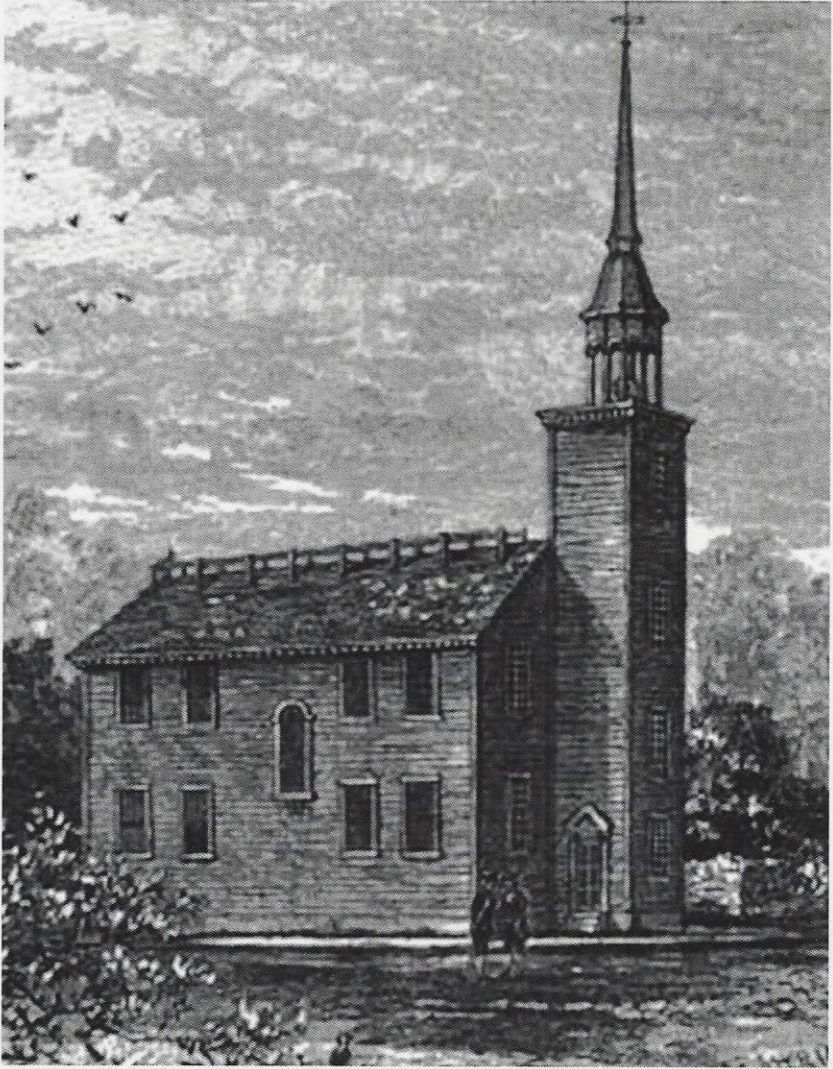




*“With Good Will Doing Service”:  
The Charitable Irish Society of Boston  
(1737-1857)*

*Catherine B. Shannon*

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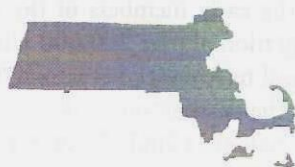


### A Stake in the City

The Irish Meetinghouse in Boston (c. 1744), also known as the “Church of the Presbyterian Stranger,” reflects the establishment of a prospering Irish population in the city despite a sometimes unfriendly reception from authorities and neighbors. Rev. John Moorhead, its founding pastor, John Little, its benefactor, as well as congregants Peter and Henry Pelham were members of the Charitable Irish Society, as was the society’s first president, William Hall.

# “With Good Will Doing Service”: The Charitable Irish Society of Boston (1737–1857)<sup>1</sup>

CATHERINE B. SHANNON



**Abstract:** *The Charitable Irish Society of Boston grew from a small group helping Irish immigrants gain a footing in colonial Boston to a larger, more significant presence in the city's social and political life. As it grew, the society found itself enmeshed in Boston's often severe sectarian conflicts, forcing the society to transform from a Protestant organization toward a more broadly inclusive group, taking Irish Catholics into its membership. Catherine Shannon, professor emerita of history at Westfield State University, proposes in this article that the Charitable Irish Society's strong philanthropic commitment enabled it to overcome sectarian tensions within the immigrant community as well as between immigrant and native Bostonians, going on to thrive as a 21st-century institution with a more inclusive definition of immigrants in need of assistance.*

The Charitable Irish Society (CIS) is the oldest Irish organization in North America. It was established on March 17, 1737, by twenty-six men of Ulster, Ireland, birth or ancestry for the purpose of providing for “the relief of poor, aged and infirm persons, such as have been reduced by sickness, shipwreck and other Accidental misfortunes.” The society also strove to cultivate a spirit of unity and harmony among all resident Irishmen and their descendants in the Massachusetts colony and “to advance socially and morally the interests of the Irish people.”<sup>1</sup> The motto attached to the founding articles was “With Good Will Doing Service,” and for the past 278 years, with a few short hiatuses, the society has remained true to this motto of doing service to fellow Irishmen and -women, its ancestral land, and its American homeland.

## BACKGROUND TO THE SOCIETY’S ESTABLISHMENT

The founders and the early members of the society were from a small segment of a larger migration of over 200,000 Ulster Presbyterians who fled from the north of Ireland to America between 1700 and 1776.<sup>2</sup> During this era, New England was the destination of about 10 percent or about 20,000 immigrants from the north of Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Ulstermen began arriving in Boston during the initial wave of Ulster migration that began in 1714 and lasted through the 1730s. They were escaping the discrimination that the English Penal Laws imposed upon Protestant dissenters (such as themselves) and Roman Catholics alike.<sup>4</sup>

They also fled the consequences of a succession of poor harvests, droughts, escalating rents, and the burdensome tithe payments demanded by the established Anglican Church in Ireland. Presbyterian ministers played an important role in promoting immigration, not only because they too were suffering economically but also because the Test Act of 1704 had eliminated their legal standing to perform marriages, officiate at funerals, and hold any civil offices. The British government’s cancellation of the annual *Regium Donum*, paid to Presbyterian ministers, left many impoverished and searching for alternatives for themselves and their flocks.

It was in this context of poverty and political discrimination that two ministers, Thomas Craighead and William Homes, as well as Homes’ son Robert, a sea captain on the Atlantic, came to New England in 1714. They subsequently sent letters to colleagues back in Ireland encouraging them to consider immigration to New England. In 1718, Reverend William Boyd arrived in Boston armed with a petition signed by a number of Ulster ministers and their followers requesting that Governor Samuel Shute allocate land in the New England colony for Ulster settlers. Shute and the General

Court agreed to provide the Ulster petitioners with land grants. They believed that these settlements would reinforce the frontier against the Indians and buttress Massachusetts' claims to the then-disputed territory of Maine (which was claimed by both Massachusetts and New Hampshire).

