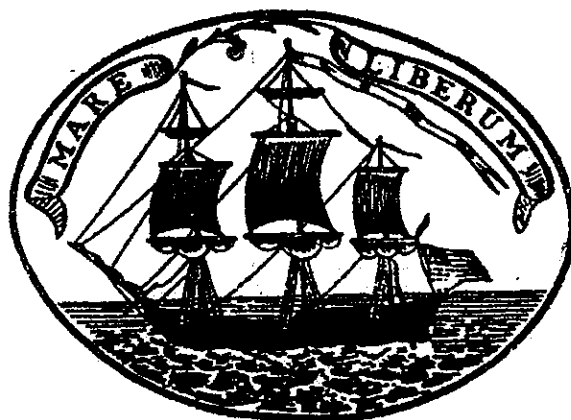


New London
A History Of Its People



CARMELINA COMO KANZLER, Editor

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~~~~~ *About The Editor* ~~~~~

Carmelina Como Kanzler was born in New York, New York and has lived in Connecticut since 1965 when she moved here with her husband Julius S. Kanzler and sons John and Mark.

She earned a B.A. in History from Connecticut College, an M.S. in Environmental Sciences from Eastern Connecticut State University and a Master of Public Administration from the University of New Haven.

Before moving to Connecticut, she worked for the music publisher, G. Schirmer, Inc. in administrative positions. In Connecticut, she was the Executive Director of a hearing and speech center until she retired in 1992.

She was elected to the New London City Council in 1983 and served as Deputy Mayor 1983-84, Mayor 1985-1986, and 1987-1988.

## ***The Irish In New London***

*May there always be work for your hands to do  
May your purse always hold a coin or two  
May the sun always shine on your windowpane  
May the rainbow be certain to follow each rain  
May the hand of a friend always be near you  
May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.*

**An Irish Proverb**

Ireland has long acknowledged that its greatest export has been its people. They carried with them a strong faith, sense of family, a wonderment of nature and a willingness to work. The genes from 2500 years of Irish history provided them with a rather unique philosophical brew of the natural, the supernatural and Christianity, and, either an inability or unwillingness to discern the differences between these forces. One might concede that the Irish character is generally marked by a vivacious temperament, rapidly changing between exuberance and melancholy. The ability to laugh at themselves in the face of adversity has been a signature trait and is reflected in the tongue and cheek wail, "Our only hope is despair". The contradictions of "quick to praise" and "quick to criticize" have produced an incongruent character of the Irish people - friendly but requiring "thick skins". Perhaps the only consistencies shared by most Irish are their learned distrust of monarchical government and their appreciation of democracy.

It is uncertain as to whether the impact of the Irish in New London has ever been formally assessed. Certainly, their contributions in the social, political, economic and religious developments of New London have been many and positive. But, the path was not an easy one.

Beginning in the 1650s emigration from Ireland to North America had become commonplace.<sup>1</sup> The new-world was seen by the Irish as a haven of opportunity for a new life and freedom from centuries of oppressive British rule. While some Irish could afford to pay their transoceanic passage, many more were transported as indentured servants (redemptioners), repaying their ocean passage in labor. In the second half of the 17th century, large numbers of Irish women and children were shipped as slaves to the Virginia tobacco and West Indies sugar plantations.<sup>2</sup>

Indentured servants dominated Gaelic-Irish emigration in the 1700s, following the imposition of the dehumanizing Penal Laws by the British Parliament. Many of the vessels bound for Virginia or the West Indies stopped in Connecticut as farmers

traded lumber and livestock for molasses and rum with the Caribbean. To illustrate the plight of these displaced Irish, a notice in a Connecticut newspaper in 1724 reported, "Just imported from Dublin, the barque Darby, a parcel of Irish servants, both men and women, to be sold cheap, by Israel Boardman, at Stamford".<sup>3</sup> During the second half of the century Presbyterians from the province of Ulster emigrated en masse to America to escape the oppressive Penal Laws; they were religious "dissenters" who refused to conform to the Anglican Church. Most of this group were able to pay their own trans-Atlantic passage. Consequently, approximately one-half of George Washington's army during the colonial War of Independence were of the Irish Race, Catholic and Protestant.<sup>4</sup> By 1790, 1,589 native Irish resided in Connecticut, about 0.05% of the state's population.<sup>5</sup>

In the 17th and 18th centuries, many Irish-Catholic settlers found great hostility in Connecticut. Catholics had to hide or disavow their religion in order to obtain jobs or property or to be accepted in society. They tended to worship in Congregational churches, where Irish children were baptized and Irish dead were buried by Congregational clergy<sup>1</sup>.

