siblings of my great-grandmother Ann Carroll, who was born in Kildorrery, Cork, c1819. Ann had married James Kenny, moved just over the border to Knockadea, Ballylanders, Limerick, and after all of the children had emigrated joined them in Concord, NH. Because I had not found relevant information using Google searches and familysearch.org, I randomly decided to search Canadian census records looking for names that ran in my Carroll family. Lo and behold! There was a Carroll family in New Brunswick that carried the names Denis and Anthony - my family names.

Although I had not previously done any searching in Canada, it didn’t take long for me to become familiar with several helpful Canadian resources. Using a New Brunswick query board, I received an answer that led me to a recently published book on families in New Brunswick. I emailed two libraries in New Brunswick; both libraries had copies of the book. I asked that if the book contained information on an Edmond Carroll family in Kent parish, Carleton, New Brunswick, would they be able to scan that page for me. One of the libraries scanned the page with Carroll information, while the second one included additional pages with information on the family that the oldest daughter had married into. Looking over the scanned pages, I could see that some of the information was inaccurate. I found an online web page for the author and sent a diplomatic email asking about the parents (John Carroll and Catherine Fenton of New Brunswick) that she had listed for Edmond Carroll who had married Elizabeth Britt. I explained that Edmond’s parents had remained in Ireland, whereas John and Catherine had immigrated to Canada. The author said that she was sure John and Catherine were the parents of Edmond.

The names John Carroll and Catherine Fenton surely were familiar to me, but I knew
from my transcribing filmed records at the National Library in Dublin years ago that Edmond’s parents were Denis Carroll and Margaret Kennedy, not John Carroll and Catherine Fenton. I checked my Carroll notes and remembered that I had highlighted the information on John and Catherine’s marriage record because a Denis Carroll had been one of the marriage witnesses. In parentheses I had written the question, “Could John be a brother to my Ann Carroll?” Because John had been born before church records were kept, I could not tell who John’s parents were. Surprisingly, the incorrect information about Edmond’s parents turned out to be a bonus! Because Edmond had lived in the same area as John and Catherine when he first immigrated to Canada, it lent credence to my hypothesis that John might have been a brother to my great-grandmother. If not for the assumption that John was Edmond’s father, I might not have found him.

After finding Edmond in New Brunswick, I decided to check original sources for records. I primarily used census records and vital records from the New Brunswick Archives site (a fabulous resource), and later used the Drouin records (church records from Canada) available on Ancestry as well as at the American Canadian Genealogical Society in Manchester, NH. From census records I could see John Carroll would have been ten years old or younger when Edmond was born so hardly a candidate for being Edmond’s father. From online records on the New Brunswick Archives web site I found a second marriage for Edmond Carroll, the second record giving the names of Edmond’s parents: Denis Carroll and Margaret Kennedy. BINGO! Edmond, for sure, was a brother to my great-grandmother.

Edmond eventually settled in an area (Johnville) planned by the bishop of St. John, N.B., for those of Irish descent so they could avoid “the ruinous tendency of congregating in masses in the city and the evils resulting from this prevailing habit of the Irish immigrant.” Again, I was able to find information online that included a chapter on Johnville in John Francis Maguire’s book, The Irish in America. I learned that Edmond would have had four years to work on the public road (his work to equal the amount of time a construction worker would earn $60), and that within that time he would have cleared five acres, built a house at least 16 feet square, and settled on the land assigned to him before he became the proprietor of 100 acres of land.

I had also received a response from one of my New Brunswick genealogy board queries. I was given the name of someone who was interested in the same Carroll family. I found a postal address online for that person and resorted to snail mail. The happy ending to a long story is that I found a Carroll family descendant who was able to give me information on Edmond’s descendants. I learned that some of my Carroll descendants had stayed in New Brunswick but many had moved over the border to Houlton, Maine. I was then able to trace families in Maine by using information from the website for the Cary Library in Houlton, another very helpful source of genealogical information.

In my travels to the University of Maine in Orono, I used to look at the highway sign that read, “200 miles to Houlton.” Every time I saw the sign, I would wonder who on earth would live so far north in Maine. I now have my answer: residents of New Brunswick who probably considered Houlton to be a metropolis compared to their small villages. And how ironic! As I wondered who could possibly want to live in Houlton, I actually had distant relatives living there.

Although many people rely on paid websites, and I do use them, most of my success came from using more traditional sources: random searching, genealogy boards, snail mail, my own organized transcription records, libraries, and free genealogical web sites. I also sought out living descendants as they often have life stories they can share, stories I would never find in published records. My goal, to find original sources rather than rely on other people’s research, also brought rewards. Thanks to the information I found in Canadian resources, I was able to add new information to my Carroll family tree.
One does not need to travel to the Nova Scotia Archives in Halifax to begin researching a Nova Scotia ancestor; in fact, it is more efficient to research online from home and onsite at a local library before embarking on a research trip to Nova Scotia. Abundant online and library resources for Nova Scotia research are available for the genealogical researcher. Websites and other online resources provide an excellent platform for initiating research, and the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston offers an outstanding collection of genealogical resources to augment Nova Scotia research.

Online Resources:
Below are listed by category several websites I have found helpful in my Nova Scotia online research. Please note that this is by no means a complete list of online offerings for Nova Scotia genealogical research. All of the sites listed below are free except for the subscription site Ancestry.com.

Vital Records:
A good starting point for online research is the Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics website (www.novascotiagenealogy.com/). This website has coverage for births (1864-1914) marriages (1763 – 1939) and deaths (1864 – 1964) with noted gaps in coverage for births and deaths from 1877-1908. It is important to recognize that not all births, marriages, and deaths are recorded, as registration of vital records was not mandatory until the 20th century,

FamilySearch.org (https://familysearch.org/) has vital records collections for births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths, church records, census records, probate records, and county-specific records. Not all records are included for the coverage period, but Family Search is constantly adding digitized records to their existing databases and adding new record collections. The Family Search Nova Scotia wiki and Canada wiki: https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/How_to_Locate_Your_Ancestor_in_Canada also provide excellent research tips for the Nova Scotia researcher.