Meanwhile, land speculator Captain Robert Temple, a former army officer who came to Boston in 1717 and had staked a claim along the Androscoggin River in Maine, also encouraged immigration from Ulster and eventually chartered five ships to bring Ulster immigrants to New England.<sup>5</sup> Boyd and Captain Homes sailed to Ireland in April 1718 with word that Ulster immigrants would be welcomed by the colonial authorities. Within four months, a steady stream of ships began arriving in Boston full of Ulster immigrants.<sup>6</sup>

Although sixteen ships had come from Northern Ireland between 1714 and 1717, thirty-eight additional shiploads of Ulster immigrants arrived in the port between 1718 and 1720. Fifteen ships came in 1718; five arrived in Boston Harbor on August 18.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the summer of 1718, between 800 and 1,000 Ulster immigrants had arrived in Boston. By 1720, the total number arriving was approximately 2,600.<sup>8</sup> Many came as members of Presbyterian congregations from the Upper Bann Valley, the Foyle Valley, and the city of Londonderry. Reverends James Woodside, James McGregor, Archibald Boyd, William Cornwall, James MacSpartan, and Edward Fitzgerald were among the twenty or so ministers who led their flocks to Boston in 1718–1719.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to sailing for America from Coleraine, the Reverend McGregor of Agadowney Parish in the lower Bann Valley gave a farewell sermon summarizing the religious grievances of discrimination and oppression that motivated the Ulster dissenting ministers and their flocks to emigrate. Like his ministerial colleagues, McGregor had an economic motive as well: his salary was three years in arrears when he left and amounted to only eighty pounds sterling.<sup>10</sup>

This large influx of Ulster immigrants soon caused great anxiety among Boston officials, who worried that the newcomers would become a burden on the town's resources. In August 1718, customs official Thomas Lechmere predicted that "these confounded Irish will eat us all up, provisions being most extravagantly dear and scarce." Governor Shute warned the General Court the following year of the heavy burden the poor Irish were imposing on the authorities.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Boston's ordinary citizens exhibited their own hostility to the newcomers since the city's dominant Congregationalists held all Irish people suspect as enemies of the crown and considered them "unclean, unwholesome and disgusting."<sup>12</sup>

Cotton Mather, who initially had some sympathy for the Ulster immigrants, changed his mind, insisting that they represented the “formidable attempts of Satan and his sons to unsettle us.”<sup>13</sup> James Bernard Cullen, an early historian of the Boston Irish, records that in 1718 and 1719 at least fourteen Irish families fled intimidation or were forced to leave Boston by the city’s authorities.<sup>14</sup> Included in this group was the Reverend James McGregor, who took his followers north to Andover, Massachusetts, where they spent the winter and later moved to southern New Hampshire to establish the settlement of Londonderry.<sup>15</sup> Nine years later in 1727, the Reverend John Moorhead arrived in Boston with a group of County Derry Presbyterians, “but on their landing (they) were met with opposition and suffered the insults of this misinformed rabble, who supposed they were Papists.”<sup>16</sup>

As a result of this persecution, many of these initial Ulster Irish immigrants ventured to Central and Western Massachusetts or northern New England, where their presence is reflected in place names such as Bangor, Belfast, and Limerick in Maine; Dublin and Londonderry in New Hampshire; Hillsboro County in Vermont; and Orange County in New Hampshire. At the same time, the Catholic Irish were especially hated; a popular term of opprobrium directed at them was “St. Patrick’s vermin.”<sup>17</sup>

The animus directed at the Irish was also reflected in the laws and ordinances passed by the General Court and the Boston authorities. For instance, a 1723 ordinance required all who came from Ireland to register with the town officials within five days of arrival.<sup>18</sup> People who housed them were required to report their guests within forty-eight hours or face a substantial fine. Thus, authorities demanded that immigrants show they had the resources to be self-sufficient or find a sponsor willing to post a bond. Failing this, they were told to leave the city. In July 1729, a Boston mob tried to prevent Irish passengers from landing, and the police watch was called out to preserve order in the city.<sup>19</sup>

The popular animosity against Irish Catholics was not just cultural but also religious, reflected in the prevailing English laws prohibiting Catholic worship and denying Catholics any legal status at home or in the colonies. In June 1700, the Massachusetts General Court passed a law that forbade Catholic priests to be in the territory under a penalty of life imprisonment and, in some circumstances, death.<sup>20</sup> In March 1731, amid rumors that a priest was to be smuggled into Boston to perform a Mass, Governor Jonathan Belcher chose St. Patrick’s Day to proclaim that “there are a considerable number of papists within the town of Boston, and it is ordered that officers of the law break open their dwelling places, shops and



**The Rev. John Moorhead**

Print by CIS member Peter Pelham, 1751.

so forth and bring them to the court of justice.”<sup>21</sup>

Five years later, in July 1736 when the brig *Bootle* arrived from County Cork loaded with immigrants, Boston selectmen forbade Captain Robert Boyd from landing any of his passengers.<sup>22</sup> The prohibition was probably motivated as much by fear of the spread of disease from ill passengers as by the assumed Catholicism of Cork immigrants.<sup>23</sup> Anti-Catholicism was a persistent feature of Boston’s eighteenth-century atmosphere and was responsible for serious attacks on Irish Catholics and their homes, which happened on November 5 in 1754, 1755, and 1762, when the city’s plebeian population celebrated Guy Fawkes Day to mark the collapse of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot that sought to oust the Protestant King James I.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the hostility of Boston residents, Irish immigration continued. In 1727, the Reverend Moorhead, a Presbyterian minister born in Belfast and educated in Scotland, led his small County Derry congregation to Boston, where they settled in the Long Lane area. They secured, for their meetinghouse, the use of a barn on Long Lane belonging to John Little, a fellow Ulster immigrant who arrived in 1722. After Little donated the barn site to the congregation in 1735, a church was constructed that was known as “the Church of the Presbyterian Strangers” and was identified on contemporary maps as “The Irish Meeting House.”<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, it was in this building that the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention debated and approved the United States Constitution in 1788, an event that explains the street’s name change from Long Lane to Federal Street.<sup>26</sup>

A second wave of Ulster migration began in the late 1720s and lasted through the following decade. In 1728, at least 4,000 fled Ulster in hopes of escaping economic hardship and religious persecution.<sup>27</sup> This Ulster outflow combined with the start of regular emigration from eastern and southern Ireland swelled the numbers of Irish immigrants arriving in Boston in the mid-1730s. Between 1736 and 1738, at least ten ships carrying a total of

### List of Ships Arriving in the Port of Boston from 1736 to 1741

| Date           | Ship Name                | Number of Passengers                    | Bond Posted |
|----------------|--------------------------|---|-------------|
| July 1736      | <i>Bootle</i> *          |   |             |
| November 1736  | <i>Hannah</i>            | 37                                      |             |
| November 1736  | <i>Two Mollys</i>        | 42                                      |             |
| April 1737     | <i>Sarah Galley</i> *    |   |             |
| June 1737      | <i>Catherine</i>         |   |             |
| September 1738 | <i>Salutation</i>        | 12 admitted                             |             |
| August 1738    | <i>Elizabeth</i>         |   | £500        |
| September 1738 | <i>Sagamore</i>          | 408                                     | £1,200      |
| September 1738 | <i>Charming Molly</i>    | 162                                     | £600        |
| May 1739       | <i>Eagle</i>             | 82                                      |             |
| 1740           | <i>Berwich</i>           | 46                                      |             |
| October 1741   | <i>Seaflower</i> (sloop) | 65 of initial 165 who sailed from Derby |             |

\* These ships both sailed from Cork and both were quarantined upon their arrival in Boston allegedly because of signs of infectious disease among the passengers. As smallpox was spreading in Boston, these precautions seem reasonable.

This information derived mainly from James Bernard Cullen, *The Story of the Irish in Boston* (1889), and Charles Burke, *The History of the Silver Key* (1973).



about 1,000 Irish immigrants arrived in the port of Boston.<sup>28</sup> (See the table on page 8 for a list of ships and other details on bonds posted.) Meanwhile, the Boston winter of 1736–1737 was an especially severe and difficult one: the harbor froze, causing scarcity of food and fuel, and a smallpox epidemic broke out, further worsening conditions.

## FOUNDERS AND EARLY MEMBERS

The formation of benevolent societies for charitable and social purposes by men of common ethnic or occupational background was common in eighteenth-century America.<sup>29</sup> However, the recent experiences of hostility to Ulster immigrants in Boston as well as the immediate crisis of a large influx of new immigrants in the severe winter of 1736–1737 were additional incentives to establish the Charitable Irish Society on March 17, 1737. Although a Scots Charitable Society had existed in Boston since 1657 and may have provided a model, the twenty-six founders chose to stress their Irish identity. They called on all those of “the Irish nation” and their descendants in the Boston area to join their society. However, until 1760, only Protestant Irish were allowed membership.