The volume of Irish immigration into Connecticut increased in the 19th and 20th centuries. During the 1840s many found work building canals in the state. The watershed event of the Irish Famine of 1845-50 generated massive emigration to North America. This Irish "Holocaust" of death and emigration reduced the population of Ireland by over three million. Most of the famine emigrants travelled in steerage in "coffin" ships, so called because as many as 1/3 of the passengers died during the 4 to 6 week transoceanic voyage and in Canadian and American quarantine stations.<sup>6</sup> From 1845 to 1860, approximately 55,000 Irish came to Connecticut.<sup>7</sup> During 1853-55, a national "No Nothing" political party sought to prevent Irish Catholics from settling in America; in 1855, a party leader was elected Governor of Connecticut.<sup>7</sup> Another agricultural famine in the 1870s produced a second pulse of Irish immigrants. By this time steam packet ships made the ocean voyage quicker and safer. These two waves of immigration served to establish Irish-America. The flood of Irish immigrants continued until after the turn of the century. The average annual population of native Irish in Connecticut during the period 1870 through 1900 was about 70,750.<sup>7</sup>

American economic expansion and the Civil War accommodated the large number of Irish immigrants. Many of these immigrants became soldiers as they stepped off the boat and before they assumed residency. Irish laborers and servants lived under impoverished conditions, but, conditions that were better than those in Ireland. With the expansion of the railroad, many Irish laborers settled in Connecticut's railhead cities, like New London. Assimilation began to be achieved in the last quarter of the century, largely because of the number of Irish in the Civil War and, by this time, the industry and moral fiber of the new Irish residents had

become recognized. Their strong appreciation of the education of their offspring was reflected in the number and quality of parochial schools established.

Although Ireland was governed by Britain until 1921, and most U.S. immigration records before that date classify Irish immigrants as British subjects, discrimination against the Irish in employment was blatantly practiced in Connecticut until at least World War I. Classified advertisements and posters stating "No Irish Need Apply" or "NINA" were common in newspapers and personnel offices. However, by the 1920s the Irish dominated the ranks of the Post Office, Fire, and Police Departments throughout the state, and with the introduction of the political ward system, became active in politics. Peaks in Irish immigration occurred again in the 1920s and following World War II. However, by 1930 the state's Irish born population was reduced to 38,418, and in 1950 was further reduced to 20,566.<sup>7</sup> Using the 1960 census, the Hartford Courant reported the Irish-American population in Connecticut as 20% of the total population, one of the largest ethnic groups in the state.<sup>7</sup>

New London was a gateway for settlers to Connecticut in the 17th and 18th centuries, and considerable trade was conducted between New London and Irish ports. The presence of Irish settlers in New London was recorded by 1650; perhaps earlier. In 1651, Edmund Fanning eventually settled in Groton and by 1654 William Collins and son were early grantees of town lots in New London. Some 17th century Irish names in New London were Dalton, Buckley, Barrett, Moore, Rice, Kelly, Keeney, Roach, Mullin and Butler.<sup>8</sup>

Joshua Hempstead kept a diary filled with details about people and events in the early 18th century. On January 4, 1724, he recorded the marriage of Isabel Maconnel and Samuel Irwin. During the period 1730-1740, the names of Kelly, Cosley and Smith were each recorded as "an Irishman." Also during the 1732-39 period, Captains Thomas and Nathaniel Shaw, New London Merchants, were trading regularly at Irish ports. In 1788, a shipwreck occurred off Fishers Island in which approximately 20 Irish immigrants perished. Since many immigrant Irish were Gaelic speaking and largely illiterate their names were recorded phonetically or anglicized, for example: Murfee (Murphy), Driskel (Driscoll), and Dehoritie (Doherty).<sup>8</sup>