Census Records:
The subscription site Ancestry.com has Census of Canada records from 1861 through 1921, as well as the 1825 census of Lower Canada, the 1841 census of Canada East, and the 1851 census of Canada East, Canada West, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. Ancestry.com provides an extensive database collection for Nova Scotia research, including vital records, passenger lists, Canada/U.S. border crossings, directories, voting lists, and much more.

Passenger Lists/Immigration/Newspapers:
Although 19th century passenger lists to Canada in general and Nova Scotia in particular are rare, two excellent websites, The Ships List (http://www.theshipslist.com/) and the New Brunswick Irish Portal (http://archives.gnb.ca/irish/databases_en.html) provide a wealth of information from a variety of sources, including passenger lists, newspapers, shipping lists, and ship descriptions to assist in researching an immigrant ancestor.

Archival Collections/Genealogical Societies:
The Nova Scotia Archives has a virtual collection of online databases from their vast archival collection. Please visit: http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/ for information about their virtual collections and http://novascotia.ca/archives/ for complete information about their library collections.

The Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia (http://www.novascotiaancestors.ca/) has limited free databases for online research without a membership. Additional resources for members are available on their website.

GenWeb and Google Books:
The Nova Scotia County GenWeb Project (http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~canns/) provides excellent genealogical resources for every county in Nova Scotia. Research provided by Nova Scotia volunteers offers a deeper glimpse into county and local records,
including church records and cemetery inscriptions, diaries, personal papers, photographs, and much more.

Google Books (https://books.google.com/), an invaluable tool for genealogical researchers, provides a deep look into book collections and volumes that may contain information about your ancestor. When using Google Books try typing in the name of an ancestor and the county or town in which he/she lived. I have made many successful and surprising research discoveries in this fashion.

Onsite Resources:
The New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) in Boston has a vast collection of Nova Scotia genealogical resources including land, probate, census, church, and other records on microfilm. The library also holds local and county histories and compiled research collections for Nova Scotia that can greatly extend and advance your research.

Dr. Terrence Punch’s Genealogical Research in Nova Scotia and Genealogist’s Handbook for Atlantic Canada Research are excellent sources to introduce the Nova Scotia researcher to the vast array of records available and to the repositories that hold the records.

Among the many compiled research collections that provide substitutes for vital records are Heather Long’s Marriages in Nova Scotia, Allan Everett Marble’s Deaths, Burials, and Probate of Nova Scotians, Terrence Punch’s Vital Statistics from Nova Scotia Newspapers and Erin’s Sons, and Leonard H. Smith Nova Scotia Immigrants to 1867 and St. Mary’s Bay: Catalogue of Families. The records in these collections are compiled from church records, newspapers, family bibles, and from record groups and manuscript collections of the Nova Scotia Archives.

Along with providing a collection of primary records of Irish immigrants to Atlantic Canada, Terrence Punch’s Erin’s Sons also provides invaluable information about migration paths and patterns of Irish immigration to Atlantic Canada. Migration studies are an essential element of effective genealogical research. The time period in which an immigrant ancestor arrived in Atlantic Canada or Nova Scotia helps to uncover the push factors for emigration from Ireland and the pull factors that led them to choose Nova Scotia as a temporary or permanent destination.

An understanding of Nova Scotia settlement patterns is complimentary to research of migration patterns. The time period in which an ancestor arrived in Nova Scotia and the place the ancestor chose to settle reveal important aspects of social and cultural history. Alfreda Withrow’s Nova Scotia’s Ethnic Roots is an excellent source of information about the settlement patterns of various ethnic groups in Nova Scotia. County and local histories also provide insight into cultural history and local development.

Land records are among the most important class of records for Nova Scotia genealogical research. Land records exist from the earliest settlements in Nova Scotia, beginning with Crown Land Grant Records from 1732 and Annapolis County land records from 1765. Land records often provide a substitute for probate records by the disposition of land as part of an estate. In my research I have found in land records a full list of the heirs of an ancestor upon the disposal of property. Land records can also reveal relationships between family members, which has special value for time periods not covered by vital or census records. Land records by county are available on microfilm at NEHGS.

The NEHGS website has an invaluable article, “Nova Scotia Genealogical Research,” on the Learning Resources section of their website at http://www.americanancestors.org/education/learning-resources/read/nova-scotia-genealogy which details the resources and collections available at the NEHGS library to advance Nova Scotia research.

Methodology:
The time period in which a Nova Scotia ancestor lived directs the approach to research. If an ancestor lived and died in Nova Scotia after 1860, vital and census records of Can-
ada as well as other record collections, are available to assist genealogical research. If an ancestor lived and died in Nova Scotia before 1860, one must use other sources, such as compiled vital record substitutes, county censuses, local histories, and land records.

A basic methodology to Nova Scotia research involves three steps:

1. Research your ancestors in reverse chronological order, one generation at a time
2. Begin with research in vital records and census records for more recent generations who lived and died in Nova Scotia during the range of coverage for vital and census records; extend the research to other sources, including compiled records, land records, and county and local histories
3. Research in compiled records, land records, church records, county and local histories, and other available sources for ancestors who lived and died in Nova Scotia outside the range of coverage for vital and census records

Using the above methodology and by researching extensively online and at the NEHGS library in Boston I was able to expand my knowledge of my Nova Scotia genealogical lines to my immigrant ancestors, Michael O'Connor (ca.1763-1843) and Hugh Sweeney (ca. 1786-1894). Both Michael and Hugh emigrated from Ireland before the Great Famine. Michael arrived in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia by 1791 and Hugh emigrated from County Donegal in 1837. After emigrating both Michael and Hugh lived in Nova Scotia for the remainder of their lives.

Below are brief biographical summaries of Michael O'Connor and Hugh Sweeney derived from my research in Nova Scotia online resources and at the NEHGS library in Boston.