A number of the founders had personal experience with the challenges and difficulties of immigration to Boston and had come to realize that an organized response to help their countrymen was now essential. For instance, John Little came to Boston in 1722 and was told to leave, but he remained and eventually served as a constable. William Stewart, a cooper, came from Ireland with his wife and two children in 1736 aboard the *Bootle*. They were allowed to stay because Stewart secured two bond sponsors. William Freeland was admitted to the town on September 9, 1730, and Joseph St. Lawrence, a merchant who had arrived just prior to 1737, was allowed to stay because he possessed fifty pounds to sustain himself and his family.<sup>30</sup> These founders hoped that providing financial assistance to the incoming Irish would help lessen the local hostility to all the Irish and would garner them an increased element of respectability within the Boston community.<sup>31</sup> It is noteworthy that six of the society’s founders or earliest members posted bonds for other Irish immigrants. The largest bond was posted by founder Captain Daniel Gibbs, who put up 1,200 pounds for the 408 passengers that arrived on his ship, *The Sagamore*, in September 1737.<sup>32</sup>

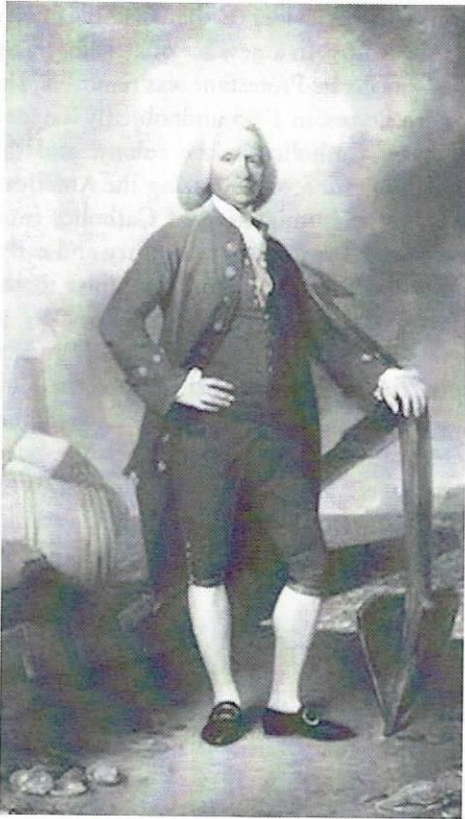
The society’s founders represented a variety of occupations, including merchants, lawyers, a teacher, a sea captain, a joiner, a cooper, a constable and a “retailer of strong drink.” The economic status of the founders was

undoubtedly comfortable since the original initiation fee was ten shillings, or the equivalent of about \$500 today, and annual dues were eight shillings, or about \$400. Annual meetings were held in April, and a dress code, stressing the formality of the occasion, prohibited members from wearing “cap or apron” at this event. Meetings were to be concluded by 2:00 a.m. All drink consumed at the meetings had to be ordered by the society’s president, and no one could exceed more than two shillings in drink. (As two shillings would have purchased two quarts of rum, it is little wonder the meetings ran rather late.) The Keeper of the Silver Key oversaw recruitment and membership.

From early in the society’s existence, the Keeper’s authority was symbolized by his possession of “the Silver Key,” which was crafted from an ordinary contemporary key and a 1738 King George II Irish coin. The coin bears the crowned harp on one side and the head of the king on the other. Jacob Hurd, one of the most accomplished silversmiths in colonial Boston, designed and crafted the Silver Key; his hallmark is still visible on the key, which is on display in the Hurd silver collection at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. It is possible that one of Hurd’s apprentices was an early society member.<sup>33</sup>

Notable among the society’s founders was Peter Pelham, who came to Boston around 1727. He was a teacher, painter, and engraver who made an engraved portrait of Reverend Moorhead. Pelham’s second wife was Mary Copley, who with her first husband had emigrated from Limerick to Boston. Her marriage to Pelham made him the stepfather of her son, John Singleton Copley, the famous painter. Copley’s famous *Boy with the Squirrel* portrait depicted his younger half brother, Henry Pelham, who joined the society in 1774.

Another esteemed member of the society was Patrick Tracey, a sea captain from Newburyport, who emigrated from Kilcarbery, County Wexford, in 1730 and joined the society along with 14 others at its second meeting on April 11, 1737. Tracey, an orphan who had been cheated out of his inheritance by his guardian, came to America at age 19. He quickly acquired great wealth as a sea captain and trader. He operated a fleet of privateers during the Revolutionary War and captured 2,000 British prisoners. He and his second wife, Hannah Goodkin, had nine children, including Hannah Tracey Jackson, whose marriage to Jonathan Jackson produced three very successful and influential Tracey grandchildren. James Jackson founded Massachusetts General Hospital; Charles Jackson rose to be chief justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court; and Patrick Tracey Jackson built the first complete cotton mill in Waltham and later was involved in the development of Lowell, named for his brother-in-law Francis Lowell.



**Patrick Tracey**

Patrick Tracey Jackson married a Cabot, while one of his sisters married a Lowell and another a Lee, establishing a hybrid Yankee-Irish clan in Essex County. Many of the descendants of Captain Patrick Tracey have been members or officers of the society over the centuries, including Simon Elliot, who served as president for 11 years, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Governor Francis Sargent, U.S. Attorney General Elliot Richardson, and more recently Henry Lee, the founder and long-time president of the Friends of the Boston Public Gardens.<sup>34</sup>

Several religious also found their way into the society. The Reverend Moorhead joined the society in 1739 and remained a member until his death on December 2, 1773.<sup>35</sup> Another immigrating Presbyterian minister who joined the

society in its early years was the Reverend William McClennehan, who later moved to Blandford in Western Massachusetts.<sup>36</sup> Robert Temple, who had promoted settlement in Maine, joined the society in 1740. By 1743, the society had approximately 116 members.<sup>37</sup>

Between 1737 and 1761, the society enrolled 173 members, 89 of whom were still active in 1761. Most of these men had joined between 1738 and 1749.<sup>38</sup> In 1760, the society omitted the qualification of being Protestant, sixty years before the Massachusetts Legislature removed its ban on Roman Catholics holding public elective office. Founding Article II of the society's constitution states that only Protestants could be society officers. This requirement was probably a result of the prohibitions Boston authorities had imposed against Catholics living in the town as well as the society's reluctance to fall afoul of the authorities. The founding articles did not

specifically prohibit Catholics, and there is evidence that Catholics were members of the society as early as the 1740s. In a new set of articles drawn up circa 1765, the requirement that officers be Protestant was removed. The end of Britain's Seven Years' War with France in 1763 undoubtedly lessened anxieties about the trustworthiness of Catholics in the colony, and the local laws prohibiting Catholic worship were revoked during the American Revolution in 1780.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, rising immigration of Catholics from the province of Munster to Boston in the late-eighteenth century and early-nineteenth century augmented the potential for Catholic recruits to the society. For example, John Magner, a Catholic who joined the society in 1770, served as its vice president in 1803 and was active in raising funds at the turn of the century for the construction of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. Article II of the revised constitution adopted in 1808 stated that "any person of Irish birth or descent" was eligible for membership. After 1794, the society's annual meetings were always held on March 17—St. Patrick's Day; from 1797 forward, they were always billed as a St. Patrick's Day event, which suggests additional progress in making the society more inclusive than in its beginnings.<sup>40</sup>

## THE SOCIETY DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA

In the decade before the American Revolution, society members could be found on both sides of Boston's political controversies such as the increased taxes imposed by Britain as well as the March 5, 1770, King Street Riot, more commonly known as the Boston Massacre. The Boston Massacre, in particular, affected the society, for some society members witnessed or participated in the affair. Henry Knox, then a bookseller in Cornhill, recalled that he had warned the British captain Thomas Preston against firing into the crowd. Municipal watchman Benjamin Burdick, who was the society's Keeper of the Silver Key in 1769, did likewise.<sup>41</sup> He had left his home to go to the scene of the confrontation armed with his "highland broad sword" in an effort to keep the peace between the soldiers and the mob after weeks of rising tension in the city. After shots were fired, Burdick fetched Dr. Joseph Gardner to attend the wounded.<sup>42</sup>

Another society member played a role in ensuring that the colonists' version of the March 5 events reached London to counter the colonial officials' reports. Robert Gardner chartered a ship that carried multiple copies of *A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston*, which was compiled from witness statements within a fortnight of the incident.<sup>43</sup> Gardner served as society treasurer from 1810 to 1812.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Robert Auchmuty,

a highly regarded lawyer, admiralty judge, and Charitable Irish Society President from 1767 to 1769, joined with John Adams in defending Captain Preston against murder charges. Auchmuty had also served as King's Counsel in a case against merchants who had organized a boycott of British-made goods. Two of the merchants involved in this boycott campaign, Captain William McKay and Daniel Malcolm, were respectively president and vice president of the Charitable Irish Society. Each was found innocent at the trial.<sup>45</sup>

The outbreak of the American Revolution caused a nine-year lapse in society meetings and forced members to decide where their political loyalties lay. Five prominent members fled to Halifax, Nova Scotia, as "proscribed Tories,"<sup>46</sup> while Robert Auchmuty, the former society president, fled to London, where he died collecting a British government pension of 500 pounds per annum. James Forrest, a merchant who had emigrated from Ireland and was the society's Keeper of the Silver Key in 1772–1773, supported the loyalist cause to the extent that he organized a militia. He fled Boston in March 1776, and was later prohibited from returning to Massachusetts by the state authorities.