New London Irish families participating in the Revolutionary War included: Condon, Crowley, Doyle, Fitzgerald, Geary, Higgins, Kelly, Powers and Ryan.<sup>8</sup> New London was the home port for a group of American privateer captains of Irish descent.<sup>9</sup> Those who commanded the privateer brigantines, sloops, etc., include: John and Richard McCarthy ("Black Prince"), Kelly (brig. "Catherine", sloop "Ranger"), Michael Melally (brigs "Marshall," "Oliver Cromwell," "Lady Spencer" and "Rochambeau."), William Dennis (General Sullivan [Sheridan?]), John McCleave (sloop "Worcester"), Robert McKeon (sloops "Patty," "Nabby" and "Hibernia"),

Joseph Powers, Tom Quigley, John Dunn and John Quinlan. Michael Melally and his wife are buried in the Old Burial Ground, New London; he died in 1791 at the age of 57 years and she died in 1812. Many Irish who served in these Connecticut vessels were recruited in New London, such as Thomas Fitzgerald (midshipman on Continental Frigate "Trumbull"), Conroy and Farrell.<sup>10</sup> One Connecticut newspaper reported about an American privateer operating off New London, "—she is a cutter of 16 guns having a Congress Commission, though the crew are all Welsh and Irish".<sup>11</sup>

In the 19th century, the Irish came to New London in groups to work as stone masons and laborers in construction and in quarries, as freighthandlers and coachmen, and as manufacturing expanded, in factories. Women usually worked as domestic servants in the large homes of the New London establishment (local businessmen, bankers and professionals). In 1842, an Irish labor force arrived to repair Fort Trumbull. The neighborhood around the fort was strongly Irish until around 1900, when it was occupied largely by Italian immigrants.<sup>12</sup> While the Irish were raising their families at the poverty level in 1847, a fundraiser rally in New London for famine relief assistance to Ireland, led by Protestant Reverend Mr. Greenwood, raised \$1,200.<sup>13</sup>

The shared love and patriotism of the Irish immigrants for both America and Ireland was clearly evident during a July 4th celebration in New London in 1846. According to the New London Morning Star, the City asked the "Sons of Erin" to lead the City's procession; Mr. Thomas Kelly, "a Dublin man", was Chief Marshall. The 100 man strong contingent carried a two-sided banner which read, on one side, "The Harp and Eagle United - Emblem of the land of our birth and of our adoption", and, on the other side, "America - though she regards us as *Aliens* by birth will find us *Sons* in her defence".<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the New London Irish again shouldered their load during the Civil War and World Wars I and II. An obelisk at St. Mary's Cemetery bespeaks of a poignant tale of the post-famine immigrants. The brief description on this memorial stone tells a story too often repeated in other families: "George Higgins, son of Daniel and Bridget Higgins, County Down, Parish of Mourne, Killed in the army at Fredricksburg on November 21, 1862, Age 16". The Irish are proudly represented on the WW I Honor List in New London's City Hall. Included among that list are, O'Connor, O'Connell, O'Donnell, O'Neill, Collins, Doyle, Dorsey, Driscoll, Flaherty, Flynn, Fitzgerald, Finnegan, Fitzpatrick, Maher, McGarry, McGinley, McMahon, Ruddy, Ryan and Sullivan. The full list leaves no doubt that the Irish immigrants proudly sent their sons into the war that was to make the "world safe for democracy". A similar acknowledgement appears on the city's World War II memorial in Williams Park.

In the 1920s many of the Irish stone masons worked shoulder to shoulder and trowel to trowel with their Italian fellow craftsmen. They erected monuments and churches that still stand in the New London area. They built stone walls, such as

those that encompass the cemeteries on Jefferson Avenue and the Morton F. Plant Estate, which now houses the Avery Point Branch of the University of Connecticut. Records of the New London Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) reveal that funding for the stone wall for St. Mary's cemetery was provided by Attorney and Mrs. John C. Geary, and that a Mrs. O'Flaherty donated the large stone Celtic Cross at the AOH burial site in the cemetery. Some Irish found work as household help, gardeners and maintenance people at Eolia, the summer estate of Edward and Mary Harkness, now Harkness State Park. During the first quarter of the 20th century, New London was a city of ethnic neighborhoods. While the Italian and Polish populations were heavily concentrated in their respective areas, the Irish were scattered in enclaves throughout the heart of the city. In east New London they occupied the areas of Hodges Square, Bragaw Street, Winthrop Cove, Connecticut Avenue in the vicinity of West Coit and Grand Streets and Shaw Street in the vicinity of Pratt and Steward Streets.