Michael O'Connor (ca. 1763-1843)
My 4th great grandfather Michael O'Connor arrived in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia between 1770 and 1791. Michael practiced the Anglican faith while living in Nova Scotia. Michael married Elizabeth Slate on 4 August 1791 at St. John’s Anglican Church in Lunenburg. Three children, Mary, Sarah, and Thomas, were born to Michael and Elizabeth between 1793 and 1795; their baptisms are recorded in St. John’s Anglican Church records. By 1799 Michael and wife Elizabeth were living at Cape Forchu in Yarmouth Township, where their daughter Elizabeth was born and baptized on 5 September 1799. Michael petitioned for a land grant in Yarmouth in 1808. While living in Yarmouth Michael purchased land from James Willson of Digby in 1811. Michael subsequently relocated to Digby by 1817, where he was granted a share of a 350 acre tract of land as a parishioner of the Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Digby. Michael’s first wife Elizabeth died between the birth of her last child, Michael, on 7 July 1815 and the marriage of Michael to his second wife, Margaret Sweeney, in Digby, on 3 January 1817. Michael and Margaret had four children, born and baptized at Trin-

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3 St. Mary’s Bay Catholic Church (Digby, Nova Scotia), “Acadia, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection) 1670-1946,” p. 12, Elizabeth O’Connor baptism, 5 September 1799; digital image, online database, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 15 October 2015). In 1799 Yarmouth township was under the pastoral jurisdiction of the pioneering minister Père Jean Mande Sigogne (1763-1844), who baptized Elizabeth on his initial progress from St. Anne in Argyle to St. Mary’s Bay in Clare.
ity Anglican Church in Digby. In 1829 Michael and wife Margaret conveyed property in Digby to his eldest son, Thomas. In 1838 Michael and his son Thomas were living in Digby as yeomen, or landholding farmers. Michael O'Connor died in Digby on 28 January 1843 at the age of 80.

From this research study I was able to determine that Michael O'Connor arrived in Lunenburg between 1770 and 1791, as Michael was not listed on the 1770 Nova Scotia census but was living in Lunenburg in 1791 when he married Elizabeth Slate. Using a combination of land records, church records, and county and local histories I was able to uncover significant events in Michael's life and track his migrations through three Nova Scotia counties, all before the time period covered by vital records and by the Census of Canada.

It is vitally important to research all surname variants for Irish ancestors. Michael’s name was recorded as Connor/Conner/Connors in Lunenburg records and as O'Connor in Yarmouth and Digby records.

Michael’s immigration path to Nova Scotia remains unclear. The time period between 1770 and 1791 indicates that he may have arrived in Nova Scotia with American Loyalists in the 1780s, he may have arrived directly from Ireland, or he may have emigrated from Ireland to Nova Scotia by way of Newfoundland in the 1780s to work in the Newfoundland fishing industry. Michael settled initially in Lunenburg and worshiped at St. John’s Anglican Church, the second oldest Protestant church in Canada, built in 1753 as a meeting house for early settlers. Other early Irish settlers who worshipped at St. John’s Anglican Church in Lunenburg migrated from the Irish counties of Cork, Kilkenny, and Waterford, which indicates that Michael and other early Irish settlers may have come to Lunenburg by way of Newfoundland.

In researching my ancestral line to Michael O'Connor in reverse chronological order, one ancestor at a time, it was a fairly straightforward process utilizing vital records and the census of Canada to research all generations through my 2nd great grandmother Martha (O'Connor) Sweeney, Michael’s granddaughter. Research in land records and church records provided the information to prove the parental link from Martha (O'Connor) Sweeney to her father, Thomas O'Connor, and the parental link of Thomas O'Connor to his father, Michael O'Connor.

As it is my eventual hope to trace Michael back to Ireland, the next steps on my research plan include extensive research of the Irish community in Lunenburg from 1780 to 1820 to learn more about the Irish origins of these settlers and why they chose to settle in Lunenburg.

Hugh Sweeney (ca. 1786-1894)
My 3rd great-grandfather Hugh Sweeney emigrated from Convoy Parish in County Donegal, Ireland in 1837. He and his wife Elizabeth (McLaughlin) Sweeney, and their infant sons John and Edward made their voyage aboard the Leslie Gault, which ran a regular shipping route from Londonderry to St. John, New Brunswick. Overpopulation and

8 Digby County, Nova Scotia, Deed Book 12B:271, Michael O’Connor et ux to Thomas O’Connor, 1829; microfilm 819,867, Family History Library (FHL), Salt Lake City, Utah.
the general condition of economic poverty in County Donegal in the 1830s were the likely factors that led to the emigration of Hugh and his family from Donegal. Both Hugh and his wife Elizabeth practiced the Catholic faith. After arriving in St. John the family eventually made their way across the Bay of Fundy from St. John, New Brunswick to Digby, Nova Scotia. Between 1840 and 1844 Hugh and his family were living in St. Mary’s Bay Roman Catholic parish in Digby. Hugh and his three eldest sons, John, Edward, and Hugh Jr., relocated from Digby to Cape Forchu in Yarmouth County between 1861 and 1871. During their married life Hugh and Elizabeth had ten children. Elizabeth died before 1894. Hugh died in 1894, leaving six surviving children.

Hugh’s obituary appeared in the St. John, New Brunswick newspaper The Daily Telegraph upon his death: “Hugh Sweeney, a resident of Cape Forchu, died Friday afternoon last at the advanced age of 108 years. He was in his usual health on Thursday and was desirous of assisting his sons in their occupation of drying fish. Mr. Sweeney was a native of the parish of Conway, County Donegal, Ireland and was born in the year 1786. He came out to St. John, N.B. in 1837 in the ship “Leslie Galt,” subsequently moved to Weymouth, N.S., and shortly afterwards to Yarmouth where he has since resided. His wife died a few years ago. He had a family of ten children, six of whom are still living. Deceased has three sons residing on adjoining farms at Cape Forchu, among whom he has had his home for many years.”

As Hugh Sweeney lived and died in Nova Scotia before and after 1860, it was a fairly straightforward process to research all generations back to Hugh using vital and census records. Researching Hugh’s life combined the optimal scenario of offering vital and census records along with a combination of land records, church records, and compiled research collection. The compiled research sources, St. Mary’s Bay 1840-1844 Catalogue of Families and New Brunswick Vital Statistics from Newspapers, provided maximum benefit, as they pinpointed the time and place of Hugh’s emigration from Ireland and provided a glimpse into Hugh’s life in Nova Scotia.