However, most of the members appear to have supported the colonial cause, an attitude also reflected across the Atlantic within the Ulster Presbyterian community.<sup>47</sup> Among those Charitable Irish Society members who supported the revolutionary cause were Captain William McKay and Henry Knox, both of whom joined the society in 1774. Knox, his father, and his uncles were members of the Reverend Moorhead's church, a congregation noted for its fervent support of the revolutionary cause. Knox gained renown for orchestrating the delivery of guns from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston; the guns' later placement on Dorchester Heights enabled General George Washington to threaten the British fleet and prompted the British evacuation of Boston on March 17, 1776. Knox later became the first U.S. Secretary of War in President George Washington's administration.

## POSTREVOLUTIONARY ERA TO 1830S

On October 26, 1784, at the society's first meeting following the Revolutionary War, President William McKay, who had been such a fierce critic of Britain's mercantile laws, spoke of his hope that "our friends and countrymen in Ireland" would follow the example of brave Americans and recover their liberty.<sup>48</sup> The Charitable Irish Society membership was sympathetic to the egalitarian and nonsectarian goals of the United Irish movement of the 1790s. For example, although a Protestant, prominent

member Samuel L. Knapp befriended Boston's first Catholic bishop, Jean Cheverus, and later took a leading role in securing the Massachusetts Legislature's 1820 decision to remove the ban on Roman Catholics holding public elective office.<sup>49</sup>

A visual symbol of the society's belief in the compatibility of American patriotism with pride in its Irish heritage is reflected in its 1810 banner, which features the American Eagle and the Irish harp, this time uncrowned. The French bonnet on the banner symbolizes the society's affinity for the republican ideals of the French Revolution. Some Protestant members of the society made donations to the building fund for the Cathedral of the Holy Cross on Franklin Street, which was designed by Charles Bulfinch and completed in 1803.<sup>50</sup> The society's commitment to inclusiveness was also reflected in its 1809 constitutional revision and in its invitations to Bishop Jean Cheverus to speak to the society in 1805 and again in 1817. The bishop recognized the society's good work and on various occasions transferred all the proceeds of the March 17th collection at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross to the Charitable Irish Society to be disbursed to the needy.<sup>51</sup>

Society records, beginning in the 1760s, indicate grants principally to society members facing financial difficulties and to widows of society members. The grants ranged from thirty to forty shillings, and some widows of society members were recipients on multiple occasions.<sup>52</sup> In December 1801, active society member Robert Gardner was reimbursed for a bond of \$13 that he had posted in the society's name to secure the landing of poor Irish immigrants arriving on the brig *Albicon*. Nine years later, Gardner again assisted destitute Irish passengers who had arrived aboard the brig *Alliance*.<sup>53</sup> In 1838, with annual receipts of \$620.36, grants were made to eighty people, half of whom were widows or women whose husbands failed to provide support for their families.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the assistance provided to individual immigrants, a notable example of the society's charitable actions during its first century was the fourteen shillings it provided in 1770 to John Ryan, a Catholic Irishman and merchant sailor, after he had been badly wounded in a confrontation on April 22, 1769, with a Royal Navy officer on the seas near Marblehead. His injuries had left him incapacitated and unable to work, so the society wanted to recognize "his heroic behavior."<sup>55</sup> The officer, Lieutenant Henry G. Panton, was killed as he tried to impress or conscript Ryan and three other Irishmen from the brig *Pitt Packet* onto the royal frigate *Rose*.<sup>56</sup> Ryan and his colleagues were arrested and charged with murder in the Admiralty court.<sup>57</sup> John Adams successfully defended Ryan and the others and Adams later described this case as one of the most important of his legal career.<sup>58</sup>



Charitable Irish Society

### Pride and Patriotism

The CIS banner captures the society's belief in the compatibility of its Irish pride with its American patriotism.

Other examples of the society's early charitable gifts are a donation of £3 in 1794 for the purchase of school books for poor Irish children, \$3.50 to James Miller for the purchase of a wooden leg, and \$2.50 in 1803 to purchase five St. Patrick's Day dinners for Irishmen who were in the city jail. During the next four decades, the society continued to give grants, ranging from \$2.50 to \$10.00 to needy individuals and families, charitable outlays when the prevailing wage was about a dollar a day. In one case it contributed \$19.50 toward a family's funeral costs.<sup>59</sup> The society continued these types of charitable acts throughout its existence.

### **PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC AT ODDS IN THE 1830S: SECTARIAN STRAINS**

The 1830s saw rising tensions between the city's Irish Catholics and Boston Protestants. This was exacerbated by the steady influx of immigrants from predominantly Catholic Munster and Leinster. Between 3,000 and 4,000 Irish arrived in Boston each year throughout the decade. While not all stayed in the city, the Yankee working class saw the Irish Catholic immigrant as a direct threat to their jobs, political influence, and Protestant religious traditions and culture.

Indeed, Andrew Jackson's defeat of John Quincy Adams for the presidency in 1832 was attributed by many Boston Whigs and Protestant plebeians to the malign influence of Irish Catholic voters, even though the number of such voters was very small and politically insignificant. The enthusiastic reception given by the Charitable Irish Society and the city's Irish community to President Andrew Jackson during his Boston visit in June 1833, as well as the president's expressed pride in his Irish heritage on that occasion, heightened resentment.<sup>60</sup>

Violent expressions of this increasing enmity were evident through many incidents in the 1830s; these included the burning of the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in August 1834 by a mob of Protestants, the Broad Street riots of June 1837, and Governor Gardner's bow to Protestant hysteria when he dissolved the predominantly Irish Catholic Montgomery Guards militia in April 1838. Established in January 1837 under the patronage of Charitable Irish Society members Andrew Carney, Thomas Mooney, and Edwin Palmer, the Montgomery Guards had been called in by the governor to put down the rioting on Broad Street on June 11, 1837, after a pitched battle broke out between two fire brigades, a Protestant company returning from a fire and an Irish ensemble returning from a funeral.



Although the guards proved impartial in carrying out their duty in quashing the riot, Protestant plebeians, and especially those in the other militias, could not tolerate the presence of armed Irishmen, and later they refused to participate in the annual gathering of all the militia companies on Boston Common in September 1837. The Montgomery Guards were harassed and attacked by Yankee mobs as they returned to their headquarters following the disrupted parade rituals.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the rising sectarian tensions of the 1830s, however, the Charitable Irish Society remained true to its inclusive tradition as was shown during its 1837 centenary celebrations.<sup>62</sup> Governor Edward Everett and a number of state and city politicians not of Irish origin participated in the celebration. In a two-hour centenary speech before 250 guests, Charitable Irish Society President James Boyd, a Presbyterian native of County Antrim who came to Boston in 1817 and later became a Unitarian, welcomed the growing number of Roman Catholics joining the society.<sup>63</sup> Boyd was noted for his tolerant views toward Catholics and, as a member of the Massachusetts Legislature, supported Bishop Fenwick's ultimately unsuccessful request that the Commonwealth compensate the Ursulines for the destruction of their property in the riot of the previous year.<sup>64</sup> Among the thirteen official toasts at this dinner was one to Daniel O'Connell, M.P., who had successfully carried the cause of Catholic Emancipation in the British Parliament in 1829. Still other toasts were raised for Irish justice and the republican cause.<sup>65</sup> The centenary celebration also included the debut of a march entitled "The Shamrock Quick Step" by J. Friedhiem expressly dedicated to the society and the Montgomery Guards whose principal founders were society members.<sup>66</sup>

Catholics from Ireland's southern provinces dominated the list of new members from the 1820s to the mid-1840s, but Catholics held only five of the fifteen presidencies during this era. One was Bernard Fitzpatrick in 1830, who was the father of future Boston bishop John Fitzpatrick; and the Reverend Thomas J. O'Flaherty in 1831, a Catholic priest who was the only clergyman ever to be CIS president.<sup>67</sup> The Reverend Patrick Byrne, who was a native of Kilkenny and was ordained by Bishop Cheverus, served as society treasurer from 1834 to 1836. Byrne was the pastor of St. Mary's Church in Charlestown at the time of the burning of the Ursuline Convent in 1834.