The 1910 census revealed that the Irish constituted 1,207 of the 4,561 foreign born white population in New London; the total population of New London was 19,659. By 1920 there were 1,049 foreign born Irish and by 1930 this number had declined to 822 Irish born<sup>15</sup>.

The first Roman Catholic Church in Connecticut was established in 1829 in Hartford (The Holy Trinity Church)<sup>16</sup>. In 1842, an upstairs room in a building at the corner of Bank and Blinman Streets in New London was rented to conduct weekly Masses which were served by a Missionary Priest. The arrival of the large numbers of Famine-Irish, beginning in 1848, served to establish the Catholic Church in New London. By 1850, the church held masses in a residence on Jay Street. In 1851, the Rev. Peter Duffy became the first parish priest in New London. In 1852, Pastor Rev. Thomas Ryan built St. Patrick's Church on Truman Street; he also purchased St. Patrick's Cemetery (later St. Mary's). In 1866, Rev. Bernard Tully purchased land on Washington and Huntington Streets for construction of St. Mary's Church, which was completed in 1874. Rev. Thomas P. Joynt became Pastor of St. Mary's parish in May 1883. In 1891, he started St. Mary's "Young Ladies High School" on Franklin Street. The teachers, who came from Meriden, Connecticut, were Sisters of Mercy. The school moved to its present location in 1898. Together with the new Italian, German and Polish immigrants the Catholic population in New London had increased sufficiently to establish a need for additional masses; they were held in the Empire Theater until St. Joseph's Church was dedicated in 1910.<sup>16</sup>

In August 1871, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) was organized in New London; a Division was also organized in Norwich in September of that year.<sup>17</sup>. Other Irish organizations or societies may have preceded the AOH in New London. The Knights of Columbus was formed by Irish-Catholics in 1882, in New Haven, largely influenced by the AOH. In 1884 the Irish National League formed in New London and in Norwich, drawing members from the former Land League

chapters; under the leadership of President William Mahoney they met in the Star of the Sea Meeting Hall, in Stoddard's Block.<sup>20</sup> The League was still active in 1933, forming a literary committee. In 1885, Hibernian Rifles Company "A" of New London was the first AOH militia unit formed in the state.<sup>18,21</sup> On June 6, 1888, the first AOH State Convention in New London was held in Union Hall.<sup>22</sup> The Ladies Auxiliary of the AOH was formed in 1896 at a State Convention in Hartford.<sup>18</sup> In 1903, Mrs. Margaret O'Connor was the New London County Ladies AOH President. By 1902, there were seven (7) AOH divisions in New London County; New London (2 divisions), Norwich (2 divisions), Taftville, Stonington and Jewett City each had one division. The New London divisions met in the Cronin Building.<sup>18</sup> AOH Division No. 1 adopted the name Father Joynt Division, after the Reverend Thomas P. Joynt, Pastor of St. Mary's Church from 1883 until his death in 1909; the Division disbanded in 1947. The Ladies AOH Auxiliary continued until the 1950s.

On September 16, 1963, the AOH re-established in New London, with James Watterson as interim President. John C. Dempsey was elected the first division President, and the name John F. Kennedy Division No. 2 was selected on December 17, 1963. The Division name was changed in July 1989 to the John P. Holland Division after the Irish born inventor of the submarine, and who is acknowledged as the "Father of the modern submarine". The Holland Torpedo Boat Company later merged with other companies to become Electric Boat. An AOH Ladies Auxiliary, Division No. 69, was re-instituted in 1965 with Mrs. Elizabeth Gallagher as the first President; this Auxiliary disbanded in the 1970s. The reestablished New London AOH Division has maintained a program of educational activities in New London to preserve the Irish heritage. They ran an annual Feis (international stepdancing and traditional music competitions) at Ocean Beach Park from 1972 to 1995, formed an Irish Reading Association, sponsored a childrens stepdancing school, gave free adult ceili dance lessons, and sponsored public dances throughout the city featuring Irish bands from New York and Boston. They continue to teach Irish history in adult education programs and have been working to establish a John P. Holland Museum in Holland's hometown of Liscannor, County Clare, Ireland.