As I hope to research Hugh and his family in Ireland, I am hopeful that land records research may provide additional information about Hugh’s origins in Ireland and may perhaps provide the name of the townland where he and his family lived before emigration.

After gleaning all I can from online and library resources I hope to travel to Nova Scotia to visit the locations where my ancestors lived and died and gain additional information through local and county research repositories and the Nova Scotia Archives in Halifax.

Additional Bibliography


New Brunswick Vital Statistics from Newspapers, 93:2744. Hugh died on Friday, 17 August 1894. The Donegal parish listed as Conway is Convoy; the Irish spelling for Convoy is Conmhaigh, pronounced as “Conway.”
Finding My Irish Roots in the Maritimes
Joan Winters # 1658

When I was younger I had asked my maternal grandmother about her family. She never really answered my questions but she would tell me about her husband’s line which could be traced back to the Mayflower. She was proud of his family story but she would tell very little about her own heritage.

Luckily, Nana had admitted a few truths about her life to my mother. We knew her parents were George Sanderson and Margaret Skehan. Nana’s people came from Nova Scotia but she only claimed Scottish roots. When asked about records, she said “the church burned down” and “all records were lost forever”. As it turned out, the person we knew as a Congregationalist had actually been baptized a Catholic. At the Archives of the Boston Archdiocese in the register of the St. Frances De Sales Catholic Church, I found the record of Nana’s baptism. Nana’s parents were married in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston. Their Massachusetts marriage record stated that Margaret had been born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the daughter of William Skehan and Mary Francis.

And there was an explanation for the family’s conversion. In 1882, my great grandmother, Margaret Skehan Sanderson, was left a widow with four young children and expecting her fifth child. Her mother-in-law agreed to help support the family on the condition that they all convert to her religion at her protestant church in Boston. Margaret felt she had to agree to this stipulation of her husband’s family for the sake of her children. That tells us so much about the anti-Catholic feelings of that time in the city of Boston and how strongly the Sanderson family felt about the opinion of the people around them.

The search for information continued in Canada. Great grandmother Mary Francis’s baptism was recorded in St. Mary’s Cathedral of Halifax, Nova Scotia, as were those of two of her siblings. Additional records were found for William, Mary and Mary’s parents, in Religious Marriages in Halifax, a book by Terrence Punch (a copy is at the NEHGS in Boston). The original entries (found on FHL Film #866353) of the St. Mary’s Cathedral, Halifax listed William Skehan and his parents, Michael Skehan and Margaret Power who were from Tipperary, Ireland. An email to Tipperary Family History Research gave me the baptism, not of Michael, but of two of his siblings, children of Michael and Margaret (Power) Skehan. I accept that as a connection.

Mary Francis Skehan’s parents were James Francis and Mary Ryan. After emigrating from County Cork, they met and married in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I found this information in several of Terrence Punch’s books and in Nova Scotia Vital Statistics from Newspapers by Jean Holder. (all available at the NEHGS). James Francis’ parents, Richard Francis and Mary Murcha, married in 1793 in County Cork. Mary Ryan’s parents, Michael Ryan and Mary Hinchin married in 1798 in Cork according to the IGI. I did not verify the IGI records as yet. A search by the Cork Family History center was not able to find them.

In order to complete my family tree, I knew I had to research immigrants to the Canadian Maritimes. Thanks to several sources from Nova Scotia, the films from the LDS, books at the NEHGS, and a couple of emails, I was able to trace my grandmother’s family back another four generations and over 200 years, through Canada to Ireland.

Another Resource
Sheila FitzPatrick #0010

An underutilized service for genealogical research is the local historical society in the area where your ancestor lived. As an example, in reorganizing the files of the Waltham Historical Society, I found three pages in three separate places. The pages all related to one family.

In a copy from the city government documents of 1887 was a bio of Alderman John Handrahan. He was born in Port Augustus, PEI, in 1842 and was educated in the public
schools in Charlottetown, about 12 miles away. At age 16, he graduated and was apprenticed to a shipwright for 3 years. In 1865, he immigrated to the U.S., settled in Waltham, MA, and became a house carpenter and builder. At various times he was employed at the Charlestown Navy Yard, as well as having built a portion of the current St. Mary’s Church in Waltham. He was involved in the Waltham Mutual Relief Society and the Grattan Branch of the Land League.

A second page was a typescript of John’s obituary from the Daily Free Press-Tribune of Wed, December 15, 1915. The information from that Waltham paper stated that he was born in Summerside, PEI, 76 years ago. He married Sarah Jane Cowen in Waltham 48 years ago, and fathered 12 children, 9 of whom survived him. The list of surviving children included John J. and Charles F. of Canandaigua, NY; and Daniel J., Francis J., Joseph B., Thomas J., William A., and Esther Handrahan, all of Waltham. A surviving sister, Mrs. Mary Flood of Charlottetown, PEI, was also mentioned. The obituary also indicated that he was an ardent worker for Home Rule in Ireland, and was one of the original leaders of the Irish Land League in the area. He was buried in Calvary Cemetery, Waltham.

The third page was a letter of inquiry from the Ontario County Historical Society (located in Canandaigua, NY) in 1986, requesting information about John J. Handrahan, a landscape architect. He was from Waltham, MA, and his parents were John and Sarah (Cowen) Handrahan, his father having been born in Canada. This John J. Handrahan died on March 28, 1968.

Perhaps this information was passed down by John and Sarah’s children – or perhaps not. Possibly the elder John’s interest in home rule and the Land League was an indication that his parents were from Ireland. These pages might hold a clue that one of John and Sarah’s descendants need to break through a brick wall.

Another page found among some old maps was about Lucinda Campbell, written by Preston MacFee, June 12, 1918. It states that she was born in Tyrone, Ireland (northern part), in 1834, died in 1914 in Dorchester, Mass, and was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery. Her family moved to St. John when she was 5 or 6 years old, and to Boston, Mass, when she was about 10 or 12 years old. They lived in the West End on Beacon Hill. She studied to be a “doctress” and married Adam MacFee, a carpenter. Their children were Adam Walker Agusta (married to Nellie Pope), William Otis (married to Elizabeth Partlow), Cora Elona Magarietta (a twin to William and married to a widower, Wallace MacKenzie), and Fred (their first child who died when he was 6 to 8 months old). I have no idea why this information was tucked into a collection of maps, but it may hold a clue for any of the MacFee descendants.