## **THE CHARITABLE IRISH SOCIETY AND IRISH FAMINE RELIEF EFFORTS, 1845-1851**

Boston had a population of about 8,000 Irish-born residents in 1845, the first year of the Irish potato famine. On November 20, 1845, the Royal Mail



WOMAN BEGGING AT CLONAKILTY.



### In Search of Relief

A sketch by James Mahony in the *Illustrated London News*, published February 12, 1847, shows a Clonakilty woman appealing for aid to “bury her dear little baby.” Mahony’s images helped spark an ecumenical campaign in New England to raise funds for Irish famine relief. Image courtesy of Ireland’s Great Hunger Museum.

Ship *Britannia* brought news of the initial and partial potato crop failure in Ireland. Members of the CIS responded quickly and generously. Former president the Reverend Thomas J. O'Flaherty established a special Irish Charitable Fund, which was the first formal response in the nation to the bleak news from Ireland. In just nine days, O'Flaherty raised \$1,000 of the total of \$19,000 collected for Irish relief in Boston by year's end. O'Flaherty, a native of County Kerry and a physician prior to his 1829 ordination, was aware of the dire consequences of a potato crop failure in his homeland, which undoubtedly accounted for his prompt response.<sup>68</sup> Thomas Mooney, also a CIS member, chaired a fundraising meeting attended by 1,500 at the Odeon Theatre in early January. Fellow member Daniel Crowley, who had a successful building company, collected \$1,100 from his employees and friends and served as treasurer of this initial fund.<sup>69</sup>

There were no organized relief efforts in the first half of 1846 because a subsequent potato failure was not anticipated; in addition, the British government of Sir Robert Peel had bought substantial quantities of American corn to sell from government depots at moderate prices in the event of another crisis. In Boston, the unexpected March 29, 1846, death of the Reverend O'Flaherty and the priority that the local Boston Irish Repeal leaders placed on the political objective of the Repeal of the Act of Union between Ireland and Britain were also factors in explaining the lack of an organized Boston relief effort in 1846. However, word reached Boston on January 20, 1847, via the Royal Mail Ship *Hibernia* that Ireland was on the verge of starvation as a result of the total failure of the 1846 potato crop and of the impending March closure of the Irish Public Works Relief Program by the recently elected Whig-Liberal government of Lord John Russell. This news led Charitable Irish Society members and other concerned Bostonians to redouble earlier efforts to send food and provisions to Ireland.

While the society's treasury was too small to make a large contribution to the relief effort, the CIS cancelled its annual March 17 dinner and donated the anticipated proceeds for famine relief.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, at least thirty-four society members were associated with the larger relief efforts of Bishop John Fitzpatrick and the New England Relief Committee. For instance, Fitzpatrick, whose father had been CIS president in 1830, launched a diocesan-wide appeal on February 7, 1847, that eventually netted \$24,000, which was sent to Archbishop Crolly in Armagh. Andrew Carney, a prosperous Catholic businessman and society member, personally donated \$1,000 and served as treasurer of the diocesan fund. The Reverend James O'Reilly, a society member and close associate of the late Reverend

O'Flaherty, raised \$1,300 cash and \$700 in pledges in one day so that when the *Hibernia* left Boston in early February, it carried \$72,600 in relief aid for the starving Irish.

The city's wealthy Protestants, known as its Brahmin elite, also responded to the shocking news from Ireland and joined the fundraising efforts initiated by Boston's Irish Catholic community. On February 18, 1847, 4,000 people attended a public meeting in Faneuil Hall that resulted in the formation of the New England Relief Committee.<sup>71</sup> Charitable Irish Society members Andrew Carney and Patrick Donahoe, editor of the *Pilot*, who had played leading roles in Bishop Fitzpatrick's appeal, cooperated with the new effort. In addition, at least twenty-four society members made donations at a March 20th fundraiser at the Melodeon Theatre.<sup>72</sup> Captain Robert Bennet Forbes, president of the Boston Marine Society, and his brother John Murray Forbes, both of whom had made fortunes in the China trade, joined the committee that evening, as did other influential Boston Brahmins such as Patrick Tracey Jackson and Thomas Lee, who were descendants of early society member Patrick Tracey of Newburyport.

One thousand people made pledges on this occasion. Within a day of this event, Captain Forbes and his brother, John Murvay Forbes, proposed petitioning the U.S. government to release two U.S. naval war ships, the SS *Jamestown* and the SS *Macedonian*, to deliver relief supplies to Ireland from Boston and New York. This request was granted by the American administration on March 3, 1847. Society members were involved in securing the 800 tons of provisions worth about \$36,000 that the SS *Jamestown* brought to Ireland on April 12, after a speedy, record-breaking voyage of fifteen days and four hours. Forbes and the other ship officers undertook this voyage free of charge.

Captain Forbes was so shocked by the devastation and misery he witnessed in Ireland that he refused government invitations to visit Dublin and London and insisted upon returning from Ireland as quickly as possible so that he could organize further relief efforts. Back in Boston, Forbes used his influence to cut through the red tape that had delayed the sailing of the *Macedonian* from New York. When that ship arrived in Cork on July 28, its cargo included 5,000 barrels of corn donated by Bostonians.

As an experienced businessman, Forbes exerted considerable effort prior to the *Jamestown* voyage and during his time in Cork to ensure that an efficient distribution plan was put in place so that the American relief supplies reached the neediest people. The arrival of these supplies from Boston in mid-April undoubtedly saved thousands of starving people in the south and west of Ireland who had no source of food in the period between the closing of the

public works in March and the opening of government soup kitchens in June.<sup>73</sup> By the summer of 1847, 3 million Irish people were solely dependent upon these government soup kitchens for their sustenance.

Although Forbes and his New England Relief Committee colleagues had set an initial goal of sending \$60,000 in provisions, enthusiasm for the effort was so great in Boston and the region that it eventually sent \$151,000 in food and provisions to Ireland. This was half of the \$300,000 in total aid that went to Ireland from Boston in “Black 47.”<sup>74</sup> The equivalent of the last figure in today’s currency would be approximately \$820,000.

Meanwhile as Irish famine refugees poured into Boston from 1846 to 1851, various Charitable Irish Society members assisted the new arrivals. For example, in December 1846, the Reverend Patrick Flood of St. Mary’s Parish on Endicott Street and Thomas Mooney rescued from the docks five



### “The Famine in Ireland — Funeral at Skibbereen”

This image from the *Illustrated London News*, January 30, 1847, was reproduced in the *New York Herald*, February 28, 1847. By 1847, the potato crop failure and the inadequate British government response caused widespread deaths. As depicted above, similar devastating funeral scenes were witnessed throughout Ireland. The Irish exodus to New England increased significantly between 1846 and 1853 as the people fled famine, disease, and dire poverty. In total, over 1 million Irish died and 1½ million emigrated between 1846 and 1853. Image courtesy of Ireland’s Great Hunger Museum.

orphaned children whose ages ranged from two to fourteen; their mother had died in transit from Liverpool to Boston aboard the *Anglo-Saxon*, leaving the children completely alone. The two girls and three boys were taken to the Reverend Flood's home, and within a week he and Mooney had raised \$553 for their care before the children were subsequently placed in the St. Mary's Male Orphan Asylum.<sup>75</sup> Another society member, the Reverend Thomas Lynch of St. Patrick's Parish on Northampton Street, and a native of County Cavan, was renowned for the material assistance and temporary shelter he gave to the newly arrived famine immigrants. His fluency in Gaelic made him especially effective in providing spiritual comfort to those from the south and west of Ireland who had limited English and who often found the urban conditions in Boston overwhelming and totally alien.<sup>76</sup>

CIS famine relief and assistance to the newly-arrived Irish in Boston proved to be the pinnacle of the society's charitable efforts for the next several decades. Citywide, ecumenical relief effort for Ireland waned after 1847, and relations between Boston's Irish Catholic and Protestant communities deteriorated rapidly in the face of the huge influx of poor and sick famine refugees who arrived between 1847 and 1851. Rising costs of public relief, disease, and petty crime were blamed squarely on the newly-arrived Irish.<sup>77</sup> The revival of anti-Irish, anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant attitudes was reflected in the electoral sweep of the Know Nothing Party in the 1854 state elections.