While most of the immigrants from Ireland had no better than a grade school education, they recognized its importance and the role it would play in creating a successful future for their children. Through education, many of the first generation Irish managed to break through the social and religious biases in New London, and gradually Irish names were found in the medical, legal professions, and in politics. Reportedly, by the 20th century the Irish were well represented in New London, state and federal civil services. The first Irish Police Chief in the city was a Mr. Quinn, in 1880.<sup>23</sup> The Telegraph newspaper was co-founded in 1885 by John Lynch. This Irish occupational assimilation into the political and professional life of New London can be best appreciated by citing some examples of a few prominent Irish-American families.



Politics: James R. May was born in 1867 to Irish immigrant parents. A Democrat, he served as City Alderman, Representative from New London in the Connecticut General Assembly, and later as State Senator. He was appointed Postmaster for New London in April 1935 by President Franklin Roosevelt. Mr. May was an insurance agent who had extensive involvement in the New London banking community. He served as Director of the New London City National Bank, as an Incorporator of the Savings Bank of New London, a Trustee of the former Mariners Savings Bank, and a Director of the Winthrop Trust Company. Along with David M. Reagan and the Reverend William Fitzsimmons, he was instrumental in the movement to construct St. Joseph's Church in New London. His son, James A. May, served on the City Council almost continuously from 1925 to 1955 and was Mayor three times during this period. In 1927, at the age of 26, "Jimmy" May became the youngest mayor in the nation of a city with more than 10,000 population. He was considered to be one of the most colorful politicians in New London's history.

Mr. James R. May was married to the former Elizabeth Ruddy, whose own family played an enduring role of municipal employment in New London. Her father, Austin J. Ruddy, a native of County Mayo, Ireland, was hired by the City in the mid-1870's and became foreman of the City Water Department. His nephew, Austin H. Ruddy, also a native of Ireland, began working for the City in 1886 and took over the foreman position. From the 1870s until 1992, there was a Ruddy on the City's work force. The two Austin Ruddys, James Ruddy (also Water Department Foreman), William J. Ruddy (City Purchasing Agent) and William J. Ruddy, Jr. (New London High School Teacher) contributed an unbroken cumulative record of over 200 years of service to New London.

Thomas J. Griffin was a prominent politician in New London from the 1920s to the 1960s; his family roots were in Ireland. He was born in 1891 in New London, son of Joseph and Martha Skiffington Griffin. He was involved in civic activities at a young age and became a potent force in City politics during World War II. As a member of the City Council for 23 years and Mayor for three terms, he was known for his candor and honesty and as a "politician of the little people". He first operated the Thomas Griffin and Sons Wholesale Meat Co. in New London. During World War II, he was Comptroller of the Naval Underwater Sound Laboratory. After the war he became an expediter at Electric Boat until his retirement. He was a State Boxing Commissioner, a Trustee of St. Mary's Church, and President of the Eastern Connecticut Basketball Officials. He was a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, an Exalted Ruler of the New London Lodge of Elks, and a Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus. On separate occasions, he was selected as the "Man of the Year" by the Hibernians and by the Elks.

Medical: Dr. Daniel P. Sullivan was born in Willimantic, son of Daniel and Ellen Sullivan. He practiced medicine most of his life in New London. Dr. Sullivan helped organize the Lawrence and Memorial Hospital, and as a Board Member,

guided the hospital through many stages of growth. He joined the Hospital as a staff surgeon in 1912 and soon became senior staff surgeon. His reputation as a skilled surgeon went well beyond New London when he became a consulting surgeon for many hospitals throughout the east. During World War I, Dr. Sullivan's skills as a physician led the region in the battle against a worldwide virulent influenza epidemic. During World War II he organized the City's Civil Defense system and as Director was in charge of more than 3,000 volunteers. He received numerous honors from the medical profession, city, state, and federal governments for his many contributions. He died in 1964 at age 89 years at Lawrence and Memorial Hospital.