I hope these two examples will give you cause to check out a local historical society or two!

President’s Message (Continued)

my other Donegal ancestor because the town clerk in a small town knew that my long dead grandmother’s first cousin was still alive. She directed me to her and I seized the opportunity. May Healey Ring was quite ancient and I only met her once but she told me where our Murray ancestors had come from, a townland called Tullynagreana It means Little Hill of Sunshine. It’s very beautifully situated with a river running through it and an ancient stone bridge providing a way across. Hard to believe anyone would leave it. Now bungalows with solid roofs and a paved road inhabit the space but over one hundred years ago it was a very different place. Thatched two room cottages with chickens pecking about and a cow by the front door. The land was to be inherited by the eldest son. What for the rest? Emigration to America, Australia, Wales, England or who knows where.

Let’s remember to raise a toast to our ancestors during the upcoming holiday season and to share our recent genealogical discoveries in an article for the TIARA newsletter!
TIARA on the Road
Mary Choppa #1792

TIARA has been out and about these past several months!

September was a busy month. Volunteers who staffed a booth at the South Shore Irish Festival on Sept 12th and 13th included Pam Smith, Judy Flynn, Pat Landry, Janis Duffy, Lorraine Roberts, Susan Steele, Pat Deal and Cheryl Hodge Spencer. Despite the inclement weather, they talked with a great number of folks.

We also had a booth at the New York State Family History Conference, held in Syracuse, NY. This three day event (Sept 17-19) was also a regional conference for the Federation of Genealogical Societies. Pat Deal, Pam Holland, Susan Steele and yours truly staffed the booth there. Thanks to Sheila Byrnes and Nancy Maliwesky for their assistance at the event. We also touched base with our friend from Find My Past, Jen Baldwin. We’re looking forward to working with Jen for the Celtic Connections Conference 2016 next August.

Our friends from Eneclann invited TIARA to be part of the Back To Our Past event held in Dublin Oct 9-11. Pam Holland and Joanne Riley joined me in running our table as part of Eneclann’s display area. A special area was dedicated to the genealogy portion of the Over 50s Show this year, making it much easier to hear the speakers and concentrating traffic of interested parties. We had several people asking about single relatives who had left Ireland and were never heard from again.

The organizers of BTOP had asked TIARA to give a presentation on the Foresters records. Although I couldn’t do the topic justice like Susan Steele would have done, I talked about how TIARA got involved and let Joanne handle the details of the records. The crowd was very attentive and interested, considering it was Sunday at 12:30pm. Joe Buggy blogged about the talk and the Forester records: http://www.townlandoforigin.com/

TIARA was also part of the PBS Genealogy Roadshow that filmed at Faneuil Hall in Boston, MA on October 3rd. Susan Steele, Pat Deal, Greg Atkinson, Angela Napolitano, Richard Wright, Virginia Wright, Margaret Rooney, Kathy Sullivan, Jane Flately, Jim Forti, Phyllis Doherty, and Jane Barber were all on hand to talk to attendees. We were told that the episode would probably air sometime in May 2016.

Library Update
Joan Callahan #3491

Thank you to the following TIARA members for their donations to the TIARA Library:

Connie Koutoujian:
Medieval ring brooches in Ireland: a study of jewellery, dress, and society by Mary B. Deevey – 1998

Theodore Wall:

Mary Choppa:

PRONI On the Record is a brochure that aims to make the public aware of the variety of records in its custody and show how the public can make use of them.

Are you planning a research trip to Northern Ireland in April? The donation from Mary Choppa is one of three PRONI documents that you may want to look at. The other two are:

Guide to Church Records, 1993, PRONI.

Guide to Landed Estate Records, Volume 1, 1994, PRONI.
Throughout this article I describe actions that “we” took. In fact, most of the actions were taken by my wife Annie Castelnuovo-McMullen. I participated mainly as helper, as a caddie participates in a round of golf.

On a July day in 1947 Waltham News-Tribune reporter Richard P Taffe unexpectedly came across a cemetery headstone bearing his own name. He was covering the transfer of bodies from the Church St. Cemetery to Calvary Cemetery, both in Waltham. The headstone he had discovered marked the grave of his great-great grandfather, of whom he had been unaware. The headstone inscription informed Mr. Taffe that his great-grandfather had been a native of County Louth, Ireland and had died on December 24, 1856. (Waltham News-Tribune July 18, 1947).

For most of the 19th century the Church Street (or Old St. Mary’s) Cemetery was the final resting place for generations of Irish residents of Waltham and the surrounding areas. Local historians and others were aware of the Church St. Cemetery and the fact that in the mid-20th century all of the bodies were removed to Calvary Cemetery. Genealogists, however, were frustrated by the absence of any record of even the names of those buried at Church St. Cemetery. The generally accepted explanation for the lack of records of Church St. Cemetery as well as early burials at Calvary Cemetery was the destruction of records in an early 20th century fire. However, the city of Waltham appropriation for the transfer of bodies included a stipulation and funds for the transcription of the names of those disinterred.

In 1976 Elizabeth D. Castner of the Waltham Public Library reference department made an exhaustive search for that transcription. She began with a request to the Archdiocese Cemetery office in Malden. Mr. T.J. McTiernan, Director, responded that his office did not have any such records, and referred her to the superintendent of Calvary Cemetery.

On March 31, 1976 Ms. Castner sent a letter to Mr. Fred Fiorini, superintendent, Calvary Cemetery, explaining that “the Waltham Cemetery Department, the Waltham Historical Society, City Hall and the public library have all been receiving requests for information from persons trying to locate where their relatives are buried and the genealogical information contained in the records and on the (head)stones.” She noted that the city appropriation for transfer of the bodies included funds for transcription (of) records. She asked if Mr. Fiorini had these records or knew their whereabouts, explaining that the library would like to be able to provide this information. Mr. Fiorini was unable to help.