Significantly, no Boston politicians attended or were invited to CIS dinners in the 1850s. The Boston Irish were left on their own to cope with the huge challenges posed by the arrival of 130,000 famine refugees between 1846 and 1851. Although its membership was still rather small at 100 members and its resources slim, the Charitable Irish Society supported the Irish Immigrant Aid Society when it was formed in 1850 and gave annual contributions of \$300 over the next seven years to aid the Immigrant Aid Society's work in placing young Irish immigrant women in domestic service, providing small grants to those in need, and also providing train fares for some immigrants seeking better opportunities in the West. Although by 1852 the flow of immigrants to Boston had diminished considerably, the society contributed \$153 to provide for the poor at the city's Emigrant Hall.<sup>78</sup>

One hundred and sixty-five years after the *Jamestown* delivered aid to starving Irish men and women, the Charitable Irish Society spearheaded efforts to have Boston designated, by the Irish government, as the official international site for the 2012 Irish Famine Commemoration. Over St. Patrick's Day, the society hosted an official delegation from Drogheda, County Louth, which was twinned with Boston for the 2012 commemorations. Irish President Michael D. Higgins launched the commemoration on May 5,

2012, in Faneuil Hall, the site where the New England Relief Committee was established in 1847. His speech acknowledged the leadership, money, time, and services that the CIS and the New England Relief Committee contributed in turning “a sloop of war” into a “sloop of peace” through their support of the *Jamestown* effort.<sup>79</sup>

In its first 120 years, the Charitable Irish Society provided an important space where party political differences as well as the animosities between Irish Catholics and Protestants were put aside so that members could cooperate for charitable and social purposes. During this era, and especially during the Famine, the society and its individual members exhibited constant commitment to its founding mission.

Some 277 years after its establishment, the society remains a volunteer organization whose officers, directors, and 250 members assist Irish immigrants facing personal crisis and misfortunes. Using funds raised at the annual Silver Key reception and other donations, grants totaling approximately \$12,000 to \$15,000 per annum have been made to individual immigrants facing a variety of emergencies and to organizations providing direct services for immigrants. For instance, grants have enabled immigrants to return to Ireland when relatives were seriously ill or had passed away. Families made homeless by fire or needing home renovations to accommodate disabled family members have also received support.

In addition, the society has provided numerous immigrants with financial assistance to pay the various hefty fees required for applications for naturalization and United States citizenship. The Silver Key Grants Committee works closely with the Irish Consulate General in Boston and with the Irish International Immigrant Center and the Irish Pastoral Center to identify individual immigrants most in need. In recent years, grants have also been made to non-Irish immigrants from other countries, including Jamaica, Senegal, Haiti, India, Uganda, and Lebanon.

The society has a high profile within Boston's Irish American community and attracts many prominent Irish and Irish American leaders to its annual March 17 dinner and other events. These luminaries have included Nobel Laureates John Hume and the late Seamus Heaney, the late Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Garret Fitzgerald, former Irish President Mary McAleese and Senator John Forbes Kerry and AFL-CIO President Emeritus John Sweeney. Its current membership includes men and women who are leaders in Boston's business, civic, and educational organizations who are committed to the society's founding motto of “With Good Will Doing Service” and to preserving the cultural links with their ancestral land.

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HJM

## Notes

1. Charitable Irish Society Records, Massachusetts Historical Society, MS N-1474, Administrative Records, Vol. 1, 1737–1804, Preamble to the Constitution. Hereafter cited CIS Records.
2. For further details on Ulster emigration to America in the 18th and 19th centuries, see Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Kerby A. Miller, Arnold Schrier, Bruce D. Boling, David N. Doyle, *Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Ronald Chepesiuk, *The Scotch Irish: from the North of Ireland to the Making of America* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2000); Desmond McCourt, “County Derry and New England: the Scotch Irish Immigration of 1718,” in *Derry and Londonderry: History and Society Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, ed. Gerard O’Brien (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1999); Carlton Jackson, *A Social History of the Scotch Irish* (Lanham, NC: Madison Books, 1993). Older studies containing useful information on immigrants to Boston are Charles Knowles Bolton, *Scotch Irish Pioneers in Ulster and America* (Boston: Beacon and Brown, 1910); James G. Leyburn, *The Scotch Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962); and Henry Jones Ford, *The Scotch Irish in America* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1966 reprint of 1915 edition). R. J. Dickson, *Ulster Emigration to Colonial America, 1718–1775* (London: Routledge, Keegan and Paul, 1966). Leyburn cites a figure of 200,000 Ulster immigrants by 1775, while McCourt calculates a minimum of 250,000 (Leyburn, 175; McCourt, 303).
3. Jay Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 19; Chepesiuk, 117.
4. The Penal Laws were a series of laws enacted by the Protestant-dominated Irish Parliament from 1692 to 1704 that placed civil, religious, and social disabilities on Roman Catholics and also against Presbyterians so that they could not threaten the Protestant (Anglican or Church of Ireland) monopoly on power and land in Ireland. Under these laws, it was illegal for Roman Catholics to possess arms, own a horse worth more than five pounds, go abroad for education, hold public office in parliament or municipalities, practice law, be army officers, or secure long leases on land, or own or inherit substantial landed property. Ulster Presbyterians were affected by the 1704 Test Act that required all public office holders to be members of the Church of Ireland, a requirement that caused twenty-four members of the Londonderry Corporation in Ulster to resign their positions rather than conform.



Presbyterians were also required to pay tithes to support the Anglican clergy, and their marriages and baptisms had to be conducted by Anglican clergymen rather than by their own pastors.

5. McCourt, 311.

6. McCourt, 310–11; Ford, 189–192.

7. James Bernard Cullen, *The Story of the Irish in Boston* (Boston: James B. Cullen, 1889), 51.

8. Kerby Miller, *Land*, 128; Dickson, 23–24.

9. Ford, 193; Miller, *Land*, 46, 59, 128; McCourt, 309–310. McGregor spent his first year in Andover but ultimately went to New Hampshire, where he led the Presbyterian congregation at Londonderry. Boyd also went to Londonderry. Woodside and Cornwall went to the Casco Bay area of Maine, where harsh winter conditions led some of their followers to leave Maine in the spring for Londonderry and Boston. Fitzgerald led fifty families west to Worcester, then a frontier settlement, while McSpartan settled in Bristol, Rhode Island.

10. Miller, *Land*, 435–436.

11. Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scotch Irish and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689–1764* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 91; *Journal of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts*, 4 Nov. 1719, Vol. 2, 172–173.

12. Miller, *Land*, 162.

13. Miller, *Land*, 57. n. 2.; Carlton Jackson, *A Social History of the Scotch Irish* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1993), 58.

14. Cullen, 51–52; Leyburn states that over 300 people were “warned out” between 1715 and 1720 and 1749, forty nine from one single ship from Northern Ireland. 240.

15. [www.lynx2ulster.com/ScotchIrishPioneers/009.php](http://www lynx2ulster.com/ScotchIrishPioneers/009.php). Accessed 6/18/2012; Ford, 346–349.