It is estimated that Dr. Joseph Ganey delivered more than 6,000 babies in New London during his medical career. He was born in 1879, served in the army during World War I, and following the war worked as a deck hand on a four-masted schooner to help pay for his medical education. He was a colorful character and a National Director of Circus Fans of America. A young Eugene O'Neill, who was 10 years "Doc" Ganey's junior, spent many hours in the Doctor's extensive personal library to educate himself in the works of European authors. Doc Ganey's infamous "Second Story Club", an informal, raffish, mostly Irish social organization, was composed of a kind of avant-garde of New London in the early 1900s and was looked upon with disdain by the respectable citizens of the community. "Doc" Ganey died in 1958, at the age of 79.

A more reputable social organization was the "St. John's Literary Society", founded by Irish immigrants in 1848, which regularly convened to discuss great works of literature. An advertisement in a 1909 issue of the New London Day revealed that the President of the "Society", at that time, was Attorney Frank L. McGuire.

Legal: Three generations of the McGuire family have been practicing law in New London. Patrick McGuire left McGuire's Bridge, County Fermanagh, Ireland in the 1830s and settled in the Greenport-Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York area. He married Margaret Collins. Their son, Thomas, a plumber, moved to New London in the 1860s where he started the plumbing business of McGuire and Maher. He married Margaret Lewis in New London.

Frank Lewis McGuire was born in 1881. He attended New York University and upon graduation joined the New London law firm of Hull and Hull; which later became Hull, McGuire and Hull. In 1907, while New London City Clerk, he married Winifred Foran, a graduate of Williams Memorial Institute. Her father, Francis Foran, owned a large furniture store, the State Financial Corp., and an undertaking business in New London. The McGuires moved to 471 Pequot Avenue, which is now the Mitchell College Library. Frank Lewis McGuire served on the boards of the Hartford National Bank, Lawrence and Memorial Hospital, Norwich State Hospital,

Williams School and was active at St. Joseph's Church. He and his wife died in 1947.

A brother, Henry McGuire was also New London City Clerk. His son, Roland McGuire, became a well respected dentist in New London.

Frank Lewis McGuire had two sons who also became prominent lawyers in New London. Francis Foran McGuire, born in 1910, graduated with distinction from Dartmouth College in 1932. He received his law degree from Yale Law School in 1935; he was an editor of the Yale Law Journal. He joined his father's law firm. He married Helen Connolly in 1935; she graduated from Smith College. Francis F. had a keen Irish wit and was the picture of distinction. He later joined the law firm of Wiggins, Dana and McGuire. He continued his father's interest in politics and served for several years as Democratic Town Chairman. He was an officer in some of New London's major institutions, including Vice-President of L&M Hospital, President of Williams School Board, member of the Executive Board of the Hartford National Bank and Trust Co. and The Day Trust; he was a director of The Day newspaper. He was President of the Parish Council of St. Joseph's Church and President of the United Fund. In 1965 he was awarded the Knight of St. Gregory Papal Order by Pope Paul VI. He died in 1982.

His brother, Morgan Kennedy McGuire, born in 1916, served for some period in the family law firm. Later, he was elected State Senator, from North Stonington. He died in 1974.

As with his father, Francis F. McGuire had two sons who continued the McGuire name in the practice of law in New London. Frank Lewis, born in 1940, and James Connolly, born in 1947, became partners in the law firm of McGuire and McGuire. Frank Lewis died in 1990; James continues the practice of law.

Attorney Thomas P. Condon was Judge of Probate for New London and Waterford for 30 years. He was born in 1923, grandson of Irish immigrants from Mitchelltown, County Cork and Valentia Island, County Kerry, it was reported that Mitchelltown was named after a relative, Mitchell Condon. His parents were Thomas J. and Helen O'Neill Condon. He graduated from Providence College and received his law degree from Georgetown University. He married Mary Caroline MacDonald. He was a popular and respected figure in the community, known for his keen legal mind, sensitivity, thoughtfulness and sense of humor. It was said of him that he seemed to know every family in the city. He took great pride in his heritage and often gave talks on Irish history, which he studied for many years. He died in 1991 at age 71. At the time of his death, he was President of the First New London Savings and Loan Association. He was a prominent Catholic layman who received Papal Honors in 1966.