On April 13, 1976 she made a similar request to the Chancery, Archdiocese of Boston. The following day Most Rev. Thomas B. Daily, Auxiliary Bishop of Boston, responded, in part, “…I note that the property was given to the city of Waltham for school purposes by the Archbishop of Boston in 1934, with the provision that the city would take care of the removal of the approximately 1000 bodies, and tombstones, to Calvary Cemetery and
that the city appropriated money for this purpose and also to cover the cost of the transcription records. ...” Bishop Daily then brought Ms. Castner’s search full circle, by suggesting that she contact Mr. McTiernan of the Malden Cemetery office for any information.

While we can hope for the discovery of the elusive transcription of names of individuals transferred from Church Street to Calvary Cemetery, the most likely source of reliable information will be from transferred headstones. About 10 years ago TIARA member Carlyn Cox unearthed several headstones in this area and placed those stones on a grid-map of the area. She has given us a copy of her map.

The current effort to unearth those headstones stems from research into McMullen family origins by my wife, Annie Castelnovo-McMullen of “County Lombardy”. Her research of McMullen ancestors began more than 10 years ago and established the fact that my great-grandfather was one of four brothers who had immigrated from Donegal in the 1840s and lived at various times in Waltham, Newton and Watertown. The fifth brother had remained in Ireland to continue farming the family leasehold. Annie, a diligent genealogist, obtained copies of all available official documents, including birth, marriage, death records for each brother. From these documents we knew that Dennis, the last survivor, died in 1890 and was buried at Holyhood Cemetery in Brookline. We did not know where the others were buried. We assumed that they were buried in Catholic cemeteries, but could not locate any burial record. One brother, Patrick, disappeared from the record, and apparently from his wife and children, after discharge from the Union Army following the Civil War. The death certificates of the other two brothers, Nicholas and Charles, do not list any place of burial, but state that they were residents of Waltham and Newton, respectively. The death record for Charles’s widow, Ann, showed that she died on October 11, 1893 and was buried in Waltham, but did not name a cemetery. A physical search of the older sections of Calvary Cemetery, which seemed to be the most likely burial place, was unrewarding. At this time in early August 2013, we had never heard of the Church St. Cemetery in Waltham.

Since the death certificates of both Nicholas and Charles listed traumatic deaths, we searched for contemporary news items. Nicholas died in a “drunken fight” on July 5, 1868 in Cambridge, and Charles’s death certificate stated that he had been “killed by falling in of well” on September 10, 1878 in Dedham.

Many hours of eye-straining microfilm viewing in several libraries were rewarded with news articles related to each death. On July 11, 1868 the Cambridge Chronicle reported that on the previous Sunday the body of Nicholas McMullen had been found by police on the premises of a boarding house “... under circumstances which led to the suspicion that he had been murderously attacked ...” The article reported further that a man named Owen Brennan had been jailed on suspicion of murder. Subsequent news articles revealed that Mr. Brennan was acquitted at trial. There was no indication in any article of a place of burial.

There were articles in several papers about the death of Charles on September 10, 1878, including one as far away as the Philadelphia Inquirer on September 30, 1878, not because of his prominence, but because of the circumstances surrounding his death. The best description was in the Waltham Weekly on September 13, 1878, as follows:

“One of the saddest occurrences that has happened of late was that by which Charles McMullen of this town lost his life while engaged in excavating a well on the Sprague Farm in Dedham on Tuesday afternoon last. His brother Dennis and a boy were at the top to attend the windlass, while Charles descended to the bottom of the well, which was about 3 feet in diameter and composed of quicksand. At 8:30 o’clock the first crash of earth fell upon the unfortunate man, covering him up to his shoulders. Planks were placed around his head, and a large gang of men employed in rescuing him, when another slide occurred, burying him partly a sec-
ond time. A sloping excavation was then made, and the rescuing party resumed their work with redoubled energy. Notwithstanding those exertions, just as the sand had been cleared to his ankles, a third falling of the sides of the well buried him completely and it is thought instantly killed him. In an hour thereafter his head was uncovered, and an attending physician pronounced him dead. After about two hours intermission, the body of Charles McMullen was brought to the surface, and conveyed to this town, where his funeral, which was largely attended, took place on Thursday afternoon, the remains being interred in Church St., Cemetery. Deceased was about 45 years old, and leaves a widow and three children, who reside in the chemistry District.”

We know from Waltham and Newton city directories that Charles and Dennis were partners in a masonry business. The boy who was present may have been Dennis’s son Nicholas (my grandfather) who was then 13 years old. In the 1880 federal census, at age 15, his occupation was described as “ hod carrier.”

The salient information was reference to the Church Street Cemetery. We were in the Waltham Public Library, and hanging on one wall was a large 18th century map, which showed a Catholic cemetery on Church Street only a few blocks away. We immediately headed to the cemetery in the hope of finding the headstone of Charles and possibly other family members. When we reached what was clearly the cemetery location, we found nothing but houses and a school building.

We contacted the Waltham Historical Society, where we were fortunate to meet members Sheila Fitzpatrick, a TIARA member and past-president, and Arthur Bennett. They were both familiar with the Church St. Cemetery saga, and Sheila told us that she had long been seeking information about family members buried in that cemetery. They explained that the city of Waltham had come into possession of the Church St., Cemetery land for the purpose of enlarging a school, and that bodies buried there had been moved to Calvary Cemetery. They were even able to direct us to the specific location of the re-internment at Calvary, and both became partners in our subsequent quest to discover the names of the people who had been buried at the Church St. Cemetery.

Annie and I determined that we would make a newspaper search for additional information, perhaps even a list of names of those moved, reasoning that an event like this would draw local newspaper coverage. However, the best estimate we had for the removal occurred was sometime in the late 1940s. Jackie Zwicker, the archivist at Waltham Public Library, narrowed that window for us. She searched an old card catalog (they still have one dating back to the 1930s), and under a tab entitled “Church St. Cemetery” she found reference to a
June 1947 newspaper article about the transfer of the bodies to Calvary. This gave us the starting point we needed, and we were then able to find several News-Tribune articles chronicling the transfer, which occurred over much of that summer.