16. Excerpt from Stowbridge book, <http://www.morrisonrobertne1740.com/records.html>, accessed 6/18/2012. Similarly the Reverend James McGregor complained to Governor Shute that his people were being labeled as “Irish papists” despite the loyalty they and their ancestors had exhibited to the British crown. Leyburn, 331.

17. Miller, *Land*, 145. In 1746, the Boston Selectmen set up a committee to hunt out Catholics and passed a motion urging the General Court to take measures to keep them out of Massachusetts. In 1772, another motion was proposed that Catholics should be exempted from the benefits of the newly enacted Toleration Act. Cullen, 15–16.

18. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1635–1743* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1968), 409–410. For a copy of this order, see Cullen, 67–68.

19. Bridenbaugh, *Wilderness*, 410.

20. Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Boston Irish, A Political History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 14.

21. Charles T. Burke, *The Silver Key: A History of the Charitable Irish Society* (Boston: Charitable Irish Society, 1973), 3.
22. Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, 410; Cullen, 54.
23. The city had erected a pesthouse on Spectacle Island in 1717 and sick immigrants were often detained there in 1718 and after. The crowded and unsanitary conditions on voyages of eight to ten weeks meant that sickness and disease spread easily among the passengers. Miller, *Land*, 90.
24. For a concise account of the Pope's Day riots, see Jack Tager, *Boston Riots, Three Centuries of Urban Violence* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001), 40–50. Tager notes that much of the motivation for this violence was also class based and that the plebian Protestant population used the Pope's Day occasions to lash out against urban elites and colonial officials. The few Catholics residing in the city were convenient targets of this artisan and working-class frustration.
25. Bolton, 169. William Price's 1769 map of Boston notes the location of the church on the map's index.
26. Little was a market gardener and a founder of the society. He was a member of Moorhead's congregation and probably was instrumental in recruiting Moorhead into the Charitable Irish Society. Other CIS members who were in Moorhead's congregation were founders Edward Allen, William Hall, and Samuel Miller, who joined in 1746. It is likely that Peter Pelham was also a congregant of Moorhead's as he did an engraving of Moorhead. Bolton, 169, 172.
27. Miller, *Land*, 153; Jackson calculates that 3,000 of these 1728 immigrants headed to New England, 46.
28. Cullen, 54.
29. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743–1776* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 126–128. Irishmen in Charleston, SC, and Philadelphia established similar benevolent societies in the mid-18th century. Meanwhile merchant sea captains and officers in Boston established the Boston Marine Society (BMS) two decades after the CIS. Over time, some individuals were members of both the CIS and the BMS, a prominent example being Captain John McKay.
30. Cullen, 24, 31–34. Immigrating weavers had greater financial resources than farmers, enabling them not only to afford the six-pound passage but also to buy land or set up trade upon their arrival in New England. Thus James McClelland, who came in 1718, bought a seventy-five-acre farm for forty pounds shortly after arrival and purchased more land nine months later. McCourt, 306.
31. For a discussion of this motive in establishing Irish benevolent societies, see Eileen Moore Quinn, "Toasters and Boasters: John D. Crimmins' 'St Patrick's Day,'" *New Hibernia Review/ Irish Eireannach Nua* 18.3 (2004): 22–24.
32. Other members who posted bonds of lesser amounts between 1737 and 1741 were Robert Auchmuty, William Hall, William Moore, John Carr, Captain Finney, and James Mayes. Cullen, 55. n. 1.
33. Information from Gerald W. R. Ward, Curator at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston at his talk "Faces and Makers: The Irish Presence in Eighteenth-Century Boston

Furniture and Silver," The Irish in New England Seminar, Deerfield, MA, 24 June 2012.

34. For Tracey ancestry, see Burke, 8. For further details on Captain Tracey's wealth and complete details of his influential descendants, see Thomas Amory Lee, "The Tracey Family of Newburyport," Historical Collection of the Essex Institute 57.1 (1921).

35. Moorhead's funeral service was conducted by the Reverend David McGregor of Londonderry, NH, the son of its initial preacher the Reverend James McGregor. Ford, 352.

36. Bolton, 209.

37. For the names of those who joined between 1737 and 1743, see Bolton, 334–335. See also CIS Records, Administrative Records, Vol. 1, for an alphabetical list of members joining between 1737 and 1765.

38. Fifteen joined at the second meeting in April 1738, 42 in 1739, but only 1 in 1749. No new members were recorded until 1756. In 1760, there were 89 members, and six years later there were 80 members. Burke, 7–9.

39. The first public Mass was held in 1790, and by 1800 there were 1,000 Catholics residing in the city. O'Connor, 18. Cummins reports that Abbe La Poterie celebrated a High Mass for St. Patrick's Day on March 17, 1789 at 11:00 a.m. This may have been for the Charitable Irish Society. Cummins, 36.

40. CIS Records, Administrative Records, Vol. 1, Minutes of January 17, 1794, January 8, 1799.

41. Proprietor of the Green Dragon Tavern, Burdick hosted at least two CIS meetings there. CIS Records, *ibid.*, Minutes of June 9, 1772, and June 1, 1774.

42. For Knox's and Burdick's testimony in the trials of Captain Preston and soldier William Wemms, see, L. Kinvin Worth and Hiller B. Zobel, eds., *The Legal Papers of John Adams*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 55–56 and 136. For a detailed account of Benjamin Burdick's involvement in the King Street Riot, see J. L. Bell, "I never used to go out with a weapon": Law Enforcement on the Streets of Prerevolutionary Boston," in *Life on the Streets and Commons, 1600 to the Present* (The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife—Annual Proceedings 2005), ed. Peter Bennes (Boston: Boston University, 2007), 41–55. Burdick also gave testimony to the town committee that investigated the incident and summarized its findings in *A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston*. This report was ordered to be printed at a town hall meeting in Faneuil Hall on March 19, 1770. Once printed, this document was sent to various officials in London to ensure that the colonist version of events was heard. See the 1973 reprint of this document by Corner House Publications, Williamstown, MA.

43. John Daniel Cummins, *St. Patrick's Day: Its Celebration in New York and other American Places, 1737–1845* (New York: 1902), 38.

44. Burke, 11–13; Cullen, 38; *Charitable Irish Society: Its Constitution and By-laws with a List of Officers and Members* (Boston, 1917), 57.

45. For an account of Malcolm's leadership in resisting the Revenue Acts, see Cullen,

44–50.

46. Those who fled to Nova Scotia were James Forrest, Henry Pelham, Archibald McNeill, John Field, and Bart Sullivan. John Magner, who had been included in a list of proscribed Tories, stayed in Boston and was reconciled with his patriotic neighbors and later took a leading role in raising money for the building of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. He was described as one of the wealthiest Catholics of Boston upon his death. Burke, 21.

47. In the 1790's, Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* was considered the bible of the radicals in the United Irish Society, attracting support from "New Light" Presbyterians in Ulster. For the influence of the American example and the impact of Paine's works in stimulating demands for reform among Ulster's Presbyterians, see David N. Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1981), 166; Marianne Elliott, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 84; Nancy J. Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 17–18, 204, 206, 222. In his recent study, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-1783* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Vincent Morley suggests there was more ambivalence about the American example among Ulster Presbyterians than previously thought. While many Ulster Presbyterians supported reform of the Irish government on the basis of their covenant principles and the political philosophy of John Locke, they shied away from the republicanism and separatism associated with the United Irish movement in the 1790s. Despite their strong family connection with America through emigration, Morley shows that the Declaration of Independence and the American link with France during the war dampened the enthusiasm of some Ulster Presbyterians for the colonial cause.

48. Cullen, 37

49. Burke, 22.

50. These members were Simon Elliot and Thomas English. (President John Adams also contributed.) Burke, 21.

51. Amounts turned over to the society from the March 17th Cathedral collection were \$36.55 in 1817, \$43.00 in 1822 and \$30.60 in 1825. Burke, 23, Cummins, 39.

52. CIS Records, Administrative Records, Vol. 1, Meeting Minutes for October 1766 for John Coppinger; August 14, 1770, for Mary Murray; October 12, 1773, and December 15 for Mrs. Carroll; December 15, 1773, and March 17, 1800, for Hannah Stone; October 18, 1791, for Sarah Campbell. On October 12, 1773, the society granted James Mayes, one of its elderly founders, forty shillings and granted his widow \$10 on 17 March 1800.