Arts and Literature: The New London Irish boast of an international literary giant in Eugene Gladstone O'Neill. Eugene O'Neill, is one of the most distinguished names in the canon of American dramatic literature. He was born in New York City, on October 16, 1888. His father, James, was born in Kilkenny, Ireland in 1846 during the Irish famine, and his mother Ella was an Irish-American born in New Haven, Connecticut. His father was a well known professional actor. The O'Neills were drawn to New London because Ella was seeking a permanent residence for her young family, and her mother and aunt had taken up residence in New London. On the stage James spent some 30 years playing the role of the Count of Monte Cristo, including performances in the Lyceum theater in New London. In the late 1890s the O'Neills purchased the house on Pequot Avenue that was to be known as the Monte Cristo Cottage. It would be their home until the early 1920s, when both parents and a brother died; they are buried in St. Mary's Cemetery.

During his youth and early manhood, Eugene spent his summers in the Monte Cristo Cottage. He turned repeatedly to the physical and emotional landmarks of New London in his writing. Three of his major plays, *Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Long Days Journey into Night* are set in the New London locale, and several other works contain references to people and events which are traceable to his early life in New London. O'Neill had an Irishman's superstition about cursed families and immortalized his own through his art. "I'm all Irish," he said, referring not only to his ancestry but also to the Irish customs and attitudes of his family.

In 1912, O'Neill's professional writing career had a less than distinguished beginning when he worked as a reporter for the New London Telegraph. In 1972, the New London City Council renamed Main Street as Eugene O'Neill Drive. In October 1988, on the 100th anniversary of his birth, a bronze statue of *Eugene O'Neill* (as a boy) was dedicated at the city pier. In attendance were William O'Neill, Governor of the State of Connecticut, as well as city officials, regional dignitaries and notable stage actors who were recognized for their portrayal of roles in O'Neill's plays. In June 1989, a contingent from New London and the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center travelled to *Shchelykovo*, Russia, the home of Russia's premier playwright, A. N. *Ostrovsky*. On behalf of the 100th Anniversary committee, former Mayor Carmelina Como Kanzler of New London presented a smaller version of the bronze statue to the Museum located there. Enter Eugene O'Neill: dramatist, four Pulitzers, Nobel Prize for Literature, international fame. Enter, immortality.

In summary, Irish immigrants came to New London poor, uneducated and unconnected but ready to work. They focused on survival. The three main components of their lives were family, church and work, and that was the ethic that they sought to instill in their children (whom they produced in great numbers). Success, in the eyes of the Irish immigrant, consisted of home ownership, indoor plumbing, and a priest or nun in the family. The overriding concern of these

survivors was: What could they do to make life better for their children? They took pride in their home and their children, pride in their work and pride in their heritage. The great American songwriter George M. Cohan, who tested many of his plays at the Lyceum theater in New London en route to Broadway, said it best in the lyrics of "Harrigan": "It's a name that no shame ever has been connected with - Harrigan, that's me".

Currently, the Irish community in New London is strongly represented by descendants of immigrants from two counties in Ireland who came in two waves, 1900 to 1910 and again in the 1920s. The families originating in the small region of Valentia Island, Cahirciveen and Portmagee, County Kerry include O'Connell, Shea, Foley, Murphy, Sullivan, and Falvey. The families originating in County Mayo include, Joyce, Higgins, McGarry, and Dorsey.

Researching the history of the Irish in New London was a difficult task because of the paucity of available written information. Therefore, the challenge to the New London AOH, the only Irish oriented organization in New London, is to continue this research to fill the voids and provide a comprehensive description of the history of the New London Irish. This effort would be a fitting legacy of the current generation since, over the next few generations, the identity of "Irish-American" in New London is certain to fade; hopefully never to be lost however.

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ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS,  
John Philip Holland Division

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*Capitol Theater, Circa 1928 • Courtesy of Peter Burgess*