The impending elimination of the 130 year old Church St., Cemetery prompted a review of the history of the cemetery and the associated St. Mary’s Parish by Mr. P.M. Stone. The article was published in the News-Tribune on June 3, 1947. St. Mary’s, the first Catholic parish in Waltham, was established in 1830, with the construction of a 50 x 35 foot one-story wood frame church on the Church Street site of a Protestant church which had been destroyed by a lightning strike on July 30, 1829. The first Catholic mass in Waltham was celebrated in a shed on that lot on July 4, 1830, although the closing did not take place until August 25, 1830. The cost of the land was $65, and the deed was in the name of “Bishop Benedict Fenwick in trust for the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Waltham.” St. Mary’s church was erected later that year with a “burial plot” located on one side.

A heated controversy arose in 1844 over the proposed erection of a parish house near the church. Mr. Stone explained that some parishioners, who came to mass from outlying areas on horseback or in wagons, wanted the space to remain open, as construction of the house would eliminate the space used for “hitching” their horses. Mr. Stone indicated that feelings ran so high that it was necessary to close the church for some time before an amicable settlement was reached and the work of the parish could continue. However, four years later on June 4, 1848 the church was burned “… perhaps by an incendiary…” according to Mr. Stone. In June 1849 a new church was completed on the same site.

Two theories about persons responsible for burning the church, if it was torched, have been suggested. Either it was burned by anti-Catholic vigilantes, or by disgruntled parishioners. Mr. Stone does not speculate. In subsequent years plans were made for a new, larger church and the present St. Mary’s church was constructed on School Street in 1859.

St. Mary’s Cemetery on the Church Street lot remained the main cemetery for Catholics in the Waltham and Newton area until Calvary Cemetery was opened in the 1870s. The need for a new cemetery is evident from an article in the Waltham Free Press on September 9, 1881 concerning a hearing before the Waltham Board of Health proposing the permanent closure of the cemetery because it had reached its capacity. The cemetery was not closed. Burials continued into the 1920s, but it appears that most of the burials had taken place by 1881, and Calvary became the primary cemetery. This is evident from a list of veterans in each cemetery published on May 27, 1881 by the Waltham Free Press in preparation for Memorial Day services. Fourteen veterans were listed at Church Street; twenty were buried at Calvary Cemetery. Since there is no known list of burials at the Church St. Cemetery or early burials at Calvary Cemetery, it seems worthwhile to list the names we do know.

**Church St., Cemetery:**
- Brady, Patrick
- Carey, James
- Cox, Michael
- Greene, Charles
- Kingsley, John
- McBride, Michael
- McVey, Patrick
- Murphy, Thomas
- Murray, William H
- Munster, Patrick
- Rooney, James
- Sullivan, Daniel
- Sullivan, James
- Tierney, Thomas

**Calvary Cemetery:**
- Bannon, John
- Brennan, Patrick
- Carey, Patrick
- Carroll, Michael Connolly
- Coleman, Michael
- Dolan, Michael
- Doling, John
- Donahue, John
- Ganty, Michael
- Lynch, Cornelius
- Lynch J.J.
- McAvoy, Andrew
- McGuinness, Hugh
- McNamee, James
- Mullaney, George
- Mulligan, Barney
- Murray, James
- Neil, G.P.
- Rogers, John F.
- Russell, Michael
- Sullivan, Dennis

Although it appears that the city had received the land in 1934, no action was taken on the transfer of bodies to Calvary Cemetery until 1947. On May 3, 1947 the News-Tribune reported that four bids had been received ranging from $16,166 to $28,750 for removal and transfer of the bodies. The city council determined that the final cost, considering additional funds for supervision and
transcription of records, would exceed the $18,000 previously appropriated by the council. On June 9, 1947 the council appropriated an additional $5000, which would bring the total appropriated to $23,000. On June 10, 1947 the News-Tribune described the project as follows:

“Approximately 1000 bodies are to be removed from the Church St., Cemetery, which has not had a burial in more than 20 years. The bodies will be reinterred in a plot of land in Calvary Cemetery, except that veterans’ bodies shall be given separate graves. Each body shall be placed in a wooden box in Calvary Cemetery and all existing monuments and markers at the church Street location, in good condition, shall be set in place on the Calvary site.”

The contract was awarded to Waltham contractor Antonio Antico, who had submitted a bid of $22,000. On July 18, 1947 the News-Tribune reported that the work was progressing rapidly, and it was anticipated that it would be completed in about two weeks. The paper reported that graves were not dug out individually from the top, but that a steam shovel dug down to the 6 foot level, and two men worked at that level with shovels removing remains from a grave and placing them into a wooden box. Each box was said to be “carefully marked”. However, it was noted that identification of bodies was difficult because grave markers and coffin markings were often illegible. The boxes were then piled for shipment to Calvary Cemetery, where they were said to be lined up side-by-side in long rows and then covered with gravel and loam. Mr. Taffe, the Tribune reporter covering the story, described standing amidst boxes filled with remains and piles of grave markers and grave stones awaiting transfer to Calvary.

The Report of the Commissioner of Public Cemeteries contained in the city of Waltham Annual Reports for 1947 states that 1375 bodies were transferred from St. Mary's Cemetery to Calvary Cemetery under the supervision of Mr. Mulvihill, superintendent of Calvary Cemetery, at a final cost of $20,738.57.

By the time we had compiled the above information it was the fall of 2013. We had to determine our next step. We had many conversations with Arthur Bennett and Sheila Fitzpatrick, as well as Bob Bradley, the superintendent of Calvary Cemetery, who was always helpful. We knew that an indeterminate number of headstones were laid flat on the ground over the Calvary Cemetery area where the remains had been reburied. During the almost 70 years since they had been placed, the stones had sunk into the ground and were covered by dirt and grass. The question was how to uncover them, and none of us had any experience in such a project. There was much discussion throughout 2014 about seeking grants to hire professionals or other alternative means to do this. By the summer of 2015, we decided that we would do it ourselves with the help of volunteers.