53. Ibid. Minutes of December 1801; March 29, 1810. In 1810, the society waived Gardner's annual charity contribution in recognition of his charity to these passengers. Minutes, March 24, 1810.

54. CIS Records, Administrative Records, Vol. 3. Minutes, March 17, 1838.

55. Burke, 11. CIS Records, Administrative Records, Vol. 1, Minutes, June 12, 1770.

56. Impressment was a form of conscription whereby the British Navy met its manpower needs for its large naval fleet during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Initially, vagrants in or near British port cities were rounded up by press gangs and forced to serve on British warships. The Royal Navy also stopped merchant ships and searched for British-born seamen who would then be conscripted into the Royal Navy. Since Ireland was a British territory and many Irishmen found employment in the private Atlantic maritime trade between Ireland, the West Indies and American colonial ports like Boston, frigates such as the HMS *Rose* intercepted these vessels to conscript Irish as well as British-born sailors. This was the reason for the raid on the American merchant brig *The Pitt Packet*.

57. The others charged were Pierce Fenning, William Conner, and Michael Corbett, the last of whom struck the fatal blow that killed Panton.

58. The importance of the case for Adams lay more in his success in exposing the illegality of impressment in the Colonies than in any personal sympathy for John Ryan's religion or nationality. Adams was notoriously opposed to Catholicism. Adams recalled in later years, "Panton and Corbett ought not to have been forgotten. Preston and his soldiers ought to have been forgotten sooner." John Ryan sued the British soldier who fired the shot that wounded him. British naval officials must have known they were on shaky legal grounds regarding this incident because they offered to give Ryan a £30 per annum position as a cook in the Royal Navy if he would drop the charges. Ryan refused the offer, as he had met a local woman and planned to get married, so the British authorities paid him £30 in compensation for his wounds. It was the following year that the Charitable Irish Society grant was made. For a full account of this incident and the admiralty court case that resulted from it, see Hiller B. Zobel, *The Boston Massacre* (Boston: W. W. Norton, 1970), 112–131, and Hiller B. Zobel and L. Kinvin Wroth, eds., *The Legal Papers of John Adams* Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1965), 275–335.

59. Burke, 19.

60. O'Connor, 37, 40–43; Burke, 24–25.

61. For details of the Broad Street riot and the Montgomery Guards, see O'Connor, 49–52, Tager, 12–24, and Burke, 29.

62. For details on the preparations for this centenary, see CIS Records, Committee Records, 1837–1926, Box 4, Folder 14.

63. An indication of the increasing number of Catholic members was reflected in the request the Centenary Committee made to Bishop Fenwick for a dispensation allowing them to eat meat at the March 17 anniversary dinner, which fell on a Friday in 1837. Bishop Fenwick granted the request and asked the members to make a donation to the poor in gratitude for the dispensation. CIS Records, Committee Records, 1837–1926, Box 4, Folder 14. For the full text of President Boyd's centennial address and Governor Edward Everett's banquet speech, see *The Constitution and By-Laws and the History of the Charitable Irish Society of Boston* (Boston: James F. Cotter, 1882), 47–66, 68–71.

64. Cullen, 201.

65. The toast proposers apparently were not concerned about the ideological conflict in simultaneously toasting republicanism and Daniel O'Connell, MP, who was a fierce critic of republicanism and its inclination to violent methods in Irish politics. Their main emphasis here probably was on American republicanism. Among the unofficial toasts that evening was one to Robert Emmet, the Irish republican who was executed for his role in the abortive Irish rebellion of 1803. For a full list of these toasts, see Cummins, 268–270.

66. The sheet music for this military march was discovered in the Boston Public Library music holdings by the late Professor Ruth Ann Harris, a society member. It was played probably for the first time since the 1838 dissolution of the Montgomery Guards at the 275th anniversary of the society on March 17, 2012.

67. Burke, 24–26. O'Flaherty had served as Vicar-General of the Boston diocese and editor of its newspaper early in his priestly career. See his obituary in the *Boston Pilot*, April 5, 1846.

68. Cummins, 40.

69. *Boston Pilot* 13 and 20 December, 1845, January 10, 1846.

70. Burke, 31. Only \$56 was given to Irish famine relief from the society treasury in 1847 and \$86 to local charity, but many society members contributed separately to the bishop's fund or sent money separately to Ireland. For example, Patrick Donahoe contributed \$100, Thomas Mooney \$200, and James Ryan, owner of the Stackpole House Tavern, \$50. *Sydney Chronicle*, August 4, 1847.

71. Press reports have the figure 4,000, but this may be exaggerated.

72. A list of these subscribers was compiled from newspaper files at the Forbes House Museum and the master list of CIS members contained in *The Charitable Irish Society, Its Constitution and By Laws* (Boston: Charitable Irish Society, 1917).

73. One who may have benefitted from the Boston supplies was my paternal grandfather, who was then five years old and living in an area of West Cork where Jamestown supplies were eventually distributed. He immigrated to New York City in 1860 as both his parents had died.

74. "Black 47" is the term commonly applied by Irish people to 1847 because of the catastrophic loss of the 1846 potato crop and the resultant 88,910 deaths from starvation and diseases in 1847. For precise figures on these losses during the entire famine era, see George O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland: From the Union to the Famine* (Clifton, NJ: Augustus M. Kelley, 1972 [reprint of 1921 Longman's Green edition]), 243–245.

75. *Boston Pilot*, 5 and 12 December, 1846.

76. Cullen, 129–130. Lynch kept a supply of boots and shoes in his house and also distributed clothes that were made at his church to poor and destitute women and children. Many immigrants slept in the church basement until other shelter could be found or they were well enough to travel to New England manufacturing towns or the West.

77. As early as April 1847, the Massachusetts Legislature held hearings regarding the impact that the influx of Irish immigrants might have on welfare cost and public

health. During the summer, gangs of “nativist Americans” roamed through the Irish neighborhoods of Fort Hill and Broad Street, intimidating its residents with anti-Irish and anti-Catholic epithets. In November, a public meeting, chaired by Mayor Josiah Quincy, addressed the financial and public health concerns of Boston residents over this large influx of immigrants. *The Boston Daily Atlas*, June 18, 1847; George Potter, *To the Golden Door: the Story of the Irish and America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1960), 466. Although *The Boston Daily Atlas* was highly critical of the nativist demonstrations, it approved the decision of city officials to monitor immigrants and quarantine on Deer Island those deemed infected with ship fever or other diseases. *The Boston Daily Atlas*, June 18, 30, 1847.

78. CIS Records, Vol. 3, Minutes, March 29, 1852.

79. For a succinct account of the voyage of the USS *Jamestown* and the work of the New England Relief Committee, see H. A. Crosby Forbes and Henry Lee, *Massachusetts Help to Ireland During the Great Famine* (Milton, Captain Robert Bennet Forbes House Museum, 1967) and my unpublished paper on the *Jamestown* voyage, May 6, 2012, read before a joint meeting of the Charitable Irish Society and the Eire Society of Boston. My account here is based on Captain Forbes’ personal account of the voyage, *The Voyage of the Jamestown on her Errand of Mercy* (Boston: Eastburn’s Press, 1847) and that of H. A. Crosby Forbes and Henry Lee as cited above.

Catherine B. Shannon - continued from back cover...

Author of *Arthur J. Balfour and Ireland, 1874-1923*, her most recent publication is on the role of Lord Randolph Churchill in Irish affairs between 1877 and 1893 in *The Churchills and Ireland: Connections and Controversies*, ed. Robert McNamara, (Irish Academic Press, 2012). She has published a number of articles and book chapters on the role of women in the Northern Irish conflict and peace process. In 1990 she became the first woman President of the Charitable Irish Society of Boston and also served as President of the Eire Society of Boston. For over a decade she served on the executive board of the American Conference of Irish Studies. She has been the recipient of awards from the Irish Voice newspaper, the Irish International Immigrant Center and the Irish American Partnership. She is currently researching the role of Boston and New England in providing food aid to Ireland during the Great Irish Famine.



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