Before doing that, we wanted to have as much information about the site as possible. Arthur Bennett suggested that we contact Antonio Antico Junior, whom he suspected had been working on this project as a young teenager during the summer of 1947. Mr. Antico responded to a letter that he had indeed been involved in that project, and agreed to meet us at Calvary Cemetery. He confirmed that we had the correct location, and explained that the boxes containing remains had been laid in a large mass grave edge to edge. He also explained that the headstones had been cut with a stone-cutter to retain only written material, although decorative details often found at the top of the stone were not cut off. The diminished stones were then laid flat over the area. He did not recall any special treatment for veterans’ graves. His recollection was that all of the reburials had taken place in the approximately 1500 square-foot area that we had identified.
Armed with this information, we solicited volunteer participation, particularly from TIARA, and on a sunny September 19, 2015, twenty-five volunteers descended on the site and went to work. Arthur Bennett brought with him a specialized tool resembling a 6 inch long weathered screwdriver designed to probe the ground for buried stones. With edgers, trowels, other garden tools and various types of brushes, the volunteers carefully unearthed 161 headstones, which had previously been buried at depths ranging from 2 inches to more than 5 inches. One volunteer, John McNally, was surprised to uncover the headstone of a family member whose final resting place had long been a mystery. We found that many of the headstones had indeed been cut and many others retained decorative details. Some had not been carefully cut, and it was obvious that some of the inscription had been cut off. The headstones are not in complete rows. Large gaps exist where there are no stones. We don’t know whether there are stones which had sunk deeper than our probe, and it is not practical to physically probe deeper, because the hard packed gravel is indistinguishable from a stone. We suspect that more than 161 stones were moved to Calvary, and considering the number of bodies, we have arranged for ground-penetrating-radar scanning, which should be able to identify buried headstones. This was performed on Saturday, October 31, 2015 by Robert Perry, who has successfully scanned many old cemeteries for the same purpose. We expect to scan an adjacent open area, which has few headstones in a section of the cemetery which is otherwise covered with stones. Since the number of bodies supposedly transferred (1375) exceeds the estimated number of bodies (1000) by almost 40%, it is possible that some bodies and stones were placed in this adjacent area. We have established a gofundme site at: https://www.gofundme.com/churchstheadstones to give others an opportunity to help defray expenses.

TIARA member Marie Daley has photographed all of the stones so far unearthed, and transcription of the often barely legible inscriptions is ongoing. As we had suspected, many inscriptions include the first generation decedent’s parish and county of origin information which is critical for genealogists. All photographs and inscriptions will be made available to TIARA and the public.
Call for Descendants—Pre-famine Irish Immigrants to Rhode Island

Providence Children’s Museum, the Museum of Newport Irish History and the Fort Adams Trust are looking for descendants of some of the earliest Irish immigrants to Rhode Island who helped build Fort Adams in Newport between 1825 and 1845. The institutions are hoping to build archives, connect with descendants and contribute to early stage research towards the development of an exhibit at Providence Children’s Museum.

Many Irish left their country before the great famine of 1846/7 and came to America to help build New England’s canals and railroads, and Fort Adams in Rhode Island. The three institutions are interested in learning more about the lives of these rarely documented workers at Fort Adams and their families who lived with them at the Fort.

The institutions would like to connect with any descendants living in southern New England who know that their ancestors worked and lived at the Fort while it was being built. The goal is to collect data related to these early Irish immigrants including any reminiscences, genealogical knowledge, and information about objects owned or used by them.

Please contact Jessica Neuwirth, exhibit developer at Providence Children’s Museum, with any information by December 31, 2015 email at: Neuwirth@ChildrenMuseum.org or by phone: (401) 273-5437 ext. 103.

The mission of Providence Children’s Museum is to inspire and celebrate learning through active play and exploration. The Museum creates and presents interactive exhibits and programs designed to meet the development needs of children ages 1 to 11.

The mission of the Museum of Newport Irish History is to tell the story of the Irish immigration in Newport County from the 1600s to the present, to preserve artifacts and mementoes of that movement, and to facilitate research into Irish heritage.

Historic Fort Adams is operated by the Fort Adams Trust a 501(c)(3) non-profit with a mission to protect and promote the historic places and public spaces at the gateway to Narragansett Bay and Newport. This includes directing and supporting the stabilization, maintenance and operation of Fort Adams as a public historic site.

Trip Notice

The registration deadline for the Dublin research trip has been extended to December 31, 2015.

The Belfast research trip has been cancelled.

Upcoming TIARA Meetings

Friday, December 11, 2015, 7:30PM
Brandeis University, Mendel Center for the Humanities, Rm. G3.
Maureen Taylor, “Photo Detecting 101”
Learn how you can spot clues in your family photos to be able to place them in time and place.

Maureen Taylor is a frequent keynote speaker on photo identification, photograph preservation, and family history at historical and genealogical societies, museums, conferences, libraries, and other organizations across the U.S., London and Canada.

Friday, January 8, 2016, 7:30PM
Brandeis University, Mendel Center for the Humanities, Rm. G3.
Speaker: TBA

Friday, February 12, 2016, 7:30PM
Brandeis University, Mendel Center for the Humanities, Rm. G3.
Speaker: TBA
The Irish Ancestral Research Association, Inc.
2120 Commonwealth Ave.
Auburndale, MA 02466

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL

Upcoming Conferences, Workshops and Events

Massachusetts Genealogical Council 2016 MGC Seminar
Courtyard by Marriott Hotel
Marlborough, MA
16-17 April 2016
www.massgencouncil.org

Irish Famine Summer School and the 5th Annual International Famine Conference
Strokestown Park & Irish National Famine Museum
Strokestown, Co. Roscommon, Ireland
14-19 June 2016
www.irishfaminesummerschool.com

Next Issue

The suggested topic for the Spring Issue of the TIARA Newsletter will continue the focus on Canada. Have you researched ancestors who immigrated to provinces west of the Canadian Maritimes? Or, perhaps you can recommend some useful resources to other researchers. Share your genealogical discoveries and write an article for the next issue of the TIARA Newsletter.

Articles on other topics of family research are also welcome.

Please send submissions to the newsletter to newsletter@tiara.ie or mail to the above address. Submissions for the Spring Issue are requested by January 30, 2016.